

Threats And Challenges To China- Myanmar Energy Corridor (CMEC)

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Abstract

Strait of Malacca connects Indian and Pacific Oceans is world's busiest trade route. China's surpassing US \$ 17 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 8.1 percent GDP growth rate can be seriously hampered if enemy blocks it. Alternative routes Makassar Straits and Lombok Straits are inappropriate because they would increase shipping costs from United States (US) \$ 84 billion per year to US \$ 220 billion per year. Potential alternative the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) backfired. Beijing views it Achillis Heel of China's Energy and Economic Security. This paper endeavors to assess threats posed to alternative routes explored by Beijing particularly CMEC to ensure its energy and economic securities. Paper concludes CMEC is not viable option due to political instability, potential for hostile agencies to launch proxies or to infiltrate East-Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) insurgents, rising insurgency and growing abhorrence for China. Paper concludes insurgency hit Myanmar can become graveyard for Chinese businesses and investment. Inevitably, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is viable available option for Beijing to achieve multilateral objectives. Beijing's geo-economic and geo-strategic goals include to reduce dependence on "Malacca Strait," ensure Chinese economic and energy security.

Key Words: Coup D'état, Malacca Dilemma, China, Myanmar, Energy Corridor.

I. Introduction

China's is significant industrial manufacturer, exporter and energy importer and second largest economy in the world. In first quarter of 2021, Beijing's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassed United States (US) \$ 17 trillion (Ashfaq Ahmed, 2022). In 2021, it set the goal to achieve 6 percent of the GDP while International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) predicted Chinese GDP will raise to 8 percent. However, the recorded GDP for the year 2021, was 8.1 percent (Tianyu, 2022). Primary reason for recorded rise in Chinese economy was

stabilized retail sales and exports of industrially manufactured goods.

Industrial production prerequisite for China's sustainable economic growth rate is dependent on energy imports. Natural gas use for energy purposes is larger than accumulate use of solar, wind and hydro-power produced energy. The accumulative amount of oil and natural gas accounts for about twenty-eight percent to meet country's energy requirements. Beijing imported forty percent of its gas and seventy percent of its oil (Collins & Rice, 2022) through Malacca Strait and energy pipelines. Myanmar- China Oil and

Gas Pipelines passes through troubled or insurgent hit areas. Authors believe China's energy and economic securities are fragile and at stake. Energy imports can be disrupted due to cuts in energy supplies, national security problems and manmade hazards including proxies, socio-economic problems are likely scenario.

This paper briefly underlines Beijing's Malacca Dilemma in the first portion. The second segment discusses how to decrease dependence on Malacca Strait. Third sector of this academic paper highlights how Myanmar's domestic environment poses threats to China's energy security? Fourth part bring into limelight fragile security cannot ensure security of Chinese interests including energy pipelines, Chinese businesses and interest in Myanmar. In conclusion it is claimed CPEC is best available alternative for China to ensure its energy and economic security.

2. China's Malacca Dilemma

International community views Malacca Strait as world's busiest chokepoint, a significant Sea Lane of Communication (CLOC) for hydrocarbon, containers and cargo shipments. It is connecting Indian and Pacific Oceans, shortest route between Southeast Asia and the Middle East and supporting twenty-five percent of global maritime trade. Eighty percent of China's energy shipments (petroleum and liquified natural gas) and sixty percent of trade flow (Paszak, 2021) passes through US Navy and US allies dominated 1080 kilometers long Strait of Malacca. It is crucial point for Peoples Republic of China's energy security. This claims cements key takeaway gleaned from introductory section 'China's huge economic gains are dependent on industrial production and external sources of energy.' Policymakers in Beijing contrarily views Malacca Strait as Achilles Heel of China's energy security and economy.

