



## **Encircling Web By China To Pakistan: A review**

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### **Abstract**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a transformative infrastructure and development initiative, presents significant potential for Pakistan's economic advancement. This research examines the complex interplay between CPEC's anticipated benefits and the mounting concerns surrounding Pakistan's debt burden stemming from Chinese loans. While CPEC is positioned as a catalyst for national prosperity, Western powers, particularly the United States, express apprehension regarding China's lending practices, suggesting a potential for economic dependence and compromised Pakistani sovereignty. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of these Western concerns, dissecting whether they originate from legitimate debt sustainability risks or reflect broader strategic anxieties concerning China's growing regional influence. Employing a multidisciplinary approach, this research investigates the financial mechanisms of CPEC, its geopolitical implications, and the potential long-term consequences for Pakistan's economic and political landscape. By critically evaluating the competing narratives surrounding CPEC, this abstract highlights the research's aim to contribute a nuanced understanding of the project's multifaceted impact and its implications for regional stability.

Keywords: China Pakistan Economic Corridor, BRI, US, west, encircle, web.

### **Introduction**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is widely regarded as a potential catalyst for transformative change, holding the promise of significantly altering Pakistan's economic trajectory. <sup>1</sup> Born from decades of close ties with China, a rapidly ascending global power, CPEC's announcement, with its initial \$48 billion investment, startled developed nations. This ambitious undertaking, which has since expanded to encompass projects totaling \$64 billion, represents Beijing's most substantial international



initiative to date. Its scale and scope have triggered considerable apprehension among global leaders, prompting regional and international powers to seek ways to impede its progress.

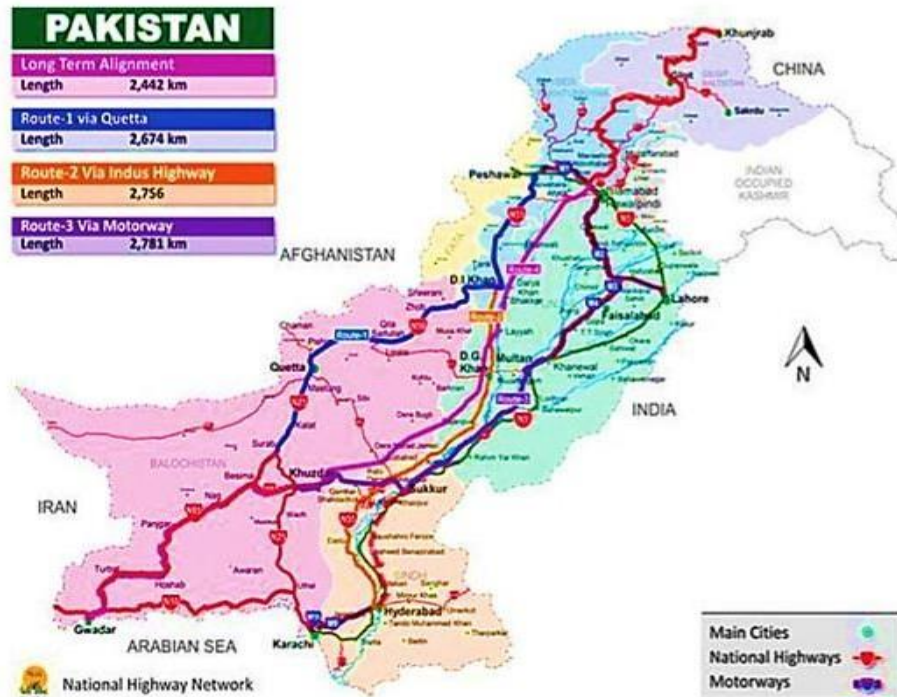
In this regard America and the western leadership are diverting the state of Pakistan tilt towards the west instead of the pro-China policies. However, having all these pressures the state of Pakistan is fixing its attention towards its testing times friend China. Both China and Pakistan are focusing over the compilation of CPEC because the hindrances have been openly created from Indian and American side. Not only Pakistan and China have to work on project but also China has to support Pakistan diplomatically. Financially China does not match with Pakistan. Pakistan has corrupted and inefficient worth in the world. Pakistan has to prove itself right to work on the project properly the investment of China and never undermine the mammoth Chinese investment in CPEC (Calabrese, 2015).

