



CPEC: The Missing Chapter between China & Pakistan

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Abstract

The paper investigate Sino-Pak relations and focusing on the missing chapter of economic relation between Beijing and Islamabad. It explains that how the two neighbors came close to each other and cleared their demarcation of international borders in their first phase of relations. The study categorizes their relations from diplomatic to political and from political to strategic that lasted in their missing chapter of economic relations under the CPEC that currently dominated the relations of two “Iron Brothers”. This part of study indicates a shift in the Beijing’s policies towards Islamabad from a political oriented to economic oriented when Deng Zhao Ping came to power in 1978 and set economic as the top priority of the nation. The study concludes that despite the shift in Beijing foreign policy from political to economic oriented, Islamabad has not comprehended nor deal the project of CPEC with the lens of economic oriented policy.

Keywords: CPEC, Pakistan, China, Economic, Joint Project, Missing Chapter.

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Introduction

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), from its commencement is a hotly debated phenomenon among the scholars, think tank organizations and policy institutions across the World. It's a joint venture of both the iron brothers of China and Pakistan that connect Kashghar to Gwadar deep sea port that ultimately links western China through the Indian Ocean to Middle East, Europe and Africa (Rakisits, 2015). This project will ensure billions of dollars investment from China to Pakistan that will developed its underdeveloped regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Baluchistan through a network of roads, railway lines, bridges and other modern means of communications. It will also benefit China's most backward region of Xinjiang by giving direct access to Arabian Sea through *Gawadar* Sea port. The corridor will connect the two partners strategically and economically through the transportations of millions of tons of goods from China to Middle East, African countries and to the big market of Europe (Khattak, 2016). This corridor not only links the time tested friends but will also connect the major regions of Asia including Central Asia, West Asia, Middle East and Eastern and Western Europe. For Pakistan, it would not be wrong that for the first time in the history of Pakistan it could get the fruits of its geo-strategic position and economic rebirth (Ahmar, 2014)

The 21st century dominated by the regional and World strategic environment across the World that led to the development and establishment of geo-strategic and geo-economic partnership among the allied states. The driving force behind this partnership is state national interests and national security for that states reshaped its policies and strategies because it could no longer achieve the national interest and security alone and without partnership and alliance system but this alliance system is different from the one which has been practiced in 19th and 20th centuries, it is both economic and political partnership (Xuetong, 2006). The core of these partnerships growing cooperation among the states in the areas of industrial projects, infrastructure development, defense, commerce, and other economic areas that promotes cooperation and peace in the region and across the World (Abid, 2015).

The role of China realized by everyone in the World that has been changed from a third World state and rigid state to international norms and institutions to more vibrant and flexible state who share responsibility of being not only an economic power but also a political stake holder in the current international World economic and political order. In this regard Beijing is playing a central role not only in Asia but across the globe due to its largest status in the World in terms of population and the second largest economy in the World (Rosecrance, 2006). After achieving the economic power status, now Beijing set its stage for the World multilateral diplomatic revolution which was the missing and ignored chapter of Chinese foreign relations. But it doesn't mean that China will replace its economic policies for the sake of diplomatic mission rather this rapid diplomatic activities will boost-up the existence Chinese rising economic position in the World (Abid, 2015).

The rise of China as an economic and political power has a lot of questions for the western World in general and particularly for the region alongside of China. To make it clear and to show the real motives of China being a rising power the PRC leadership introduced the "Good Neighbor Policy" in 2003 when Hu Jintao came to power as a president of China. According to this strategy Beijing tried to realize that China sought to promote independent and peaceful relationship rather than conflictive relations (Ikenberry, 2008). Hu also marked that the rise of China is peaceful and Beijing will hold the five



principles of UN peaceful coexistence and the neighbor should not worry about the peaceful rise of China. By this way China changed the behavior of its regional states into friendly and converted the region into trade hub (Abid, 2015).

