CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC): PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

To realize the vision of common prosperity of mankind, President Xi Jinping’s initiative on strategic vision of “One Belt One Road” or Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, are indeed manifestations of “Great Chinese Dream” of regional connectivity and enhanced economic integration which prevailed in the past and have to be revitalized for eventual benefit of relevant countries, the region and the world at large. Pakistan-China relations have special significance; therefore, Pakistan has been integrated in the esteemed project of “One Belt and One Road” through CPEC.

This paper outlines the contours of Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC), its strategic significance as part of “One Belt and One Road” vision and its paybacks to China, Pakistan and the region. Certain questions have also been put across for accruing the opportunities it offers to China and Pakistan. The paper also highlights various challenges being faced by both China and Pakistan in executing the vision and proposes way forward.

Key Words: One Belt One Road, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Win-Win Cooperation, Fate Changer for Pakistan, Regional Integration

Introduction

The Center of Gravity of world economy is leaning towards Asia with the rise of China as an economic giant at the international stage. The Chinese people are peace loving, peace searching and peace developing. With an exceptional history of more than 5000 years of uninterrupted civilization,
the Chinese nation has enormously contributed towards the progress and the development of mankind. Empirically it has been proved that Chinese nation despite foreign aggressions, invasions and humiliations have never become revengeful with personal vendetta and have never demonstrated to be hegemonic. Survival and Self Help have been the dominant underpinnings as a national priority. Thus it can be appreciated that peaceful development of China is for the better service to humanity and inclusive development of the world through win-win cooperation. China’s practical steps in line with these objectives make it clear that the good neighbour approach to diplomacy encompassed in its harmonious world concept has become the basic blueprint for its international strategy. The vision of a harmonious world stalks from the ancient Chinese culture and symbolizes the Chinese cultural desire and practice of “advocating peace”, “acting in good faith and cultivating friendship with neighbours”, and “living in harmony with all others far and near”. National rejuvenation and Peaceful development are at the core of policy planning which is summarized in the comprehensive concept of Chinese Dream. President Xi Jinping States “To realize Chinese Dream, we must adhere to peaceful development. We will unswervingly follow the road of peaceful development, unswervingly pursue the mutually beneficial and win-win strategy of opening up. We are not just committed to China’s own development; we are equally serious about fulfilling our responsibilities and making contributions to the rest of the world. Our development will not only benefit the Chinese people, but also the rest of the world”¹. It can be understood explicitly that China’s peaceful development is not China specific, rather caters for Chinese nation’s great aspirations of positive contributions towards humanity and common development of rest of the world with inclusive coexistence.
Analytical Debate on China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The Origin of CPEC

The Corridor strategy can be traced back to the 1960s as part of Pakistan’s efforts to develop Gwadar port as an alternate port and shipping hub, which could ultimately uplift province of Balochistan, serve as an important conduit for China and assume the role of regional transit and transportation hub in maritime domain. The geo strategic environment following 1960s did not favour the initiation of project, therefore remained in the background. In November 2006, President Musharraf during his visit to Beijing initiated the vision of trade corridor between China and Pakistan linking Kashgar with Gwadar via Korakoram Highway (KKH). The cornerstones of the project remained the Gwadar port and the trans-Pakistan pipeline. Pakistan’s political instability following Musharraf’s standoff with judiciary distracted the government and no worthwhile progress could be made.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his visit to Pakistan on 22-23 May 2013 outlined strategic vision of Pakistan-China Economic Corridor. The project was hailed by then President Asif Ali Zardai and the Prime Minister in waiting Mr Nawaz Sharif during their meetings with the visiting Chinese Premier. Pakistani media, think tanks and public expressed full support with lot of enthusiasm and thanked China for assisting Pakistan with huge investment. President Xi Jinping has also given his full support to the project. The vision was immediately followed by all the relevant ministries of Pakistan and China and great progress has been made in actualizing the concept.

