



Challenges to China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC): The Indian Perspective

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Abstract- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an upshot of the enduring relationship between Pakistan and China. It is an umbrella venture proposed under China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative. CPEC is an exertion for supercharging the China-Pak relationship in order to pressurize India for safeguarding footing in the Arabian Sea capable of empowering Chinese PLAN to project influence across the Indian Ocean. Delhi has been importing most of its requirements of oil from OPEC countries of the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz. This transportation marine route of oil from countries of the Middle East towards Indian ports is enormously substantial for India. New Delhi seemingly believes that China and Pakistan may block the route of ships carrying Indian oil in case of any conflict. India sees the emergent China-Pak strategic connections and substantial investments by China in Gwadar as a hurdle against its intents to access the CAR's and Afghanistan for conceivable trading linkages through bypassing Pakistan. This research aims for analyzing Challenges to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with respect to the Indian perspective and opines that India usually interprets its correlation as to be a zero-sum game vis-a-vis Pakistan. The consideration of Indo-Pak relationship as to be of a zero-sum strategic equation means that the gain of one's is the loss of the other. This aggressive approach has created an environment of security dilemma in South Asia.

Keywords: Silk Route, Kashgar, Indian Ocean, OBOR, Middle East, PLAN.

I. INTRODUCTION

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being the newest mutual project is an upshot of the enduring relationship between Pakistan and China. It is believed to be a landmark joint venture marking a novel era of geostrategic and commercial collaboration among the two "all-weather" friends. Initially, CPEC was projected during a visit to Pakistan by the Premier of China Li-Keqiang in May 2013 (Bhattacharjee, 2015). Subsequently, secretariat of CPEC had been established in August 2013, at Islamabad for accelerating execution of the project (Hussain and Hussain, 2017). The Prime Minister of Pakistan during his visit to China in April 2014 further discussed the proposal to his counterpart. China declared in November 2014 that it will finance companies of China for building road infrastructure and projects related to the energy of worth US\$46 billion as a part of the CPEC project in Pakistan (Bhattacharjee, 2015). CPEC has been an umbrella venture proposed under China's "One Belt, One Road" OBOR initiative declared by National Development and Reform Committee (NDRC) in March 2015 (Markey and West, 2016). During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pakistan, this agreement was officially signed on April 20, 2015 (Cheng and Lim, 2016).

CPEC being a flagship project of OBOR is of enormous prominence for both Pakistan and China. It has been seen as not only advantageous to China and Pakistan but also for the whole region and trans-region. It is for that reason substantial for Pakistan to ensure its successful execution (Rifaat and Maini, 2016). Chinese strategy for the revival of the old Silk Route is an aspiring concept built on multifaceted collaboration. This initiative encompasses two components. Firstly a terrestrial route or an economic belt inter-connecting China with European's through the South and Central Asian states. Secondly, the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) intends for the creation of a marine corridor amid China and Europe through the Indian Ocean (Baruah, 2018). CPEC as an

enormous development project of US\$62 billion by China's Silk Road Fund has been hailed to be a "game-changer" in the geopolitical realities of South Asia between Pakistan and China (Naseer, 2017). It is considered to be one of the biggest initiatives of the world meant for endorsing regional connectivity and providing funds for financing the development of infrastructure (Baruah, 2018). With China's assurance for the investment of US\$46 billion, CPEC will interweave China's Western part of Kashgar to Gwadar port in the Arabian Sea through a network of highway and railway by the eastern, central, and western routes emanating from Gwadar (Ejaz, 2016). The architects of the initiative envisage for building networks of roads, highways, railway lines, pipelines of oil and gas, seaports, as well as parks of information technology alongside the route (Baruah, 2018).

CPEC investment is part of the Chinese stratagem of OBOR comprising the ancient Silk Route Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Route of the 21st Century (Caixin, 2014). It originates at the Western part of Chinese Kashgar in the Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang and culminates at Gwadar port in Baluchistan Province of Pakistan (Baruah, 2018). It adjoins Kashgar to Gwadar through Khunjarab Pass lying across the Karakorum Range and traversing nearly 3,000 Km (Ali, 2015). CPEC aims to provide interlink through Pakistan by means of road highway and railway lines supplemented by development schemes in energy, dry ports, commercial zones, industrial parks, and pipeline networks (Markey and West, 2016). The China-Pak mutual initiative has been envisioned for investment enhancement, trading and commercial collaboration. CPEC project may be consummated over a period of 15 years in four phases (Cheng and Lim, 2016). The execution period of all the schemes under CPEC is spread in four phases for 15 years: early harvest ventures expected for completion by 2018, plans of short-term by 2020, medium-term schemes by 2025, and long-term to be concluded by the year 2030 (Hussain and Hussain, 2017).