On the other hand, working on CPEC project has many hindrances due to the security purposes. In the state of Pakistan there is Islamic militancy and internal insurgency. This is the major reason speedy construction in project has enjoyed many ups and downs (Sial, 2016). CPEC's success will be the milestone of China's story of the success in foreign policy and Chinese positive conclusion will prove China's serious efforts to other BRI countries, propelling it into the position of a serious and critical global power. Having strong commitments by both China and Pakistan, the west and regional states are in the state of fear that the state of Pakistan in the deep ocean of debt by the Chinese banks. And in this regard Pakistan having weak economy will be not in the position to repay the entire loan within time frame. Having in this concern Pakistan is in the state of strong hardships economically and people of Pakistan will pay a heavy cost of it in the shape of heavy burden financially. Economically Pakistan is taking this project as advantages to monetary well settled structure and flow of money.

Further the task of Islamabad vital association with territorial superpower claim is strong in terms of CPEC compilation. So, CPEC is the project of lifesaver for Pakistan. This is the strong source of Pakistan that the Indian claim over Gilgit Baltistan is weak after the single source of route to reach the Chinese territory because China has openly support the Gilgit Baltistan the solely rightful territory of Pakistan (Lambah, 2016).



## Official Map of CPEC



Source: Planning Commission

Figure 1. Official Map of CPEC

### Benefits of CPEC to China

China is considered global power. It has created its strong competition in the world, it has large trained and professional army also has strong economy. Further, China has high class of developed infrastructure and ready to surpass financially as compare to the west. Having all expertise, it has dream of strong links with the world to trade fairly without hindrances. It is Pakistan that can be trusted from the side of China because China considers Pakistan as its all-weather trusted friend. In this regard, the CPEC gives China an efficient route into the larger family of BRI platform. In which there are 69 countries have initially signed a single route to use under the name of belt and road initiative with strong trade and investment plan. The leading figure of the project president Xi Jinping has consulted with other members for the jointly development of this project. He has communicated with other partners for their joint interests of all members.

The most important factor is that the Chinese efforts should be made to integrate the development strategies of other countries along with the route. The project is designed to open for all and not be closed for any state. It is not solo efforts only from the side of China but has collective efforts by other states for the compilation of the CPEC. Hence the apprehension from other partners likes Iran, Myanmar, Thailand, and Russia. They all have embarrassed the CPEC with open heart. In this regard China is trying to supply oil, gas and energy via this



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initiative. Therefore, that is very pragmatic vision by China to have energy and oil supply via the routes BRI states from the Mediterranean Sea to the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and South East Asia will take advantage of this gigantic project (Shafqat, 2017).

China has great opportunity to use the land web of Pakistan to use for its energy supply along with oil. It will try to control both sides of the world in its favor. Through CPEC Pakistani ports, highways could be used as its essential lines of communication in the near future. That will be helpful for China's Land Empire globally cutting the longest routes into the shorter routes via Pakistan. In this agenda Beijing is in full zeal to maintain its all-weather friendship with Pakistan. In this cause China is trying to plan long run relationships with Pakistan that in near future the trade with India could easily also be managed (Markey, 2013).

Chinese CPEC is the source of entirely transformation, reform, and transition. And this gigantic project is considered completely win situation for China. Though the mission is especially well appeasing, aspiration and open ended. The foreign policy of China is very optimistic dreaming positive and lucrative entire world better for the Chinese after president Xi's policies over CPEC and other formation of national policies. They are claiming that China has achieved its right direction of success (Ferdinand, 2016).

China wants to develop a new and stable export market during the U.S. trade dispute. China has maintained close ties with Pakistan for decades; particularly economic relations. Pakistan has great economic potential with the world's 5th largest population, 24th largest Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Pakistan was identified by British economist Jim O'Neill as one of eleven countries with a high potential to become one of the world's most significant economies in the 21st century. In addition, Pakistan is one of the 'youngest' nations in the world. Sixty-four percent of Pakistan's population is below the age of 30 while 29% is between the ages of 15 and 29 years. In this regard, both China and Pakistan anticipate increased trade cooperation. Further diversification of trade partners and industrial goods through CPEC projects is likely to improve the transportation network and infrastructure.

