THE SECURITY CHALLENGES OF BELT AND ROAD CORRIDORS[*]

Kuşak ve Yol Projesi Koridorlarının Karşılaştığı Güvenlik Tehditleri

Gökhan TEKİR**

Abstract
This paper tries to identify security problems exist on the Belt and Road Initiative corridors. Although it is one of the most ambitious economic projects in the 21st century, Belt and Road Initiative is afflicted by separatist and terrorist activities. The paper selected three cases: Xinjiang, Balochistan, and Myanmar. In Xinjiang, oppressed Uyghur people sporadically rise against Chinese rule, afflicting the security of the New Eurasian Land Bridge and China-Central Asia-West Asia corridors. Balochistan province, which has witnessed several rebellions since Pakistan's independence threaten China's 46 billion investment in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims are unwanted hosts of the territories which Belt and Road corridors pass through. In response to these threats, China implements a set of security measures including strengthening its presence in Xinjiang and abandoning its traditional non-interference policy in its interactions with relevant countries to provide stability Belt and Road corridors. In Xinjiang, it establishes a security state; in Balochistan it propels Pakistan to increase the number of troops; for Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar China backs Myanmar army's atrocities in the global arena.

Özet
Bu çalışma Kuşak ve Yol Projesinin koridorlarında mevcut olan güvenlik tehditlerini teşhis etmek amacındadır. 21. Yüzyılın en iddialı projelerinden biri olmasına karşın, Kuşak ve Yol Projesi ayrılıkçı ve terörist aktiviteler tarafından tehdit edilmektedir. Bu çalışma Kuşak ve Yol Projesinin üç vakayı ele almaktadır. Şincan, Belucistan, ve Myanmar. Şincan bölgesinde Uygur azınlık Çin otoritesine karşı çıkarak Yeni Avrasya Kara Köprüsü ve Çin-Orta Asya-Batı Asya koridorlarının işleyişini tehlikeye düşürmektedir. Pakistan'ın bağımsızlığından sonra birçok isyanın yaşandığı Belucistan, Çin'in Çin-Pakistan Ekonomik Koridoru kapsamında yaptığı 46 milyar dolarlık yatırımlarını tehdit etmektedir. Myanmar'ın istenmeyen Rohingya Müslümanları Kuşak ve Yol Projesinin geçtiği bölgelerde yaşamaktadır. Bu tehditlere karşılık olarak, Çin, Kuşak ve Yol Koridorlarının istikrarını korumak için, Şincan'da güvenlik güçlerinin varlığını artırmış, dış politikasında da geleneksel olan ülkelerin iç işlerine karışma politikasını bir kenara bırakarak güvenlik araçlarını devreye sokmaya başlamıştır. Şincan'da Çin bir polis devleti kurmuştur; Belucistan'da Pakistan'ın güvenlik güçlerinin sayılarını artırmasını istemiş; Myanmar'daki Rohingya Müslümanları için Myanmar'ın ordusunun katliamlarını uluslararası alanda savunmaya devam etmiştir.

**Doktora Öğrencisi, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Bölge Çalışmaları Departmanı gokhan.tekir@metu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-3985-7442

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative was announced by the President of People's Republic of China in September 2013. It consists of two main components: The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on connecting China, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe through infrastructural linkages built on land. The Maritime Silk Road is planned to connect China's coast to ports located on through the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean (The National Development and Reform Commission, 2015).

The Belt and Road Initiative has become a central pillar of Chinese foreign policy. It aims at augmenting connectivity separated regions such as Europe, Central Asia, South Caucasus, Southern Asia, and the Middle East (Magri, 2017, p. 9). The Belt and Road Initiative is, therefore, is an expression China's new ambitious foreign policy. Vision and Actions Paper articulates five goals: upgrading policy coordination, facilitating connectivity, removing obstacles to trade, establishing financial integration, and encouraging people-to-people bonds (The National Development and Reform Commission, 2015).

Focusing to realize these goals, the Belt and Road envisions the creation of six economic corridors: China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor; the New Eurasian Land Bridge; China-Central and West Asia economic corridor; China-Indo-China Peninsula economic corridor; China-Pakistan economic corridor; and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. Through these corridors China is linked with the rest of the world.

However, these six corridors pass through areas which are politically unstable and plagued by separatist and terrorist activities. This study examines three areas due to their strategic location in the corridors. The first case is Xinjiang which is planned to serve as a transportation hub for the Belt and Road Initiative. It is on the on the route the New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Central Asia-West Asia, and China-Pakistan economic corridors. Xinjiang has had a long history of Uyghur separatism. The violence in the region occurs sporadically, jeopardizing Xinjiang's position of becoming a transportation center. The second case is Balochistan where Gwadar port is located within China-Pakistan economic corridor. Balochistan experiences a long-running separatist insurgency. It also witnesses the evolution of sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia militants. The absence of state authority exacerbates the instability in the area. This threatens the operation of $46 billion worth corridor. The third case is the state sponsored violence in Myanmar's Rakhine. The conflict between Buddhist groups supported by Myanmar's military and Muslim minority threatens the stability of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor. China's *carte blanche* to Myanmar's military which commits atrocities against Muslim minority creates humanitarian crisis which would stain the development of the corridor.

