

## **BRI & CPEC: Strategic & Economic Depth for Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

CPEC project (China – Pakistan Economic Corridor) being the flagship project of Belt & Road Initiative initially witnessed a planned investment of \$ 46.6 billion which Beijing initiated and now it is extended to \$62 billion and would be completed in the next few years. CPEC is not only aimed at connecting Kashgar to Gwadar but it is also considered to be the Zipper of Central Asia with South Asia, Moscow and Beijing with the Middle East and Africa. CPEC is specifically envisioned beneficial for economic security for Pakistan in a crucial time when Pakistan is isolated and badly damaged by the War on Terror since September 2001. Islamabad and Beijing have developed strong ties despite their ideological differences. This research work sheds light on the economic cooperation between the two neighboring states i.e. China and Pakistan in the context of Beijing's huge investment in Pakistan. The study analyzes CPEC from political, economic, and social perspectives. The study reveals that CPEC is the venture of economic and strategic depth for Pakistan.

**Key Words:** OBOR, BRI, CPEC, Economic strategic depth, Cooperation, Beijing, Islamabad.

### **Introduction**

Since the end of cold war global politics has changed considerably. The end of the Cold War made the USA a sole superpower in the world. This status quo is challenged by China in the recent few years. It was in this context that China's foreign policy has been modified extensively. China's remarkable military spending over the past decade unavoidably offers the impact that the Asian giant aspiration for advancement and, in the years, to come to surpass the United States as the largest military power in the world. Then again, China desires to counter balance to Asia policy initiated by Barack Obama's administration – a policy of containment even expanded in the Donald Trump administration with the new free and open Indo-Pacific method – by increasing its sphere of influence in the direction of the heart of Eurasia via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also called One Belt, One Road (OBOR) (Zhou, 2015). As one of the awesome examples of modern-day Chinese expansionism, this formidable initiative is aimed to restore the historical Silk Road by connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa through the realization of many transcontinental initiatives, both using land and sea.

CPEC is also the part and parcel of the “OBOR” grand initiatives. As a part of the BRI, CPEC is a complete essential infrastructure venture for the long – term

ambitions of Beijing. Indeed, the success of the entirety of the CPEC can reap many economic and strategic benefits. Even though Xi Jinping's China wants to appear as a responsible global power via pursuing a non-coercive and peaceful initiative. The enlargement of Chinese language have an impact on Eurasia that may also represent new revisionist strength of the cutting-edge global order, which could represent a critical danger to American hegemony (Zhu, 2015). Moreover, the improved cooperation between China and Pakistan, which has emerged in the recent years, would unleash numerous effects at the global and regional levels, shaking the geopolitical balance. This paper attempts to a better observe the CPEC project from a geopolitical angle expound the primary strategic implications of the mission for the People's Republic of China and its allies and opponents in South Asia region (Sabahat Jaleel, Naureen Talha, & Shah, 2020).

Both "OBOR" and the CPEC projects are not merely economic connectivity projects but vital for. Entire the region geostrategic interests of China and the country involved. Many countries would have willingly embraced these projects. Many countries like Pakistan's next-door neighbor India and China's rival, USA has shown skepticism over these projects. These projects, besides bringing the much needed economic connectivity will also bolster China's economic and geostrategic position vis-à-vis the USA and India. Opposition of these countries is viewed in the context of China's rivalry with India at the regional level and its rivalry with the USA at a global level (Khalid, Jalal, & Bilal, 2020).

The "OBOR" and the CPEC projects also have brought to limelight the dynamics of global and regional politics. International Relations and activities of the state interaction posit the fluidity of the distinction between either friends or enemies. Likeminded countries are aligning themselves and joining the CPEC projects. Russia has also shown interest in the CPEC project. Both China and Russia are coming out of the shell of the Sino-Russia split of 1960. Both countries view USA as their rival. Russia is challenging USA militarily in many parts of the world while China is head-on with the USA both militarily in terms of the arms race and economically (Gul, Umer, & Malik, 2018).

## **Literature review**

"One Belt, One Road" initiative and its allied projects like CPEC have assumed considerable significance. It is not only due to the wider finance it involves but also due to the geostrategic significance it has for the rise of China and the subsequent retreat of USA in many parts of the world.

