



CPEC Impacts on Foreign Policy of Pakistan: From Security to Economic Policies

Hina Said^{a*}, Dr. Sajjad Ali Khan^b, Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Irshadullah^c, Kainat Khan^d, Rani Zain^e

^aElementary & Secondary Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ^bAssistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. ^cAssociate Professor, Department of Education, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. ^dMPhil Scholar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. ^eMPhil Scholar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

*Email: fairyk114@gmail.com

Abstract: China initiation of 'Belt and Road Initiative(BRI)' in 21st century is a massive project of linking china with more than sixty countries of Central Asia, Middle East, South East Asia and Europe via new roads, ports, railways and gas pipelines. Due to linking china with almost all near and far countries of the world this project has international strategic importance worldwide. It includes trade development, economic development, transportation, energy sector, mining and political connectivity. Secondary data and qualitative method has used for analyzing the impacts of CPEC on foreign policy of Pakistan. Due to its wide scope and importance this plan has enormous impacts on foreign policy of Pakistan and has changed the dimensions of its foreign policy with neighboring states and other states of the world.

Key Words: CPEC, BRI, OBOR, CHINA, Pakistan, Region and foreign policy etc.

1.Introduction

The Belt and Road initiative of China is a massive project for reconstructing the old Silk Road, once constructed in China during the Dynasty of Hans (from 206BCE to 220 BCE). That has been used as a channel for trading from China to Central Asia, South Asia and further to the Europe. Globalization was thus seemed first and foremost in Central Asia, as it was linking eastern markets with the western one. Hence China was supplying spices, jade and such other products to west and was receiving some sort of goods from the west as glass products, ivory and precious metals etc.

The China's One Belt, One Road was announced by Chinese president Xi in 2013 when he was on official visit to Indonesia and Kazakhstan. Initially this plan was named as One Belt, One Road and was consist of the Maritime Silk Road Economic Belt, but later it was changed as the Belt and Road Initiative.(James McBridw, 2023)

China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) is a part of china's BRI which is a mega project consists of roads, gas pipelines and railways. This massive development plan was signed on 5th July 2013 when former prime minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif visited china, hence a memorandum of understanding was signed by both countries for launching CPEC. It aims to connect Gawadar port with kashger in Xinjiang province of China which is designed to reform the old silk road of China once used for trade. It is planned to be completed in three stages:

- The first phase is from 2015 to 2022, progress of most of the energy projects completed in 2019 which lift energy and electricity of the country.
- Gawadar development, power projects, coal mining, roads hydel and optic fiber networks are short term projects will be finished in 2022.
- Industrial zones and Railways are medium range projects and will be done in 2025.
- Others long term projects__ Agriculture, Industrial zones and tourism will be completed in 2030.(Hussain)

CPEC is a significant component of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative, which aims to enhance regional connectivity across the Eurasian continent. As part of this initiative, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are being established in key financial centers and strategically important locations in Pakistan. An example of this is the investment in Gwadar port, located in Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province in terms of surface area. The development of these SEZs and investment in Gwadar port are expected to promote industrial growth and to strengthen regional connectivity.(Rizvi, 2015) The beginning of the 21st century brought new opportunities for cooperation between the two countries, with the roots of CPEC stemming from China's Silk Road and One Belt One Road project.(Ahmad, 2023)

1.1 Research Questions

- 1) Why Pakistan shifted its foreign policy from the security priorities to the economic strategies (CPEC)?
- 2) How are China and Pakistan integrating the region through CPEC?
- 3) How is CPEC elevating strategic importance of Pakistan in the region?

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research paper will bring awareness among people about CPEC, its role and current status. People will know about BRI which is a mother project of CPEC and such other plans. After reading this paper; students, professionals and researchers may get data and guidelines from this work. This has highlighted the significance of Pakistan in the region for neighbors and other states. It also signified the importance of Pakistan for China which is a great economic power.