President Hu Jintao while addressing the participants of Conference on Economic Work of the Communist Party of China in 2003 pointed out this heavy reliance as Malacca Dilemma (Khan, 2019). In case of conflict leading to hostilities or crisis like situations US navy or regional enemy can restrict PRC's movement in the area. Further, Chinese energy imports from Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia and exports can be easily disrupted. Beijing is continuously working on finding solutions by diversifying energy resources and to find new routes for energy imports. Decision to use alternative routes including Sunda Strait is inappropriate as it is shallow and unsuitable for modern ships. The Makassar Straits and Lombok Straits are inappropriate because they would increase shipping costs from US \$ 84 billion per year to US \$ 220 billion per year (Rusli, 2012). This estimated cost was recorded in February 2012 naturally this cost would have been doubled today.

3. Decreasing Dependence on Malacca Strait: Chinese Alternative Routes

Chinese government is working on alternatives and taking various measure to diversify its energy imports to mitigate potential threats posed to its energy imports by decreasing its reliance on Malacca Strait. Myanmar is one potential option recently country's geo-strategic and geo-economic increased significantly for China. Yangon's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, closer border proximity with Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and energy resources (Topcu, 2020) boosted its importance for Chinese Communist Party (CPC). According to 2017, estimates PRC can address five percent of its daily energy requirements (Slay, 2017) by importing oil from Myanmar's oil reserves in Made Island in Western Coast. Myanmar proven crude oil reserves in January 2022 had been reported as 7.5 thousand barrel/day (Myanmar - Crude Oil,

2022). Asian country's Shwe area in Rakhine and West coast's Yetagun, Yadana and Zawtika areas in Moattama have these proven oil reserves. Key takeaway gleaned from above passage is this route and energy resources contributes to PRC's energy security.

This energy route serves twofold purposes. First, can meet South-West and South-Eastern China's energy requirements without any disruption by avoiding Malacca Strait. Exploration and energy consumptions from additional energy reserves can reduce Beijing's imports from Middle East and Africa. Second, the route naturally addresses potential threats to China bound energy supplies including naval blockade, halting shipments at Malacca Strait, near horn of Africa, in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gul. It potentially prevents confrontation between Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and US navy including Fifth Fleet and Seventh Fleet in the region. Additional features of this route include reduced shipment timing by at least five days as distance is cut-off by 3,000 kilometers (Steinberg & Fan, 2012). Certainly, it attracts Beijing to utilize this cost-effective route as it offers complete package i.e. reduces transportation charges, avoid threats to energy imports, reduce delivery timing and avoid confrontation with hostile actors.

3.1 Myanmar- China Oil Pipeline

This 770 KMs long onshore oil pipeline officially starts operations on April 10, 2017 (Overview of the, n.d.). It originates from Made Island is owned by CNPC and Myanmar's Oil and Gas Enterprise. It starts at Rakhine and passes through Mandalay Region, Shan state, Magwe region in Myanmar and pumps oil to China's Yunnan province (Carmen, 2021).

3.2 Myanmar- China Gas Pipeline

This project started operations on July 28, 2013 to deliver natural gas to energy hungry Chinese

markets. Pipeline starts at Ramree Island and ends at Ruili in China (Overview of the, n.d.).

Significant aspect of Chinese joint venture with Myanmar is socio-societal changes introduced by CNPC. Prior to starting operations or delivering oil and gas to Chinese markets CNPC signed an official document with Myanmar's Ministry of Energy to reconstruct and upgrade schools and medical facilities. Donation of US \$ 6 million was promised for above purpose (Caring for Communities, n.d.). In return, Myanmar is playing its role in securitizing Chinese energy.

3.3 Kazakhstan-China Pipeline (KCP)

Construction of 2,228 Kilometers (KMs) long Kazakhstan-China Pipeline (KCP) (The founders Of, n.d.) accessing energy rich Caspian region. Pipeline is jointly owned by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and KazMunay Gas. It will connect Atyrau Caspian region with China's Alashankou in Xinjiang region.

