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CHINA-PAK ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL PARADIGMS

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ABSTRACT

The geography of a country determines its role in the world affairs. Pakistan is located at a very significant strategic place on the globe. It is situated at the juncture of energy proficient to the energy deficient countries. The Gawadar Port in Pakistan is positioned at the Arabian Sea which is 72 Kilometers far from Iran, 320 Kilometers from Cape al-Hadd in Oman and about 400 Kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz and relates to the Persian Gulf. Gawadar as a key shipping point may be able to play a key role in ensuring China's energy security as it provides a much shorter route than the current 12,900 km route from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Malacca to the eastern seaboard of China. China has been building its leading role in Asia and beyond for economic and political cooperation through "One Belt One Road". OBOR project has two components: first, the land-based 'New Silk Road'; and second, a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road through a vast network of transport corridors, pipelines, ports and fiber-optic cables spreading across the entire Eurasian landmass connecting East Asia, Central and South Asia, the Middle East and parts of Europe. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (hereafter CPEC) is very vital and a joint venture of Pakistan and China to connect Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region with the Southwestern Pakistani port of Gawadar. Under CPEC, China will invest \$46 billion in Pakistan for the development of infrastructure and energy for the next 15 to 30 years. The four main pillars of CPEC are Gawadar port, communication infrastructure, energy infrastructure and industrial zones. Pakistan will serve as a crucial bridge between China and Central Asia; South Asia and the Middle East. This paper makes an analysis of the strategic parameters of CPEC from both the Chinese and Pakistani perspectives.

KEYWORDS

CPEC, Gawadar, Kashgar, OBOR, Silk Route, Energy Corridor, Pivot Asia Policy

1. STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINA-PAK ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

The geographical location of a country determines its role in the world politics. It denotes that critically how beneficial or non-beneficial one country is to the others in terms of the social, economic and political aspects. Strategically, Pakistan is located at a very significant geo-strategic place on the globe. It is situated at the juncture of energy proficient to the energy deficient countries. The geo-strategic importance of Pakistan is evident from the fact that it is bordered by the emerging economic giants of the world i.e. India and China, and by the countries rich in abundant natural resources i.e. Afghanistan and Iran (Mehmood). Historically it is evident that the very concept of a corridor has been a cause of development in different parts of the world. In the post-1945-time, European Economic Community was formed in 1957, which was later incorporated and renamed as the European Community (EC) in November 1993 and then reformed to the European Union (EU) in 2009, based on the pillars of free movement of people, goods, services and capital. The idea of establishment of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) encompassing Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar under the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Economic Cooperation Programme is also parallel to the concept of establishment of economic corridor for promoting trade and people to people contact by interaction (Ahmar, 2015).

Economic corridors have emerged in the recent years as an important tool of regional cooperation, integration and development in a globalized world under reciprocity. Following the experience of economic integration at the regional level through a network of transnational economic corridors in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), similar initiatives have now been stimulated in different parts of Asia to speed up economic growth by linking backward regions with more established industrial centres and to improve access to markets through the incorporation of trans-border production networks (Ranjan, 2015). The idea of building mega projects through Pakistan is not novel. In the late 1990's an earlier American proposed project under consideration, in which the oil and gas would have been transported by a pipeline from the oil-rich Central Asian Republics (CARs), through Afghanistan and Baluchistan Province of Pakistan was dropped due to the security concerns. It demonstrates the capacity of Baluchistan to play a pivotal role in the overall economy and the enhancement of the objectives of national interest of Pakistan. Keeping in mind the changing geo-strategic environment, Pakistan is looking forward to improve security of its largest province. Russia, which had a cooled relationship with Pakistan at one time in the history, is now warming up and has shown keen interest into the economic corridor, besides building Karachi to Lahore gas pipeline (Khan T.). China as being the neighbour of South Asia has a special significance in enhancing the agenda of constructive engagements, which is now evident from the active involvement of Chinese leadership in South Asian region. Mr. Xi visited South Asian countries, and announced huge investment packages and trade enhancement programmes for mutual benefits and regional integration (Ramay). China is going to build its leading role in Asia and beyond for economic and political cooperation through "One Belt One Road (OBOR)" initiative (Wang J., 2015). The "One Belt One Road" plan integrates an area with a population of 4.4 billion people and a total economic volume of US \$ 21 trillion, being 29 percent of the world's total (X, 2015). OBOR project consists of two major components: first, the network of land-based 'New Silk Road'; and secondly, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The aim is to create a Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) altogether through a huge network of transportation corridors, oil & gas pipelines, ports and fibre-optic cables spreading across the entire Eurasian landmass linking