During the visit of Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain to China in February 2014, both the countries reiterated solidifying their plans on proposed Economic Corridor. President Mamnoon Hussain stated in Beijing on last day of his visit on 19 February 2014 that “project is going to be a
monument of the century. It will benefit not only Pakistan and China, but also the whole region with billions of people”

Components of CPEC Vision

To benefit Pakistan from President Xi Jinping’s strategic vision of “One Belt and One Road” exclusive mega projects for Pakistan have been envisioned with name of “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which will serve as catalyst for Pakistan economic development”3. The proposed Economic Corridor stretches about 3000 KMs from Kashgar in Xinjiang Province to Gwadar in Balochistan Province of Pakistan. “US$ 45.6 billion have been proposed for the project which is expected to be completed by 2030”4.

Proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

In November 2014, the Government of China announced investment of $ $45.6 billion in several energy and infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of CPEC with the breakdown as; ”investment of around $33.8 billion in various energy projects and $11.8 billion in infrastructure projects. US$622 million have been pledged for the development of Gwadar port. Under the CPEC agreement, $15.5 billion worth of coal, wind, solar and hydro energy projects will add 10,400 megawatts of energy to the national grid of Pakistan to alleviate the growing energy crisis”6.
CPEC has three main components which are discussed separately.

**Karakoram Sector**

Gilgit-Baltistan, the northern extreme of CPEC is of increasing significance to the Pakistan and China as the 1984 occupation of the Siachen Glacier by the Indian army injected a militarized element into the area. The proximity of Gilgit-Baltistan to Afghanistan, Tajikistan and India, in addition to Xinjiang and Tibet, makes the region a strategic, logistical and political asset. Road connectivity with China via Karakoram Highway (KKH) enabled Pakistan to access Gilgit-Baltistan, and Xinjiang and also helps safeguard political and strategic interests of Pakistan. The structures are maintained and upgraded by Frontier Works Organization (FWO), China’s Production and Construction Corps (PCCC) and telecom companies like Huawei, Zong, ZTE and Pakistan’s Special Communications Organization (SCO), provide uninterrupted coverage to Gilgit-Baltistan including major towns along the KKH, which improves connectivity and surveillance capabilities. The up-gradation plan will convert KKH into a 90-feet wide express way for a threefold increase in the existing capacity. Corridor Development Plan is construction of 19 tunnels, which will be dug out on the road-stretch between Hunza and Khunjerab Pass. One major tunnel called “Friendship Tunnel” will pass under the infamous Khunjerab Pass, which is also known as China’s Khyber Pass will provide all weather access to revolutionize inter-regional travel and freight carriage. Further, a 1,100 km long rail-link will also be laid, which will cut the distance between Pakistan’s capital Islamabad and Kashgar to seventeen hours. In addition, oil and gas pipelines (OGP) will also run across the corridor linking the existing fuel-lanes of Central Asia and China to refineries on Pakistani ports, and the Middle East. Fiber optic communication link will also be established in second phase of the project.
Gwadar Sector

Pakistani ports and KKH are the lynchpins that ensure China’s long term economic sustainability. The Gwadar port eventually, will give China an entry point into the Arabian Gulf, thus widening its geopolitical influence in the region. China is also planning to improve the holding capacity of Gwadar port to 100,000 dead weight tonnage (dwt) of dry cargo and 200,000 dwt of oil tankers. The development and operationalisation of Gwadar Port will be of strategic significance for both China and Pakistan. Especially for China, the distance from Gwadar port to western province of Xinjiang is approximately 3000 KMs, which is significantly less than the sea route passing through Strait of Malacca, thus the trade through CPEC between Africa –Middle East and mainland China will be greatly facilitated. The oil can also be stored and pumped through proposed pipe line to China from Middle East. “In particular oil from the Middle East could be offloaded at Gwadar, which is located just outside the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and transported to China through the Balochistan province in Pakistan. Such a link would vastly cut the 12,000-kilometre route that Mideast oil supplies must now take to reach Chinese ports”7. For Pakistan, the development of Gwadar port will serve as an alternate commercial hub which provides an alternative strategic link to the mainland Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia and China. The development and expansion of Gwadar Port to enable it to operate as commercial port with allied oil and other storage facilities and construction of international airport at Gwadar will also be carried out by 2017.