3.4 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), gigantic consensual developmental project was launched by Chinese Premier Xi Jinping on April 20, 2015 (Perlez, 2015). CPEC is considered as the backbone of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project. Billion dollars project is unique it aims at overcoming Pakistan energy crisis, improve trade opportunities, build rail road, renovate existing and to develop new infrastructure across Pakistan. Starting in Kashghar, Xinjiang economic corridor aims to export Chinese manufactured goods to Middle East and Africa from Gawadar in Balochistan. Total length of this economic corridor is 2043/ 2700 Kilometers (KMs) (China-Pakistan Economic, 2018). Ambitious project has connected Gawadar seaport with Middle East, Africa, China's Xinjiang province, Central Asia and Eurasia. Integrating Pakistani Economy in international

economic system is China's grand motive. It reduces shipment time, transportation charges and physical fatigue for drivers and co-staff. Gawadar is key to resolving China's Strait of Malacca Dilemma. CPEC is relatively lengthy route if compared with China- Myanmar 770 KMs long pipeline routes. This study claims Pakistan provides best alternative to decrease reliance on Strait of Malacca and insurgency hit Myanmar. Pakistani corridor provides energy security to energy imports. This route will ensure smooth exports of China's industrially manufactured products.

4 Threats to PRC Energy Supplies Myth or Reality

This section is divided into two sections. Primary purpose of this segment is to assess whether threats posed to PRC energy supplies in Myanmar are myth or reality. First portion aims at highlighting Myanmar's domestic environment is conducive for anti-Chinese forces to recruit, raise militia, operate and carryout kinetic operations. Second, section assesses potential threats posed to Chinese energy imports as an alternative to Malacca Strait. PRC's dependence on US dominated Malacca Strait can be reduced however the extent of direct threat will increase. Inference drawn is Malacca Strait poses potential threat while alternative energy supply routes enable hostile states/ agencies to inflict formidable damage to Chinese economy. Consequentially, CPC should consider CPEC is back bone of BRI, Chinese energy security and economic development.

Themes and threats in this study have been categorized in the light of Corbin and Strauss's "Grounded theory" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). It helps in articulating the procedure to classify categories and establish linkages between them. Following themes are used by insurgents to justify their attacks against state apparatus and officials.

4.1 Terrorist Coup Council

Since, February, 2021 coup till the end of 2021 military junta sentenced eighty-six political activists to death. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group claims Junta has killed six-hundred and fourteen people including forty-eight children while another twenty-eighth hundred have been illegally detained (19 People Sentenced, 2021). Amnesty international believes grave human rights violation is used by junta as a tactic to sow fear among masses (Diamond & Nasser, 2022). These human rights violations helped insurgents to make widespread appeals to masses to join them in their fight against military regime. Insurgents have labelled ruling elite as "terrorist coup council of junta." Many young people from different walks of life have been attracted by these appeals. Al Jazeera television aired video it shows a former policeman joined People's Defence Force (PDF), a local resistant group, is making gun now for rebels to attack junta. Likewise, a nurse quit her job from military hospital in protest. She is providing medical services from PDF's platform to villagers affected by military operations. Karani National Defence Force (KNDF) newly formed militia insurgents launched attacked against military (Myanmar: People's Defence, 2022). General Min Aung Hlaing led administration is viewed as terrorist group (Myanmar Junta Labels, 2021).

4.2 Insurgents Fighting for Up-holding Democracy

Rebels/ insurgents and democratic forces believes junta is an ideological rival for regime's disregard for democratic values including freedom of expression, right to vote and elect representative. Myanmar's Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services is executing opposition political leaders through judicial executions. Political leaders are charged with allegations of treason, terrorism and murdering informants (Zin, 2022). Insurgents highlights abovementioned tactics are used by

anti-democratic military regime to curb democratic forces. Rebels claim their struggle is aimed at resisting anti-democratic ruling elite, to restore and preserve democracy in the country.