As Chinese projects, workers, and businesses are exposed to these security challenges, China is developing a set of complex measures. China's response to these troublesome security problems ranges from resorting to brute force, collaborating with host countries, development of economies hoping that high economic standards would bring stability, acting as a mediator of intra-state conflicts, and extending its military posture in these unstable areas.

2. Xinjiang

The Xinjiang Autonomous region is a core area and transportation hub. It borders eight countries, linking China with Central Asia, Europe, and South Asia. Thus, due to its geographical position Xinjiang serves as transport link for land connection. Xinjiang is in the route of the New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Central Asia-West Asia corridors which provides connection between China and Europe; and China-Pakistan corridor, which enables China to reach Gwadar port to which China contributed its construction $46 billion. Urumqi, the

capital of Xinjiang, and Kashgar, southwestern city of Xinjiang emerges as transportation hubs in Xinjiang.

The New Eurasian Land Bridge consist of several transcontinental railway routes including Chongqing-Urumqi-Duisburg, Chengdu-Urumqi-Lodz, Yiwu-Urumqi-London, Yiwu-Urumqi-Madrid, Zhengzhou Urumqi-Hamburg lines. Thus, Urumqi is the key location which connects Chinese coastal and inland cities to European cities along the New Eurasian Land Bridge corridor. China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor starts from Urumqi and moves west to Central Asia crossing five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), two South Caucasus countries (Azerbaijan and Georgia), and several West Asian countries including Turkey and Iran. The China-Pakistan corridor is set to connect Pakistan's Gwadar port to China aiming to reduce China's dependency on oil and gas imports from Africa and Middle East. Gwadar port, built in 2016, is planned to be linked to Kashgar in Xinjiang. The routes of these three corridors, therefore, indicate that Xinjiang is important point in their realization.

Xinjiang is comprised of thirteen major ethnic groups. Uyghurs, the largest ethnic group are Turkic and Muslim, resent Chinese rule. Many of Uyghurs claim that China colonized the area in 1949, while Chinese government claims to perceive Uyghurs equal with other nations in the People's Republic of China (Bhattacharji, 2012). However, China has preferential policies in Xinjiang favoring Han citizens, which sharpen ethnic divide in the region. This decreases economic benefits allocated for Uyghur population. Another problem is religious oppression imposed by the China Communist Party. The CCP's atheist ideology and the perception of religion's strengthening role in separatist tendencies lead Chinese government to adopt a restrictive policy regarding Uyghur population's religious activities. This policy offends Muslim Uyghur population and aggravates grievances (Wei and Weng, 2010, p. 60).

Xinjiang has witnessed five separate periods of Uyghur uprisings against Chinese rule in Xinjiang: the rebellion during the Qing dynasty; the rebellions in 1931-1934 and 1940-1949 resulting in the establishment of short lived Uyghur states; the rebellion in 1990-1998; and the latest rebellion since 2009. This paper deals with the most recent occurring and its impact on the Belt and Road Initiative.

In July 2009, ethnic rioting took place in Urumqi resulted in deaths of more than 200 people and over 1600 injured. The CCP General Secretary Xu Jintao, canceled his visit to Italy and immediately returned to Beijing where he gathered the Standing Committee of the CCP. The meeting called for stability in the region emphasizing the central government had no intention of giving in to rioters. Within two weeks at least 4,000 Uyghurs were arrested and 24 Uyghurs were sentenced to death (Mackerras, 2012, p. 505). Xu replaced the long standing CCP Secretary of Xinjiang Wang Lequan with Zhang Chunxian, who favors racial assimilation and cancel the exemption, which allows Uyghur couples to have more than one child. The authorities placed strict regulations on religious meetings and fasting during Ramadan months. The pressure was extended to arrest prominent opposition figures. (Strategic Comments, 2014, p. viii).

Nonetheless, the security situation in Xinjiang has continued to deteriorate. Since 2013, a new wave of attacks has been carried out. In June 2013, protesters attacked a police station and government offices in Turpan city of Xinjiang region. In the conflict, 9 police officers and security guards were killed, and 10 rioters were shot by security forces (Buckley, 2013). In August 2013, the clash between security forces and Uyghurs resulted in 16 dead people in Kashgar. In Kargilik County, police shot 15 militants in a confrontation. The violent attacks were also seen in Beijing. In October 2013, a car carrying three Uyghurs crashed into a crowd of tourists in front of Mao Zedong's portrait in Tiananmen Square. In March 2014, as a result of a knife attack at Kunming railway station in the southwestern province of Yunnan 29 people were killed, exacerbating fears of similar attacks throughout the country. 96 people were killed

in Kashgar's neighboring country Yarkand in July in attack by large group of knife-wielding Uyghurs. According to statistics provided by the Uyghur Congress showed that approximately 2,000 people were arrested due to repression measures implemented during Ramadan month in Kashgar for following fasting. In September, 50 people were killed and 50 people were injured in Bugur (Strategic Comments, 2014, pp. viii–ix). The violence continued in 2015. In September 2015, a knife attack orchestrated by Uyghur separatist at coal mine resulted at least 50 casualties in Sogan ("China's Xinjiang region", 2016). The casualties from both sides indicate a worrisome trend for the region and the rest of China in that violence is persisting and spreading.