Many geopolitical theorists – Alfred T. Mahan, Halford J. Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, Zbigniew Brzezinski – have identified the strategic centrality of Eurasia; so, an inquiry into the significance and scope of the BRI and CPEC necessitates of a closer study of a number of the classical geopolitical theories to figure the imperatives which have caused China to recognize one of these large ventures centered in Eurasia. A hasty assessment of those geopolitical theories may additionally result in the belief that they are outdated or otherwise not

relevant for this paper. Most of these theories converge in the direction of a distinctly applicable point for the prevailing dialogue: the geostrategic centrality of the Eurasian continent in international politics.

As said by Saran (2015), China employed Mahan's and Mackinder's theories and is presently aiming to create a "continental-maritime geostrategic realm" through BRI; mainly, through the realization of the Silk Route Economic Belt and the twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Route. In this context, CPEC project and the resultant connectivity play an essential role for the Chinese strategic interests, because the Pakistani port of Gwadar is one of the geographical points wherein both routes converge. But, it is essential to underline that China still lacks a long way behind the USA and its partner Japan in maritime projection competences. Notwithstanding, Chinese communication developing investments in the improvement of an adequate maritime force and how much China has been inspired by using Mahan's strategic calculations, Eurasia the overpowering presence of U.S. naval forces in all main world sea routes, coupled with the Yankee willingness to rebalance Asia-Pacific, have each induced the "march westwards" rhetoric in China's overseas coverage (Clarke, 2015).

Lukin (2015) stated, the People's Republic of China is surely following Mackinder's theoretical tips and developing a form of "offensive rail" through the enlargement of its railway community no longer only within its substantial territory, but also in the direction of the outside. As an example, in January 2011 the Chinese government introduced the construction of a high-velocity railway line – about 7.000 kilometers long and costing about 242 billion greenbacks – that would connect Moscow to Beijing and decrease the distance between the 2 capital from 6 days of travel to 33 hours. The assumption is that America, with its unsurpassed naval potential, can successfully paralyze the maritime outer edge of the Chinese regime, but on the contrary can rarely assault the territorial epicenter of China – that is a part of Mackinder's Heartland – for the reason that it is landlocked and therefore easier to guard especially terrestrial energy like China compared to the yank strength primarily based instead on sea strength (Lukin, 2015).

Anyhow, even though the development of the People's Republic of China toward the Eurasian landmass appears promising, it's essential to consider that Mackinder's Heartland principle foresaw a victorious and hegemon Russian Empire poised to take entire management of the Pivot region. The Asian region is facing neighborhood demanding situations that might abruptly halt its outstanding upward push in international politics., regarding its internal troubles, the Beijing government nevertheless has addressed the Uyghur separatism inside the region of Xinjiang – wherein the strategic metropolis of Kashgar is located – and further make investments in inner Mongolia. In the end, China desires to settle numerous inner problems if it wants to secure its place and set up peaceful economic cooperation with Eurasia geared toward further growing its worldwide reputation (Clarke, 2015).

## **Economic & strategic depth**

In the words of Nicollo Machiavelli, more than anything else, the *raison d'être* of the state is important. Such a concept can assume various manifestations both at formal and informal levels of state interaction with other states. The concept of “strategic depth” is one such an instrument which secures the *raison d'être* of the state.

The concept of strategic depth primarily deals with the military and defense aspects of a state's capabilities in the war to cope with the adverse effects of the enemy's designs. It may include both the tactical and strategic inter-play of a state's motives. The main objective of strategic depth is to establish and maintain influence and control over a territory and asset. It enables a state to protect not only the military assets but also the civilian infrastructure in a manner to counter the enemy's attack and readjust itself for a counterattack. “Strategic depth, in military terms, refers to the internal distance within a state from its Forward Defended Localities (FDLs) or the distance from the frontline to its center of gravity or heartland, its core population areas or important cities or industrial installations. It refers to the consideration relating to the vulnerability of the center of gravity of a country to the enemy's onslaught in case of war as against the capability provided by the space available within the territory to halt enemy's advance, counter-attack and restore the balance” (Khan, 2015). This strategy was used by the Soviet forces in the Second World War against the German forces successfully. Pakistan has used the concept mainly in Afghanistan since the 1980s and against India. An effort has been made here to link the strategic depth concept with the economy, particularly CPEC. Since Pakistan has been struggling to improve its weak economy and overcome the acute energy problem, the CPEC is envisaged as a game-changer in this context. The geo-strategic position of Pakistan can help to boost the state's posture economically, using the framework of CPEC. Looking at the in grave security situation Afghanistan, the region and Indian strategic competition, the economic strategic depth concept is evolving. Along with some other players, India and the US are trying to make hurdles in the way of CPEC. An emerging economic paradigm is reinforcing the established concept of the strategic depth in a new fashion. The paper illustrates the current trend to link the trade and economic aspects of CPEC with the concept of strategic depth (Ishaque, Ullah, & Khalid, 2020).

