

## **China Pakistan Economic Corridor: Peace, Prosperity and Conflict Resolution in the Region**

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### **Abstract**

*China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a God given opportunity for Pakistan and rest of the region. It opens Pakistan for the rest of the world where it can perform greater role in keeping peace and prosperity in the region. China, Central Asia and rest of the world will get benefits from this connective corridor. CPEC's dream to connect the world. Pakistan will play the role of bridge between East and West, and also between North and South, where the trade and transportation routes crisscross in Pakistan. Furthermore, the connection of the inter and intra-regional states lead to interdependence, which in turn develop the convention of collective security, ultimately, the goal of peace, prosperity and conflict resolution are achieved. This study finds out that open invitation from Pakistan and China to CPEC (integral part of BRI) will connect South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East, that led to economic growth, economic dependence and regional integration. As a result peace, prosperity and conflicts resolution will prevail in the long run. The aim of this study is to investigate CPEC role in bringing peace and prosperity on the one hand and led to conflict resolution in South Asia on the other hand.*

**Key words:** CPEC, Conflict Resolution, Peace & Prosperity, Collective Security, Pakistan, China

### **Introduction**

In the twenty first century, the geostrategic importance of South Asia is rising because of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is the important component of the one belt one road initiative (BRI). CPEC, started point is Gawadar a deep water port connects to the China's province of Xinjiang. Being part of the BRI, once CPEC is completely started functioning, it will improve the political, social and economic situation of the regional states and will raise the geo-strategic importance. CPEC is the priority of both states China and Pakistan, for Pakistan, CPEC pass through Pakistan's geography, is outlet for the landlocked

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countries and provides access to the supply and demands market to regional countries, while it is very short route for China, CPEC replace 13000 km only into 2500 km to reach to Middle East.<sup>1</sup> So both the states have an instinct desire to continue it irrespective of change in the government.

Not only this, CPEC will boost up the regional states' economy, ensure peace and prosperity in the region. Political, social and economic degradation in South Asia, created a hurdle in the cooperation among the regional countries. Security issues, terrorism, over population, economic disparities, lacking of education and modern inventions, lacking of health facilities, poor economic setup, water issues etc. devastated the life style and hindered the progress, development and peace in the region. CPEC is a turning point in the history of Asians' countries, it is not only a game changer and a target for Pakistan and China but a project for the whole region. Goal of this project is to promote commerce and trade culture, integrate the regional states for the development of economy, agriculture and industries. Furthermore, it is a source of peace, prosperity and conflicts resolutions in the region through economic development, economic dependence and regional integration.

CPEC is a sign of peace and affluence for the whole region as for Pakistan. Being economic zone it will bring political, social and especially economic growth in the region. However, this research work deals with analyse the CPEC role in bringing peace and prosperity on the one hand and led to conflict resolution in South Asia on the other hand.

### **What is CPEC?**

The CPEC is the part of one belt, one road has featuring of common advantages and prosperity, containing on complimentary interest, cooperation and collaboration and mutual benefits. A widespread transport corridor, industrial and trade cooperative rout between China and Pakistan, having the potential of people to people contact and communication, sources of cultural diffusion and exchange. Additionally, CPEC has the ability of political, social and economic growth, bringing peace, prosperity and security in region<sup>2</sup>.

The CPEC covers the areas starting from a muslim majority province Xinjiang Uygur in China and almost all provinces Pakistan. Main areas through which CPEC passes are Kashgar, Atushi, Tumshuq, Shule, Shufu, Akto, Tashkurgan Tajik, Gilgit, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Quetta, Sukkur, Hyderabad, Karachi and Gwadar. Furthermore, the CPEC will comprise one belt, three passageways, and two axes and five functional zones.

