

**Research Article**



# CPEC Security Challenges, Perspectives and Recommendations

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## Abstract:

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an important part of the Belt and Road Initiative and its historical origins. Historic trade routes have now risen, bringing game-changing and prosperous opportunities to the war-ravaged Pakistani economy. Since the financial crisis, China's economic power has grown, giving China's voice a pivotal role in the world. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, China has fulfilled its promise to fight global terrorism, raising its economic status in the world economy. The concept of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the shortest route to reach the strategically important Indian Ocean and deepen its influence on world leadership. CPEC's impact on Pakistan is beyond imagination. However, the challenges are enormous, and in Kyber-Paktunkwa (KP), especially Baluchistan, this resonance can be observed with tremendous gravity and force.

**Key Words:** CPEC, Security, Economic, Energy, Historical Solutions

## Introduction

One belt one road, the vision of President Xi Jinping will connect 60-plus countries of the continent of Asia and Europe and CPEC is one of the vital part of this game changer project (Haider, 2015). China and Pakistan are following the footprints of that “Silk Roads” which connects the Eurasia for trade and cultural exchange some 2000 years ago. This metaphor was coined by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877. Historically it connected East, South, and Southeast Asia with the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa along with Europe. At that time China was the main center of civilization and trade of silk. History reveals that this connection expanded Buddhism, Chinese civilization and trade in the connecting areas. Development of Chinese civilization, subcontinent, Central Asia, Africa, Italy, and Europe is indebted to great Silk Road (Waugh, 2007). This connectivity of pre-modern time is the synonym of globalization.

After independence of China in 1949, relation between two neighboring countries were cordial and friendly due to the strategic understanding of

the then foreign minister of Pakistan; Sir Zafarullah Khan. The revival of the road linkage between the two countries was initiated in 1959 and was completed and inaugurated in 1979. It is also called “friendship highway” in China. It passes through many parts of the ancient historical Silk Road. Karakorum highway is considered to be the most important route for trade and commerce between the two countries. The route gives a record trade of \$16.006 billion between China and Pakistan in 2014 (Farooq, 2014).

After the emergence of China its real aim was to restore its past glory. In this context, the policy of cosmopolitanism was devised to accomplish its goal in the arena of international politics. Bandung Conference, that was famous for the launching of Non-Alignment Movement, also considered as a first step to fulfill the desire of Chinese reformation because after that the relation among China and Non-Aligned Countries were established. During that period the Chinese focus was on economic stability and economic relations with the world (PWC, 2016). After 9/11 the

Chinese kept their eyes to focus the enhancement of gravity of economy, development of infrastructure and to encourage it imports in industrial sector of world market, whereas on the other hand rest of the world was busy to counter terrorism. China is almost against terrorism but shoulder by shoulder she was improving her economy and economic influence among the comity of nations. China has second largest economy in the world and now the place of Pakistan is 41<sup>st</sup> amongst all (Hussain & Ali, 2015).

The wave of globalization is shrinking the world into global village. Connectivity, trans-border relations of trade, flow of human and capital are the key component of globalization. In this connection China decided to initiate its trade relation with rest of the world via one belt one road (Cherng-Shin, 2013). Keeping in view, especially its economic interest and to opt for the most economical way to shorten the distance of trade routes and also to curtail the expenditure of import, China launched CPEC project. Besides, as a futuristic approach it will be an alternate device for Chinese economy to flow in the world market without any external fears. CPEC project was announced in 2014 while its inauguration by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was held at Dera Ismail Khan (DIKhan-Hakla) in May 2016, KP Pakistan (Malik, 2016).

War on terror spread a wave of extremism in the region with rigorous force especially in the tribal belt of Pakistan and its two provinces i.e KP and Baluchistan. The physical structure of CPEC is crossing all these war torn areas of the country, on the other hand, the neighboring countries are also creating hurdles by proxy wars, border tension as well as to escalate sectarianism and racism in surrounding areas of CPEC but the civil and military administration is determined to fulfill the objectives of this project which is metaphorically called a game changer (Gillani, 2016).

The project will be completed in its stipulated time but the real issue is its security. It is historical fact that trade routes always remained in danger in the past in these regions; the ruler of that very time solved the issue with different strategic approaches, sometimes with military strength, while at other occasions with diplomacy, negotiation and transitional justice. Therefore

peaceful solution of the issue can be traced in the leaf of history, Constitution and Charter of United Nations, keeping in view the historical peace keeping strategies of the ruler of huge empires and also the successful policy of the nation confronting with the same situation of extremism in present day upheavals.