## **Analysis of the CPEC**

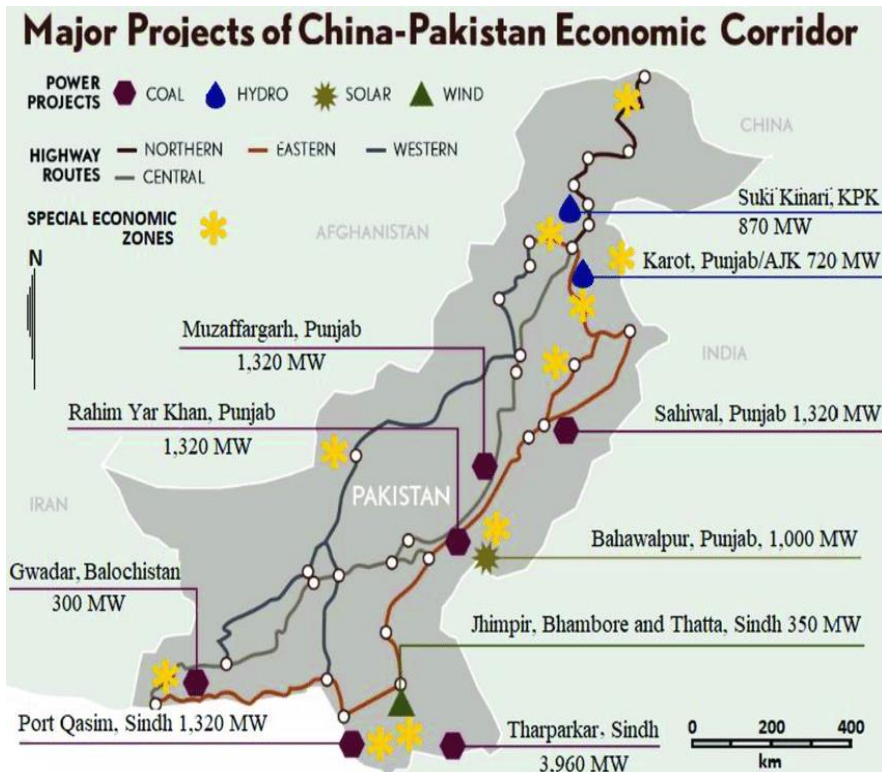
CPEC project is the manifestation of globalization as it involves the free flow of capital, labor, and services. Globalization in the beginning enriched the developed countries at the expense of the developing countries. This was the reason that such trends of globalization were resented by developing countries. Such globalization was driven by North-South cooperation where developed countries cooperated to exploit the developing countries. However, since at least the 1980's the era of

globalization has been dominated by North-South cooperation where developed countries are cooperating with the developing countries based on the principle of the “win-win” situation for each category of the country involved. China is far ahead of many countries to extend such support to many developing countries. The BRI and many of its associated projects like the CPEC projects are the iconic examples of the North-South cooperation where a developed country like China is investing in developing countries for the long-term economic development for both countries. These projects, though are not devoid of the geostrategic interests, will bring about the needed economic development to the countries like Pakistan (Rahim, Khan, & Muzaffar, 2018).