East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East and parts of Europe (Ranjan, 2015). Chinese Premier Mr. Li Keqiang during his visit to Pakistan from 22 to 23 May 2013, wished-for a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in relation to connect Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region with the Southwestern Gawadar Port of Pakistan (Ministry of Foreign affairs, 2013). The strategic bonds between Pakistan and China have been on an upward trajectory with moved thrust on economic interaction after the initiation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project since 2013. Under CPEC, China would invest \$46 billion in Pakistan for the development of transportation infrastructure and energy projects. CPEC is a futuristic socio-political & economic object oriented dimension of Pakistan in the 21st century. This multi-faceted project has opened new vistas of Pakistan's rebalancing options from geo-politics to geo-economics. It comprises four pillars namely, the infrastructure, the energy requirements, workforce development and economic progress. CPEC project is not an economic and financial aid given to Pakistan but an investment for the next 15 to 30 years. This time frame is significant for Pakistan as it is the period in which Pakistan by the utilization of its resources and manpower could bring Pakistan in line to the mainstream of global economies. It has been anticipated that if CPEC has been utilized properly, it would bounce the economy of Pakistan from three to four times (Ijaz A., 2016).

CPEC project was initially projected by China in May 2013. Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping came to visit Pakistan in April 2015, and both sides decided for enhancement of relationship towards an all-weather strategic partnership (Lu, 2015). During President Xi's visit, Pakistan and China signed fifty-one agreements (BBC, 2015). CPEC is a 'flagship project' of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative and the economic & energy corridors are explicitly designed to stimulate economic growth. It is appropriate to mention here that CPEC is a long-term broader framework with multiple dimensional proposed projects, which would be accomplished in different phases through bilateral agreements approved by the both sides as a win-win equation (Khan T.). CPEC is the most advanced part of the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) Initiative. It might be possible to acquire a deeper understanding of the New Silk Road by looking at how CPEC develops and influences Pakistan and its neighbouring countries (Esteban, 2016). The main pillars of CPEC are: Gawadar port, communication infrastructure, energy infrastructure and industrial zones (Rizvi, 2015). The major aim of corridor (CPEC) is to enhance the well-being of people throughout the country and to bring about long-term socio-economic prosperity and political stability (Tiezzi, 2016). The corridor emphasizes to facilitate multi-dimensional economic collaboration in finance, trade, energy, and industry. The leadership of both countries has built an all-weather friendship and close political relationship over the previous years. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Council was established in 2015 to jointly address the challenges arising in the CPEC projects (Pak-China Economic Corridor Council Launched in Islamabad, 2015). The (CPEC) council has opened offices in both Beijing and Islamabad respectively, with the purpose to assist and oversee the implementation of CPEC projects (China-Pakistan economic Corridor Council: council Profile). CPEC apprehends the new certainties of global and regional politics by humanizing a more systematic, up-graded and need-based collaboration for socio-economic, industrial, energy and trade development (Rizvi, 2015). CPEC has been assumed by having potential to be a game changer for Pakistan and for the whole region as well. It may be able to play crucial role through economic incentives and regional amalgamation in the form of networks, connectivity and partnerships. It is a mega project that has the capability to transform the lives of the people in the

region by opening common vistas of co-operation and development in the field of economic integration. CPEC is the far-reaching part of the Chinese leadership and motivated vision of modernization of ancient Silk Road under the new One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. This would integrate countries such as Egypt in the Middle East, European Countries and important global points in Eurasia. The network intensifying in the form of Land Silk routes and Maritime Silk routes would link the regional countries through trade leading to an economic boom in the region (Ijaz A., 2016). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is very vital and a joint venture of Pakistan and China, having the desire of making Pakistan as one of the most strategically important countries in the region. China will benefit from this economic corridor, which would reduce trade route of China from 12000 Km via sea, to 2000 Km via land i.e. from Kashgar in China to Gawadar in Pakistan. China and Pakistan have a very strong friendship, and this initiative (CPEC) will further strengthen this correlation, by making China a stakeholder in Pakistan's future (Khan T.). The construction of CPEC is an important agreement extended by the leaders of China and Pakistan. It will optimize the trade and energy cooperation between China and Pakistan and will benefit to over three billion people in China, South Asia and Middle East (Rafi, 2016).