The East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) seeking an independent state in Xinjiang called East Turkistan took credit for the attacks carried against China. The 9/11 events enabled China to have this group listed a terrorist organization by the US treasury department due to ETIM's alleged links with Al-Qaeda (Xu, Fletcher and Bajoria, 2014). Another organization, The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), founded in Pakistan, distances itself from ETIM. Still, its aim is to establish a caliphate in Xinjiang by liberating it from Chinese rule. China also does not distinguish ETIM and TIP considering them terrorist organizations whose aim was to establish an independent state in Xinjiang. (Strategic Comments, 2014, p. ix). TIP expanded its geographical reach by strengthening its links with Al Qaeda in Waziristan and Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. Its increasing activity since 2003 mimics Al Qaeda, increasing its damaging effect of attacks. The terrorist attacks in 2013-2014 in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and attempt to hijack the aircraft Hotan-Urumqi indicate a change in attacks and places (Botobekov, 2016). The increasing attacks would pose challenge China's social, political, and economic stability.

TIP has already extended its operations outside China. In August 2016, operatives from Syria performed a car suicide bombing attack to Chinese embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, wounding six people (Soliev, 2017). This attack shows increasing capability of Uyghur groups in inflicting damage to Chinese interests along the Belt and Road route. It also demonstrates the militants trained in Syria will be dangerous for China when they return from Syria.

There are also indications that Uyghur militants are being recruited by the Islamic State. In March 2017, the IS pledged to "shed blood like rivers" in attacks against Chinese targets in a half-hour video released (Gramer, 2017). The total number of Uyghurs who are fighting in Syria reached to 5000 in 2017. The Syrian ambassador to China stated that Uyghur militants are fighting under the IS or TIP in Syria. ("5,000 Chinese Jihadists", 2017). The return of these militants to Xinjiang will be disastrous for the stability in the region. The experienced jihadists might flare up the already tense situation in Xinjiang. The stakes are higher considering China's efforts to make Xinjiang a transportation hub in the Belt and Road route.

3. Balochistan

Balochistan is the southwestern region of Pakistan. It borders two strategic countries, Iran and Afghanistan. Its southern border is the Arabian Sea. Gwadar port built within China-Pakistan economic corridor is located in Balochistan. The economic picture of Balochistan is dire. In Balochistan. Approximately 75% of people in the region live in poverty. About two million children are not attending schools. Health indicators are also dreadful. Because of maternity complications, 977 women per 100,000 die in Balochistan. This number is 300 women per 100,000 in the rest of Pakistan. Almost 20 % of Balochi people suffer from Hepatitis B or C. Furthermore, there's an acute water shortage (Khan, 2018). These factors make Balochistan a suitable ground where terrorist groups find recruitment.

China is set to invest $46 billion to the construction and the connection of the port which would provide sea access to its western regions and Central Asia. The most important element of CPEC is the construction of port on Gwadar. The aim is turn Gwadar, located at the Persian Gulf, into regional commercial, industrial and shipping hub. Its capacity of handling

cargo will expand, when it is completed. The CPEC will also include, energy and transportation infrastructure, power complex, and industrial zones (Kanwal, 2018). The project also includes the construction of a 1,100 km motorway connecting the coastal city of Karachi (Sindh) with Lahore (Punjab). Pakistan's provinces are connected to Kashgar through Karakorum Highway (Rifaat and Maini, 2016, p. 4). A direct railway link, which connects Kashgar to Makran coast of Balochistan is planned to be built (Kanwal, 2018). These transportation lines pass through Balochistan territories. As Balochistan is strategically important in the realization of the CPEC and the success of CPEC depends on the stability of Balochistan. This project can also be beneficial for Balochistan's struggling economy.

However, since independence Balochistan has been plagued by unrest and disturbances. It has witnessed five successive insurgencies. The first started 1948, lasting only few months. Late 1950s witnessed second eruption of insurgency. Balochistan was gripped into the third insurgency 1960s and fourth insurgency in 1973. All these insurgencies tried to be contained by offering general amnesty without addressing the root causes. The fifth insurgency, commenced in 2005, is entering its thirteenth year (Mirza, 2013, pp. 23–24). The ongoing insurgency, which has continued for seven decades, demonstrates the resilience of Baloch nationalism.

The latest insurgency is much more complex than previous four ones. The insurgency starting after 2005 characterized with several components: the principle conflict between Baloch nationalist and the state; Islamic groups, ethnic and sectarian groups; and inter-tribal conflict. The persistence economic and social inequalities, military's repressive measures, and human rights violations exacerbated the violence in Balochistan.