### **Peace, Prosperity and Conflict Resolutions**

Narrowly peace is defined as the passivity and acceptance of injustice and cruelty without showing reaction.<sup>3</sup> It may also be turn as the complete absence of war which simply fall in the negative peace category, but actually peace is more than that, it is based on the political, social and economic development of society and elimination of the injustice, and violations of the human rights.<sup>4</sup> More elaborately, peace focused on the modern concept of democracy, liberalism and postmodern society, which is really related to the deconstruction of the parochial society, snatch powers from single body and share with rest of the society, where there is popular democracy is observed. Where there is no exploitation of the individual and restriction on the abusive use of the authorities.<sup>5</sup> Nonviolence, the philosophy of Gandhi and Bacha Khan, is the part of positive peace, where there is no violation of the law, demand for rights under the shadow of law, no threats are used during protest and strikes. So, by this way there is risk for the conflicts, violations and war. Demand for right by using violence fall under the umbrella of negative peace. Jonathan Schell fruitfully summarised the dilemma of non-violence as cooperation, collective action consist on the mutual consent against abusive and parochial power and compel those actions which are taken against them.<sup>6</sup> However, it is a very emotive term which has many heads and tails has not absolute end, in short the think tankers are in seeking to find easy way to bring cooperation, consensus, mediations, resolutions and more effective ways to resolve the issues and disputes, and transform the causes of war into peace.

Perpetual peace is possible in resolving the conflicts, but due to anarchy in the international community, there is conflict. Disagreements, irrational demands, denial and counter claim leads to conflicts. So, prevention of the conflicts, mediation, management and resolution fascinated the international community, because the cost of war and conflicts is higher. For the conflict resolution, various methods are used as the tactics of good offices, arbitration, enquiry, negotiation, problem setting workshop, second track diplomacy, reconciliation and judicial settlement.<sup>7</sup> However, conflict resolution depends upon clear assurance from all parties.

### **CPEC Role in Bringing Peace and Prosperity & Peace through Economic Growth & Regional Integration:**

Political, social and economic interdependence society, reduce the chances of conflicts and war. Liberal thinkers probe out that free trade and economic interdependence flourish peace and eliminate the risk of militancy. The theory of *Economic Opportunity Cost Hypothesis* investigated that economic interdependence increase the level of integration among nations,

consequently there is the eruption of peace and alleviated the condition of war<sup>8</sup>. Economically weak states, where is economically disintegrated states are mostly enhanced in conflicts with each other. So, it is the benefits of trade globalization which decreases conflicts among nations. The theory of *Neo-Functionalism* which discussed norms and values of the Europe integration, has focused that cooperation and harmonization in one sector open the routes of another for the cooperation.<sup>9</sup> Where, further expansion of the chain of integration, cooperation and as a result peace enhances in society. Like European states, Afghanistan, Iran, India, Pakistan, China and other central Asian states have the capacity of regional integration through CPEC. The CPEC has the potential of cooperation, integration, economic growth, and forged unity among regional states. According to the norms of Neo-Functionalism, CPEC provides an opportunity of free trade, economic dependence, transportation and regional integration through functional cooperation.

South Asia is the most exacerbated region in the world, because of militancy, conflicts, overpopulation, less development, lacking of education and specially the arm race among nations. Terrorism in the region (Afghanistan and Pakistan) created security dilemma and furthermore the conflicts of Pakistan and India over Kashmir worsen the situation, which disturb the economic chain in the region for a long time. CPEC bestowed the best opportunity to resolve the conflicts and created peace through geo-economics and geo-politics. This corridor has the capacity to create economic interdependence in the region and regional integration because of functional cooperation based on common interest and needs.<sup>10</sup> CPEC network connected the regional and extra-regional countries through, economic trade, liberalization of economy, free policies and open membership, to get advancement in commerce and trade on global level.<sup>11</sup> Being part of the of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC has the capacity to interconnect China, Pakistan, Iran, India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, West Asia, not only this other states of the Central Asia are also may connected with this corridor through India. After Passing through Asia, CPEC enter into Europe through “One Belt, One Road” strategy.<sup>12</sup> By this way CPEC created cooperation among adjacent and de-adjacent countries, and lead to peace and prosperity through economic dependence, as the China’s Assistant Foreign Minister opined that peace, prosperity and economic development of CPEC not only limited to China and Pakistan but to the whole region.<sup>13</sup> Similar view has been presented by the Ex-PM Nawaz Sharif during his visit to Turkmenistan, CPEC would be beneficial for everyone in the region in the socio-economic perspective, as he said that “CPEC will offer opportunities for hundreds of millions of people.” But it is necessary to promote peace in the region because without peace, development remains just words on

the tongue, as he further mentioned that peace and prosperity are connected with each other. Furthermore, flourishing the popular concept of happiness and prosperity Nawaz Sharif added, that my government will ensure Regional integration and connectivity. It will help us to work together towards pursuing our common objective of strengthening peace and bringing development in our region. In fact CPEC is an opportunity where Pakistan and other countries of the region have to work for the betterment of our people.”<sup>14</sup> So, through integration of the regional states, CPEC has a great role in the flourishing of the peace, prosperity and development in the region.