The Khunjerab pass, the boundary between China and Pakistan is referred to as the world's highest paved border passage, in the Karakorum Mountains. The Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC) will move from Khunjerab Pass into Pakistan in the mountains down Karakorum Highway, and at an altitude of more than 15,000 feet, cargo trucks will be crossing over Pakistan's border with China. Pakistan will benefit of its strategic location and China is taking advantage of that. About 80% of Chinese trade and energy imports travel through the pirate-swarmed Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean, both being patrolled by the US Fleet & Indian Navy. The CPEC trade route would not only be the substitute to the Strait of Malacca but also be responsible for China with an entry point to the Persian Gulf. China and Pakistan have found common ground in terms of maritime concerns in the region. Gawadar port can be used for joint naval patrols in the Indian Ocean, by further accumulating the naval outreach of China and Pakistan in the region. Gawadar port will escalate the countries' naval movements and further expand defence cooperation, especially in the naval and maritime security field (Khan T.). The CPEC will be a channel for the Maritime Silk Route imagined for connecting about three billion people in Asia, Africa and Europe (Irshad, Xin, & Arshad, One Belt and One Road: Does China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Benefit for Pakistan's Economy, 2015). As stated by the Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping: "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is located where the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road meet (Rizvi, 2015). In 2010, China declared Kasghar, an essential transit point situated on the ancient Silk Route and a gateway between China and Pakistan, as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) with the intention to the development of Xinjiang Province of Western China into a major trading nucleus leading to energy and economic integration within South and Central Asia. The SEZs in the Pakistani port of Gawadar and Kashgar in China with the prospects of rail and road connectivity between projected SEZs would develop great economic, political and strategic potential for the region (Rafi, 2016). The CPEC and its strategic geographical position would help Pakistan in emerging as trading centre. Russia was interested in the project as it would have provided them access to the warm waters (Dawn, 2015). The improved relations between China and Pakistan have exposed plans of a China-Pakistan economic corridor providing Beijing with entrance to the Arabian Sea, and by increasing its trade with Europe, the Middle East and Africa. With the kick-off of Xin Jinping's proposal, the "China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor”, the relations of both countries have been promoted to a new height from high-level of political and military relations, by encompassing to the full range of contacts and inclusive relations (Lee, 2016).

CPEC, to safeguard common interests and mutual benefits epitomizes a model of cooperation, coordination and strategic communication between China and Pakistan to strengthen connectivity in areas of trade and economy with states in the region to fulfil growing energy requirements and enhance exports (Javaid & Javaid, Summer 2016). Pakistan’s leadership pronounces the CPEC as a game changer for Pakistan and the region at large (China Closely Works with Pakistan to Implement CPEC, 2016). However, the dividends of CPEC will be apprehended over a period between 10-15 years. It therefore requires a continuous determination on part of both China and Pakistan to stay firm on the course (Rizvi, 2015). Along with CPEC, Pakistan will turn into a commercial hub in South and Central Asia, an axis of the regional trade. The Gawadar Port, while gaining prominence as Pakistan’s economic centre, will be one of the most important ports in the Arabian Sea. CPEC is a life-time development opportunity for Pakistan (Mirza, 2015). The regional states can increase their mutual relevance and build a supportive and positive environment by engaging in greater economic activity, based on trade cooperation. Pakistan being located geographically at the junctions of resources rich Central and West Asia, the Persian Gulf and the oil rich Middle East holds a geo-strategic position. It is due to certain factors like instable geopolitics, insufficient transportation systems and energy shortage that the economy of Pakistan has remained short of utilization of its potential at its best. With the execution of CPEC, Pakistan will be able to heighten its strategic significance. CPEC would inter-link South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa and Gulf States in terms of economic and energy collaboration. Pakistan’s Ambassador to China Masood Khalid said: “The territory of Pakistan is like a corridor which links China with Arabian Sea and Pakistan can play the role of a bridge between China and the world” (One Belt One Road Provides New Drive for Regional Sustainable Development, 2016). CPEC will be transformed to be a bridge that would also connect Pakistan to Central Asia through a 1300-Kilometer-long Optic Fibre Project (Paracha, 2016). The Gawadar Port in Pakistan having been positioned at the Arabian Sea which is about 72 Kilometres from Iran; 320 Kilometres from Cape al-Hadd in Oman and 400 Kilometres away from the Strait of Hormuz which is linked with the Persian Gulf, has the capacity of handling up to about 19 million tons of crude oil per year, by putting the requisite infrastructure in place (Kahlon, 2015). China has been interested in the development of a direct crude oil pipeline from Gawadar in Pakistan to Xinjiang in China through CPEC (Khetran, 2014 & 2015). With the operationalization of Gawadar Port, all the trade to and fro from land locked Central Asian Republics (CARs) can be taken on the shortest available route via Gawadar due to which the trade benefits to Pakistan may be expected to multiply. Pakistan could be able to become major world channel for petro-chemical trade which will stimulate its economic progression. Moreover, the Baluchistan Province in Pakistan will become substantial for regional amalgamation (CPEC Route to be Functional this Year: Ahsan Iqbal, 2016). This would incorporate Egypt in the Middle East; the European Countries and important global points in Eurasian region. The networks expanding in the form of Land Silk routes and Maritime Silk routes would link the states through regional trade leading to socio-economic boom in the region. Gawadar Port has a rare difference of being only one of the few points where ‘One Belt, One Road’ (OBOR) would intersect. Therefore it is imperative that Pakistan should deal optimistically with all the challenges in construction of CPEC and may convert this golden opportunity into an economic

certainty (Ijaz A., 2016). Regardless of the importance of CPEC for Pakistan, there are other dimensions too. It has also exceptional implications for China and its future role of emerging as a great power at the global level. China considers regional connectivity as a central element and first step to rise at global level. President Xi of China during his address to Foreign Affairs committee at Communist Party meeting in 2014 said that we will give priority to our neighbours in our diplomacy on all fronts. While, other part of policy is to build relations with developing countries having abundance of natural resources, including energy rich, countries. It will help China to be branded as the development partner and non- interfering ally in the comity of nations (Godement, 2014). Counter balancing the Pivot to Asia Policy designed by the US to contain and encircle China with an alliance including India, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Australia, Singapore and Philippines. This corridor will serve as a substitute route for Chinese trade, thereby allowing China to outwit the threat of a blockade of Chinese oil supplies through the Strait of Malacca by the USA and allied navies in the wake of a future war in Asia (Ahmed).