Mainland Pakistan Networks

The work at fenced four-lane motorway in the country’s northwest has already begun. The 60-km-long, 4-lane fenced Hazara Motorway in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province will cost $297m and take two years to complete. The Gwadar-Kashghar route was originally planned to run through Bisima, Khuzdar, Kalat and Quetta onto Zhob, D. I. Khan, Hassan Abdal and onwards to Kashghar (Western route) but it has been
changed to Bisima, Ratodero and towards Punjab (Eastern route), which means bypassing the Baloch and Pakhtun areas. The eastern route does not include a major portion of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from where the project was otherwise supposed to wind through. According to the new plan, the corridor route turns from Havelian towards the East and links up with the Islamabad-Lahore Motorway, to include Punjab. From here, the corridor is linked to the Lahore-Karachi Motorway and then to Gwadar. That is why there were recent protests in the Senate by members from Khyber- Pashtunkhwa (KP), FATA and Balochistan. Officials at the Planning Commission argue that the completion of infrastructure in K-P and Balochistan will take a few years and thus it was imperative to utilize the existing infrastructure. This was done to accommodate Chinese concerns rooted in the security condition in K-P and Balochistan. Recently, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unanimously passed a resolution opposing any change in the western route. There is now a third plan under consideration which also envisions going through Balochistan and KP covering economically backward parts of the country.

Pakistan railways in cooperation with Chinese Consortium will establish Gwadar-Khunjrab Rail Link at an estimated cost of over US$ 2.3 Billion. Pakistan Intermodal Limited (PIL) will be Pakistan’s First Private Train Operator, to facilitate efficient and cost effective freight movement between Pak-China Economic Corridor through its well established intermodal network across Pakistan.

**Analysis of the Opportunities Brought by China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

CPEC promises enormous opportunities for China, Pakistan and the entire region. However, certain research questions have been formulated to build comprehensive debate on the opportunities:-

- Will the prospects of corridor further strengthen China and Pakistan’s relations?
- How security of both China and Pakistan will be
maximized?

- Will Pakistan be able to optimize from greater regional connectivity?
- How CPEC will become economic fate changer for Pakistan?
- What prospects of enhancing people to people contact are promised by CPEC?
- Will construction of mega projects be completed as per planned timeline?
- How CPEC will be a new modal of win win cooperation and help in building community of common interests.

**Will China and Pakistan’s Relation Solidify?**

CPEC is the practical manifestation of ever flourishing relations between China and Pakistan, where President Xi Jinping’s strategic vision of “One Belt and One Road” separately caters for development and connectivity with aim to assist Pakistan to reap the benefits of China’s economic development and regional integration initiatives. Chairman Pakistan – China Institute Islamabad Senator Mushahid Hussain opines that the “relations with China were a factor of national unity in Pakistan since all political parties and provinces supported it”8. During his visit to Pakistan in May 2013, Premier Li Keqiang stressed in his meeting with President Zardari that his visit to Pakistan will “open a new chapter in bilateral ties, chart a new course for practical cooperation and thus lift their traditional friendship to a new heights”9. He also added that “the all-weather cooperative friendship between China and Pakistan not only boasts a solid foundation but also enjoys great prospects”10. Prime Minister in Waiting at that time Nawaz Sharif in his one on one meeting with Premier Li described that "the friendly foreign policy toward China has been the common aspiration of all Pakistani people, and Pakistan regards it as a priority no matter which party takes power"11. Chinese Premier Li Kiaqing in his meeting with speaker of Pakistan’s National Assembly on 30 January 2015 stated that “China-Pakistan economic corridor functions as the strategic framework for the cooperation of the two nations”12.
Will CPEC Enhance China’s Security?

China’s economic, political and security interests are interlinked. Without short and safe overland connection to the ports, China will find its security interests compromised since it lacks blue-water naval capacity and aircraft carriers in the Gulf. With almost half of its oil imports passing through the Strait of Hormuz, China is conscious of the need to enhance its political and security influence in the region. Linking Gwadar ports overland to Chinese western provinces attains significance. Maintaining control over Khunrjab Pass will also help China maintain its control over Shaksgam and the neighbouring valleys, which otherwise may create choke points along the historical silk route and threaten Chinese control of Xinjiang. At the same time, overland access to Iran and Afghanistan from Pakistan will help reduce threat perceptions arising from the Indian and American presence in the Gulf. By approaching Afghanistan through Gilgit-Baltistan rather than Central Asia, China will benefit by avoiding competition with Russia for strategic depth in what Russia considers its near abroad.

Addressing Malak Dilemma for China?

