The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Security Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the currently faced challenges of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) from the security standpoint. It’s considered central to China-Pakistan relations and will link Kashgar to Gawadar port through the extension of Silk Road initiative name as One Belt One Road (OBOR). With the investment of 46 billion dollars and expected to be completed by 2030. Further, this Economic Corridor will help to resolve the problems that affect the stability in their borders and also prevent the different forces that manipulating the internal and external ethnic conflicts between two countries. This Economic Corridor could only become a game changer if both Governments are succeeded in the overcoming of this security challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Nature and man-made disaster such as depression, inflation, epidemics, floods, terrorism, etc., have affected the local economies globally. Security and terrorism are contemporary, for both developing and developed countries are particularly vulnerable for several reasons. In the aftershock of 9/11, the USA undertook on a massive global quest for terrorists and started its operation in Afghanistan called “Operation Enduring Freedom”. It’s done to control insurgency in Afghanistan spillover to Pakistan, with adverse upshots. The resurgence of the Taliban with the different tactics and subterfuge experience has become more dangerous for both Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as for the USA. It is evident that due to Afghan insurgency Pakistan has faced very heavy economic and political losses [1]. The violence recalls the insurgent has dared the political and national integrity of Pakistan that cannot be tolerated.

Pakistan faces manifold external as well as internal challenges; one and all have a talking on the security point within the country [2]. To a great extent, these challenges have been intensified by Pakistan’s economic policy delivery paucity, which has been a constraint on strategic resource-allocation and decision-making.

From its inception, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multi-billion dollar infrastructure investment plan, is heralded as a ‘game changer’ for Pakistan’s regional and economic cooperation. Being a central part of a main development initiative controlled by China, known as ‘One Belt, One Road’ (OBOR), to link Asia.
with the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, the CPEC is much linked to hopes, interests, as well as regional and global geopolitics (see Figure 1). Though, such a mega project never comes without challenges and critical questions.

![China’s Proposed New Silk Roads](image)

Figure 1. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) proposed rout.

The security issues remain the primary challenge to the realization of the CPEC project [3]. For several years, Islamabad has been engaged in a war against terrorist groups that might threaten or attack the CPEC project. These security problems can affect and delay the implementation of projects under CPEC [4].

**CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND SECURITY CHALLENGES**

Security matters endure the most major challenge to the CPEC as a while. The security of the corridor is critically importance for both Pakistan and China in order to further support trade and development related ties. It is also a challenge for both countries to develop the CPEC in the specified time frame [5]. As a security point of view, Gwadar and Kashgar are two central points, which are going to be linked through the CPEC, but there are further several security challenges. It is anticipated that reducing the risks of nationalist and militant movements of the Uighurs, China is making different five economic zones in Kashgar can transform the region into an economic hub, as well as the similar view is articulated about the nationalist movements in Balochistan. In fact, their aim is to defend security related matters of CPEC such as routes and workforce on short and medium-term bases. Certainly, the terrorists ‘activities are being condensed by the military action and there are decreasing tendency in terrorist activities in Pakistan, but there is still the possibility of threats existed. Gawadar seaport is located in Balochistan, which faced instability and terrors are being publicized after starting the work on the CPEC. The protection of the Chinese labor force is likewise a matter of concern for Pakistan. The Pakistan military has created a force of 10,000 to protecting the Chinese workforce who the work under the
CPEC, this force is known as Special Security Division (SSD), they have six wings of paramilitary forces and nine army battalions, the Frontier Corps and the Rangers. So far most prevailing threats experience by the CPEC from militants groups such as Nuristan and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan along with Al Qaeda and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Turkestan Islamic Party and the Movement of Islamic Uzbekistan etc. There are a number of internal and external factors posing threats to CPEC.

**Internal security challenges**

There are certain internal challenges which should be faced by Pakistan regarding internal security point of view.

The first challenge is the most progressive Talibanisation of Pakistan, especially in the FATA and western parts of the country. Pakistan confronts prospective security threats from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and different other militant groups in the tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, although separatist insurgency in Baluchistan, religious and ethnic violence in Punjab and Karachi (Sindh). The militancy groups and insecurity will become serious threats for the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The second challenge is the religious extremism and terrorism that also become serious threat China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a society and the country as a whole. Meanwhile, 9/11 incident more than 30,000 citizen and also different security workers have lost their lives in terror attacks. Likewise, Pakistan has been taking a serious stance to control the threat of terrorism and its main uproot causes, i.e., religious radicalism [6].

The third one challenge is faced by Pakistan like Indian involvement. Several countries cogitate that CPEC has a strategic threat to their military and economic interests and penetrating effect on the state. India violently substances to CPEC, specified the atmosphere of a forceful geo-strategic struggle it put into the hands of Pakistan an advantageously favorable position along the Arabian Sea. Furthermore, reliable evidence exists that divulge RAW run a special cell set up to sabotage CPEC in Pakistan.

The fourth one is about our actually close friends, the UAE; in the meanwhile, Gwadar is also another perceived challenge to its virtual monopoly over trade in the gulf countries. On the other hand, India is also diligently promoting their own port with the name of "Chabahar Port" initiative as an alternatively to connect Central Asia and Europe, having more of an upshot on the UAE than Gwadar.