Insurgents self-proclaimed democratic force have rejected present day 2008, constitution. Significant features of the constitution include it is undemocratic. Second, the constitution was solely drafted by the military. Third, it was passed in military's rigged referendum. Fourth, twenty five percent of seats and key ministries are allocated to military officials to keep powers in the hands of military top-brass. Consequentially, human rights activists, political opposition and international observers have outrightly rejected it (Is Myanmar's Junta, 2022). Anti-military militias are arousing hatred amongst masses by highlighting General Min Aung Hlaing breach of constitution. General Hlaing is accused of committing treason and treachery by the opposition. Anti-junta forces are confident in convincing public junta will suppress and keep them out of power. Therefore, military installations and Chinese assets have been destroyed to avenge killings of their comrades and eventually topple the government. On September 7, 2021 Duwa Lashi La Myanmar's self-declared President of parallel government formed by National Unity Government (NUG) implored masses to launch defensive-war against military clique by targeting military personnel and assets (Ratcliffe, 2021).

4.3 Military Commits Atrocities

Worrisome aspect of countrywide instability is seventeen hundred civilians have been killed after the coup. Largescale executions are intensifying anti-junta feelings among masses and providing conducive environment for insurgents to intensify their recruitment drive. Insurgents are making public calls urging masses to join them against Myanmar ruling military. Public has responded positively to these appeals. Civilians have alleged counterinsurgents forces of human

rights violations and committing atrocities against unarmed civilians i.e. their properties are set to fire, unarmed civilian family members are killed (Head, 2022) during raids, taken several people into illegal custody, torturing detained political leaders and extra judicial executions of opposition prominent leaders. Military is committing atrocities including arson, homicide killings and executing political prisoners under anti-terrorism laws. Women political activists are tortured, threatened with rape and sexually harassed. Dead bodies of several deceased political activists have been refused to deliver to their families by military. Several received dead bodies had signs of intense torture (Owen & Aung, 2021). On October 12, 2021 Middle East Institute an online new agency published a gruesome report stating that Tatmadaw or Myanmar Army snipers shot young protesters in the head (Lorch, 2021). Tatmadaw is committing human rights violations is widely acknowledged narrative by the Myanmar's resented masses. It is also provided widescale coverage by international media. International media is also highlighting and supporting the aforementioned narrative. Worrisome aspect of counterinsurgency operations includes radicalization and growing abhorrence of junta specially in the youth. Appalling treatment of masses is widening the gulf between masses and the Tatmadaw. Educated government employees have positively responded to disobedience calls guns have supplanted pens, peace is replaced with growing unrest and political instability.

4.4 International Support Strengthening Rebels Cause

This section briefly discusses international community is supporting Myanmar's opposition. International media including British Broad Casting (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), Al Jazeera and human rights organizations i.e. Amnesty International is proliferating news highlighting atrocities committed by Myanmar's

ruling establishment. International coverage of crackdown against pro-democracy gatherings serves as a support base for insurgents in attracting and encouraging disgruntled youth to join pre-existent or form new militias.

5. Assessing Threats posed to China-Myanmar Oil and Gas Pipeline

Inference drawn from above excerpts highlighting Myanmar's domestic environment is Southeast Asian country is neither feasible for tourism nor foreign investment. Political instability, economic crisis and distrust is causing stress, fear and mental problems among civilians. Widespread counterinsurgents operations and activities of anti-junta militias are constant features of present-day Myanmar. Disgruntled insurgents have been able to inflict colossal damages to military assets in several cases. Emboldened by tactical triumphs kinetic operations have been continued by anti-Tatmadaw factions. It has inspired largescale civilians to join hands against junta. Prior to recent coup on August 15, 2019 the Northern Alliance collation insurgents killed fifteen security officials in an attack on elite military college (Aung, 2019). Anti-junta forces have carried out several deadly kinetic operations in center of Myanmar Mandalay's region and provincial capital Ioigor Eastern parts of the country. Kinetic operations are carried out to reshape political landscape and justified in the background of military intervention, aforesated atrocities, communication cut-off including mobile data and internet blockage, military's involvement in corruption, profiting from businesses, derailing democracy, embourgeoisement of military and eventually takeover of the political power. Approximately, sixteen different insurgent groups are carrying out insurgent operations. It includes Natogyi-People's Defense Force (NPDF) a resistance group involved in attacks against Junta forces (Chaudhury, Rebels Attack China's, 2022). Pro-

democratic forces, insurgents or rebel groups have intensified their terror attacks alleging powerful ruling elite of neglecting peoples wishes. Manyfold objectives include to weaken, pressurize and discourage human rights violations and pressurize General Haling regime to restore democracy. Consequentially, several electric pylons transferring electricity to energy hungry Myanmar have been destroyed (Electricity Towers Destroyed, 2022).