### **Peace through Security in the Region**

The issue of terrorism, militancy, Kashmir disputes, crimes as piracy, human trafficking and problems around the Indian Oceans, are created severe affection over the region regarding international trade and commerce, crumpling of economy and security threats. These issues also devastating the security and economic situation of Pakistan, therefore, responding to these devastating issues is one of the foremost priorities of Pakistan and China. China-Pakistan adopted joint struggle for the fortification of their maritime security to bring peace and stability in the region and secure the CPEC from insecurity.<sup>15</sup>

To insure security and peace in the region China and Pakistan cooperated on security with each other, where it would not only boost the security of the CPEC but also maintain peace in the region. Both states are agreed on joint strategy for security in the region. The issue of terrorism in Pakistan and as well in China (Xinjiang region) as a severe matter in the region, this is a harsh threat to peace.<sup>16</sup> Along with Pakistan, China, too, raised special security mechanism to protect the CPEC and Western areas. The project of CPEC bring China and Pakistan to collective security, both the state extend their military operations to naval, their special joint cooperation against piracy in seas.<sup>17</sup> There is a power dominance game in the Indian Oceans i.e. the United States and India have close ambitions in the Indian Oceans to contain China role in the region. As a consequent, Sino-Pak has close agenda on seas and alliance to protect South Asia from the US-Indo dominance.<sup>18</sup> To create a balance of power in the region, China-Pakistan struggle to convert Gawader Port into naval base in the near future.

CPEC is a foundation of collective security among China, Pakistan and Russia and would be consider as a super power triangle. China and Pakistan invited Russia to join deep sea route Gawader, where a secret meeting was held between the chief of Russia and Pakistan’s high officials. The important agendas of the meeting were containing on strengthening their military and defence ties, they also focused on the sharing of intelligence

information and show interest of cooperation between the two, there was also discussion on the trade and it was realized to the Russian's officials about the economic opportunities on related to CPEC.<sup>19</sup> Global Times, China's premier English language news outlet that Russia participation in the CPEC would strengthening the security system and would prevent the international community including India unnecessary interference and worries of threats for CPEC<sup>20</sup>. So, Russian joining in CPEC will push the threats of India and US, and it also means to turn away from India and make an alliance with Pakistan and China.

China also uses CPEC as alternative to South China Sea, China imported oil from OPEC (Oil and Petroleum Exported Countries) countries, as Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. China uses a long route while importing oil, it passes through Gulf and reaches to Strait of Hormuz after that oil ships enter into Arabian Sea, then passing on Indian Oceans these ships join Strait of Malacca and then enter into South China Sea, from here it reach into Honking. So, this route passes through South China Sea, there is no other alternative route. But there are a lot of problems as there are rich resourceful islands i.e. Paracel Island, Spratly Island and Scarborough Shoal Island, many states like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippine, Brunei and Taiwan wants to have possession over it, and anyone who control over South China Sea will control over commercial activities.<sup>21</sup> China Claimed over the Nine Dash Line, but other countries rejected China claim. So, for solution of the problems UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) divided Nine Dash Line into many states and dismissed the China claimed over South China Sea.<sup>22</sup> Not only this, South China Sea is also a very long rout for China. So, CPEC is a very fruitful for China's trade, which keep save China from all problems that occurring on South China Sea. CPEC is a very short way as compare to South China Sea, furthermore it will support China to develop the Western part of China where only six percent population are living.