In 2005, the uprising was triggered in Balochistan by the rape of a female doctor by a military personal. The perpetrator was not punished. This incident triggered series of attacks against Pakistani security forces. The assassination of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a prominent separatist leader, by the security forces unleashed the latest insurgency. Among many pro-independence groups, the most active pro-independence group is Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) listed as a terrorist group by the USA and the EU. It is estimated that this group has approximately 3000 militants (Grare, 2013, p. 5). According to figures from the South Asian Terrorism Portal, 242 civilians and members of the security forces had been killed in attacks by insurgents in 2017 (Lunn, 2018, p. 3).

In response the attacks of insurgents, the army adopted repression as a counter-insurgency strategy. Kill and dump operations characterized by abductions, murder, and abandonment of bodies to the streets have plagued the province. In 2008, Interior Minister Rehman Malik mentioned at least 1,100 victims were found. In January 2011, Balochistan Home Minister Zafrullah Zehri said that only 55 persons were missing. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported 198 cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan between 2000 and 2012 and 57 bodies of missing persons had been found in Balochistan in 2012 alone (Grare, 2013, p. 13). These extreme measures only serve to precipitate conflict by angering the population.

Not all armed groups in Balochistan are motivated by nationalism. Pakistani administration has implemented Islamization policy to counter Baloch nationalism. Pakistani Taliban and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi are the most notorious Islamic groups, which are protected by Pakistani state. Nonetheless, as a side effect sectarian violence thrived as a result of activities of these groups. Attacks target the Hazara community, a Persian-speaking Shia minority living in Quetta, Balochistan. In September and October 2011, 36 Hazara Shia were killed in Quetta (Grare, 2013, p. 18). In Quetta, the government hospital was attacked by suicide bomber in August 2016, killing at least 70 people (Lunn, 2018, p. 3). Shias are not only victims of Islamic groups. Baloch nationalist leaders were also killed, such as Habib Jalib Baloch, inflaming a violent environment (Grare, 2013, p. 18).

Besides sectarian conflict, ethnic tensions have also risen in the province. Nationalist insurgents target non-Baloch civilians, not just security forces. Between 2008-2010, Baloch

militants killed teachers and other personnel for being representatives of Pakistani state and subjecting Balochi to assimilation through spreading Punjabi symbols in the province ("Pakistan: Balochistan Militants", 2010). Punjabi population was subjected to violent attacks (Grare, 2013, p. 15). This violence has compelled non-Balochi civilians to flee Balochistan. By October of 2014, the number of fleeing non-Balochi reached to 300,000 (Ricks, 2016).

CPEC's development is directly linked with the violence in Balochistan. Nationalists in Balochistan viewed CPEC's development as a means of bringing greater numbers of non-Balochi to the province. Baloch nationalists think that the port city will encourage of migration of non-local population, which will alter demographic balance against Balochi interests. Its opening exacerbates fears of losing Baloch control over their coast and natural resources in the province (Memon, 2017). Their concerns are not baseless. Chinese workers have increasingly filled labor demand, as well as serving in senior management positions. Approximately, 71,000 Chinese people entered in Pakistan only in 2016 (Akins, 2017, p. 9). Another troublesome aspect of Chinese investment to Gwadar is documented by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry. FPCCI President Rauf Alam at a press conference given the current rate of influx of Chinese nationals into Balochistan and after the completion of the CPEC, the native population of the area will be outnumbered by 2048 (Yousafzai, 2016).

Therefore, Chinese representatives and workers have become most probable targets for separatist groups. In August 2018, Chinese engineers were attacked in Balochistan. In November 2018, BLA carried out an attack the Chinese consulate in Karachi (Notezai, 2018). If these direct attacks against Chinese actors in Pakistan persist, the questions about the security of CPEC will be highlighted.

CPEC's inability of sidelining Balochistan population in sharing economic benefits would further alienate Baloch people. Baloch people believe that benefits brought by Gwadar port primarily accrue Punjabi elites and military cronies (Braithwaite and D'Costa, 2018, p. 285). Balochi population interprets Chinese investment to Gwadar as an indication of support to Pakistani military operations. In January 2018, the Free Balochistan Movement (FBM) organized a two-day protest outside the Grosvenor Hotel in London, against the sale of Baloch lands in Gwadar. Faiz Baluch, an activist of Free Balochistan Movement, said that this protest's aim was to call international community to obstruct selling Baloch lands to China in the name of promoting CPEC, labelling the sale of lands as genocide ("Baloch Activists Protest", 2018). Thus, instead of garnering Baloch sympathy, CPEC alienates the Baloch population.

Another country, which experiences long running insurgency due to the military repression and land allocation, is Myanmar. The latest conflict between the Rohingya Muslim in the Rakhine and Myanmar's army led to massive displacement of the Rohingya due to the army's actions. This ethnic cleansing is relevant to the Belt and Road Initiative as the Rakhine in Myanmar is the region where one of the Belt and Road corridors pass through.