The development and operationalisation of Gwadar Port will be of strategic significance for both China and Pakistan.
Especially for China, the distance from Gwadar port to western province of Xinjiang is approximately 3000 KMs, which is significantly less than the sea route passing through Strait of Malacca, thus the trade through CPEC between Africa–Middle East and mainland China will be greatly facilitated. The oil can also be stored and pumped through proposed pipeline to China from Middle East. “In particular oil from the Middle East could be offloaded at Gwadar, which is located just outside the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and transported to China through the Balochistan province in Pakistan. Such a link would vastly cut the 12,000-kilometre route that Mideast oil supplies must now take to reach Chinese ports”\textsuperscript{15}. Similarly, the development and opening of Chinese western provinces will be greatly facilitated. For Pakistan, the development of Gwadar port will serve as an alternate commercial hub and provide alternate strategic link to the mainland Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia and China. Addressing at Boao Forum on 14 April 2014, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated “Our geography links China and the New Silk Road to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. This is the linear dimension of our relevance with the Silk Road”\textsuperscript{16}.

**Will it result in Greater Regional Connectivity and Integration for Pakistan?**

CPEC is aimed to integrate the economies of both China and Pakistan. Several economic zones and hubs have also been planned along the proposed route to generate economic activates, alleviate poverty and offer huge economic incentives for the population to the adjoining areas of CPEC.
Apart from bilateral benefits, CPEC will also transform future of entire region driven by the economic activities, energy supplies through construction and development of ports, pipelines, railway infrastructure and roads. Senator Mushahid Hussain reiterates that “will play a crucial role in regional integration of the ‘Greater South Asia’, which includes China, Iran, Afghanistan, and stretches all the way to Myanmar”\textsuperscript{18}. Similarly, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying stated that “the corridor will serve as a driver for connectivity between South Asia and East Asia”\textsuperscript{19}. Similarly Central Asia will also get access to Gwadar through Afghanistan.

![Map of Central Asia and the Middle East](image)

(CPEC, importance for regional countries\textsuperscript{20})

CPEC is assumed to be strategically vital for both China and Pakistan due to its growing trade, regional collaboration and development of Gwadar Port. It also offers win-win opportunity for both friendly countries. According to Director General of Planning Commission of Pakistan, Syed Mujataba Hussain, “CPEC has the potentials to turn Pakistan into hub of regional cooperation if the opportunity is wisely availed in Pakistan”\textsuperscript{21}. China played a key role in the construction of Gwadar Port which was completed in 2007, with the cost of US $1.6 billion in the project. Its attractiveness derives from its location as a deep and warm-water port just 250 miles from the Strait of Hormuz through which 40% of the world’s oil supplies are transported. The operation of this port has
also been handed over to China since 2011, which was previously being operated by Singapore Port Authority.

**Will CPEC be an Economic Fate Changer for Pakistan?**

CPEC is widely believed as a fate changer for Pakistan due to unprecedented investment of US$ 45.6 billions promised by China for Pakistan. As per the statement of Senator Mushahid Hussain, The Chairman Pakistan-China Institute Islamabad “CPEC is of huge significance for the revival of Pakistan’s ailing economy, the resolution of energy crisis and strengthening of federation of Pakistan through development and building of infrastructure”22. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif in his meeting with Mr Yu Boren, the Chinese first Consul General in Lahore stated that “Pakistan-China Economic Corridor is an important step in the growing trade and economic relations between the two countries and will usher in a new era of progress and prosperity in Pakistan”23.

**Will CPEC be a new Model of Win-Win Cooperation between China and Pakistan?**

Both Pakistan and China have to gain immensely from the CPEC which contains huge potential in several fields. Khalid Masood, President of Islamabad Council of World Affairs opines that “CPEC will bring development and prosperity for both China and Pakistan. It can help China get connected with the Gulf region, Africa, Europe and the other parts of the world in an easier way and in a shorter time. Meanwhile, for Pakistan, there will be more business and trade activities in the region. Pakistan will also become the center of energy transmission from the Gulf region”24. It is widely appreciated that the successful completion of CPEC will open new vistas of commerce, trade, transportation and energy supplies.
Will CPEC provide New Opportunities for Enhancing People to People Contacts?