Furthermore, CPEC is likely to provide China significant strategic and security benefits. China's engagement in the CPEC helps mitigate the "Malacca Dilemma." The term coined by former Chinese President Hu Jintao refers to the over-reliance on the Malacca Strait, where 80% of Chinese energy needs pass enroute from the Middle East and Angola. Not only strategic but economic security can be acquired, as especially oil supply, has become a big concern for China, because of its tremendous oil consumption, while the U.S. has energy independence aided by shale gas technology innovation. More than 30% of the world's seaborne trade and up to 80% of China's energy supply (80% of crude oil and much of China's natural gas imports) passes through the Malacca Strait (a 500 NM narrow waterway between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea). For these reasons, China views obtaining a stable alternative route for energy will alleviate its reliance on this narrow and congested waterway. Achieving this as a critical and strategic objective for China. Gwadar port provides China with a shorter alternative land-and-sea gateway to the Middle East and eastern Africa. Some experts suggest China may see Gwadar port as a future strategic naval base and logistics hub. A Gwadar base could link to other port facilities encircling the





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Indo-Pacific region appears as long-term strategic plan, though both China and Pakistan deny any such plan exists.

### **Pakistan and CPEC**

Strategic local of Pakistan is considered the gift of creator. Having mountains, access to the ocean and possess the international standard ports are really valuable not only for the state of Pakistan but also for the land locked states in south Asia. Having all these approaches naturally to the state of Pakistan there was a need of an hour for the state of Pakistan having a strong partner that can spread the web of the infrastructure. That can access to the all-regional states. Through that all land locked countries can benefit easily. In this regard China find its space in Pakistan and have a bond with the state of Pakistan to work mutually namely on the project of the CPEC. In this regard all allocated projects construction is the need of an hour for the state of Pakistan. Because having bulk of population Pakistan has to meet its energy needs for its survival. Not only Pakistan has to meet through CPEC its needs but for the dream of Asian tiger it must has to work properly on the all projects.

On the other hand, both China and Pakistan have mutual interests in enmity in case of India. In the regard China always has supported Pakistan to get expertise to counter Indian influences in the region. In a special case of Pakistan's nuclear weapon struggle China supported backdoor during the years of isolation help from the west. Nowadays Pakistan is enjoying very strong position in the Chinese high command to build the infrastructure of Pakistan including, of ports, pipelines, roads, and railways connecting the oil and gas fields of the Middle East to the mega cities of East Asia. (Small, 2015)

In the case of western concern of Chinese debts to the state of Pakistan the experts of Pakistan have little concern over it. And have full support to the mutual decided project. Both politician and high command of military is on a single page to have CPEC compilation in given time frame. Though the quote of retired military general reinforces this fact as "We made the nuclear bomb despite international criticism... we will succeed in making CPEC despite international criticism... nobody could stop us then... nobody can stop us now". (Ex Pakistani military officer, Lahore, December 2018).

Both China and Pakistan have committed to formalize the project. But political inconsistency, policy uniformity, economic instability, has make China uncomfortable. (Saqib et al., 2015). Somehow, China has halted the speed of the assigned projects in framed time span due to the political inconsistency in Pakistanis political structure. There have been internal conflicts among the province's governments over the routes of the projects in Pakistan. Further, internal security issues have created fear in the foreign worker being targeted insurgents in Pakistan while ongoing projects. Where as many foreigners have been targeted. So, there is still security issue for Chinese engineers in Baluchistan and Sind provinces.