CPEC will strengthen the strategic alliance between Pakistan and China as it would seem probable to exacerbate the dispute between Pakistan and India. China promotes the hope that CPEC and its economic impact will also contribute to the transformation of Pakistani society and the consolidation of moderate forces. China believes that peaceful progress in Pakistan would have in turn a positive effect on the region about the situation in Afghanistan (Wagner, 2016, p. 4). The CPEC will provide an opportunity for reinvigoration of Pakistan's economic structure, predominantly through the development of its energy sector and by encouraging a greater connectivity. Inappropriately, the huge potential of CPEC for promoting socio-economic wellbeing in Pakistan has sometimes led to over expectations and to a credulous approach towards the project. The CPEC now is at a very early stage and it is incredible to confirm at present the actual impact of the project (Esteban, 2016). CPEC is disparagingly important for both countries. Pakistan needs it to overcome its socio-economic development, and energy concerns, while on the other hand China desires it to enlarge its periphery of influence, consolidate its global existence and safeguarding its future supply routes of energy and trade goods. It is important to point out that the concept was established by China, as being part of its "Go Global 2001" policy. Pakistan can be one of the beneficiaries of Chinese dream of economic integration at the regional level. Therefore, it is advisable for Pakistan to remain concentrated on the development of the country rather than wasting time on inconsequential issues. Provincialism should not be given the chance to take over the development agenda by any stakeholder, including the federal government (Ramay). China has taken over control of Gawadar Port for a 40 years' lease, and started to develop the deep seaport into one of the most up-to-date and progressive seaports of the world. Gawadar Port will have a huge storage of cargo and shipment handling facilities and many shipyards. This Sea port will be capable of competition to the Persian Gulf seaports of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Doha and other ports in the region (Paracha, 2016). The Gawadar port will function as a tail of the New Silk Road, which would connect China's Kashgar region to the different communicational networks of the region (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). It holds an essential position in the CPEC venture that it has been situated close to the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 40% of the world's oil supply is flowed. Gawadar as a key shipping point could play a key role in safeguarding Chinese interests of energy security by providing a much shorter route than the current 12,900 Km route from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Malacca to Chinese Eastern Seaboard (Chowdhury, 2013). The port is envisioned to the transformation Pakistan into a center of commercial activities among the energy

rich Gulf and Central Asian States, Afghanistan and China, by offering the Pakistan Navy with strategic depth beside its coast as a maritime base (Syed, 2013).

2. GEOPOLITICAL PARADIGM OF CPEC- CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

CPEC will play a key role in enhancement of the objectives of China's foreign policy aimed for linking infrastructure measures by establishing a "New Silk Road" (One Road) running through Central and South Asia as well as to create a "Maritime Silk Road" (One Belt) in the Indian Ocean (Wagner, 2016). Chinese plan of opening and development of its landlocked western regions in line with its marching towards Westward Policy (Wang J., 2015). President Xi gave a new dimension to foreign policy of China by initiating "Constructive Engagement" policy. Economic engagement has been given the prime focus to move forward the agenda of constructive commercial cooperation at the regional grounds (Ramay). Viewing from Chinese point of consideration, collaboration in the perspective of security and economics is relatively inter-linked as improvement on the one side improves the other. China believes that economic growth in Pakistan can strengthen its economy and internal political stability by reinvigorating the latter's economy through investment in infrastructure projects as well as the construction of oil and gas pipelines. China hopes that it will create a certain level of stability within Pakistan and in turn stabilize China's western periphery, particularly the province of Xinjiang (Zhiqin & YANG). In September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping accentuated reviving of the ancient trade routes connecting China, Central Asia and Europe by developing three main corridors through southern, central and northern Xinjiang, which connect China with Russia, Europe and Pakistan. Chinese have also increased concentration on the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar corridor that would provide China's landlocked Yunnan province admittance to the Bay of Bengal (Sial, *The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: an assessment of potential threats and constraints*, 2015). More broadly, the CPEC must be understood in the framework of China's strategic interests in East Asia and the way how the United States has challenged them. Faced with such difficulties, China believes that it can expand its strategic space by heading towards west. Pakistan serves as a crucial bridge between China and Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Security and stability in Pakistan will make it possible for China to exercise greater influence in these regions and to ensure security at home. That is why China is keen to pour vast amounts of resources into the economic corridors based on the logic of improving security through economic development (Zhiqin & YANG). The Strait of Malacca joins China with global trade through an expensive 12,000 km sea route for transportation of their goods to the Xingjiang region, the Chinese must have to travel another 3,500 Km over land. A quarter of the world and most of Chinese oil passes through the Straits, whose control has continually been challenged for dominance by the US Navy and Indian pretensions have given rise to the Malaccan Dilemma. The CPEC will reduce China's route from the Indian Ocean to 3,000 Km across Pakistani territory through the Gawadar Port and avoids the Straits altogether, which facilitates trade by road. Gawadar has a 200,000-ton tanker capacity. Located strategically at the tail of the Corridor and at the confluence of most of the world's oil producing states, Gawadar automatically will become one of the largest trans-shipment ports. It is envisaged to have an international airport, crude oil refineries and the ability to dock larger ships, turning it into a robust trade and transportation hub of the region (Khan S., 2016). The Malaccan dilemma is one of the most pressing foreign policy concerns of China. The Chinese aspire to maintain their economic growth to help them achieve their great power ambitions. To satisfy their energy