As mentioned above that in 21st century, states are seeking strategic and economic partnership for achieving its objectives. China and Pakistan are the two neighboring states and have good relations from 1950s till date (Li, 2005). Both states developed strong relations on the basis of trust and cooperation. Pakistan being a poor and third World state always rely on foreign aid and support to deter its traditional rival's India. For that purpose Pakistan adopted the alignment policy with the US and West to get economic and security assistance to counter the India aggression but it was in 1970s when Pakistan found all these security pacts not fulfilling its demands and left the alignment policy (CA, 2018). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto being a prime minister of Pakistan adopted the independent foreign policy along with making Pakistan a nuclear state because by conventional weapons Pakistan cannot defeat its rival India as the history is witnessed in 1971 war. Pakistan played core role in patching the Sin-US relations in 1971 when it secretly arrange Henry Kissinger meeting with Mao Zhe dong (Schaller, 1975). The Afghan War of 1979 was once again clubbed Pakistan with the US but it could not hurt the Sino-Pak relations. Post 9/11 2011 both the states added the missing chapter of economic cooperation in their relations which was ignored in past (Abid, 2015).

The US being a hegemonic power kept close relation with Pakistan but in tough time it kept the principles of neutrality between India and Pakistan. Keeping the historical diplomatic experiences with the US Pakistan is now trying to decrease the dependence on the US and making new supporter to counter the big India. For this purpose Pakistan got tremendous importance not only in the region but also across the globe to have friendship with the new super power of the 21st century, China. Recently, both the states revive the historical and traditional trade Silk Route and will connect Kashghar (China) to Gwadar (Pakistan) which is known as China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Abid, 2015).

Associated Terms

In the words of Prof. Ahsan Iqbal minister for planning, development and reform government of Pakistan, CPEC was understood initially as a game changer but it goes beyond that because for Pakistan it is fate-changer since every passing day due the keen interests of the regional states in CPEC because of its huge potentials for grand development of the region and regional linkages that intimately bring peace and prosperity not only in one region but in the three continents of the World including Asia, Africa and Europe (Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, 2016). He termed CPEC is a Leap forward policy for Pakistan and marked it is one of the pivot project of Beijing's long term grand strategy of engagement with the rest of the World through One Belt One Road Initiative that connect Asia Africa and Europe. He also pointed out that CPEC has great significance for Pakistan where it put the state on a level to have connected with regional powers including Iran, Saudi Arabia, central Asian states and Afghanistan because all these states signed the OBOR initiatives agreement with Beijing (Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, 2016).

The Minister further outlined the benefits of CPEC for Pakistan that it had restored the investors' confidence on the country which was lost due to the policies of involvement in the War on terror post 9/11 2001. He stated that with this confidence it will help to speed up the economic activities that consequently overcome the energy crises, develop infrastructure, and build up new economic cities, produce new employment opportunities



throughout Pakistan, especially in much needed provinces of Pakistan Balochistan and the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. He marked this corridor as a new phase in Chin-Pakistan relations which has already deepened and strong but this new economic cooperation will boost up the relations of the two states (Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, 2016).

H.E Mr. Sun Weidong, Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Pakistan also highlighted that the CPEC is a grand and pilot project of OBOR initiative proposed by the Chinese president Xi Jinping. Mr. Sun elaborated the importance of corridor in the words that, it is the only project on which both the states ruling parties and civil society developed a consensus and has no opposition in the partner's states. He stated that it will give strength to sin-Pak strategic cooperative partnership and will build up community of shared destiny between the two states. This corridor will provide new momentum to China-Pakistan relations. Mr. Sun is of the opinion that after completion this corridor brings revolution of prosperity in both the states, beside this it will promote social welfare projects in construction of Gwadar with Chinese government grant Vocational Schools, medical education, training projects as a special activity for the Gwadar people. He marked CPEC is the tangible, accessible, and enjoyable project that's why Beijing want to construct the CPEC (Weidong, 2017).

CPEC is not only a road but it will generate the growth of industrial development through energy plants linking not only the two partner states but also integrate the provincial capitals into one basic unit for the future trade corridor. The two poor federal unites, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Baluchistan would be primary beneficiary because one is the starting point and later would the future hub of international trade. Both these unite are also considered to be a challenge for the implementation of corridor due to so many factors including security, terrorism, involvement of foreign agencies and foreign hands. Despite all of these costs and benefits Pakistani officials especially the army is committed to provide full security to the Chinese worker who will construct the project (Javaid, 2016).