CPEC may offer innumerable prospects for Pakistan and other states of the region; evolving dynamics of the region can minimize or enlarge these opportunities. CPEC being a geostrategic choice for both China and Pakistan is an inclusive and far-reaching conception. The importance of CPEC predominantly consists of three wide-ranging points: first, it could resurrect the stagnant economy of Pakistan and enhance its power to counterbalance the hegemonic designs of India in the region; second, it may generate new jobs and increase societal well-being in Pakistan; third, it will offer a pivot for Chinese sea route for the Indian Ocean and evade devastating supremacy of India in marine potentiality (Jia, 2017). Furthermore, China aims to elevate its deprived westernmost regions out of poverty through CPEC, to aid companies of China through the state and lending by the bank which could return higher incomes and may also subsidize the economy of China, and for securing easy admittance to effective and reliable maritime routes for the transport of energy resources (Johnson, 2016).

CPEC offers prospects for addressing most of its more embedded organizational problems of Pakistan and for enhancement of the living standard of its people. Pakistan, regardless of its enormous innate potentiality and its geographic importance, has been struggling for recovery of economic turmoil over the past few decades. This state of affairs has to be owing for a large number of contributory elements, comprising a lack of interior security situations that rejecting overseas investments and the crisis of energy shortage that has brought commercial progression towards a halt (Rifaat and Maini, 2016). The advent of Pakistan at the forefront of China's BRI has made it a pivotal point for observing the deliberate insinuations of the quickening rise of China (Schwemlein, 2019). Gwadar being transformed into a marine base of China may provide an enduring platform to China's PLAN (Hussain, Hussain, Ahmed, Quddus, Rafiq and Pham, 2021) in the Indian Ocean to the extent that it would turn out to be a challenge for the military and diplomatic abilities of India in the regional set up (Kanwal, 2018).

CPEC is an exertion for supercharging the China-Pak relationship in order to pressurize India for safeguarding footing in the Arabian Sea capable of empowering Chinese PLAN (Hussain, Hussain, Ahmed, Quddus, Rafiq and Pham, 2021) to project influence through the region of the Indian Ocean (Schwemlein, 2019). Gwadar possesses geostrategic potentiality to be converted into China's naval base (Gill, 2019). The China-Pak relationship has appeared at a time of escalating powers in Asia, fluctuating dynamics of regional power, and enhancing strategic antagonism (Schwemlein, 2019). It has been projected as being a game-changer initiative for the South Asian region and predominantly for Pakistan (Durrani, Bilal and Kalim,

2017). CPEC may transmute the destiny of China and Pakistan and it would amazingly affect states of South Asia, as well as the shape of the global trade (Shoukat, 2015).

Indian Perspective and Challenges to CPEC

Pakistan has to face strategic threats from India since its inception. Pakistan and China consider India as a mutual adversary with respect to the regional geostrategic interests. The US is shifting its interests under the changing dynamics of the region from Pakistan to India. Pakistan in a similar way has also been moving towards China due to the geostrategic circumstances based on the commonality of their national interests in the region (Durrani, Bilal and Kalim, 2017). CPEC and the consequent probability of Gwadar for becoming a naval base of China, and emerging China-Pak strategic collaboration has become the main source of security concern for India. Parallel to the CPEC project, China has ensured Pakistan for supplying eight submarines worth US\$4 billion to US\$5 billion as militaristic hardware beyond the CPEC venture (Detsch, 2015). This agreement additionally underpins the US and India's concerns with respect to Gwadar port to be utilized as a major naval base for the expansion of the blue-water fleet of PLAN in the Arabian Sea vis-a-vis Chahbahar port about 72 km in the west of Gwadar (Hussain, 2020) and planning of India for the development of a "North-South Corridor" through Iran's Chahbahar and Afghanistan towards Central Asia. It may provide an alternative trade route to India and an entrance way for accessing Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics as Pakistan has rejected a proposal by India, raised at the platform of (SAARC) the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation for allowing a transportation route to the transporters of India towards Afghanistan via Pakistan (Mahajan, 2015).