The ever expanding relations between China and Pakistan is manifested through Premier Li stated during his address to Pakistan’s Parliament in 2013, “Chinese people refer to Pakistan as Iron Pakistan, meaning that the Chinese people view Pakistan as a trustworthy friend and the friendship is as solid as iron”\textsuperscript{25}. Premier Li further added that although "all-weather friendship has strong public support, and urged to further expand their people-to-people and cultural exchanges as they are the solid foundation for the development of bilateral ties”\textsuperscript{26}. CPEC promises huge opportunities of people to people and cultural exchange programmes due to enhanced communication facilities and better travel and lodging facilities for tourists, media, public and students of both countries.

Will Construction of Mega Infrastructure Development Projects be timely Completed?

The proposed vision involves massive construction projects of roads, railways, infrastructure developments in the domain of transportation, trade and investment, energy and related natural resources. Construction of oil storage facilities, oil refineries at Gwadar and development of pipelines from Gwadra to Kashgar and several logistic hubs along the route have been proposed, which apart from bringing economic activities will also generate huge employment opportunities and business activities in Pakistan. The expansion and realignment of KKH will allow speed with safety and cost reduction by accommodating heavy-laden trailers under extreme climatic conditions. The corridor development project will link Central Asia and China to the Asian highway network, passing through Afghanistan and Iran. In essence, the conduit will facilitate a range of world class transport services such as freight management, trucking, modern dry-port infrastructure, an efficient logistical chain, customs clearance and border terminals, which will lead to a quantum leap in regional trade. This upgrade will ease commercial
exchanges to further integrate Pakistan’s economy with north-western China. The corridor is expected to serve the economic needs of both countries with an eye on advancing their strategic interests in the Gulf. Expanding the Karakoram Corridor to an expressway, railway line and OGP through it may help reduce the trade volume along the sea-lanes. Similarly, the existing motorway will be extended from Lahore to Karachi and further extended to Gwadar via Ratodero. Another dimension of this project in linking Balochistan and KP provinces through CPEC which will apart from infrastructure development will generate economic activities for relatively under developed provinces. The western alignment of CPEC envisages construction of road link from Gwadar to Khuzdar-Quetta-Zhob-Dera Ismail Khan-Peshawar and joining existing motorway. Similarly the project involves construction of dual carriage railway line from Multan to Peshawar, upgrading existing railway infrastructure throughout the country and linking Gwadar also with rail. Huge investment in energy sector will alleviate power shortages and provide enough power for industrial development and economic zones. By and large, CPEC will be all encompassing investment aimed at generating massive economic activities for Pakistan.

**Will CPEC help in Building Community of Common Interests?**

President Xi Jinping’s vision of One Belt and One Road is not only a grand strategic hallucination for rejuvenation of China, but is also anticipated as an advantageous conduit for the prosperity and development of relevant countries and the regions. This strategic vision will help in building the global community of shared values, mutually beneficial interest, common prosperity and common destiny through a win-win cooperation and peaceful co-existence. The underlying philosophy lays the foundations for connection of hearts and minds of the peoples of the region. It encourages promotion and cooperation in the exchange of people to people contacts especially in the fields of economy, science, trade, culture, education, transport and host of other domains as specified in
the relevant vision documents. CPEC as a part of One Belt and One Road vision also envisions the spirit of building community of common interests as it will not only benefit Pakistan but also the adjoining countries and the regions.

**Analysis of the Challenges Visualized in the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

As every new undertaking specially one of bilateral as well as regional significance will have difficulties and challenges to confront, covering variety of dimensions. The anticipated challenges in the implementation of CPEC are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

**Skepticism (Strategic Significance of Gwadar Port and Areas of Gilgit-Baltistan)**

The strategic importance and significance of Gwadar Port need not be over emphasized. Located at the mouth of Strait of Hormouz, it is a gateway to South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and China. It is also hugely important for Pakistan as an alternate port to Karachi enormous economic and commerce potentials when fully developed. Huge controversy over the development of Gwadar port has been appearing in the media with varying dimensions of analysis. United States presence in Afghanistan, the Gulf region and Middle East with competing strategic interests give much credence to negative arguments. Certain news items have also highlighted Gwadar Port as Chinese String of Pearls strategy which portrays negative propaganda despite noble intent of both Chinese and Pakistani Governments. These are purely development and economic oriented projects aimed at bringing prosperity and stability of Pakistan and the region. CPEC may also enhance the threat perception among the neighbours, especially India which claims Gilgit-Baltistan as party of J&K thus lays claim. Some analysts see Chinese projects as part of its plans to encircle India.
Non Availability of Broad Based Road Map for CPEC