The BRI is a remarkable infrastructural project that aims to connect 3 exclusive continents – Europe, Asia, and Africa – through the creation of essential transcontinental communication projects, by way of land and sea respectively. The terrestrial infrastructure network of the initiative consists of six foremost economic corridors, inclusive of the CPEC. This economic corridor – divided into three exceptional routes – is strategically important for the People’s Republic of China, due to the fact, via connecting the Chinese town of Kasha in Xinjiang to the Pakistani Gwadar Port. It will allow China to bypass the Strait of Malacca and easier admission to the Middle East, East Africa, and the Mediterranean Sea (Ge, Christie, and Istle, 2015). Certainly, Beijing has been attracted to the industrial port of Gwadar in most of cases because of its proximity to the Straits of Hormuz – the important waterways for the Persian Gulf – through which maximum in their power imports drift; The Gwadar port will provide a port for both the exporting of Chinese items and the offloading of Chinese energy imports, to be transported overland via Pakistan into China, warding off further maritime delivery. In other terms, CPEC could offer a way to the Malacca to catch 22 situations. So that it will recognize the scope of the CPEC and examine its strategic implications. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines the monetary corridors as “crucial networks or connections among monetary retailers alongside a described geography, which give the connection between economic nodes or hubs, commonly targeted in urban landscapes, wherein large amount of financial assets and actors are concentrated; they hyperlink the deliver and demand sides of markets” (Brunner, 2013).

In recent years, many Asian countries have tried, with blended effects, to reduce political fragmentation, social schisms, religious divisions and, in preferred, endemic conflicts a few of the foremost economies of the region. In this context, the concept of the monetary investment has been an outstanding success, because, by using definition, it tends to draw foreign economic investments in infrastructures within the countries involved in the initiative, increasing regional interconnectivity (Safitri, 2012). But, the conclusion of a financial investment has additionally inevitable strategic implications that could modify the status quo of the area worried, with the aid of growing the warfare between the primary regional and global actors that gravitate around the place. The case of the CPEC is not any exception.

### The CPEC Project: The Beginning



Map courtesy: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-major-projects-of-China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor-13-14-15-16\\_fig1\\_327638000](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-major-projects-of-China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor-13-14-15-16_fig1_327638000)

Though the idea of the CPEC is a new one, the integration of China's eastern province with Gwadar was much older. The conception took traction once the Gwadar port became operational and the incumbent president of China, Xi Jinping assumed the presidency (Haider & Waqar, 2020). After lengthy and protracted diplomatic discussions between the two nations, the idea of building an economic corridor between China and Pakistan officially emerged for the time in May 2013, when Chinese leader Li Keqiang – gave go-to Pakistan – publicly underlined the mutual advantages of constructing a not unusual trade path. On that event, the two signed the understanding MOUs for the long-term Plan on the China-Pakistan financial cooperation, which claimed, amongst other matters, the start of an “unbreakable partnership” between the two countries (Tiezzi, 2014). After further initial agreements, in April 2015 the Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a total of fifty-one financial-commercial agreements along with his Pakistani counterpart. In keeping with those agreements, the People's Republic of China pledged to finance a series of lengthy-time period infrastructural projects in Pakistan – initially worth 46\$ billion – linking their economies and underscoring China's economic and political pursuits in Asia (I. Haider, 2015). The investments for the development of

### *BRI & CPEC: Strategic & Economic Depth for Pakistan*

the CPEC were progressively elevated through the years, reaching approximately 65 billion bucks in April 2017 (Siddiqui, 2017).

As explained earlier, the economic port of Gwadar has an incredible significance for China, due to its proximity to Strait of Hormuz – which is a strategic maritime passage for international exchange and oil transportation from the East, as it connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman. The improvement of the Pakistani port of Gwadar and the development of CPEC could provide to China a far faster and more secure way of transportation than the conventional sea route – about 12,900 kilometers lengthy – which connects the Persian Gulf to the Chinese language ports, passing through the Strait of Malacca (Roy Chowdhury, 2013). It's no accident that in February 2013, even earlier than the signing of the memorandum of expertise at the implementation of the CPEC in may additionally 2013, China and Pakistan had reached a 40-yr agreement to entrust management, improvement, and control of the aforementioned port to China Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC), managed with the aid of the People's Republic of China (Raza, 2013). The importance of the Pakistani port of Gwadar is also evidenced using the latest undertaking to construct a Chinese base in Jiwani – handiest about 80 kilometers away – to defend Beijing's huge investment within the vicinity. Inside the monstrous framework of the BRI, of all the monetary corridors, the CPEC is probably the most secure one, because it entails most effective partnership united states – the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – with which the Chinese government has mounted an “all – weather friendship”, at the same time as the alternative corridors span distinctive countries belonging to exceptional areas that don't have such stable relationships with Beijing (Ali, 2016).