requirements, the Chinese need an uninterrupted supply of oil but it lacks the naval power to secure its Sea lines of communications. China imports 60 percent of its oil from the Middle East and this figure is expected to increase up to 75%. The Strait of Malacca is a narrow passage between Malaysia and Indonesia with Singapore on its Southern tip. Due to the strong ties of Singapore with the Anglo-American bloc, Chinese need a safe passage of oil into China from the Middle East. Therefore, the only passage that allows their imports to enter is through Gawadar, Pakistan (Iqbal, 2016). One of the main aims of this huge foreign investment is to uplift the economic conditions in Xinjiang Province that is home to about 10 million Uighur people who belong to Muslims. The political situation in Xinjiang Province has been unstable for years due to religious and ethnic pressures. China considers that some Uighur people have been linked to the terrorist's groups under operation from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The CPEC will generate jobs and economic opportunities for indigenous people who have lost confidence and are joining terrorist ranks (Paracha, 2016).

China is going to play a greater role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to constrain the resourceful moves from Pakistan, which is welcomed by other regional actors including Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Gulf countries (Lee, 2016). China would be the major beneficiary as the project provides it a shortcut to Indian Ocean, rather than passing through the Strait of Malacca. China can access entrance in to the Western part of the Indian Ocean in the easiest way only because of its amicable and deliberate relationship with Pakistan. China transports about 80% of its oil through the trade route of the Strait of Malacca, which can be deviated through the CPEC route. There is also a future preference for China to retain military existence in Pakistan in the pretext of providing security to the CPEC (Iqbal, 2016). China has started to increase its presence in the Indian Ocean under its String of Pearls strategy to which Gawadar and CPEC in Pakistan have been added recently. CPEC would be perceived as a dynamic bridge in the all-weather friendly relationship between Pakistan and China that will open new vistas of economic activities in the region. This mega project will have implications that would change the dynamics of global and regional politics. The CPEC will help in strengthening the economy of Pakistan and to improve its position in the regional politics. CPEC will open new routes for China towards the oil rich Middle East via the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. It will support regional connections and empower the region to stand on its own with least dependence on the Western world (Khan T.). The economy of China has been showing signs of slow down based on reduction in the demand for Chinese products in the global economic markets. Now, China appears to be shifting its commercial stratagem. Despite of exports, it will also emphasize to increase inland consumption because only exports cannot withstand the anticipated economic growth. To facilitate national customers China necessitates reduction in the transportation cost of energy and imports, which could be reduced dramatically by CPEC (Paracha, 2016).

CPEC is correspondingly advantageous to China. The seaport of Shanghai is 10,000 Kilometres away from the Strait of Hormuz by sea via the Malaccan route while, Kashgar the capital of Xinjiang, is about 4500 kilometres beyond the port of Shanghai. However, Kashgar is 2800 Kilometres far from Gawadar port via the envisaged CPEC trade route and henceforth just over 3400 Kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz. It makes sense for Beijing to prefer this route only based on the time distance equation. Nevertheless, despite of economy China is also facing security concerns which make the Gawadar Kashgar route significant. The Chinese ships travelling through

the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea must adopt a passageway nearby to the Indian Territory as well as through the Malacca Strait. China is entirely conscious of the vulnerability of the ships during the long sea passage and predominantly through the Malacca Strait which is characterized by the Chinese as the Malaccan Dilemma. China has consequently been considering for substitute choices to safeguard its deliveries and in this way, Gawadar may be able to provide the most protected and economically feasible substitute to link with this side of the world (Ahmed). China has reservations that in the worst-case scenario of a war or conflict with the U.S, sea trade routes might be blocked, for that reason having an alternative trade route would be a very essential strategic objective for China, and the CPEC would be able to serve that perseverance perfectly well (Paracha, 2016).