The fifth one is the Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan has provided nonstop support to the insurgents and has backed by the insurgency, as well as Taliban has a close connection with the Norzais, Ghilzai Alekozai, Durrani and Eshaqzais tribes. Moreover, Wazirs, Ahmadzai, and Mahsuds in North and South Waziristan have also backed the insurgent cohort by organizing their variant happenings in Afghanistan that can also upshoot on CPEC.

**REMEDIES FOR INTERNAL CHALLENGES**

The Pakistan military and Government has launched different operations against war and terrorisms inside the country.

First of all, the challenge of ensuring security for the CPEC development, for example, the military organization setting-up of new armed forces in Baluchistan and
Sindh, dedicated specially, for the security of CPEC and associated projects-, a decision particularly made by the military top brass. Although, from the internal security point of view, the army is an absolute authority and also launch the operation Zarb-e-Azb to control militancy, which started in summer 2014.

Likewise, the choice to the extent the duration of operation and to expand the operation in geographical standings was also carried out by the armed forces. At the initial level, this operation was launched for just to control the insurgency on Afghanistan boarder areas, but after the erstwhile army launched extent this operation at the country level. Overall the main aim of the Zarb-e-Azb operation is to secure the circle of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and ‘terror free Pakistan’. In this context, Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif: "We [Pakistan’s security forces] will not stop unless we achieve our end objective of a terror-free Pakistan” regardless of the costs.

Similarly, in the area of public policy, the Government of Pakistan instituting of the Apex Committees at both provincial and federal levels consequences therefore into the decreasing of the decision making the authority of the policymakers collective with a lack of parliamentarian lapse by the provincial and national assemblies. So, the ultimate aim of these committees is to make important decisions with the bureaucracy and military amalgam. In the same vein, the preliminary tasks of this Apex Committees were to execute the National Action Plan (NAP) and organize security, which was drafted mutually by the parliamentarians, army, and government.

**External challenges**

Since its genesis, Pakistan has encountered extreme threats on its integrity and security from its west borders align to Afghanistan. Along with NATO invasion of Afghanistan, India, Russia and Iran has been trying utter best to destabilize Pakistan. The rise of greater interest of India in Afghanistan compelled to establish an AF-PAK alliance to hinder the challenges. Moreover, the Chinese investment and curved eye of Iranian and Russian has further brought security implication.

In addition, to list the internal set of confrontations, strong external oppresses on CPEC is obvious. Since after 9/11, cooperation level between Pak-Iran has attained its height in naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean. There existed the tight level of strategic and economic competition level with India and Iran because of amendment of China-Pakistan economic corridor. Instability in politics and disturbed security state of Pakistan may carry backlashes in the advancement of CPEC infrastructure near the Afghan border. The biggest challenge is existing proxy war with neighbor India and its strong influence in Afghanistan at the same time recently bettering hostile relations with its west.

So far Caspian region Russian monopoly status quo standby decision on oil pipeline is concerned which extending to Europe and beyond has a threat from the construction of new pipe line as per CPEC [7]. Chinese design in the Indian Ocean is yet another complication in India-China geo-politics. Not only this to counter the corridor, ‘Chahbhar Port’ is another grand design of India with Iran and Afghanistan strategically [8].

Advantageous geographical and socio-cultural strategic location of Iran has created a shortest link between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean at the same time Iran has several projects with central Asian counterparties like Anzob Tunnel with Tajikistan and Amu Darya Bridge. Heavily dependent on central Asian nations on Russian
communication networking infrastructure and Russian energy resources’ linkages with Kazakhstan has entangled Pakistan corridor dream. However, Common wealth independent states (CIS) like Azerbaijan plays a supportive role so far corridor success is concerned [9].

The struggle for power influence in Afghanistan by different regional actors in the wake of US withdrawal has a grace threat on the sustainability of proposed CPEC. Most ignored factor is the cost of production. Heavy demand from industrial clusters for raw materials brings price hike and hurts the major motive of CPEC economic prosperity. At the same time result in resource depletion, environmental pollution and changing climatic patterns [10].

**REMEDIES FOR EXTERNAL CHALLENGES**

Historical unending uncomfortable relation with India is the most predominant concern so far external threat is anxious. Both the countries have indulged in four conventional wars, employed slow-bleed tactics to hurt each other’s physical and economic base [11]. As a part of china containment policy, rise of US-India strategic relations is a big game in itself in Asia [12]. The consequence of the hegemony of Indian thrust and lust of regional geo-politics driver, and rivalry with china has brought perfect partnership between India and USA. This became evident during President Obama’s visit to India this year as Prime Minister Modi’s new robust “Act East” diplomacy, which has pleased Washington, which has been jolting India for years to intertwined its moves with the USA’s strategic pivot toward the region [12].

**CONCLUSION**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the agitator for counter-terrorism cooperation between two countries. Therefore, people of both countries should emphasis not only strengthened the prevailing security measures but also to ensure successfully and timely completion of this project. But there is still security related threats concerns, however, it might be originated from Pakistan, and the Xianjiang province in Western China is also facing security related threats. The security of corridor is the crucial for Pakistan as well as China in order to strengthen trade and development ties.

**REFERENCES**


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