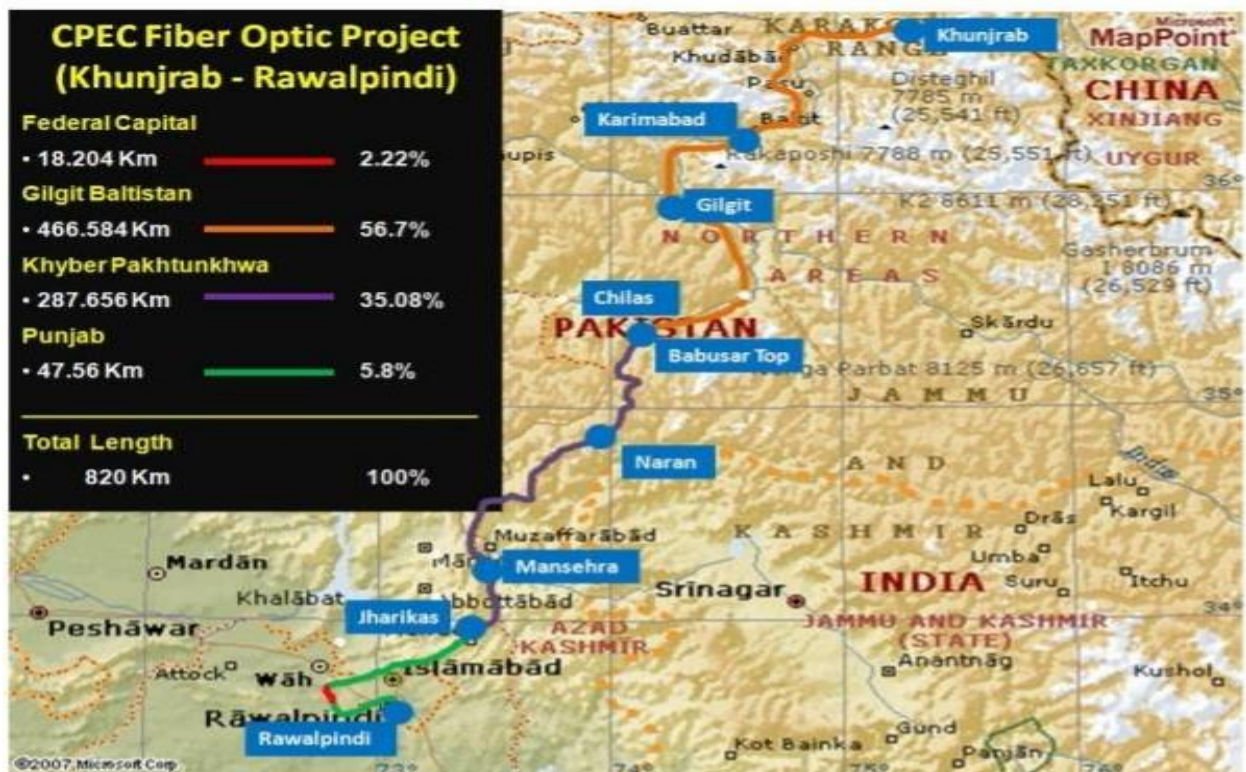
In the presence of security and economic problems in Pakistan, the government of China is entirely focusing to train the young engineers of Pakistan. Entire work is going on with the surveillance of Pakistanis young engineers. Even though the young population is being trained to learn Chinese language to understand each other easily. The companies of China are very interested to train work force in



Pakistan on the basis of capacity building. Further, Chinese are working with Pakistan to improve infrastructure of Pakistan with Pakistani capability.

CPEC is the most important measure to escape its economic crisis and expects the projects will further develop energy and transportation infrastructure. Regarding CPEC, Pakistan's government vision is stated as, "to improve the lives of people of Pakistan and China by building an economic corridor promoting bilateral connectivity, construction, explore potential bilateral investment, economic and trade, logistics and people to people contact for regional connectivity

## Fiber Optic Project of CPEC



Source: <http://www.pc.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Fiber-Optic-Network-of-Cpec-new2.jpg>

Figure 2. Fiber Optic Project of CPEC

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is expected to deliver economic prosperity in the whole region. But the realization of the various potential developmental benefits is contingent on the effective completion of the several projects. The development of a corridor in the region must be economically feasible and should offer a satisfactory return on the investment. And its success is also dependent on political stability as well as regional security. CPEC runs along the entire length of the Pakistani territory, which itself faces a myriad of problems (Sial & Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2014).

This raises the most crucial question: how practical is the realization of such a mega- project in a developing, politically unstable country with an exceptionally inadequate institutional, political, and administrative infrastructure? Political



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Instability and Lack of Consensus Pakistan's domestic politics has never been stable where military and civilian leaders alternate in political authority. Due to the absence of civilian supervision, there is still secrecy and lack of transparency surrounding the CPEC projects and routes, which is contributing to internal criticism of the project (Vinayak, 2020).

Divergence of interests of both the civil and military leadership over distribution of potential benefits of CPEC is further impeding its growth. The political consensus in Pakistan is also weak. There are also divisions between the provinces, particularly Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab as well as divisions between the central authority and the provinces over the original route of the CPEC. Due to considerable opposition from regional governments, the Chinese may not be able to finish the Kashgar–Gwadar corridor.