1.3 Research Methodology

In this research paper secondary data has used based on qualitative method from different articles, journal articles, reports, official documents, newspapers and web sites.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The researchers see this research paper on the lens of Neo-liberalism which focuses on the factors to improve the quality of life, interdependency, promotes trade and market as it is a way to peace and prosperity; same are the aims of BRI's CPEC, to bring prosperity in the region. It intends to promote interrelations among states through the web of trade and cooperation. In the current Global world, no state can live alone nor are they self-reliant, in fact they strive to establish friendly relations with each others for enhancing their economic power. Hence, they depend upon one another, and through this way they establish political and economic bonds.

3.1 CPEC: A Game Changer

As world has become a global economic village, China strives to connect with all developing and developed states of the world. Pakistan(the immediate neighbor and close friend) might be use as a gate way for China to enhance

her collaboration with Central Asia, Middle East, and Europe and to the rest of the world. Historically, both China and Pakistan have been politically and strategically affiliated. Along with strategic partnership both nations intended to lift up their mutual cooperation economically too, for such development CPEC was thought to be used as a best tool. It is a **Game Changer** for Pakistan and for the whole region as it concerned with trade expansion, connecting all nations, bringing peace and economic revolution in the region. (Tasneem Sultana, 2021)

It is widely believed that China desires to rule the world and to become the superpower through economic strategies. Correspondingly, she is eager to spend huge amount of money and resources on CPEC to safeguard Pakistan's security for the sake of fulfilling her own dreams of ruling the whole world and for the maintenance of her safety. As it is a win-win game: from which both countries can get advantages, hence Pakistan hailed this project for its strategic importance from China. (Zahid Khan, 2018) CPEC is not advantageous just for China and Pakistan rather all the neighboring states will be avail through this. Almost 3 billion individuals in the region will be benefited through CPEC. Likewise, economy will be developed which will further reduce poverty through providing employment opportunities. Due to this plan all the states in the region will be connected for the sake of trade and economic development. Thus, it is considered a game changer for Pakistan, China and the whole region.

CPEC is a "flagship project" for China as it will shorten the route to Middle East, Africa and Europe which will develop economy. (Iqtidar Hussain, 2022) For China — being an emerging power in the modern world — it will deter the dominance of USA. Consequently, China will be able to counter not only US, rather all the emerging economic powers in the world easily. Moreover, after the accomplishment of this project China will have golden chance to settle down the problems in her underdeveloped areas, such as Xinjiang province which have been remained weak politically and economically. The Muslims of Uyghur have also been started separatist movement there. Therefore, CPEC is the only way through which this province will be developed economically and politically, it will come in the rank of other regions in China. Thus, this region will be well-known to the world. (Hassan, 2020)

3.2 Pakistan and China: Foreign Policy Perspective

National interest is the core element of each state. Every state shapes its foreign policy according to its needs and security strategies. Generally, it has been seen that countries are always looking for their own survival. As a result, they tend to focus on increasing their power and capabilities. It's all about the quest for strength and security. (Saoud, 2019) Since we have seen that in 21st century states are enhancing diplomatic relations, they are diplomatically consulting and debating upon numerous fields like defense, developmental programs, commerce, infrastructure and industrial ventures and such others areas of economy. Due to the development in these areas each state becoming more close to another and strives to bring economic development through their alignment with each other. As economically stable country has potential role in international community, so every country try to reshape its foreign policy and enable it to best suits the modern world. China with deep strategic and economic plans has very successfully shifted to open market economy, because she wants to be a greater economic power in the Asia as well as in the whole world. China believes on "Good Neighbor Policy" strategy for the better relationships with Asian countries and the entire world. In this context she further ahead hands of friendship towards Pakistan with the orientation of huge economic investment. Our foreign policy is also based on the principle of good and positive relations with all neighboring states, so we happily accepted Chinese initiative which connects Pakistan with all neighboring states through bilateral and multilateral relationships. Moreover, this economic com strategic policy will upgrade Pakistan strategic significance in the Asia and other regions of the world.