Premier Li Keqiang proposed CPEC in May 2013 and later on President Xi Jinping had announced this strategic vision of One Belt and One Road in September 2013. Despite huge government and peoples’ enthusiasm in both countries, a comprehensive Road Map along with implementation strategies have not been announced. The information provided to public is generally through print media in bits and pieces which generally lacks coherence.

Lack of Adequate Publicity

Despite lapse of more than two years, the esteemed project is highly under reported in both electronic and print media in China as well as in Pakistan. Public in both countries is also not very well informed about the contours of the projects. Similarly, in the international media, occasional appearance in the form of short statements are some of the challenges with respect to publicity, which are creating uncertainties and allowing space to those elements who are interested in the negative propaganda.

Challenges posed by Regional Power Politics

China believes in five principles of peaceful coexistence. The fundamental ingredient of China’s foreign policy philosophy is that it does not believe in power politics. “China will not play power politics and will not interfere in other countries internal affairs. China will not impose its own ideology on other countries”\(^27\). In the backdrop of regional power politics, like USA’s presence in Afghanistan, Gulf, Middle East, USA’s relationship with India and Pakistan and China’s own relations with both countries indeed pose challenges with respect to managing regional Power Politics. Although not very much debated now a days, USA’s own initiative of New Silk Route connecting Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India is also one of the issues which has to be deliberately addressed. Managing regional Power politics which will prove to be major impediments for the
successful completion of CPEC. No alternate other than skilful diplomacy and removing misperception through enhanced multi channel communication and win-win cooperation can help in managing the power politics and converting competing interests into common and mutually beneficial interests for benefit of Pakistan, China and indeed the entire region.

**Suspicious regarding Gwadar Port**

Pakistan has demonstrated marked excellence in managing her relations with two great powers i.e. USA and China. Despite roller coaster ride, the relations with USA are on upward trend. Pakistan’s deep rooted friendship with China is exemplary and not at the cost of any other country. Pakistan has to demonstrate statecraft in managing and balancing these relations as both are very vital for Pakistan. As highlighted at paragraph 4.4, there are occasional negative reports on CPEC in international media especially with reference to Gwadar port.

**Institutional Capacity Building of Pakistan**

Absorption capacities especially in view of struggling security situation is also challenging and uphill task. The ministerial working and approval system, availability of skilled labour, construction material, power generation facilities and output, transportation means and availability etc are some of the challenges which may retard the progress of the project. Capacity enhancement before commencement of work will impose big challenge.

**Security and Safety of Chinese Nationals working in Pakistan and Issue of Terrorism/ Extremism**

Despite fool proof security arrangements, yet there have been sporadic incidents in the past directed against Chinese citizens working on several projects in Pakistan, thus constraining the bilateral relations. With promised investment of US$ 45.6 billion under CPEC unfolding in near future, many Chinese experts will be coming to Pakistan. Despite
being universal trend, this has affected China and Pakistan the most. TTP and Alqaida in Afghanistan and ETIM in China have been involved in heinous crimes of terrorism in both the countries. Despite enormous sacrifices and valiant operations conducted by Pakistani security forces, the criticism still continues in the western media. Pakistan and China has good understanding on counter terrorism efforts on ETIM. During his visit to Beijing in November 2014, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated “Pakistan would resolutely fight the East Turkestan Islamic Movement terrorist force”\textsuperscript{28}. Managing the issue of terrorism and extremism will be highly significant in future bilateral relations of both countries. Similarly, the proposed alignment of CPEC will have to pass through Chinese Province of Xingjian where ETIM has been active, Province of KPK where Pakistani Taliban have been operating and Province of Balochistan where occasional law and order incidents have been taking place in the past.

**Consistency of Policies and Security of Chinese Investment in Pakistan**

There is no denying the fact that irrespective of form of government in Pakistan, relationship with China has been carried forward as national obligation and priority. However, it is regretted to express that on the eve of planned first visit of President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in September 2014 to India and Pakistan could not take place due to political deadlock in Islamabad. This is a significant setback in our history of relations when viewed from Pakistan public point of view as it materialized for India. However, recent visit on 20-21 April 2015 has been celebrated by across wide segments of Pakistani society.