The CPEC has remained the center of protest in Pakistan due to China's increasing involvement in Balochistan for squeezing out all the wealth from the region (Bishay, 2021). The CPEC is viewed by people of Pakistan especially from Gwadar as a foreign occupation of their homeland and an attempt to marginalize the native Baloch people in the guise of economic development (Aamir, 2019).

In order to protect Gwadar's port town from insurgents, the government constructed a perimeter security fence with entry checkpoints. The removal of security check posts was one main demand of the massive protests that erupted in Gadar city on 22 November this year. The other reasons being unavailability of basic needs like clean drinking water, electricity, and of course loss of livelihood of fishermen. Such resentments and anti-state feelings may make it impossible for the government to effectively undertake CPEC-projects in the long term. There is a chance of spread of this discontent in other parts of Pakistan considering the way of acquisition of land for infrastructure building. This process can be seen in Punjab province where people have to sell their agricultural land at very low prices. And loss of agricultural land leads again to unemployment as no job has been provided in other sectors.

The completion of CPEC is hindered by the lack of time and poor management ability on the part of Pakistani authorities. Furthermore, pervasive corruption, a lack of planning and management, such as land acquisition issues and poor development on various projects, have already substantially increased expenses. Pakistani officials have previously stated that several projects planned by China and Pakistan in 2010 may not be completed. While continued energy shortages and inadequate planning will impede CPEC progress and inflate the cost of individual projects.

Despite several anti-terrorism operations, Pakistan's security situation remains perilous (Calabrese, 2016). The main impediment to the completion of CPEC is security. The Baloch insurgents are constantly attacking and kidnapping Chinese construction workers and project personnel. In Pakistan's northwest frontier, road networks are planned to run near or through territories where the Pakistani Taliban and other anti-state militant groups could attack construction crews and even disrupt the flow of goods. Although Pakistan claimed that they had eradicated the ETIM from Pakistan, the threat of other militant groups still remains. Baloch insurgent groups, ETIM and TTP have frequently targeted a variety of development projects, blown up infrastructure including gas pipelines, targeted local laborers and civilians, and, most importantly, assaulted Chinese engineers working on the Gwadar project in the framework of CPEC. It appears





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that providing protection and security to Chinese citizens working on a variety of CPEC-related projects around the country would be a tedious task or a big challenge. Pakistan has deployed nearly 15,000 security personnel to safeguard roughly 7,000 Chinese nationals working on the CPEC (Khan, 2016).

As per analysts, CPEC's security through these forces is feasible in the short term but as CPEC progresses, the presence of Chinese citizens will increase across Pakistan and it will be difficult to provide security to all of them (Shi & Lu, 2016). IN 2021, the insurgents escalated the fight beyond Balochistan to avenge their allegation of Chinese exploitation of Baluchistan's resources (Joshi, 2021). Four individuals were slain in 2018 when armed gunmen attacked the Chinese consulate in Karachi. In 2020, four people were killed in another attack on the Pakistan Stock Exchange, which is mostly controlled by the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

Pakistan's economy is in shambles, with several macroeconomic issues such as expanding current account and budget deficits, falling foreign currency reserves, and unemployment. In 2019, Pakistan's GDP growth rate fell below 1%. Pakistan's economy has been in a catastrophic position, and this will badly affect the implementation of CPEC. Moreover, Pakistan is a semi-industrialized country with few industrial hubs or clusters. The majority of the projected industrial parks are still in the planning stages and would entail significant investment. Similarly, almost all of the missing linkages in the proposed connectivity projects will need massive expenditure. Given Pakistan's perilous economic situation, such a large-scale investment may be unfeasible. Investment in Pakistan has dried up due to a weak law and order situation (Hussain, 2016).

While Beijing would pay the majority of the CPEC initiative through commercial loans, soft loans, grants, and private equity investment, Pakistan is also expected to fund transportation projects. However, for nearly one decade, Pakistan's average annual economic growth rate has not been more than 3 percent. Rising militant violence and perpetual political instability have made it difficult for the country to get FDI (Hussain, 2017).

The total value of the power and infrastructure deals concluded under CPEC has increased from the \$46 billion investment plan originally announced in 2015 to an estimated \$62 billion (Hussain, 2017).