3.3 Pakistan (trade) Relations with China: in the Context of Foreign Policy

From the very beginning Pakistan has good relations with Chinese government and in 1950 it was recognized by Pakistan as an independent republic of people. Their mutual bilateral trade relations started in 1963 when they signed long term trade agreement bilaterally for first time. They established their strategic alliance in 1972 when we have received assistance from Chinese government during Karakorum Highway's construction. Again in 1989 both signed their Bilateral Treaty of Investment which further opened Chinese businessmen and investor for Pakistani

market. Furthermore, they enhanced their bilateral relationships in terms of importing as well as exporting of goods. Historically, both have been initiated trade agreements in 1990s, 2002, 2006 and 2009. During the Musharraf regime it was examined that an economic belt be established for connecting of Pakistan and China. But it was officially appeared when the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Pakistan in 2013. This agreement was signed by both countries during his official visit to Pakistan. The implementation and application of this plan was further emphasized in 2013 and 2014 after the assent of bilateral contract of CPEC. This has made trade and transportation of goods much easier for the Chinese people. It has also brought about significant advancements in technology and infrastructure development. It's incredible to see how this project has such wide-ranging benefits. (Haiyan Li, 2021)

CPEC is a vital source of enhancing strategic ties with China as after initiating this plan we have seen much improvement in the relationships of both countries. They successfully boost their bilateral partnership in several economic sectors. Besides the economic and trade ties China and Pakistan have boost its foreign policy relations as well. It compels Pakistan to reshape and redesign its foreign policy according to the modern economic competitive world.

Strategically China and Pakistan have positive and strong relations but CPEC will strengthen their economic relations too. After the 9/11 attacks and domestic disturbance in Pakistan, make us so weak in the foreign policy perspective. So in these unstable circumstances and economically weak country no state was in favor to invest here. But China very boldly started his plan; in this plan not just economic support will be given rather efforts to stop terrorism and to ensure security in the country are the fundamental principles. . Therefore, Pakistan also felt her strategic importance in true terms of economy as valued by China through CPEC. Accordingly, Pakistan too hailed this valuable project rapidly and happily.

After the accomplishment of CPEC China will have easy access to the west via rout of sea-land. Additionally, as pipeline projects will be completed through which the time of importing oil to Africa from Middle East will be lessened to just 2 days as was ever 30 days. Since china will use these routes and will get free from shipping via far and insecure routs.

3.4 CPEC Impacts on Pakistan's Foreign Policy

After 9/11 CPEC is the greatest and massive foreign direct investment in our country. In Pakistan (Baluchistan) Gawadar Port will be connected to China's Kashgar in north-western part of it. In February 2013 Chinese state owned the Gawadar Port's control from Pakistan. It is expected that huge investment projects will be completed in 2030. In Pakistan she is investing different developmental projects in short-term, medium-term and long-term plans till 2013, it will be resulted in a great trade route connecting China with Middle East and further to the Central Asian states.

CPEC will boost Pakistan's economy through investment and will make Pakistan valuable for other states to invest. CPEC will improve trade relations with other states and along this Pakistan's technological development will be significantly enhanced. Pakistan strongly supports the CPEC for its geopolitical and economic benefits. The corridor will elevate Pakistan's status as a key regional player and foster trade and political relations with Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Many states, both within and outside the region, are interested in participating and offering opportunities for Pakistan to enhance its foreign relations. (Gill, 2019)

China is a friendly neighbor of Pakistan and therefore is considered by Pakistan as "all weather-friend". (Fahad, 2015) Following are the aspects of foreign policy of Pakistan which can maintain these friendly relations alive with China:

- 1) Political Support
- 2) Military Role

According to the earlier point, all the leaders and their parties in Pakistan are strongly agree to have pleasant relations with China. The military of Pakistan too support strategic ties with China as an active actor of support in the defense. Their affiliation and friendship based upon the four vital facts of interests i.e.

- 1) Economic Interest
- 2) Energy security of both states
- 3) Internally the areas of Security Concerns, and
- 4) Geostrategic Interests of china and Pakistan(Motwani, 2023)

3.5 A Strategic Move in the Pakistan's Foreign Policy: From Security to Economic Policies

Due to the growing military arm race in South Asia, each state wants to maximize its power through military means. In these complex situations China sought to unite these states through cultural, social and economic bonds. Thus, China desires to peacefully integrated these countries, for this purpose she introduces her major plan of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It will be proven as a peaceful weapon for joining South Asian states. Pakistan is a major player of this project through CPEC.