5.1 Growing Abhorrence and Attacks against Chinese Interests

The rebels have mounted attacks against Chinese interests in the South East Asian country. Anti-Chinese sentiments are rising because of prevailing perception that Beijing was aware of and has provided tacit support for February, 2021 coup d'état. Locals hold neighboring economic giant responsible for supporting anti-democratic forces and overthrowing Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government. Demonstrators gathered outside Chine embassy in Yangon. It manifests anti-China sentiments runs deep among Burmese public. Feelings of abhorrence have been intensified after coup d'état on the basis that Beijing's envoy to international forums including United Nations (UN) are safeguarding regime's human rights (HRs) violations. This protection layer enables junta to continue HRs abuses with impunity. Several Burmese have strong perception that PRC is helping the regime to enslave free people of Myanmar against their wishes. Calls for boycotting Chinese manufactured products and attacking China bound oil/ gas pipelines are widespread. In March, 2021 angry mob torched 32 Chinese factories in Hlaingtharyar Industrial Zone (Kuo & Mahtani, 2021). Protesters are targeting Chinese interests to prevent it from supporting junta. A strong perception prevails among largescale population that Tatmadaw is encouraged, brought into power and dictatorial regime rule is sustained by neighboring PRC. Segment of Burmese

population and erstwhile ministers of Kyi's administration believes in internationally developed perception that Beijing is using China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) part of BRI as a debt trap (Chaudhury, Myanmar's Pushback against, 2020). Commonly held believe is CMEC endows PRC to increase its influence at domestic level, penetrate most sectors i.e. energy exports, energy imports, economic zones, manufacturing units and mining sector. Beijing overgrowing influence is byproduct of newly forged structural relationship resulting in structural subordination. Yangon's evolving structural dependence on Beijing creates another impression that China is prioritizing its own interests in Myanmar. Over seventy seven percent of people have no confidence in China.

Key takeaway gleaned is Burmese society is riven politically, socially, economically and civil-military gulf is widening. Presently, sixteen indigenous insurgent groups are operating to resist Tatmadaw. Chinese interests have also been attacked i.e. armed militias have damaged and threatened to launch attacks against energy pipelines, public property, PRC's backed businesses and other interests. Second, Burmese public is overwhelmed with (mis)perceptions about China and resulting in armed attacks against Beijing's interests. Insurgents' successful attacks against energy pipelines pumping billions of barrels of oil and transferring billions of cubic meter gas to China will cause dismay in Standing Committee of the Politburo, the State Council and the Central Military Commission. Disruption in energy supplies would be a huge setback for politburo to avoid shipments through Malacca Strait and direct access to the Indian Ocean through shortest route.

5.2 Myanmar A Safe-haven for Sino-Tatmadaw Anti Forces

This segment underlines fragmented society, political differences, growing rifts between ruling elite and opposition, presence and successful

insurgent operations makes Myanmar an attractive safe-haven for anti-junta and PRC forces. Histories of insurgencies establishes the fact that insurgent forces have defeated counterinsurgents North Vietnam, Algeria, Afghanistan under Soviet occupation, Somalia and Afghanistan under American occupation are primary examples. Protracted nature and external involvement had been the common attribute of these insurgencies. Myanmar is victim of well-established protracted insurgency. Largescale presence of rebel groups, widespread successful operations combined with growing popularity of insurgents among Burmese is alarming. Fertility of strategic milieu is attractive for third parties to launch and support proxies to oust pro-Beijing government, coerce Chinese businessmen and state-owned companies to rollback their economic ventures.