It is anticipated that India as an adversary of Pakistan has not been happy with projects of development in Pakistan under CPEC. The government of India and its intelligence organizations are playing the role of an enemy to disrupt the CPEC venture because it has to be considered as being a regional game-changer project. India has perceived a feeling of Xeno-centrism by CPEC because it desires for being a South Asian hegemon. The significance of CPEC may draw consideration of the entire world and will reorganize the region of South Asia (Shoukat, 2015). Consequently, China will utilize Gwadar as a marine base for the containment strategy of the influence of India in the region (Hussain, 2020). New Delhi is frightened due to China's intents under its "string of pearls" stratagem regarding the encirclement of India, and also investments of China in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. In this way, intentions and measures of China are seen to be a deliberate effort to surround India (Ishaq, Ping and Ahmed, 2017).

India is worried about China's emergent strategic footholds in South Asia and IOR. The presence of China's PLAN at Gwadar may pose serious threats to India. It is articulated that the CPEC plan by China and Pakistan has to be initiated not only for commercial objectives, but it is also driven for geostrategic intentions for besieging of India (Javaid, 2016). India perceives CPEC in contradiction to its geostrategic interests. Delhi has been importing most of its requirements of oil through OPEC countries of the Middle East. Indian vessels containing oil have to pass through the Strait of Hormuz for shipment of oil to westernmost Nhava-Sheva in Mumbai, Mundra in Gujrat and Kandla ports. This transportation marine route of oil from countries of the Middle East towards Indian ports is enormously substantial for India. New Delhi seemingly believes that China and Pakistan may block the route of ships carrying Indian oil in case of any conflict. India considers that both China and Pakistan could limit the functioning of Chahbahar, which has to be projected as Indian counterbalancing of Gwadar in lieu of CPEC (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020).

India and Pakistan have strategic desires with respect to Central Asian Republics. Pakistan has admittance to Central Asia through Afghanistan whereas India has been creating difficulties in Afghanistan for Pakistan. Pakistan is confronting interventionist threats by India. The internal instability of Pakistan is also to be associated with India as part of the Great Game in regional geopolitics (Jiang, 2015). India sees the emergent China-Pak strategic connections and substantial investments by China in Gwadar as a hurdle against its intents to access the CAR's and Afghanistan for conceivable trading linkages through bypassing Pakistan (Abid and Ashfaq, 2015). According to defense experts in Pakistan, India usually interprets its correlation as to be a zero-sum game vis-a-vis Pakistan and, in this way it resists for any advantage to Pakistan (Bhattacharjee, 2015). The consideration of Indo-Pak relationship as to be of a zero-sum strategic equation means that the gain of one's is the loss of the other. This aggressive approach has created an environment of security dilemma in South Asia (Awan, Alvi and Munir, 2019).

The military and civilian elite of Pakistan believe about the establishment of a nexus by India in order to disrupt CPEC (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020). The leadership of Pakistan deliberates that Indian agencies are involved in insurgent activities in Baluchistan to sabotage CPEC by means of providing finance and military support to the non-state actors for the escalation of violence in Baluchistan and Karachi (Awan, Alvi and Munir, 2019). CPEC is a China-Pak substantial economic corridor. The success of such corridors is associated with the backing of bordering states and that it may not be opposed by neighboring countries in public. New Delhi and India's media publically express hostile objections regarding China-Pak determination for the development of CPEC (Ikram and Rashid, 2017). India believes CPEC to be a China-Pak strategic approach to counter the interests of India in the IOR (Gill, 2019).