4. The Rohingya Crisis

Myanmar emerges as a strategic location for the Belt and Road Initiative, participating in two of six corridors. These corridors aim at reducing China's dependence on Malacca Strait by opening new trade routes in Southern Asia. The first corridor is China-Indochina Peninsula corridor which links China with South Asian countries. Myanmar's southeastern city Dawei is linked with Bangkok, the capital of Thailand whereas Kawkareik in Kayin State in Myanmar is connected with Mae Sot in Thailand and Hue in Vietnam. The eastern sub-corridor bridges Muse, Mandalay, and Kunming. The second corridor, which Myanmar involves, is the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor. The land route of the corridor connects Kolkata, India to Kunming, China. Along the route Myanmar and Bangladesh are also attached to this extensive land network. The maritime side of route aims to provide maritime access of goods

from Kolkata, through Myanmar's port of Sittwe, capital of the Rakhine State, to Paletwa by inland water transport along the Myanmar river, Kaladan, and back via highway to Mizoram in northeast India (Chau, 2017). Thus, the Belt and Road Initiative offers Myanmar to expand its contacts with neighboring countries, increasing the possibilities of commercial and financial bonds. The maritime leg of the Bangladesh-China-India is directly related with the Rakhine where the Rohingya live. The political instability and violence also affects the operationalization of China-Indochina Peninsula corridor.

Kyaukpyu port, located in western Rakhine, emerges as the main port of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor. It is valued at $7.3 billion and an accompanying Special Economic Zone (SEZ) valued at $2.7 billion. The town Kyaukpyu is also is the terminus of a $1.5 billion worth oil pipeline and a parallel natural gas pipeline running to Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan Province. The gas pipeline entered operation in 2013 and can send 12 billion cubic meters of gas to China annually. The oil pipeline which entered operation in 2017 can reportedly carry 22 million oil per year, which corresponds 6% of China's 2016 oil imports (Poling, 2018).

Although these projects bring economic benefits to Myanmar, they also increase tension among Myanmar's local communities. The construction of the oil and gas pipeline aroused significant local resistance because of land confiscations, insufficient compensation for damages, pollution, and an influx of foreign workers instead of providing employment opportunities for local population (Advisory Commission On Rakhine State, 2017, pp. 22-23). For instance, Shwe Gas Movement, expressed an organized discontent, emanated from Myanmar's government refusal to funds provided by Chinese companies for compensation to local communities along the pipelines' route (Borroz, 2014, p. 2). The land allocations due to the land connection between Kyaukpyu and Yunnan province also create disturbances. In 2016 Myanmar allocated million acres of Rakhine rural land in the national list of land allocations for economic development. This allocation is significant comparing the list for a mere 17,000 acres allocated in 2012 before the beginning of the Belt and Road Initiative. The economic development phase describes land allocated to military to sell Burmese and foreign firms (Sassen, 2017).

The allocation of lands contrary to local groups' wishes contributes to deepening ethnic insurgency in the Rakhine. Since Myanmar's independence the region has been plagued by the ethnic conflict between the Muslim minority, who call themselves Rohingya referring their connection with Arakan kingdom established in 9th century in the region, and Myanmar's Buddhist majority. First rebellion occurred in 1948 ending with the military intervention in 1954. Second rebellion erupted in 1974 creating various small insurgent groups. The citizenship law in 1982 excluded the Rohingya from citizenship, increasing their vulnerability to mob attacks and military repression. Between May 1991 and March 1992, more than 260,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar due to human rights abuses by Myanmar's army including forced labor, torture, rape, and murder (Steele-Perkins and Chang, 2017).

The most important armed insurgent group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). It was established and is overseen by a committee of some twenty senior leaders headquartered in Mecca, with at least one member based in Medina. All are Rohingya émigrés or have Rohingya heritage. Although it uses religious themes in their propaganda, their aim is to stop persecution of the Rohingya instead of imposing Sharia law. Nonetheless, it carries periodic attacks on Myanmar's security forces in the Rakhine (Crisis Group, 2016).

After the 2012, the Rakhine entered into a spiral of violence. The violence started in 2012 following the rape and murder of Buddhist woman by three Muslim men. In response, the Rakhine Buddhist killed 10 men and violence evolved a Buddhist and Muslim ethnic conflict in the Rakhine. In total, dozens died and about 2,000 buildings were destroyed. Instead of stopping violence, the police supported Buddhis pillaging and burning of Rohingya villages and denied

international assistance (US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2016, p. 5). In October 2016, due to an attack on Myanmar police by the ARSA, the military started a crackdown on Rohingya. Approximately 87,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh (Larmer, 2017). The latest systematic attack against Rohingya Muslim took place in August 2017, when ARSA carried out attacks on more than 30 police posts in Northern Rakhine. The total number of the Rohingya who fled to Bangladesh approximates to 700,000 since August (Marshall, 2018).