Protracted nature made conflict resolution difficult and bloody. Involvement of different external sections can fuel insurgency and make overall strategic environment volatile leading to chaos. Hostile intelligence agencies can launch proxies against PRC as a viable option. First, geopolitical stature and advance military weapons dissuade anti-China forces from direct confrontation. Proxies enable them to remain in the background avoid direct confrontation with dragon and do not expose themselves to unnecessary criticism, direct confrontation with Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and international condemnation. Proxy war can help in achieving key objective to inflict damage and force Beijing to rollback its businesses. Certainly, implementation of CMEC will become a distant goal, dependence on Malacca Strait will be increased, affect Chinese industrial production and exports. Hostile agencies can fuel rebellion by creating splinter groups and deploying Uyghur insurgents. Worrying facet of this fear is external involvement with an aim to provide finances, intelligence information, military assistance in pursuit to create diverse platforms with a single

cause to sustain ongoing rebellious. Different strategies and techniques can be applied to achieve politico-strategic objectives.

5.3 Raising Arms is Essential for Stopping Junta's Hostile Policies

February, 2021 coup d'état led to mass protests followed by crackdown against unarmed civilians. Public opinion was turned against junta. A huge number of detainees were tortured. Government policy backfired as insurgents launched targeted kinetic operations to arson and destroy state owned assets. Lack of intelligence information about insurgents exactly involved in attacks led to arrests and deaths of innocent civilians during interrogation. Colossal mistake resulted in politico-strategic consequences. First, incumbent government discredited itself among population and lost masses support to extend its rule. Second, coup was condemned by international community on moral grounds. Mishandled Crackdown led to civil disobedience thus junta lost moral grounds at domestic level. Third, people-government widening gulf and growing unpopularity of military regime led to creation of numerous insurgent groups. Overtime public can become easy prey for numerous hostile intelligence agencies and accept their propaganda i.e. acts of vandalism will not stop. Further, the only available option for the public to ensure self-survival is to raise arms in self defence. Foreign forces are supporting people to defend community against an enemy ruling them. Society is persuaded that there is no alternative to work in collaboration with insurgents. However, clandestine purpose of hostile agencies for recruiting insurgents will be to sabotage CMEC by damaging energy pipelines and increase Chinese dependence on Malacca Strait. Certainly, it is an attractive option to economically fund and raise new insurgent groups against junta. Solely dependent upon external support it will blindly pursue hostile

agenda to achieve its strategic objectives to target Chinese energy pipelines.

5.4 Creating Splinter Groups

Presently, sixteen different armed groups are running insurgencies. Burmese masses are questioning junta's protracted operations resulting in detaining, torturing and killing civilians. It has become unpopular and people are afraid of crackdown. Myanmar politico-strategic milieu is rich for outsider elements to approach insurgents and create new or splinter armed groups. Prestige associated with higher ranks can lure lower ranking insurgents to establish breakaway factions. Second possibility arise out of disgruntled middle ranking commanders supported by external forces to form splinter groups. Flow of unaudited liquid cash will enable splinter group leadership to gain recruits considering the government as an enemy. Charity work i.e. medical services, education and food in military hit areas with foreign finances can help in recruiting more insurgents. Ultimately, splinter group's will be capable of causing more damage to PRC backed businesses. Inference can be drawn this can be effective strategy capable of producing positive results.

5.5 Infiltrating Uyghur Insurgents

A strong sense that Beijing supported military coup and spent a decade to cultivate elected leaders (Tower & Clapp, 2021) is major cause of suppression and alienation of Burmese society. Strong sense of alienation also prevails among Chinese Uyghurs (Kashgarian, 2022). Insurgents' consortium, government lack of discernment that hostile agencies can instigate disgruntled Uyghurs to take advantage of the chaotic situation and infiltrate insurgency hit areas will fuel ongoing insurgency. Heavy coordinated insurgents' blitz against Chinese energy supply pipelines, businesses, nationals and government assets will certainly sabotage implementation of Sino- Myanmar Energy Corridor (SMEC).

Inference drawn is ground is ripe for anti-Sino-Myanmar junta forces including Uyghurs to join hands against common enemy and wipeout prospects for securitizing Chinese energy security. Stringent counterinsurgency measures and kinetic operations will invite backlash and serious security threats to foreign investment projects.