Some of the political experts maintain that Chinese move is intended to counter the U.S and Indian influence in the Asia Pacific region. Some others contend that the corridor is more about enhancing China's economic benefits and is a main pillar of China's far-reaching policy directive "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative, which looks for physical linking of China to its markets in Asia, Europe and beyond. A profound analysis discloses that the corridor is vital for China from both an economic and strategic perceptions (Ahmed). China perceives the U.S "Pivot to Asia" strategy contrary to its core interests, by having an understanding that the U.S desires to hamper its growth and expansion by improving collaboration and forming alliances with the rising powers (India, Singapore, Malaysia, North Korea and other East Asian countries) so that it could maintain its authority and hegemony in the South Pacific region. Another Chinese apprehension over CPEC is to find an alternate to the Strait of Malacca. The South China Sea, rich in resources and a way en route for Strait of Malacca has been disputed among China and other Southeast Asian countries. China imports largest percentage of its oil supply through the Strait of Malacca, so it has uncertainties that, if the other East Asian countries make coalition against China, then they can enforce naval barricade on the narrow Strait of Malacca and thus could choke China economically (Cheema, 2015). Analysts have proposed Chinese decision makers to adopt a two-pronged policy making approach while in the process of establishing relations with great powers as well as, it should also expand its relationship with the developing and its neighbouring countries. Li Yonghui, the director of the School of International Relations at Beijing Foreign Studies University, stated in 2013 that emerging powers need a friendly periphery, which he called a strategic periphery belt (Godement, 2014).

String of Pearls policy, a term being used to define a chain of Sea Ports of countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma and Pakistan has been considered for strategic venture to restrain India (Kabiraji, 2012). The economic corridor is considered to shorten the route for Chinese energy imports from the Middle East by about 12,000 Km as well as it would also link the underdeveloped far western region of China to the Gawadar a deep-sea port of Pakistan situated on the Arabian Sea (Bhattacharjee D. D., 2017). The CPEC will be able to offer the Chinese proximity to the areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan rich in mineral resources by further fulfilling its agenda of energy security. It is imperative to mention that the CPEC will also provide the Chinese contiguity to the oil and gas of Iran, the untapped gas reserves of Afghanistan, to the gas and unexploited oil and mineral resources of Baluchistan in Pakistan (Javaid & Javaid, Summer 2016). Strategic position of CPEC is cortical, as it is located at the juncture of Road Belt and Maritime Belt (S., 2015). It will offer prospect for China to institute and fortify its position in the Indian Ocean. It will also help to secure the energy routes from Middle East and Africa, which may be precarious for the future

progress of China as it will shorten the route of energy substantially (Bhattacharjee D., 2015). China's development policy is export centric and for this purpose it needs to expand trade routes. China is expected to benefit both strategically and economically through numerous projects under CPEC. Oil cargo travelling through the Strait of Malacca takes 45 days to arrive at desired destination in China, whereas it will reach in just 10 days via Gawadar port. The project will provide China the access to the Indian Ocean and beyond. China will also be able to enhance power in Central and South Asia. China is one of the largest oil importing country in the world, and in this way energy security is of prime concern, so a pipeline will shorten thousands of kilometres of ocean trek via CPEC route (Javaid & Javaid, Summer 2016). The proposed (CPEC) Corridor will reduce the route for Chinese energy imports from Middle East by 12,000 Km (Jidong, 2013). It is expected that the project will boost trade of China with CARs, the Middle East and Africa.

Gawadar Port may be able to allow China to watch over the Sea Lines of Communications SLOCs lying just 460 Km away from Karachi, and to monitor the U.S maritime placement in the Persian Gulf, as well as the Indian Naval Bases of Gujarat and Mumbai. It is estimated that approximately 60% of Chinese energy imports from the Persian Gulf will be carried through this route (Ashraf, 2015). Gawadar port will give China a strategic position in the energy rich Caspian Region. Gawadar port being located at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz will be very reasonable for China by which, it will get an opportunity to use the direct access to the Gulf of Aden and Persian Gulf by merely traveling about 2500 Km on the existing Silk route. The management and usage of the Gawadar port under China may help to establish its presence in the Indian Ocean and quite near to the Strait of Hormuz (Javaid & Javaid, Summer 2016).