Gilgit-Baltistan being part of the Kashmir issue has also great importance in making the project a success of failed due to its complex constitutional nature in Pakistan. The region main revenue is tourism but due to war on terror it was heavily damage its major source of avenue. It was in 2009 that Pakistan empowered the region through Self-Governance Order 2009 that gave the power to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan that ultimately got de facto province-like status. The two major issues of Gilgit-Baltistan is planned to be addressed through CPEC which will also enhance socioeconomic integration to the rest of Pakistani provinces and will generate huge revenue for the people of this neglected region (Javaid, 2016).

The corridor will pass through Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa that were mainly targeted by the wave of international and national terrorism due to geographically linked to Afghanistan that was declared the hub of international terrorism since 9/11 2001 attacks on the US. The CPEC will provide grand opportunity for the conflict management in these two most destructive regions of Pakistan (Leonard, 2016) . The common root cause of terrorism declared is poverty on which consensus has been developed across the globe. In this regard CPEC could modernize the current socio-economic setting of Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa by dramatically altering its communication & transport sector and revamping its infrastructure (Javaid, 2016).



Sino-Pakistan Relations

Diplomatic Relations

Being diversity in ideological aspects, Pakistan was one of the first Muslim countries to recognize newly established People's Republic of China but keeping in mind the Indian threat perception post-independence, Pakistan joined the CETO and SENTO, which were arguably aimed at containing China, but at Bandung Conference in Indonesia Pakistan make it clear that we have joined SETO to protect our national interest not for containment strategy against China (Qandeel Siddique, 2014). During this period, Indo-China friendship was also quite strong and have slogan of "*Hindi-Cheeni Bhai Bhai*". In 1954 China and India formally signed peaceful co-existence treaty, which were based on the five principles of UN Charter (Siddique, 2011).

It was in 1961 when the largest communists' states were started to split and adopted hostile relations against each other while Indian enjoyed strong relations with USSR and Pakistan with US. In 1962 India-China border conflict united Islamabad and Beijing more closer apart from diplomatic relations to political ally against the common enemy. China has border clashes with most of its fourteen geographic neighbors including Japan, Vietnam, Russia, India and Korea, Pakistan remain one of the few neighbors with whom Beijing has not clashed (Amin, 2019). In 1963, the boarder issue between China-Pakistan on territory of Kashmir, Pakistan quietly handed over 5180 square kilometer of Kashmir to China and cleared the demarcations issues. The US adopted policy of encircling China and to isolate it in international community while Pakistan played crucial role in entering China to World politics and forming bridge between US and China (Amin, 2019).

Political Relations

Pakistan did a lot for the restoration of China's authorized right in UN Security Council which was given by the US to Taiwan. No one can ignore the role of Pakistan for arranging a secret visit of Henry Kissinger secretary of state in 1971 to Beijing that led to the visit of Richard M. Nixon to China, which opened up PRC to the Western World and specially USA. This historic role that was played by Pakistan for its neighbor became the base of cooperative relations between the two states. This land mark achievement of Pakistan also remembered by the Chinese leadership that later led to terms of Iron Brothers, Friendship higher than Himalayas, Sweeter than Honey and Deeper than Ocean. Pakistan involvement in war of Afghanistan in 1980's was comprehended by Beijing and support Pakistan's oriented forces against the Red Army in Afghanistan. Post-Cold war both the neighboring states were strengthened their relations when the US imposed sanctions on Pakistan and let alone to handle situations in Afghanistan. Islamabad took Beijing in confidence when it clubbed itself with the US against the War in Afghanistan post 9/11 2001. China also shows its solidarity with Pakistan when US raid on bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad in May 2011 and show its will to attack on Pakistan (Siddique, 2011).