## 2. From Silk Route to CPEC

In ancient times when there was no concept of globalization and connectivity was bleak, the Chinese civilization was at its zenith due to the linkage of China via Silk route with other continents of the world. With the evolution of globalization in modern era China once again reviewed its past history to connect her with all parts of the globe through one belt one road. Now the new project of CPEC is considered to be a successor of Silk route and may create an environment for the renaissance of ancient Confucius civilization of China (Farooq, 2014).

Ancient Silk Route was famous for cultural interaction among different region of East and West from China even to Mediterranean Sea. The Han dynasty was prominent to trade out silk via this route in different parts of the world therefore, the term was coined for the road. At that time, security was the main issue and the Han dynasty was also aware of fact therefore along with other measures they extended the "Great Wall of China" to provide security to Silk route and also to its trade flow (Waugh, 2007).

Silk route flourished the Chinese civilization on one hand, while on the other hand it developed subcontinent, Persia, Central Asia, Europe, Rome, Africa and Arabia in the field of politics, economics and culture interactions. The intellectuals and researchers have the vision that Economic Corridor has the same potential with new imputes in the age of globalization with forceful gravity and progress especially in economic sector.

## 3. E in CPEC

The importance of CPEC lies in economic factor, which is evident in the very name of the project, as the term CPEC depicts the combination of two countries with the help of corridor while the real essence of this game changer is economic (Gillani, 2016). The economist predicts that in the coming three years the GDP growth rate of

Pakistan will increase up to 1.5% due to this vital part of one belt one road. The predictors are of the view that this project will provide friendly, peaceful, and stable environment for foreign investors as well as for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Pakistan. The project will enhance socio-economic condition of surrounded areas of the corridor rapidly (INP, 2016).

The economic benefit of one belt one road is many folds for China itself. The importance of connectivity is a basic approach of China to work as a great power in international politics. Economy is a key factor for global hegemony. Therefore the opponents are opposing and creating every possible hurdle to destabilize Pakistan to curtail the economic power of China (Johnson, 2016).

The CPEC will open doors to immense economic opportunities not only for Pakistan but will physically connect China to its markets in Asia, Europe and beyond. Almost 80% of the China's oil is currently transported from Strait of Malacca to Shanghai, (distance is almost 16,000 km and takes 2-3 months). It is estimated that when Gwadar will become operational, the distance would reduce to less than 5,000 km. In March 2018, 14 energy agreements (out of 21) will give a fruit of 10,400 megawatts (MW) energy to Pakistan, which will be a blessing for industrial sector as well as for domestic use (Haider, 2015).

One of the most important benefits of the CPEC will be the attraction of project for some poor population of China. The economic attraction of the route will divert their attention towards western China for good economic fortune. According to statistical data only 6/7 percent population is residing in very large area of western part of China. While Eastern part of China is populated by 93/94 percent, the Corridor will ultimately create balance in the population of China in its western part. The footprints of Silk route guides China to connect Xinjiang Province to Gawadar of Baluchistan through 2000 kilometer long route which enables it to overcome energy shortfall from Persian Gulf. The route will bring economic prosperity in Xinjiang Province and to some extent dip the ethnic indigenous movement of the area.

The extraordinary importance of CPEC will provide benefits to Pakistan to brush aside its

economic issues, energy problems and weak infrastructure in the shape of strong economic power in the region. While China will take the benefit to penetrate in economic market at global level and also to channelize its trade via short and economical routes of land and sea. The futurist approach of China can be mirrored in its policies even in "Go Global 2001". Investment mode of the project is more beneficial for Chinese economy than other foreign investment. In this plan the Chinese labor and machinery will play key role for the boosting of its economy (Shahid, 2016).

A motorway between Karachi and Lahore (1100 kilometer) is under construction, while "Friendship Highway" between Chinese border and Rawalpindi (Pakistan) is going to be reconstructed. The Peshawar-Karachi railway line will be graded by December 2019 and Pakistan's network of railway lines will be extended up to Chinese border. The oil and gas of Middle East will be transported to China via this corridor, in which the role of Pakistan is like a bridge, by reducing the journey from current 12000 kilometer to 2395 kilometer. The trade hub "Gwader", the Gateway for Central Asia connecting Iran, Sri Lanka with Xinjiang to maritime route for transportation of all types of commodities is likely situated in the deep water of Indian Ocean at the bank of Baluchistan (Hamza, 2016).

The geo-strategic importance of the CPEC is too much crucial as it will connect China via road belt with Indian Ocean. It will save energy, time and capital for Chinese economy and will provide a strategic base to China in the maritime belt of ocean. CPEC will connect China with Middle East, Africa and Europe and it will provide an opportunity to dominate the trade markets of these areas. It means that three continents will be filled with the commodities of Chinese products, while it will motivate Pakistani traders and investors to occupy space in the arena of world trade.