Social, political and economic stability is essential factors for the eradication of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. Poverty, unemployment and illiteracy permeate terrorism, militancy and insecurity. Unfortunately, Pakistan is facing poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lacking of tolerance, lacking of democracy and poor condition of life, as a consequent, there is militancy, extremism, terrorism and radicalisation. The terrorist groups in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Now integrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), insurgency in Baluchistan is the outcome of the mentioned reasons. Furthermore, ill-policy of the government regarding launching war against USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) and the war against terrorism as front line for the United States (US) devastated peace. Although, Pakistan faced the ill-fated situation, but luckily, God bestowed the best

opportunity of CPEC, as a milestone for the development of economy, commerce, trade and industries. CPEC will boost up Pakistan's economy and will eradicate the issues of insecurity, unemployment, raise sources of economy and will bring peace in Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

### **CPEC and Conflict Resolutions in the Region**

Any political deadlock, whither bilateral or multilateral, if could not resolve, it may create threats on domestic and regional level. As, the political history of Pakistan and South Asia is full of political issues, whither it is related to Kashmir issue, terrorism, ethnicity, conflicts or the cold war issue etc. These are very severe faults among different nations in South Asia and hindering to cooperation and peace in the region.

The issue of Kashmir many times have caused of war between Pakistan and India<sup>24</sup>, this issue is the main cause of other conflicts between the two i.e. the issue of the Uri Attack, India claim for "Surgical Strikes", claim of terrorism and counter terrorism, political and geo-strategic interest in Afghanistan and recently the "the terrorist attack at Pulwama". These are the main causes of hindrance for cooperation and peace in the South Asia. Furthermore Pakistan role in the war against Soviet Union 1979 in Afghanistan, with support of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) ISI (Inter Service Intelligence) defeated Soviet Union in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> So, this issue kept away Pakistan from Russia to have a positive relation. Turning to Pak-Afghan relations, in historical perspective there were many ups and downs between the two. Both the states mostly claim and counter claim against each other for supporting insurgents and interference in the affairs of each other.<sup>26</sup> So, these are the main issues in South and Central Asia which hindered every bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations and cooperation among the regional states.

The CPEC is the God bestowed opportunity, to resolve political and economic conflicts and grievances, increase connectivity through trade among South Asian's states. China and Pakistan invited different states from South Asia, Middle East and Europe to join this corridor. Spokesperson of China's Foreign Affairs Geng Shuang declared that CPEC is an "open initiative", for everyone to be part of this project on the principle of equality.<sup>27</sup> So, open invitation on the basis of equality for all could pave the way to resolve the conflicts like Kashmir, terrorism, issues with Afghanistan and Russia and will bring peace and prosperity in the region. Furthermore it will more strengthen the all-weather friendship of China and Pakistan as stated by the Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua that CPEC project is totting up a strong dimension to the all-weather friendship ties between Pakistan and China.<sup>28</sup>

It feels greatly encouraged to conflicts resolution and a road to healing that CPEC integrated most of the countries in the region. The response of the Russia, Iran, Bangladesh,

Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan in account of CPEC is very useful and valuable for conflicts resolution, increasing peace and bringing prosperity in the region. Mostly of the states consider the CPEC as a good omen for the economic growth, culture exchange, people to people contact and decreasing grievances among the regional states. The mentioned states have a valuable response to CPEC, which are observing below.

During Cold War era Pak-Russia had remain in worse relations with each other, but recently bring improvement in their relations and turn to friendship because of CPEC. The former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif openly invited all countries in and out of the region to join CPEC during a conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. On the invitation of Pakistan and China, Russia gave a very positive response, the government of Russia not only accept the invitation but also sent a delegation of high official to Pakistan. During meeting, there were discussions on the security issues in the region and elimination of the economic deficiencies.<sup>29</sup> So, it is hypothesizes that if Russia become a part of the CPEC, it would bring a strong military alliance among China, Pakistan and Russia. It will be a very positive step in the development of CPEC and BRI, because it will push the threats of US and India, because they have an instinct desire to sabotage the CPEC. Not only this, Russian participation in CPEC will also affected terrorism, strong security will make narrow the sphere of terrorism, and bring peace and prosperity in the region. Furthermore it will erase grievances between Pakistan and Russia.