The Importance of China to Pakistan can be experienced from first visit of PM Nawaz Sharif on July 4 2013 to China, as it was surprise for those who thought that PM will visit to Saudi Arabia due to his close personal and family relations and spent eight years in Saudi Arabia when he was disposed by Genral Pervez Musharraf in 1999. China has second largest World's economy, disturbing the dominance of the US. China has invested heavily in South Asia and so the US is interested in countering-Chinese influence in the region. Despite of diversity in language, culture, ideology and history, Sino-Pak relationship is



growing day by day. As the Beijing invested billions of dollars in unstable Pakistan now PRC has more concerns and feeling to have a stable and peaceful Pakistan to achieve its economic objectives. The killing of Chinese people in Pakistan still did not affect this relationship because both of the states knows that there are outside forces involved in region to counter-weighting Sino-Pak partnership, for this purpose China is co-operating with Pakistan in defense and military equipment's (Siddique, 2011).

Economic Relations

Historically speaking, Sino-Pak relations dominated by political issues rather than economic areas which were considered to be the missing aspect in their relations. But post-Cold War turn the Chinese policies into economic oriented and their policy towards Pakistan were also colored by economics especially post CPEC. Both enjoying trade relations volume of US\$12 billion but the trade in favor of China not in Pakistan (Kumar, 2006). Before launching CPEC, Pakistan has a balance of economic relations with China as compare to the US but the joint project altered the nature and volume of relations between the two states. What is important to note here is that, Chinese made Pakistan economically dependent that can also pose threats to its own business community and its domestic economic development (Shabir, 2007). (Javeria Jahangir, 2020)

Defense Relations

Since its birth Pakistan heavily dependent on Western and the US for purchasing its arms but post Cold War Pakistan decreased its burdens on them and focused on China as the main supplier of arms to Pakistan. It was in 2013, when Pakistan emerged as the largest beneficiary of Beijing's arms and China declared as the largest supplier of military and nuclear technology (Lee, 2009). With China support Pakistan built two power plants of Chashmaone and two while another accord was signed to build Chashma 3 and 4 which has just completed in 2017. It shows the defense relations of both the states and their cooperation in the area of nuclear program. Despite of NSG concerns about the Chinese support of Pakistan nuclear activities, Beijing expedite its program with Pakistan and declared it as the Israel of China that has automatically answer to anyone who criticize their relations must think about the US support of Israel (Ahmad, 2015).

The defense commitment can also be understand from the incident of Osama operation inside Pakistan by the US and its aftermath warning of attacking Islamabad. During this time the Chinese foreign office issued a clear warning to Washington that, any attack on Islamabad would be construed attack on Beijing. Again post Osama operation similar support from the PRC leadership was issued that caused isolated Pakistan in the World community. To the US criticism and aggression to intervene in Pakistan that ultimately breaches its sovereignty, Beijing backed Pakistan and the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao told in this occasion. He said whatever changes may occur in regional or global level we will support Pakistan and both China and Pakistan will be good friends, neighbors and best partner forever. He also issued warning that no country has the right to intervene in the internal affairs of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2015). It was for the first time when Beijing stood and took firm stance on Pakistan and the US received warning from a major power for the first time since 1945. On the other hand it also indicates the level of friendship between the two states. Beijing has intentions to use strategic friendship with Pakistan for countering Indian and American influence in the region.



China and Pakistan: Perception about Each Other

Pakistan comprehended China as a strong, stable, emerging super power which has Veto power at the UNO Security Council that benefit it so many times since it got that seat in 1970s. Beijing also supporter to Pakistan key issue with India, Kashmir and being the second largest economy now largest investor in a terror torn state. China being a the largest producer of Steel and coal and second largest importer of Oil and Gas has developed many emerging markets in international community to boost up its economy but also involve Pakistan in this race to counter it traditional partner India. Gawader (being operated by China) set Pakistan at a level that can easily expedite its commercial activities with Central Asia, Middle East and the emerging economies of African nations. Both states have enjoyed the transfer of technology that benefits both nations in divers' areas. These cooperation areas also strengthen their already strong relations that have been practiced for the last six decades (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2009).