The acts of Myanmar's army indicate that the main purpose of repression was to force Rohingya to flee Rakhine. The houses of Rohingya were burned down, rape was used as a weapon of war. One rape victim interviewed in a refugee camp recalled her attacker's words: "He kept saying, this kind of torture will continue until you leave the country" (Larmer, 2017). Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the Human Rights Council calls the latest events in Myanmar is a textbook definition of ethnic cleansing ("UN human rights chief", 2017).

Despite being weakened by the exodus of the Rohingya, ARSA continues its attacks on Myanmar's security services. It ambushed a military truck in January injuring officers. Richard Horsey, an independent analyst said that while the group is small and poorly armed, its attacks would create major disturbances in Myanmar and provoke a heavy-handed response from the government (Paddock, 2018). This has a potential of further discrediting and condemnation of Myanmar in international arena, contributing its isolation.

Indeed, Myanmar's crackdown on Rohingya has been evaluated as an ethnic cleansing by the international community. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres calls events "the situation has spiraled into the world's fastest developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare" ("Rohingya refugee crisis", 2017). US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said Myanmar authorities have committed "brutal, sustained campaign to cleanse the country of an ethnic minority" (Rayner, 2017). Iranian Second Deputy Parliament Speaker Ali Motahari demanded Muslim-majority countries to raise a Muslim-led expeditionary force to rescue the oppressed Rohingya. Iran's rival Saudi Arabia tweeted: "Acting upon [our] responsibility as leader of the Islamic Ummah, Saudi Arabia has called for a resolution to condemn the atrocities and human rights violations" (Considine, 2017).

The reaction to Myanmar's acts in the Rakhine was not limited to oral condemnations. The USA imposed sanctions on Myanmar general Maung Maung Soe and four other commanders for human right abuses (US Department of Treasury, 2017). In February 2018, US Foreign Relations Committee approved new legislation concerning imposing sanctions concerning deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar in a unanimous vote, implying its sanctions will continue (Sifton, 2018).

ARSA proved to be resilient by demonstrating its capability to attack on Myanmar's security forces in the Rakhine. Although ARSA's operation capability seems limited, even these limited attacks might lead to severe disturbances in Myanmar. Myanmar's disproportional use of force and support to Buddhist extremist groups in conducting atrocities will further alienate international community. If Myanmar's atrocities continue as a response to increasing ARSA activities, the sanctions could be extended in a way that it may threaten the development of planned projects financially. The world's growing outrage at the Myanmar's behavior in the Rakhine has a potential to undermine the planned projects within the Belt and Road Initiative.

As three cases presented show the security risks that threaten the development of the corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative. The second part of the article will examine China's response to these security threats. China adopted a heavy-handed approach not to lose control in Xinjiang. The concern of stability of the corridors prompts China to follow an active foreign policy in its neighborhood. In addition to traditional military tools, China uses high technology, economic ailment projects, and diplomacy to ensure the maintenance of projects along the economic corridors.

5. Chinese Responses to Security Threats to Corridors

This section examines Chinese precautionary measures against violence and political instability that threatens the development of corridors along the Belt and Road route. Its actions differ in terms of employing different measures in each case presented above. Although these measures succeeded in reducing tension in short-term, underlying reasons of violence remain unsolved.

5.1. Xinjiang: An Orwellian Approach

In response to insurgency starting after 2009, China increased its security presence in Xinjiang and excelled in its surveillance methods. Security and surveillance spending almost doubled last year in Xinjiang. Public security spending rose to Rmb57.95 billion ($9.16 billion), eight times greater than the growth rate for China's overall public security budget. Xinjiang's security costs have increased 10 times in the past decade eclipsing the rest of the country (Feng, 2018). Xinjian has, thus, become a center of security overhaul. Increasing security spending in Xinjiang region demonstrates China's overemphasis on stability in Xinjiang region, whose importance has risen due to the Belt and Road corridors.

According to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Xinjiang is now the frontline in China's battle against terrorism. After viewing Xinjiang as a battleground, China's security measures incrementally consist of four stages. Stage one was implemented between 2009-2011 aiming at increasing armed men in Xinjiang. Beijing mobilized 14,000 People's Armed Police forces as well as the recently formed Special Police Units. Stage two supposes expansion of policing and surveillance. In January 2012, the new secretary of the XUAR Political and Legislative Affairs Committee Xiong Xuanguo announced the recruitment of 8,000 new police officers. After witnessing high profile terrorist attacks in Beijing, Kunming, and Urumqi, Zhang Chunxian declared a "people's war on terror" in Xinjiang, President Xi called for "walls made of copper and steel" and "nets spread from the earth to the sky to capture these terrorists." In addition to 10.000 recruitment, grid-style social management started to be implemented, employing CCTV cameras, mobile Internet technologies, and big data analytics to monitor activities within a defined area. Stage four implemented after 2016, finally, focuses on developing surveillance system in Xinjiang. New recruits were diverted to convenience police stations whose real purpose is to conduct surveillance and process high-tech systems (Zenz and Leibold, 2017).