3. GEOPOLITICAL PARADIGM OF CPEC- PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

China and Pakistan have been collaborating closely at all the political and strategic levels on the traditional grounds. Both the nations are now making efforts for reciprocated relationship and to increase their bilateral economic relations as well in terms of (CPEC) the China Pakistan Economic Corridor which indicates a landmark shift. The CPEC is a multi-dimensional initiative for construction of energy, communication, and port infrastructure to build up the economic acquaintances between the states. The Sino-Pak economic corridor (CPEC) is an important agreement having the potential to redesign the South Asian geopolitics. Under the designed project, China is keen to capitalize \$46 billion in this economic and energy corridor, in succession from Gawadar, a deep-sea port of Baluchistan province in Pakistan to Kashgar the north-western province of Xinjiang in China with highways, railways and pipelines (Fazil, 2015). CPEC, to maintain mutual benefits, signifies a model of cooperation, coordination and strategic communication between China and Pakistan to strengthen connectivity in areas of trade and economy among the regional states to accomplish growing energy requirements and to heighten exports. Pakistan has apprehended that no other country places such high strategic prominence in its economic correlation with Pakistan as China does. According to Pakistan 2025, a plan for economic enlargement published in 2014 by Ministry of Planning and Development, Pakistan intends to improve its economic prestige from being a lower-middle-income nation to an upper-middle-income nation by 2025 (Ministry of Planning).

Pakistan has been working to improve its inclusive economy by constructing energy projects and other forms of infrastructure in relation to generate employment opportunities for its population,

and to improve the system of governance. China and Pakistan share the common belief that economic growth can help to stabilize Pakistan and intensify its internal security condition (Zhiqin & YANG). More than 60 percent of 200 million people of Pakistan are under the age of 30. Most people are out of work and anxious about their future. The CPEC project has the potential to generate thousands of new jobs in construction, transportation and trade sectors. With the operationalization of the Corridor, new jobs opportunities will be produced in the economic and industrial zones along the Corridor route. Thousands of people will also acquire employment in security of the CPEC as well (Paracha, 2016).

Geo-strategically Pakistan will come to be the most significant country in the region because it will develop trade and economic connection between Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Gawadar to Kashgar trade route will not only reduce the expanse between china and Middle East but it will also make available the safe and protected mode of oil supply to China. As Gawadar is situated at the fore front of the Strait of Hormuz being the passageway of \$40 trillion trade per year, moreover it will also decrease the shipment cost of China to Middle East and African countries to the excessive magnitude. Basically, CPEC is the name of multiple road alignment networks in Pakistan. There are three main alignments having numerous roads being the part of this project i.e. western alignment, eastern and central alignment which would be linked through highways and motor ways. The western alignment may be more significant rather than others, because it will open the door of prosperity and progress in Baluchistan and KPK. Ever since, Chinese investors will develop manufacturing units on this route, it would enhance the prospect of job opportunities in these distant areas. The most important certainty is that China is going to participate in ever biggest foreign direct investment (FDI) in the history of Pakistan, the country which has been facing economic ambiguity since 1970's (Khan T.). China has made commitment to invest about \$46 billion in the developmental projects under the CPEC, with approximately \$28 billion in immediate projects and the rest has been allocated for projects in the pipeline (Irshad, One Belt and One Road: Does China Pakistan Economic Corridor Benefit for Pakistan's Economy). Pakistan has applauded Chinese investment for social and economic development that is likely to improve infrastructure in relation to roads, highways, ports, and transportation sectors. CPEC would also address the accusations of the province of Baluchistan. The sense of dispossession, discernment, lack of proper administration and distribution of possessions would also be undertaken under CPEC. The people would have an economic development and would get opportunities for trade and investment. The oil and mineral resources of the province would be discovered as well as, with the establishment of Gawadar port, Gawadar International Airport and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) would supplementary increase the strategic and economic position of Baluchistan. CPEC would create job prospects for the Baluchi youth that would gain contemporary innovative abilities in the forthcoming as being part of CPEC (Ijaz, 2016).

It is anticipated that CPEC would bring more affluence to Baluchistan, because Pakistan would have admittance to Central Asian states and Europe. It would benefit not only Pakistan but other countries of the region as well (Dawn, 2015). The deliberate role of Karakoram Highway (KKH) is another characteristic of the CPEC stratagem. The CPEC is not only passing from side to side with the established areas of Pakistan but it would also cover underdeveloped parts of Pakistan too. CPEC will make available opportunities for locals in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan as some routes of CPEC have been planned to pass through GB. The CPEC plan would not only just

incorporate the commercial class or the business class of the society but also the starring role of youth and local masses would be significant in all improvement projects. The CPEC will appeal the tourism and direct foreign investment (DFI) in Pakistan and would help Pakistan to overcome its dominant energy crisis (Ijaz, 2016). About 17,045 megawatts of energy would be produced initially, as well as actively endorsed China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects across the country to overcome energy crisis and strengthening economic activities (Khan T.). Under CPEC the energy projects will supplement 17,000 megawatts of electricity production at a cost of US \$ 34 billion. The rest of the capital will be spent on transport infrastructure, including up gradation of the railway line between the mega cities of Karachi and Peshawar (Irshad).