This rise in costs has resulted from the inclusion of Chinese financing for rail-based mass transit projects in various other areas. Moreover, the increasing cost of security is becoming a big problem in efficiently pushing forward the project. In 2015, Pakistani authorities decided to create a Special Security Division to defend Chinese interests and nationals in Pakistan (Ritzinger, 2015). And one percent of the cost of CPEC projects was directed towards this cause (Government of Pakistan, 2016).

Undulating and rugged topography and harsh climates - The northern route of CPEC (Karakoram Highway) passes over challenging mountainous terrain that rises to more than 5000m above sea level and is prone to landslides, extreme weather events, and earthquakes. And parts of the 805 kms track are barely two-way, cut out of the rock face that drops abruptly into valleys below. Due to heavy snow, the Khunjerab Pass stays blocked from November to May; these harsh weather conditions also offer a slew of technical challenges for transportation businesses. Technical alternatives exist, but they are expensive, requiring costly rail and road tunnels as well as pipeline insulation and expensive pumping





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facilities, raising the project's overall cost (Montesano, 2016, Nov 28).

India is highly dependent on energy imports for its economic growth. India imports with over 60% of its oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz mainly from Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. India has sought to secure shipping lanes for the transportation of oil from the Middle East. Any disruptions in the Indian Ocean can lead to serious consequences for the Indian economy. Located a mere 600 km from the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar places China in close proximity to the Iran controlled water channel, which supplies 35% of the world's oil requirements. China's permanent maritime presence at the narrow entrance of the Persian Gulf can be a risk to India's energy security. China has also built 16 airstrips all along Karakoram Highway, mostly for military operations. This would be important for enhancing Pakistan and China's strategic airlift capabilities and ensure smoother logistical support (Prasanna, Ahuja & Sagar, 2021).

### **CPEC and Its Limits**

China has formalized CPEC as a mega project of all the times. Its credibility will increase with the passage of time and all states will prefer to use this route to access their trade within shorter space of time. Initially CPEC has 69 countries with 62 billion dollars investment. Leading energy and oil supply to the Mediterranean Sea to the Middle East, central Asia, south Asia and south East Asia. Further China and Pakistan have mutually agreed to enhance the credibility of CPEC at global level that not a single country declines the benefit from the use of the BRI. Iran, Myanmar, Thailand, and Russia are the leading partners of apprehension this project. And the easy access to worm water will be easy for Russia to benefit via safe and secure route to the world in the terms of trade (Shafqat, 2017).

United States of America and India both have fear with this project of China that China is trying to spreading its influence in the region and curtailing us influence simultaneous. Similarly, India is not happy with this project and trying to halt the speed of construction of CPEC. In this regard some groups of insurgents are backed by the India to target foreign works to create fear in the minds of the workers in the grounds of works. Having all eases to the world from this project its shortest of all the times. As from the Persian Gulf it has 13000 km long route while using CPEC it is 3000 km. figure 1 show the credibility of the project in time consuming the Persian Gulf takes 45 days long and CPEC takes only 10 days.

### **China as a Sleeping Crocodile**

China has a trained population and landmass. They have very professional skills to compete with the world. They have highly advance technology. Having strong land mass and huge bulk of population China is really sleeping crocodile. The entire anti- Chinese states are in the fear of Chinese superiority. The time space of Chinese development is used as an exemplarily for the developed states. The nation of China has strong links with the world and has strong links of trade and investment with other regional and global states. The planning of investment and trade of China has created huge fear among the lines of other states of the world. Like Chinese belt and road strategy (BRI) cover the investment of \$4-8 trillion approximately. That will cover the two-third of the land mass across 69



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countries with 4.4 billion population of the world.

At broader perspective BRI includes China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC), China- Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CIPEC), China-Central and West Asia Economic corridor (CCWAEC) and New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB) is also included in the net of projects. The purpose is to link South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, West Asia, and Europe from Malay Peninsula to the Mediterranean Sea. That would be managed by developing of highly technological based highways, sea ports, rural and urban industrial areas and multi-dimensional economic zones spread in the entire web of the projects.