**Way Forward**

After comprehensive debate on the opportunities and challenges brought by CPEC, certain recommendations are highlighted in the succeeding paragraphs.
Perception Management

These are purely development and economic oriented projects aimed at bringing prosperity and stability to the region; therefore, have to be portrayed in the same manner. Pakistan needs to signify the importance of an alternative port due to enormous commerce at Karachi port. Themes be developed to counter controversy over Gwadar port. The noble intent behind the project needs to be highlighted by both Chinese and Pakistani Governments to obviate Indian perception of encirclement.

Issuance of Policy for Unanimous Approach

A comprehensive White Paper on CPEC highlighting the spirit, motivations, benefits, details of projects with implementation strategies and timelines be issued for rejuvenation of Pakistan public and adopting “Whole of Nation Approach”.

Widespread Publicity

It is strongly felt that as an esteemed national priority for bringing good to the Pakistani nation, economic development and prosperity, the national and international media and public have to be galvanized through wide media coverage on the purpose, intent and efficacy of CPEC under overall strategic vision of “One Belt One Road” project through extensive debates, newspaper coverage, seminars and symposiums to convey the spirit of this project. “Whole of Nation” and “Whole of Government” approach is suggested for wider publicity which will not only inform the audience but will also generates the ownership across the length and breadth of Pakistan and China.

Managing the Regional Power Politics

No alternate other than skilful diplomacy and removing misperception through enhanced multichannel communication and win-win cooperation can help in
managing the power politics and converting competing interests into common and mutually beneficial interests for benefit of Pakistan, China and indeed the entire region.

Managing Relations with Leading Nations

Pakistan has to demonstrate statecraft in managing and balancing these relations as both are very vital for Pakistan. Pakistan has to proceed proactively in balancing her relations with USA and China and counter media strategy to portray the correct spirit and noble intent of CPEC as it is for the prosperity and economic development of Pakistani nation.

Aptitude for Concurrent/Myriad Works

Capacity enhancement in required fields and relevant departments should be concurrently undertaken, otherwise work on the project may impede due to several capacity related issues.

Issues of Terrorism and Extremism

The existing level of cooperation has to be further optimized and joint efforts are recommended to be undertaken in defeating three evil forces ie, terrorism, extremism and separatism which may impede the work on CPEC. Extra ordinary security measures are recommended to defeat the visualized designs of evil forces for uninterrupted work on CPEC.

Broad-based policies for continuity of CPEC

As CPEC is a long term project therefore, the consistency of policies by each following government as esteemed national priority has to be ensured as it is in our vital national interest. Similarly, constitutional guarantees in the form of appropriate legislation be carried out by the parliament for security of Chinese investments and continuity of CPEC.
Conclusion

China has proven to be a time tested friend and with a clear policy towards Pakistan. It has helped Pakistan in number of ways like economically, diplomatically and technologically. In the emerging world order, this relationship is likely to grow further as it is based on mutual respect and mutual trust. For Pakistan, there are immense opportunities, which can be capitalized through wisdom and pragmatic leadership. Pakistan needs to exercise strategic patience in the short term and improve upon domestic stability and economic situation to make strides in achieving positive relevance and rightful place in the comity of nations. In all probability, strong China in the future will play a more positive role for Pakistan. In the context of service to mankind, The “One Belt and One Road” is unique initiative of President Xi Jinping of 21st century which is focused on common development and prosperity of mankind and lasting stability of relevant countries and the regions due to enhanced economic integration. The noble project has benign intent aimed at enhancing people to people contacts, rejuvenate and reinforce the resources integration and promote common development of Asia, Europe, Middle East and Africa alike and contribute towards growth of global economies. CPEC as part of One Belt and One Road initiative is testimony of ever growing Pakistan China friendship which promises economic and development turnaround of Pakistan, therefore, has to be vigorously pursued.
Notes


3 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s Statement after Meeting with President Xi Jinping at Beijing in November 2014 at APEC Conference

4 ibid


6 ibid

7 ibid

8 ibid


10 ibid

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