Pakistan and India are connected to the geographical contiguity and in such a way, the security objectives of both countries are linked to each other (Awan, Alvi and Munir, 2019). India envisages CPEC to be a hurdle for emergence as a great Asian power. The rivalry of India towards China and Pakistan has been marked by opposition to CPEC based on two strategic reasons. Primarily, CPEC enhances prospects of China for becoming a powerful hegemon by emerging as a regional superpower; secondly, CPEC may transform Pakistan into a stable and powerful regional actor and to be a challenge for the hegemony of India (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020). India and the US are not comfortable with the bilateral agreement of CPEC by Pakistan and China (Shoukat, 2015). India has been creating obstacles for the development of Pakistan and trying to sabotage CPEC by its reliance on the US (Durrani, Bilal and Kalim, 2017) because a flourishing and established Pakistan is not to be suitable for India (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020). India is also seeking support and assistance from Israel and the US against China-Pak regional designs (Awan, Alvi and Munir, 2019).

In the perspective of India, CPEC has marked Chinese emergence as being a principal strategic partner of Pakistan by replacing the US at the time of a comparative US decline, worsening the China-US relationship, enhancing the Indo-US relations, and evolving tensions between Beijing and New Delhi (Menon, 2016). India perceives CPEC as a continuing strategy of China for a protected admittance to the Indian Ocean by the operative control of Gwadar which may strengthen the influence of China for the containment of the Indian dream for supremacy in the South Asian region despite its enhanced leverage on Pakistan (Bhattacharjee, 2015). India envisages CPEC as part of a naval power projection of China's PLAN in the Indian Ocean (Baruah, 2018).

CPEC is viewed by the Indian navy as a strategic approach for having dominance and the permanent marine presence of China in the IOR. The development of Pakistan and China's naval ships and joint military exercises in the Arabian-Sea will pose security threats for India to be evolved by CPEC (Gill, 2019). India is afraid that China desires for entrance to the warm waters of the Indian-Ocean for taking control of the regional trading sea routes, and energy reservoirs of Central Asia (Ishaq, Ping and Ahmed, 2017). Indian security experts assert that Chinese workers to be working on various projects of CPEC belong to PLAN's engineering wing. India considers the presence of Chinese military personnel as potential intimidation to the security interests of India and perceives it to be an agenda of supremacy in the region. India has been raising voice against CPEC at every platform and trying to dismantle it by all political and diplomatic means. India may utilize every strategy to derail the development of CPEC at any price, which indicates that the establishment of Gwadar and progress in Pakistan is not to be digested by India. New Delhi desires CPEC to be failed while utilizing all possible tactics (Shoukat, 2015). Fearing of investment through CPEC by China in the region, India has been falsifying wrong allegations with respect to the interlinking of the issues of territorial resistance and regional permanency to CPEC (Nazir, 2016). The reservations of India on CPEC have opened a new strategic front between Pakistan and India (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020).

India is opposing CPEC due to its routes passing through Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan to be administered by Pakistan which is claimed by India to be a territory of its own. India's major apprehension about CPEC is that Gwadar could be used as a China's marine base for its prolonged blue-waters fleet and its operations from the IOR. Pakistan claims India of collaborating with non-state actors to interrupt CPEC by fueling insurgent activities in Baluchistan. It is expected that Indo-Pak unhealthy relationships may cast its shadows over the execution of CPEC (Naseer, 2017). China-Pak strategic correlation poses a challenge for the establishment of regional hegemony by India. New Delhi interprets CPEC and Gwadar to be suspicious with respect to its impact regarding the naval balance of power in IOR (Barber, 2014). India considers that CPEC will establish the foot-

holding of China in IOR which may challenge the nautical posture of India (Baruah, 2018). A major apprehension for India regarding CPEC is that it will enable Beijing to the utilization of its existence for the advancement of its strategic objectives of national interest in the region (Shoukat, 2015). India worries about CPEC and China-Pak strategic connections in a sense to be associated with the emerging presence and enhancing the influence of China in the IOR and South Asia, because Beijing has remained engaged to the neighboring countries of India during the last decade through military and economic support. India perceives the emergent profile of China as its encirclement in the region (Rifaat and Maini, 2016).

India believes CPEC and China-Pak strategic coalition adversarial to the Indian dream of supremacy in Asia. India desires to be recognized as the main power of South Asia and the global world (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020). Security and political analysts of India have been viewing CPEC to be a significant venture having geopolitical and security implications for India in a futuristic broader context (Markey and West, 2016). New Delhi deliberates it indispensable for making CPEC a failed project (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020). The Indian government has established close links with the dominated government of Northern Alliance in terms of economic and security perspectives in a non-coastal Afghanistan by soft ventures. Delhi has invested about US\$100 million for building a lengthy road of 220 km linking Nimroz province of Afghanistan with Chahbahar port of Iran (Nazir, 2016).