This last phase of securitization involves extreme level of surveillance, levelling up George Orwell's novel *1984.* A dense network of video cameras, checkpoints, and human informants keep close scrutiny on Uyghur residents. Hotels in Urumqi use facial recognition software to verify identities. Purchasing tickets from metro requires identity cards. Residents in Xinjiang are required to install an app called *Jingwang (Clean Net)* which scans devices for photos and files deemed dangerous and reports back to authorities. A technical assessment published on by the Open Technology Fund confirmed its intrusive capabilities, finding that "any user with this app installed will have every file stored on their device sent to an unknown entity for monitoring" (Cook, 2018).

These measures create a huge police state in Xinjiang. The cars in Xinjiang are required to install GDP trackers for real-time monitoring. Since 2017 Xinjiang authorities started to collect DNA samples, purchasing $8.7 million worth DNA scanners. Besides these high-tech tactics, authorities rely on an old low-tech: recruiting the masses. Since 2016, local authorities have assigned 10 families including theirs to spy on one another in a new system of collective monitoring. Furthermore, Uyghur residents started to be graded depending on their conformity with state rules. Out of 100 points scale, being a Uyghur means 10-point automatic deduction. Being aged between 15 and 55, praying daily, or having a religious education, all

result in 10-point deductions. Those who have lower scores are being sent to re-education ("Thought police create", 2017).

Another measure is the internment camps, established for 're-education' for Uyghurs. According to data presented by the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs (2018), approximately a million Uyghurs were sent to these camps, which are referred as concentration camps. Shohrat Zakit, the chairman of Xinjiang government, responded the criticisms by claiming that these camps aim at teaching Uyghurs Chinese language and training them job skills (Buckley, 2018). However, it is doubtful that this awkward justification will convince international human right groups and Muslim countries not to consider increasing human rights violations against Uyghurs.

These extreme measures are indicators of China's fear of losing control over Xinjiang. The return of Uyghur jihadists currently fighting in civil war of Syria and latest high-profile attacks cause China to overextend its counterterrorism measures. This over-extension, however, could become counterproductive leading to marginalizing and radicalizing even peaceful Uyghurs. Thus, these tactics may turn into self-fulfilling prophecy. Furthermore, abusive counterterrorism implementations may awake international sympathy for Uyghurs, promoting their status to a persecuted minority.

5.2. Balochistan: Increasing Visibility

The insurgency in Balochistan poses direct threat to Chinese interests in the area. The development of Gwadar port enables China to extend its influence on Indian Ocean, checking the power of India and the USA. Its land connection with Kashgar help China to alleviate its dependence on Malacca Strait. Therefore, deteriorating security situation in Balochistan would hurt China as much as Pakistan. Chinese engagement with Balochi insurgency confirms that China takes this problem seriously.

The first step is to increase military aid to Pakistan. The rise of anti-American sentiment in Pakistan and the Trump's administrations' alienating statements drove Pakistan further to China. In 2011, the U.S. and China supplied the Pakistani military with the same proportion of its armaments, 39% and 38%, respectively. By 2016, however, China had surpassed the U.S. in that Pakistani military had received 63% of its armaments from China and only 19% from the U.S. This figure makes Pakistan as the largest recipient of Chinese military armaments, approximating 35% of China's total arms exports (Akins, 2017, p. 11). In return, Pakistan's commitment to protect Chinese interests in Balochistan has increased. Pakistan officials have outlined security plans which include police protection forces and tighter monitoring of Chinese nationals. 15,000 troopers, whose sole mission is to safeguard CPEC projects are dispatched. 4,000 Chinese workers in Sind province in Balochistan are protected by 2,600 police officers. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, which signed billions of dollars in contracts with Chinese companies, is also raising a force of about 4,200 officers to protect foreigners ("Pakistan beefs up", 2017).

China also extends its own military presence in Balochistan. Beijing revealed that it would set up a naval base near the Gwadar port, marking Chinese second major foreign base. Chinese military officials told that the new base was necessary, pointing out the insufficiency of the current port, which caters mostly to merchant ships. Thus, China is reportedly building a military base in Pakistan's Jiwani peninsula, which is near Gwadar. This, however, requires the displacement of local population to create a security zone (Maza, 2018). China's actions have a potential to alienate local population by forcing them to leave their lands while securing Gwadar port.

In addition to increasing military presence in Balochistan, China has engaged in secret talks with Balochi separatists to secure the future of CPEC. According to *Financial Times* talks

have been held between Chinese officials and Balochi separatist to ease the conflict in the area although the details of talks have not been publicized ("China acts Peacemaker", 2018). One Pakistani official commented that: "The Chinese have quietly made a lot of progress. Even though separatists occasionally try to carry out the odd attack, they are not making a forceful push." But, Mir Kabir Muhammad Shahi, a member of the Senate, said that: "I, or other parliamentarians, are not aware of this development, and it's only Pakistan's government parliament right to hold talks with Baloch separatists" ("No dialogue between China", 2018). This statement indicates Pakistani discontent of Chinese interference in the conflict in Balochistan. While engaging with separatists, China will also have to take into account of Pakistan's considerations.