In popular, the Beijing authorities are well aware of Pakistan's strategic position – at the brink of China, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia – makes it a country with the monstrous capability to grow to be a financial nerve middle, connecting some of these areas in phrases of trade and transportation and reworking the geo-strategic panorama of the whole vicinity (Siddique, 2014). But, the implementation of the CPEC and the Sino-Pakistani alliance should have massive repercussions in the entire region.

### **The reactions of the main regional and international actors to BRI**

Since the People's Republic of China has conceived the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a tool to promote nearby cooperation and create an immense network of interconnected states spanning three continents, it's crucial to do not forget the attitude of some of the principal regional and global actors involved inside the place wherein this initiative extends, with a purpose to understand and divulge its strategic implications. Indeed, the unique pursuits of these actors are directly or indirectly invested via the Chinese initiative, and their response ought to have a decisive effect at the achievement or failure of the BRI and, consequently, of the China-Pakistan economic corridor CPEC. Consequently, an outlook of the reaction

### *Hafeez Ullah Khan*

of those countries to Chinese expansionism in Eurasia will help to examine the geo-strategic results of this project (Faisal, CPEC and Regional Connectivity: Navigating the South Asian Politics, p. 2016).

As per Lin (2016), the biggest advantage for China – that could make the implementation of the BRI, in addition to their geographical proximity to the promoter USA of the initiative. Indeed, many critical Asian international locations including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, together with the 10 contributors of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), have emerged as vital and vital for the overall success of the BRI. Consequently, it is no twist of fate that the people's Republic of China is orientating its foreign policy inside the region consistent with foremost directives (Weidong, 2017). On the one hand, becoming a type of financial benefactor, so that it will exert its influence in their respective governments by becoming. However, a member of local institutions and agencies are taken into consideration of unique significance for promoting and safeguarding Chinese interests (Kaczmarek, 2015).

### **CPEC and Sino-Pakistani alliance as a threat to economic & strategic interests of India**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is not only witnessing the rise of China, but it is also the century characterized by the shift of global politics from Europe to Asia. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw many major events happenings in Europe. Now the same is happening, though somehow in a modified manner, in the region based in Asia Pacific. This is the reason that China has changed in its approach towards global politics. The strategic importance of playing a primary role inside the diverse nearby states explains why Beijing is inquisitive about becoming an everlasting member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This membership might allow China to increase its sphere of influence in South Asia and, consequently, higher each of the CPEC and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Having acquired the status of observer member in November 2005, China expressed for the first time the desire to become a complete member of 18th SAARC Summit in November 2014. Beijing had the consent of allied individuals including Pakistan and Nepal, however, it met strong resistance from India – the United States of America that most fears the rise of China as a hegemonic power (Khaniejo, 2016). Specifically, the concern of Delhi is that the conferment of a complete club to the Chinese resulted in Sino-Pakistan axis, capable of challenging its modern-day political-monetary dominance inside the SAARC. Aware about China's appeal to the countries of the region – because of its greater financial assets and its willingness to make investments – India fears that different states in the region are under the impact of both China and Pakistan, will unite to oppose the economic-strategic pursuits of the country (Khaniejo, 2016).





Map courtesy: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/194175/indias-baseless-opposition-cpec/>

China is actively pursuing a foreign policy aimed at limiting India as an emerging power in the region with the aid of helping economic boom and strategic significance of Pakistan. Furthermore, the current undertaking to construct a Chinese military base in Jiwani to defend the commercial port of Gwadar has shown how some distance the synergy between the two nations can pass. Therefore, it's not surprising that the CPEC – which is certainly the best symbol of the friendship between China and Pakistan – is visible with the aid of New Delhi as a part of a bigger joint method to counterbalance the Indian effect in South Asia. Also, the reason for friction among the parties is that CPEC crosses the Pakistan Administered Kashmir. In response to the Indian authorities which has time and again accused China of fueling geopolitical tensions at some point of the Kashmir area. Beijing has repeatedly argued that the CPEC is a monetary initiative "that is not relevant to disputes over territorial sovereignty" and that this challenge doesn't have an effect on its function on the so-called Kashmir issue, which in line with China need to be solved via bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan (Laskar, 2017).

India has to counter the progressive Chinese maritime involvement within the Indian Ocean, represented utilizing the strive with the aid of the Beijing government to develop the String of Pearls, which is a part of the bigger undertaking of the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Route.