New Delhi has been spending US\$20 billion in Iran as well as it is constructing Salma Dam and also making an investment of about US\$300 million in Herat a province of Afghanistan. India has been extending its relationship with Iran and Afghanistan to counterbalance Gwadar with Chahbahar. Delhi is attracted to the natural resources of gas in Afghanistan, but due to antagonistic relationships with Pakistan, it is not feasible for India to import. Therefore India is developing Chahbahar port in Iran. With the development of Chahbahar, India may be in a position to bypass Pakistan (Shoukat, 2015). India apparently considers that China will station its naval forces in Gwadar, which may intrude working of India's Chahbahar port and could also be able to cut off energy supplies of India coming through the Middle East (Hussain, 2020). In order to counterbalance CPEC India has established a nexus in the region of the Middle-East. China's string of pearls strategy has been viewed by Delhi in a wider perspective. China has been developing many ports in the IOR such as Pakistan's Gwadar, Sri Lanka's Hambantota, Bangladeshi and also Myanmar's Kyauk Pyu. India deliberates a string of pearls strategy of China as containment of India (Safdar, Muhammad and Asghar, 2020).

The endorsed narrative of India is based on the speculation that CPEC passes through assumed territories of India which is considered to be a violation of its sovereignty (Baruah, 2018). New Delhi has also articulated its apprehensions about the route of CPEC crossing Gilgit-Baltistan, which is claimed by India as a part of the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir (Bhattacharjee, 2015) and to be viewed as a China's support for Pakistan in right on the territory by Indians (Mahajan, 2015). India has reservations that in order to provide legal cover to CPEC, Pakistan is considering up-gradation of the legitimate status of Gilgit-Baltistan as the 5th province of Pakistan. It has to be concluded with respect to the narrative of India regarding CPEC that it is like a potpourri of dissimilar estimations. There exists customary skepticism regarding CPEC. There has also to be a pragmatic point of view by the sections of the strategic community, who believe that CPEC could offer trilateral advantages for China, Pakistan, and India (Rifaat and Maini, 2016).

II. CONCLUSION

It is imperative to conclude that CPEC is an upshot of the enduring relationship between Pakistan and China. CPEC as an enormous development project of US\$62 billion by China's Silk Road Fund has been hailed to be a "game-changer" in the geopolitical realities of South Asia between Pakistan and China. It is considered to be one of the biggest initiatives of the world meant for endorsing regional connectivity and providing funds for financing the development of infrastructure. The US is shifting its interests under the changing dynamics of the region from Pakistan to India. Pakistan in a similar way has also been moving towards China due to the geostrategic circumstances based on the commonality of their national interests in the region. CPEC will interweave China's Western part of Kashgar to Gwadar port in the Arabian Sea through a network of highway and railway by the eastern, central, and western routes emanating from Gwadar. Gwadar being transformed into a marine base of China may provide an enduring platform to China's PLAN in the Indian Ocean to the

extent that it would turn out to be a challenge for the military and diplomatic abilities of India in the regional set up. India perceives CPEC in contradiction to its geostrategic interests. New Delhi is frightened due to China's intents under its "string of pearls" stratagem regarding the encirclement of India, and also investments of China in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

The rivalry of India towards China and Pakistan has been marked by opposition to CPEC based on two strategic reasons. Primarily, CPEC enhances prospects of China for becoming a powerful hegemon by emerging as a regional superpower; secondly, CPEC may transform Pakistan into be a stable and powerful regional actor and to be a challenge for the hegemony of India. India is afraid that China desires for entrance to the warm waters of the Indian-Ocean for taking control of the regional trading sea routes, and energy reservoirs of Central Asia. New Delhi interprets CPEC and Gwadar to be suspicious with respect to its impact regarding the naval balance of power in IOR. The establishment of peace and security in the region of South Asia is to be conditioned with the Indo-Pak productive role. Being a flagship project of OBOR is of enormous prominence not only advantageous to China and Pakistan but also for the whole region and trans-regions.

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