On the other side of the picture, China see Pakistan as a friend that has tested so many times starting from the 1962 war to the border demarcation in 1963 and the first non communist state which recognized the PRC. China feel proud of its friend when it fought for the right in the UNSC Veto seat and became a bridge between the two major powers when they were reproached in 1970's that led to the normalization of China and USA. Beijing again kept its ally strong when they came to know that Pakistan can has the ability to engage India in the minor issues to keep it out of race in the regional politics for China. This perception of the Chinese elite policy makers proved that still focused on Kashmir for the last seven decades. Beijing once more feel very happy when China was encircled by the US and Indian around the Indian Ocean to keep its annual growth rate in single digit rather in double but it was Pakistan to welcome the China Pakistan Economic Corridor that put an end to the Malacca Dilemma and provide Beijing an upper hand on the US and Indian not only in the Indian Ocean but also in Middle East, Central Asia and African nations when Pakistan opted to give Gwadar on Lease to Chinese, the deep sea water in the World.

Cooperation in Terrorism

Terrorism is an American oriented phenomenon that pursue the US and Western interest especially in Islamic World post Cold War era. The US used it as a tool to achieve its economic, political and strategic objectives throughout the World (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2009). Like the other Muslim state Pakistan was also in the list of targets that can be remap and restructure to pursue the US objective to counter China in the region. Pakistan being a friend of China for a long time has resisted to the US presence in Afghanistan and kept the Pak-Afghan border safe from the NATO/American forces not to harm both China and Pakistan. Chin being a multiethnic society, also victim of separatism, extremism and terrorism while on the other hand Pakistan was also victim of terrorism that has gravest threats to its security from within and outside its borders. Both PRC and Pakistan developed common perceptions about terrorism and mechanism to tackle these issues which were created by American and Indian on their border (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2009). The hot areas of terrorism in China are the province of Xinjiang where the Uyghur Muslims pose a serious threat to the Beijing policy makers while on the other hand for Pakistan the law less areas of FATA has created severe problem for the sovereignty of Pakistan. Both states hot spots are very closely linked and have similarities in nature of people, religion, culture and values. For Chinese, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and for Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has the real forces to destabilize both the states



who getting support from the US and Indian intelligence agencies (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2009).

Conclusion

China Pakistan Economic Corridor has been marked as an emerging development in regional and global politics that heated the debate among celebrity anchor scholars. This paper analyze the associated terms of CPEC that to what extend it were coined correctly by different scholars, think tank institutions, diplomats, governmental officials and elite policy makers across the globe. The paper defining and investigate the dominant terms including, CPEC is a Game Changer, A Flagship Project of BRI, A Mega Project, A Joint Venture of China and Pakistan, A connector of three continents, A Zipper of Civilizations, An alternative Route to China bypassing Strait of Malacca, A win-win project of share destiny, Opportunity of the Millennium for Pakistan and Economic Rebirth of Pakistan. By examining these terms, this piece of paper also highlighted and conclude the contradictory aspect of the CPEC so to come up with a balance analysis and try to get the reality about the joint venture.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Flagship project of Beijing's *One Belt One Road* within three years of its inception gained global attention and termed as *The Game Changer*, *The Zipper*, *Opportunity of the Millennium* and a *Symbol of Friendship of the Iron Brothers*. For China, CPEC answers to the questions of Sovereignty, security, economy, political and strategic. For Pakistan, the completion and operation of CPEC is a game changer and rebirth of its economic and global political position. The plan of the project covers, rail, road, energy, development projects; and expansion of Gwadar port as a hub for international business that connect three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.

The project faces significant internal challenges, especially from the provinces of Baluchistan and KP that includes political controversies over the routes and investment plans. The domestic divert opinion also coupled by the external forces from Eastern and Western border of Pakistan where Indian on the one hand fully determined to sabotage CPEC ,while on the other hand New Delhi exploiting the Afghan land through diplomatic and development links and instigating anti Pakistan forces to hurt the project. It is also evident that the presence of US in Afghanistan provides required shelter to India in its strategy that ultimately benefits American in containing China. This picture of external threats to CPEC also verified by Trump new strategy that discourage Pakistan role in Afghanistan and assigned more active role for India that resulted in diplomatic proximity of Washington and New Delhi to contain China and declare Pakistan as a *terror sponsor*.

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