Despite the senator's comments, China no longer shies away interventionist policy in order to secure its grandiose project in building and securing Gwadar Port in Balochistan. Besides increasing its military presence and collaborating with Pakistani security forces in troublesome Balochistan, it is not surprising to expect that China will hold separate talks with Balochi rebels to administer stability in the region. Although Pakistani government showed its willingness to provide security for Chinese citizens working in CPEC projects in Balochistan, Pakistani officials showed displeasure with Chinese diplomatic involvement in the conflict in the province. The intensifying conflict, therefore, will not only endanger the development of CPEC but also will possibly create strain between Pakistan and China.

5.3. The Rakhine: Backing Myanmar

China initiated and financed various big projects including building pipelines, special economic zones, industrial parks, and ports in Myanmar within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The presence of armed Muslim and Buddhist groups raise the security questions in the Rakhine. The Muslim insurgency in the Rakhine has a potential to threaten the natural gas pipeline that carries gas to Yunnan and China's access to Kyaukpyu port. To allay this threat, while supporting diplomatically Myanmar's extreme actions against the Rohingya in the Rakhine, China also tries to develop a peace plan in the area by acting as intermediary between insurgents and Myanmar's government.

The whole international community condemned Myanmar's excessive use of force in the Rakhine against the Rohingya. The UK requested the meeting on Myanmar days after violence broke out. But China resisted stronger involvement by the UN Security Council. In March, China, together with Russia, had blocked a brief UNSC statement before the events escalated ("Analysis: China Backs Myanmar", 2017). Thus, China encouraged Myanmar's army to commit further measures at the earlier phase of the conflict.

China has expressed its approval of the Myanmar government's crackdowns in the Rakhine State. In September, the Chinese ambassador to Myanmar, Hong Liang, called the Rohingya as extremist terrorists and strongly welcomed the counterattacks of Myanmar security forces, describing these crackdowns as Myanmar's internal affair. He assured the Myanmar government that China would stand firmly by it on the international stage and continue providing it with necessary assistance to help it preserve internal stability and development (Ramachandran, 2017). This promise was kept on Chinese side. In November 2017, Chinese and Russian pressure succeeded in preventing the issue of resolution. The UNSC unanimously adopted a presidential statement, which is not enforceable, demanding an end to the brutal campaign against the Rohingya. Nevertheless, the role of Myanmar's military in this violence was omitted due to Chinese and Russian pressure in even this presidential statement. (Yap, 2017).

While supporting Myanmar's war in the Rakhine, China also prepares a settlement plan. On November 19, 2017 Foreign Minister Wang Yi introduced China's plan, which consists of

three phases, about the Rohingya crisis. In the first phase, China calls for ceasefire for social stability. In the second phase, China encourages communication between Myanmar and Bangladesh concerning the repatriation of refugees. In the third phase, China suggest elimination of poverty in the region, which it perceives as the root cause of the conflict. To eliminate poverty China calls for international community's support indicating it would contribute the economic development of the region (Foreign Ministry of People's Republic of China, 2017).

This peace plan is another demonstration of Chinese new active foreign policy. China aims at providing stability to secure its interests in the region. It also tries to appease Bangladesh, shaken by the refugee crisis as Bangladesh is also a part of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. The third phase invites the investments of international community to the Rakhine claiming the root cause is the poverty. It is a cunning proposal in that apart from China no one will be interested in investing in such a volatile region. This secures China's weight in the Rakhine.

6. Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most ambitious economic and political projects of the century. It covers over 65 countries and more than half of world's population. It consists of six economic corridors connecting continents. Nevertheless, these corridors are marred with security risks. This paper examined three of existing security risks that plague the development of Belt and Road corridors: Xinjiang conflict, Balochistan insurgency, and Rohingya conflict.

The conflict in Xinjiang continues to cause security and economic headache for China. Due to the geographical position of Xinjiang, it is now affecting the development of the New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Central Asia-West, and China-Pakistan economic corridors in the Belt and Road Initiative. Balochistan insurgency in southern Pakistan directly threatens the newly established Gwadar port, damaging China-Pakistan economic corridor. Myanmar's Rohingya conflict harms the development of China-Indochina Peninsula and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridors.

To counter these threats, China uses different methods. In Xinjiang, China created an Orwellian dystopia by implementing severe surveillance on Uyghur population and increasing the number of security members. The scale of domestic pressure upon Uyghurs reached unprecedented levels. On the other hand, to secure its investments abroad, China is forced to abandon its non-interference policy in its foreign policy. It supports Pakistani military while conducting talks with Balochi separatists. In Myanmar, China backed Myanmar's 'cleansing' efforts in the area and prepared a peace plan for the future stability in the Rakhine. All these developments suggest China's active participation in the security affairs on the Belt and Road route will continue as these threats are not to be overlooked for the development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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