The continuation of different CPEC's projects in Pakistan changed its foreign policy with China and other countries of the region to a great extent. In case of China, Pakistani government has been very pleasant relations from the very beginning. But very recently they committed to further wield their ties through a permanent economic and strategic plan. Chinese government was well aware of Pakistan's security controversies with its neighboring states, thus agree her to peacefully joint all these countries. In a nutshell due to CPEC Pakistan's foreign policy greatly influenced the attention of regional states and extra-regional towards Pakistan.

Historically, we had adopted non alignment policy, but due to some serious problems it could not maintained. Sino-Indian and Pakistan war with India, and in 1972 when the result of Simla agreement unveiled, we adopted bilateralism and non-alignment policy. But in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan Pakistan had to move again towards its 'old alliance'. When Soviet Union withdrew and the Cold War was ended that time our foreign policy was engaged among several problems. In the post-cold war time when President Bush asked Pakistan either to join terrorists or join the American bloc for resisting terrorism, so Pakistan once again swung into US alliance.

After the incident of 9/11, though Pakistan very confidently fought against the Global War on Terror but due to the worst situations we have lost thousands of innocent lives. Consequently, Pakistan's social, economic and political progress have damaged to a large extent. (Zaheer, 2023)

In these situations, we were not expected any country to invest in Pakistan. But suddenly in the black stormy night we saw a giant shining star (CPEC) from the North-East. This twinkle star was China's CPEC, which intends to bring revolutionary alteration in our foreign policy. Correspondingly, the objectives of our foreign policy are to maintain good relations with all the states especially with closed neighbors, in the same way China wants to make Pakistan close to all states of the Asia through CPEC.

Although, CPEC was designed as a bilateral project from China to Pakistan, but the wholeregion might be connected and benefited because of its broad nature. Similarly, it grew such policies in Pakistan through CPEC which ascertain security situations in the country, and thus make it economically attractive for other countries to invest. Hence, UK, Iran, Tajikistan and various other states have exposed their opinion in favor of joining this strategic plan. Likewise, Pakistan offered Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to connect with CPEC. (Fatima, 2019)

Unlike other projects in Pakistan, CPEC is the first project which application has seen to stayed secure from any political impact and government change. Previously, being an economically weak state, our foreign policy was not fully independent. In many policies and alliances of US we played our role, yet our foreign policy was controlled by her too. Despite desiring an independent foreign policy our foreign policy has been remained a puppet in the hands of USA. Consequently, we have not acquired profitable outcomes, nor USA is gratifying the role of Pakistan, rather she demands of 'do more'.(Montesano, 2015) More sadly, when President Donald Trump came in power, he clearly said that we have been paying Pakistan --- a billion, trillion --- but she is producing terrorists. In a nutshell, despite the mentioned sacrifices USA is not satisfied from us and continuously blaming for terrorism.(Jorgic, 2018) Besides, China which is the great economic power of the world has planned to uplift our status in the global world through her economic strategies.

Pakistan seeks to invite other neighboring states to affiliate with CPEC, in this context we have showed our interest

to Saudi Arabia and Iran; the former too strives to establish an industry for the sake of refining oil at the Port of Gawadar, while the later also said that its Chabahar Port is not challenging the Gawadar. However, we also hailed their views for the sake of integrating the region. Pakistan and China also wished that Afghanistan should connect with CPEC. In this regard we have tried to initiate peacefully negotiation between the Afghan Taliban and the US. Now Pakistan has an independent foreign policy is neither act upon the US gestures nor has any hesitation from the India's threats. Although, America withdrew its military assistance and India is continuously opposing this plan, but Pakistan is still continued to implement this project as soon as possible. (Butt, 2015)