The fantasy of the dream is attractive, charming and beautiful, but the ground realities are hard and challenging to materialize the real essence of the vision. The security scenario of the two key provinces of Pakistan are alarming and puzzling, but the civil-military commitment can make it possible. These security challenges are main

hurdles not only for the success of project at global level but also in local prospective.

#### 4. Security Challenges

The corridor will pass through one of the largest province of Pakistan i.e. Baluchistan, where the law & order situation is not up to the mark as in the current year 2016 there are 41 bomb blasts including 7 suicide attacks recorded up till now. In these blasts more than 260 casualties have been recorded and 572+ injuries. The length of the corridor in this province will expose it with extraordinary dangerous situation (SAPT, 2016).

The main hub of the project is also situated in Baluchistan i.e. Gwader. The most important trade center of the project is the seaport where in and out of the trade will be carried out. The Baloch insurgency, supported by neighboring countries also intensified by sectarian extremism creates flammable position for the hub of trade activities. Therefore it is predicted that the security cost will be much higher in these areas of the corridor (Siddiqi, 2015).

Pakistan is facing a very critical issue of provincialism since long. The eighteenth amendment was introduced in 2010 to fill the gap but the suffering is still alive. With the inception of economic corridor the petty issues within the provincial legislatures and also by the demo-gags are erupted, once again, to detract the economic vessel only for their own personal interests. To fulfill it, they are inflaming the situation with the help of anti-state elements.

TTP, Al-Qaida and Jundullah are the most visible challenging banned organizations for the smooth running of corridor in Pakistan especially in the provinces of KP and Baluchistan. During the construction of Gomal Zam Dam in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) an uncomplimentary incident took place. The Dera-Hakla route is passing through Frontier Region (FR) near SWA to connect it with Gwader seaport is also important for security point of view. The presence of TTP was observed in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) and surrounding of the Zhob (Baluchistan) adjacent to Afghanistan which also needs great attention (Rumi, 2015).

Economic corridor is also suspiciously eyed at international level because they are of the view that it can provide a more economically

sustainable position to Pakistan in the region. The foundation of Chabahar port by Iran with the temptation of India is also providing an alternate port to European and Asian markets near Gwader. On the other hand the UAE is also feeling unsafe from Gwader for its sole monopoly of trade in the gulf (Khokhar, 2015).

History guides every nation to solve each and every issue amicably with the force of dialogue, because gun is not the solution of every problem. Extremism, as it is said, is the name of mindset therefore it is needed to change the mindset of the extremist with every possible means particularly with psychotherapy of the main stockholders.

#### 5. Prospects

The economists forecast in connection with the project are the elimination of energy crises in Pakistan. It is obvious from the planning of CPEC that Chinese authorities will provide 15000 MW power to Pakistan till 2018. Power is the main source of development in industrial sectors and this will lead to development in the production of cement and steel stock in Pakistan, which will ultimately enhance the GDP growth (Malik, 2016).

The government is committed to safeguard the Chinese technical staff involved in the construction of corridor by special security division at every cost. The specially constituted "Counter-Terrorist-Force" combating against terrorist organizations in tribal areas and operation Zarb-e-Azb are strengthening the security situation generally in Pakistan and particularly around the corridor (Agencies, 2016).

The agencies of both the countries are also working to meet the security challenges of the corridor in this context China-Pakistan Institute (CPI) is taking practical steps by involving all agencies of Pakistan to safeguard the route from all security challenges (Hussain, 2016). The establishment of corridor security commission, the implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) and Activating National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) are some of the glaring and concrete examples of the project's security (Rumi, 2015). Besides, PEMRA has introduced extraordinary measure to ban negative reporting regarding this mega project.

National Action Plan (NAP) and Operation Zarb-e-Azb are moving towards tremendous success and to its true destination with constant velocity and pace. In Baluchistan the efforts of provincial and federal government along with security agencies are bringing fruitful results in connection with the betterment of security. Besides, some outlaws and foreigners were arrested indulged in seditious activities which are positive signs for the better law & order situation in the province and for the corridor (Agencies, 2016).

Keeping in view the importance of law & order and also the vital position of trade and economy not only at indigenous level but also on international level it is obligatory to take in confidence all the stockholders for the best future of the Pakistan and its prestige in global scenario. An early approach in this direction will be fruitful and will give golden eggs in the basket in the long run for our progressive economy. The security of CPEC is the joint responsibility of Pakistan and China and they must take appropriate joint action to ensure this.