5.6 Support it or Abort it Dilemma

Xi administration is going to be faced with “support it or abort it dilemma.” Tacit support of the regime invites direct attacks against economic investment projects. Contrarily, Tatmadaw replaced by democratic forces will force PRC to windup its economic ventures in Southeast Asian country.

6. Targeting Energy Pipelines

Hostile elements are aware of the strategic value and economic significance of energy supply pipelines. Energy pipelines pumps energy to fulfill industrial and household energy needs of China’s four Southwestern provinces. Energy pipelines contributes ten percent of Yunan province’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually. In February, 2022 insurgents inflicted major damages to oil and gas pipelines (Mitra, 2022). Crude oil pipeline alone pumps twenty-two million tons annually to PRC (Chaudhury, Beijing on Edge, 2021). President Xi administration urged General Haling regime to beef up security of energy pipelines. Insurgents have warned to increase attacks in future against China bound energy pipelines. Energy pipelines bears significance for China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) smooth economic growth rate and sustainable development. Myanmar energy route was adopted under ambitious BRI project to reduce dependence on US dominated Malacca Strait and ultimately abandon it for importing oil and gas from the Middle East and Africa.

6.1 Attacks against Electricity Supply Lines

Sagaing’s Tigyaing Township houses China-backed Tagaung Taung nickel-processing plant in early January, 2022 it came under insurgents’ attack. Chinese popularity graph has plummeted in Myanmar. Masses believes Beijing is providing financial, diplomatic and technical support to keep junta in power. Abhorrence against PRC is increasing and

6.2 Attacking Chinese Backed Mines

Disgruntled group have also threatened to target Chinese backed mines. Coalition of sixteen rebel groups alleged military junta for benefiting US \$ 275 million from three Sagaing mines during fiscal year 2020-21 (Anti-coup Fighters, 2022). United States (US), European Union (EU) targeted economic sanctions, foreign investors including Japanese Kirin to withdraw from signed deal (Kurlantzick, 2021) and targeted attacks against developmental infrastructure and Chinese sponsored economic projects will certainly damage country’s fragile economy.

7. Conclusion

Post-coup constant features of Burmese society include internally riven society, insurgents’ blitz to damage energy pipelines or arson, abhorrence for Tatmadaw is sky rocketing and economic activities are decimated. Armed militias operating along with China, Thailand and Indian borders are opposed to Tatmadaw’s reign and inciting civilians to join their ranks. Insurgents hold PRC responsible for tacit support to overthrow the democratically elected government. Economic and strategic significance of energy supplies for China brought it under attacks from insurgents. Overall ground conditions are favorable for hostile intelligence agencies to fuel insurgency with prime objective to bleed China through thousand cuts. Consequentially, intensifying insurgent and

counter-insurgent operations leading to chaos and politico-economic instability.

Features of the pre-existent insurgency are manifold e.g. spillover effects are evident as it spread from peripheries to settled areas. Second, surge in the on-going insurgency is an added feature. Chaotic situation in urban centers endangers precious resources and basic infrastructure. Third key characteristic is insurgency manifests it will not be short lived. Hope to restore normalcy in insurgency hit-areas through increased economic activities alone is seemingly a futile exercise. Restoration of normalcy requires pragmatic approach to address sense of alienation, feelings of insecurity, suppression and ideological differences. Authors believe Myanmar cannot provide alternative route for Chinese energy supplies unless security threats are overcome. Abovementioned threats cannot be addressed in near future. Therefore, CPEC provides best alternative route to decrease PRC's dependence on Malacca Strait and ensure uninterrupted supplies of energy. China should invest in education sector of Pakistan to eradicate radicalization. Establishment of vocational training institutes would increase prospects of self-employment for the masses and increase gross domestic product (GDP). Chinese investment in health sector and provision of medical services to the masses would increase soft-image among Pakistani population. Measures mentioned above would further ensure success of CPEC backbone of BRI and eradicate PRC's reliance on Malacca Strait.

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