Afghanistan has also desired for joining the CPEC, being a landlocked country, it is a good omen for Kabul, because CPEC would facilitated Afghanistan to reach to the international market. Afghanistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Omer Zakhilwal declared while interview to Dawn that CPEC is a big project that is as relevant to Afghanistan as it is to Pakistan. He further said that anything that will be good for Pakistan will be good for the entire region.”<sup>30</sup> Further he added, “CPEC is very much relevant to Afghanistan and it takes much interest in the project.”<sup>31</sup> The Afghan delegate also mentioned that to join CPEC will heal the injury of Afghanistan what the war of terrorism provided to Afghanistan for a decades. So, the participation of Afghanistan in the CPEC, will provided an open chance for the development and prosperity. Having engagement in the regional politics and economy will bring peace in Afghanistan, it will also reduce anxiety between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Because CPEC is an economic corridor, which enhances economic dependence, as result there will be no war if both the states Pakistan and Afghanistan want to success the project. Another side CPEC will also reduce Afghanistan dependence on India, which is a

positive option for Pakistan. As a consequent, the border issues will be ultimately eliminated between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Being sharing of 900 km long border, Pak-Iran have a very cordial relations with each other, there is no border disputes between the two states. To enhance good relations, Iran was the first country in the Muslim world to recognize the independence of Pakistan, while in response the latter accepted the regime after revolution in Iran. However, relations between the two tremendously change because of changing the interest, Pakistan give preference to United States and Saudi Arabia, while Iran has hostility with US and security threats from Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the interest game during Cold War diverged relations, Iran supported the Afghan's Hazarian tribes while Pakistan pushed the Pakhtun tribes, as consequent, there was emerging of security issues in post-Cold War. In the current scenario, Iran has cordial relations with India, through Iran, India supported the militancy in Baluchistan, the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav<sup>32</sup> (agent of the RAW), proving the India-Iran cordial relations. But CPEC through regional integration change the ill-fated situation between Pakistan and Iran. The official visit of the Iran's President in 2017 and his instinct desire of focusing on Gawadar, which is a sign of good relations. Iran's Representative to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoost articulating Iran's aspiration to join while speaking the Oxbridge lecture in Islamabad in early 2017 must be taken utterly so that two-sided trade maybe amplified to an extensive level.<sup>33</sup> For reducing the influence of India and having peaceful relations with Iran, Pakistan should motivate Iran to join CPEC, not only this, Pakistan should aware China to increase their trade with Iran for the development of CPEC. By this way, there will be elimination of conflicts and peace be enhance in the region.

It should be kept in mind that CPEC is not only a game changer for China and Pakistan but for the whole region. Although, its fruits have direct link with China and Pakistan, but it also provides it share with rest of the states. Pakistan use CPEC as a game changer in respect of economic growth, prosperity and conflicts resolution in the region. So, Pakistan will use CPEC to solve the issue of Kashmir with India, although in current situation, India is an opposition to CPEC. But very soon, India will reluctantly join CPEC because of economic interest and involvement in the politics of Asia. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), which belong to business class can be pressed the government to join CPEC.<sup>34</sup> A former public finance bureaucrat analysed that India joining in CPEC, is fall into the interest of Indian economy, it will not only boost up its economy but also engaged with rest of the states in the region including China, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> So, Indian

integration in CPEC will reduce the tension between Pakistan and India and will side line the old rivalries.

### **Conclusion**

For a long time the politics of South Asian states maintained on realist oriented approach, parochial politics, arm race, security centric, having no room for the liberalism and solution for the regional and domestic problems. But CPEC, as a component of BRI opens the door of modernization in the region because of economic dependence and regional integration. CPEC has the potential of economic growth, regional integration, peace and prosperity. There is a misconception regarding CPEC that this corridor is only giving fruits to Pakistan and China, but actually, this mega project is going to reconstruct the social, political and economic situation not only in South Asia and Central Asia, but also Middle East. CPEC, as a source of peace, prosperity and conflicts resolution, but there is the condition of transparency and quality to bring more chances of economic growth in future. In the post-CPEC will further strengthen the ties of regional integration and raises chances of cooperation, peace and eradication of militancy, terrorism and conflicts in region.

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