## 6. Suggestions

The role of transitional justice is also important in connection with Baluchistan and KP to provide an opportunity to the communities of these areas to be benefited from the fruits of corridor and to work core heartedly for the security and wellbeing of the trade through passage for the prosperity and prestige of the Pakistan in the comity of nations.

Capacity building measures and to give right directions to proactive people of the concerned trade route areas brings fruitful results in the form of tangible security measures for this game changer project. In this backdrop, historical events of the past, particularly related to the security of trade routes are loudly speaking and diverting the attention of authorities to think and decide the matter on the footprints of their predecessors.

The trade route between Mughal Empire and Afghanistan leading to Central Asian States were in constant danger, looting and plundering due to the activities of plunderers at different points in mountainous areas on the way. The government of that time was worried because trade was the backbone even at that time of the economy. In this context, as a security measures the Mughal emperor of the time with its full military strength

decided to meet head of one of the tribe who was famous for plundering the traders. The chief was too much influenced from the military strength and obeyed the rule while the Mughal king conferred upon him the title of “Malik” and became him the custodian of the trade route. After that peace prevailed in the region and there was no plundering/ snatching on the trade route (Awan, 1994:777). In this connection, military strength and will of the government can provide sustainable peace and tranquility to the area in the surrounding of CPEC for safest mobility.

The military operations and particularly operation Zarb-e-Azb can bring the extremists to negotiating table like the strategy of Sri Lankan government to end the 22 years long war with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The same situation is also observed that the extremists time and again unilaterally collapsed negotiations like LTTE even when Sri Lankan insurgents deliberately once ended the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire and opted for another phase of civil war. At that moment the Sri Lankan government decided to root out the insurgency from the nip and launched a decisive campaign against them. The campaign compelled the insurgents to negotiating table, once again, and the matter was solved and now there is peace on the land of Sri Lanka. In this backdrop, operation Zarb-e-Azb and other related security measures for the safety of CPEC can pave the way for peaceful Pakistan and also for fruitful CPEC for the country.

Role of media, in this connection, can play a decisive part to weld the disintegrated communities into mainstream of national interest. Seminars, conferences, and awareness campaigns are the need of the hour to be launched in the surrounding areas of corridor especially where there is any type of resistance and insurgency. Special supplements in daily and local newspapers, one hour daily regional language program from radio Pakistan and private radio channels, one hour Pakistan Television program and one hour from all private Cable Networks program regarding the importance of CPEC can bring better results for the project.

Mobilization of local bodies’ members, Members of National and Provincial Assemblies and Senate of Pakistan has the potential to pave the way and to create better environment in their respective

constituencies near the corridor route. Due to their intimacy with the locality and the people they have a say as people respect their opinion and understand that their local leaders cannot betray them. As corridor will connect the very ordinary areas of Pakistan with world, the local leaders inculcate in the minds of native people about the importance of the globalization of the route and fruit for them.

Economic Corridor has global prospective therefore, it is needed to have close bilateral cordial relations with all neighbor countries, because the present era is channelized by trade and countries of strong economy will survive on the surface of the ocean of deep economic seaports.

### 7. Conclusion

CPEC is gigantic project for the Pakistan and China. Neither Pakistan nor China can afford its derailing. It is a dream for the economic prosperity and strategic communication between Pakistan and China. There are stakes of entire Pakistani population over the CPEC and destiny of all provinces of Pakistan is connected with each other as far as the CPEC is concerned. Completion of the CPEC as per given timetable is mandatory. In this regards, the domestic and international conspiracies will have to be countered by the entire Pakistani nation. The project is really a game changer and aims at economic prosperity and strategic linkage between Pakistan and China.

The implementation of CPEC will change the face of Baluchistan and in the long term would be its greatest beneficiary. The central focus is on the development of Gwadar. Its deep seaport, last year, was officially leased to China for 43 years until 2059 and is now fully operational. The new airport is also near to completion and great emphasis is being laid on improving the infrastructure which is likely to attract foreign and local investment.

So far as, security challenges are concerned they cannot stop the strong willpower of Chinese, because they are determined to build the route at every cost. The first few moments of CPEC will be crucial, insurgents can attack but willpower of the people, military and governments of China and Pakistan can defeat them. As it is said that international law is a law if it is violated day and

day out as jurists are of the view that violation of municipal law does not mean that it is not a law, it is a law. So, if there are few untoward incidents then it has no value, but it will strengthen the capacity of both nations. "When a dog barks at the sun the sun does not stop shining".

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