Infrastructural projects would be constructed under the CPEC including Gawadar East Bay Expressway, Gawadar International Airport, up-gradation of KKH phase-II, parts of Karachi to Lahore Motorway and Muzaffarabad - Mirpur Expressway. There are three main routes of the CPEC project after its entrance to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa from the Khunjerab Pass and Gilgit-Baltistan including Western, Central and Eastern routes. The Western route of CPEC will enter Baluchistan via Dera Ismail Khan to Zhob, Qila Saifullah, Quetta, Kalat, Punjgur, Turbet and Gawadar. The Central route will pass through Dera Ismail Khan to Dera Ghazi Khan and onwards to Dera Murad Jamali, Khuzdar, Punjgur, Turbet to Gawadar. The Eastern route will enter Punjab province from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, going through Lahore, Multan and Sukkur, from where it will take the traditional highway to enter Baluchistan, passing through Khuzdar, Punjgur, Turbet and Gawadar (Rizvi, 2015). CPEC will ease to overcome energy crisis of Pakistan with the amalgamation of country's economy by neighbours on three sides, the east, the west and north. India is the only missing link in the Belt and Road project that has raised reservations concerning the planned construction of the Corridor through Gilgit-Baltistan (Rafi, 2016). Pakistan would be able to improve its strategic prominence as a bridge and connection between the European, Asian and African continents with the execution of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that links South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa and Gulf countries in terms of economic and energy collaboration. Pakistan enjoys special geographical advantages, being boarded by South Asia, Central Asia, the Arab World and China, and joins the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf (Mirza, 2015). China Great Wall Industry Cooperation and Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission have also employed an agreement to set up a Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-1) System, that has been planned to be launched in June 2018, for protection and monitoring the execution of the CPEC plan (Jaiswal & Paul, 2016). Four-layer security preparations have been programmed for 3000-kilometer-long CEPC route and the Gawadar port. About 32,000 security persons will safeguard around 15,000 Chinese workers employed in 210 small and mega development projects across Pakistan (Paracha, 2016). The foremost accomplishment of Pakistan would be to rope in China for solution to the prevalent energy catastrophe that has engulfed it. The anticipated project would endeavour to fix Pakistan's broken-down power infrastructure, being an urgent and long-unsolved problem that according to experts shaves at least two per cent off the country's gross domestic product (GDP) per year (Masood & Walsh). The projects under CPEC would add 10,400 Megawatts of electricity to energy grid of Pakistan through various sources of coal, nuclear and renewable energy projects (Tharoor).

Pakistan would be able to become a hub of trade and commercial activities in the regional parameters that will create several trade and economic zones, roads and railways infrastructure.

With the initiation of CPEC, it may develop economic and trade cooperation in the region that will contribute to accomplishment of regional peace and constancy (Sial, The China Pakistan Economic Corridor: An assessment of potential threats and constraints, 2014). Gawadar port being situated on the Baluchistan coast is estimated to inspire investments, increase trade flows and would serve as a regional nucleus for commercial transportation that could stimulate the geostrategic milieu of the region. Pakistan will acquire revenues in transit fees in addition to the Gawadar sea port being located at the cross roads of the three commercially important regions namely- West Asia, Central Asia and South Asia (Shahnaz, 2017). Gawadar port will enable transmission of massive power resources of Central Asia to the world emerging markets. The commencement of regional and international trade through Gawadar will create new shareholders in Afghanistan that would help in normalization of conditions in the war-torn country Afghanistan. China plans to build worth of more than one billion US\$ road infrastructure including a six lane 1,240 km long expressway between Karachi and Lahore that is scheduled for completion by 2017, as well as, up gradation of Karakoram Highway, and modernization of transportation in Rawalpindi, Karachi, Lahore, and three other Pakistani cities outside of the CPEC sphere. Pakistan and China had been geostrategic allies in the past, and now have been moving towards being geo-economic allies through CPEC that has potential to boost its trade with CARs and the Middle East states (Javaid & Javaid, Summer 2016). The presence of Chinese marines is estimated to advance coastal defence of Pakistan. Gawadar will also strengthen position of Pakistan to check SLOCs opening from the Persian Gulf and bottleneck the Strait of Hormuz (Jidong, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

CPEC is equally beneficial to China and Pakistan. CPEC would be a game changer for Pakistan and for the region as well, by playing a pivotal role through economic incentives and regional integration in the form of networks, connectivity and partnerships. The CPEC as China-Pakistan Joint Venture will prove to be of much significance from the futuristic point of view to further the objectives of their national interests by means of regional integration and enhancement of social, political and economic activities. It is the need of time to make use of the opportunities that will be created under CPEC in the better interests of the state. The CPEC as a game changer will connect more than 50 countries to this well-established economic hub, turning this region into an economic bloc at the first instance. It is expected that both China and Pakistan will be able to play more active role in the regional and international sphere. With the development of Gawadar port, Pakistan will become the hub of regional economic activity and more so it has also the potential to be economic vis-a-vis energy corridor. There will be a net of highways, railway lines, gas pipelines and economic zones as well be developed under CPEC in through out of Pakistan which will open new vistas of development, making it economically strong and self-reliant.

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