Further the Euro-Asian landmass, BRI is covering a \$900 billion mega project. Which has two sides firstly it strengthens the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and secondly on Maritime Silk Road (MSR). This includes the spread of shipping routes to the entire allocated projects. Both land and sea routes of BRI are equally important but CPEC- due to its strong geo-strategic location, military significance and economic intensification- has attracted the eyes of the US and the west along with Indian. (McBride, 2015)

### **Speedy Superiority of China in the World**

In the twenty-first century there will be the rise of non-Western countries. The West will no longer be dominant region in the world. China will be the central player of the world. China has Power of links with many states having strong trade and investment with other states. China's BRI plan which is extending to 65 countries, combining gross domestic product of \$23 trillion and including some 4.4 billion people indicates the global pivot changing from the west towards China.

The timing of this Chinese gigantic plan is perfect because many of the partnering BRI countries have needs and their usual western patron, the United States, is not interested or committed. China is in the race of global shift and stepping up its economy very speedy. The Asian bank predicts the courted emerging Asian economies required

\$1.7 trillion per year to maintain growth, handle poverty, and to face the climate change circumstances. (Small, 2015)

China Pakistan economic corridor is the top priority of China on its list to be completed for showing off to the worldly states to show its intentions towards the project. Chinese future planning is dependent on this gigantic project. Energy needs could be met through this project. Further curtailing hegemonic nature of power in the region from American should be stopped. In this regard both Russia and China are working together to lemmatize American influence in the world.

The Chinese projects connect 69 countries and the investment in trillion dollars is the open stop call to the American influence in the world. China has played as a role of sleeping crocodile. That is focusing on projects, trade, and investment. The anti-China nations are in fear of Chinese wake up call. The wakeup call of China will disturb the entire countries of the world. Because, it is China, that is going to be the number one economy of the world along with largest army of the world. Having all strong elements of national powers, China will behave differently with other states.



## **China as an annoyance to West for Global Hegemonic Concept**

China has developed its national policies very effective globally. Its economic grooming, well managed infrastructure, hegemonic nature of economy has created strong criticism from the western world. US and its allies are curtailing their policies to halt the influence of the Chinese hegemonic perspective. Especially the states of Europe and strong allies of US are trying to form strong financial and security pacts against the China openly. In the response of overall acts by the west China is focusing only on its development of its security measures and economy. In this regard China is enhancing its approaches to the Europe to increase its trade and investment. Having all kinds of the success path of China the inception the BRI story is hard to hear by the western side especially by the side of the US. Chinese newfound foreign policy towards CPEC faces skepticism for the Western countries.

In this regard Chinese communist party (CCP) is under fire from the side of US that expansion of BRI project will raise western concerns over the security and economic structural design of the world order. Hence this kind of scenario has created a strong vacuum between the relationships of two nations the US and China. China is focusing to attract the members of the states where as the US has started open criticism of the project. Many thinkers are saying that the president of China Xi has his dominant nature and will not maintain the continuity of the project and will withdraw after his western concern and pressures (Greer, 2018). That's why the Chinese are trying to get easy access via Pakistan to get maximum benefit and return back to the Silk route for trade. Further, Gilgit-Baltistan serves as a gateway for CPEC project which connects China with Pakistan. And all the trade will be passing through Karakorum Highway (KKH), the Old Silk Route is restoring by Chinese to get easy access to the Middle Eastern Countries and to the Indian Ocean for trade.

## **Conclusion**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multi-billion dollar undertaking exceeding \$60 billion, represents a collaborative effort between China and Pakistan to develop interconnected infrastructure, including highways, railways, and pipelines across both nations. <sup>1</sup> As a cornerstone of China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) or the New Silk Road, CPEC aims to revitalize ancient trade routes through modern connectivity. <sup>2</sup> This ambitious 2,000-mile corridor originates at the newly constructed Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan province, strategically located on the Arabian Sea, enabling access for large vessels and facilitating trade routes from Asia to the Arabian Sea and the Strait of Hormuz. CPEC encompasses a broad spectrum of benefits for Pakistan, with Chinese investment targeting financial, technological, and infrastructural development. <sup>3</sup> However, the project faces internal challenges within Pakistan and external concerns regarding China's potential for undue influence. <sup>4</sup> Despite these obstacles, CPEC's potential to significantly bolster Pakistan's economic stability is undeniable. Amidst China's rise as a formidable economic rival to the United States, a geopolitical competition has emerged, impacting the project's trajectory.

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