3.6 Regional Integration and Role of CPEC

As the main aim of CPEC is to bring economic revolution in Pakistan, along it intends to make it beneficial for all states of the region as (Maini, 2016) mentioned that it has strategic rationales and external perspectives. Since, it will be a tool for connecting all these states, as reported by World Bank: various countries can be tightly integrated through CPEC. In addition, it was suggested that for such great integration of regional states, trade should be ease up and infrastructure should be improved. It is a vital part of China vision of OBOR. So it will also be connected with Afghanistan, Central Asia and Middle East. Gawadar which is a port of warm water will be integrated to China's western region of Xingjian. Energy will be supply through the new straits which would be less costly and time will be saving too. Chinese will get free from trading through the old strait (Malacca strait), which can make problems for her, because it is under the American control. Moreover, she is a growing major economic power, so all controversial old straits should be avoid and rely to continue its efforts for finding new ways to supply its energy safely and quickly. Furthermore, China's products will be easily available to the world through transportation. (Nurmuhammedov, 2017)

Recently, Pakistan has become the member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); it is a good step because it will further improve the relationships of regional states, which is a positive sign for achieving the dreams of CPEC. Currently the SCO has eight members along with Pakistan. Under the SCO meetings CPEC has been discussing at the top. As in June 2018 when SCO meeting was held in Qingdao, Afghanistan expressed her interest regarding CPEC and was welcomed by both China and Pakistan. In further meeting, the foreign minister of China Wang said that we (China and Pakistan) have accepted Afghanistan to join CPEC on the basis of agreed beneficial principles and on adequate ways to become a part of this strategy. After her joining this project, will results in the economic boost of both states. Moreover, their mutual collaboration and communication may result in their joint efforts against terrorism and insurgencies. Additionally, both Chabahar and Gawadar ports may make as sister ports if Iran become a part of this plan. Iran strives to get free from US sanctions and to start pleasure relations with all emerging powers of the world. Since CPEC will prove as a mean of enhancing Iran ties with Russia and China etc. Since the initiation of CPEC, India has been apparently opposing it. Recently in the SCO meeting at Qingdao the prime minister of India Modi said that we are not in favor of this plan. India believes that Kashmir and Azad Jammu are their parts, while CPEC is passing through this. Nevertheless, we hope that SCO will solve these issues, China and Russia as the SCO's major actors are trying to solve these disputes via negotiation.

Pakistan is also trying to integrate Turkey in his plan. In this context the Turkish businessmen and official were invited by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry to examine how both states can collaborate under CPEC. Memorandums of Understandings have contracted between both states many times, and the trade is expected to be further increased. Moreover, Pakistan desires to extend CPEC towards the rich natural blessed states (Central Asia). Though Pakistan has already pleasure relations with these oil rich states but after the extending of this plan there might be more closeness.

So CPEC performs a crucial role not just in region but in connecting the extra-regions too. It believes that as states extend their trade it makes states more independence. So states maintain good relations with neighboring countries and avoid war, because war can cause of their extreme economic decline. To avoid such aggressive steps and create cooperative environment are the basic ideas of CPEC. Another importance of regional collaboration is their unite strength against the treat of neo-imperialists policies of China in the region.

The anticipated positive outcomes of CPEC are expected to bring significant advantages to the neighboring

countries. It's really exciting to think about all the benefits it can have for the entire region. CPEC is a mean through which Pakistan can connect with extra regional countries as well as with European states, who have already expressed their willingness in favor of CPEC. Due to this scheme Pakistan might establish good relations with European Union and European states bilaterally and multilaterally.(Dr. Sarwat Rauf, 2018)

However, CPEC is not just about economics or politics, but the perfect blend of both. It aims to prioritize strategies that maximize economic benefits while considering geopolitical factors. In today's world, geopolitics focuses on strategic and political goals rather than purely economic aspects. The globalization of economies has fueled trade and growth, but it has also intensified the pursuit of power and created a competitive atmosphere. In this region, which is home to emerging economies like India and China, there is competition as both countries aspire for a stronger regional and global presence. They actively expand their influence and seek new trade networks, which aligns with their strategic goals.(Khan, 2017)

4. Conclusion

From the above all discussions, the researchers can assume that BRI is a master economic plan initiated by China, it consists of several sub plans. CPEC is a crucial element of this master strategy, which shifted the foreign policy of Pakistan from the old security strategies to economic priorities. Through this scheme Chinese government desired to integrate the region and further the whole world. It will bring positive and great impacts on the economy of Pakistan.

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