## **India's tilt towards Iran**

As stated by Taylor (2016), India is presently trying to counter China's expansionism in South Asia and pursuing its monetary and strategic pursuits through looking for a relationship with Iran that is facing the new sanctions imposed by Western powers. The approach of Delhi towards Teheran is evidenced through big Indian funding, accredited since May 2013, for the development of the industrial port of Chabahar – positioned within the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, in the front of the Gulf of Oman and best approximately one hundred and seventy kilometers from the Pakistani port of Gwadar. This initiative is a part of the wider infrastructure challenge – which entails India, Iran, and Afghanistan – aimed toward building the Chabahar-Zahedan Hajigak Railway (CZHR), which might link the Iranian port of Chabahar to the Hajigak mining website online, via the Iranian metropolis of Zahedan. The realization of this infrastructure venture and the improvement of the port of Chabahar are significant for India, due to the fact they would allow it to connect Iran and Afghanistan without delay, bypassing Pakistan. greater commonly, this photo suggests that India's strategic goals are: to become stronger and enlarge its affect Afghanistan; advantageous entry to the transit network in critical Asia; outsmart its rival Pakistan in its very own outside; counteract the approaching Chinese language upward push in South Asia (Taylor, 2016).



Map courtesy: PressTv.com-2019

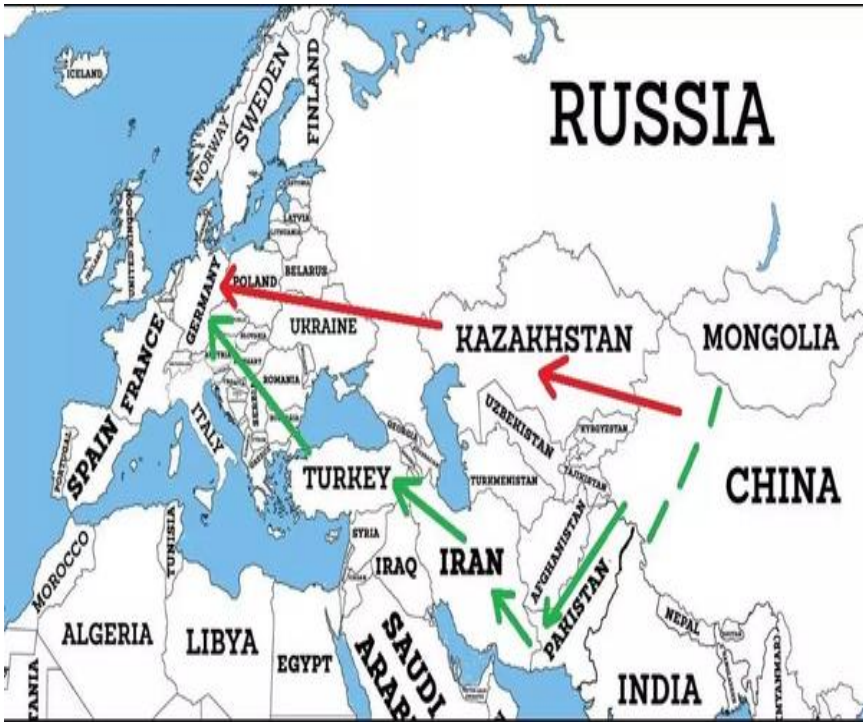
Iran has participated in similar negotiations with the People's Republic of China inside the last few years, even as Pakistan is trying to attain an agreement

with the Tehran government to reap a huge fuel supply for the future. for instance, in an assembly held in Tehran in January 2016 between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani, China has pledged to make investments about 600 billion dollars within the US over the next ten years (Bokhari, 2016). Furthermore, Afghanistan has time and again expressed its enthusiasm for its feasible participation within the CPEC, to be able to emerge as a strategic junction that without delay links the Sino-Pakistani initiative to vital Asia through the construction of conversation and transit infrastructures on its territory (Singh, 2016).

Indo-Iranian strategic partnership is trying to counter the Sino-Pakistani alliance. Consequently, because of those objective difficulties, the method developed through New Delhi to counteract Chinese expansionism in South Asia should be as a minimum in part reformulated perhaps that specialize in strengthening cooperation with US and Japan – countries that percentage the same fear approximately the rise of China as a hegemonic power in the region (Calabrese, 2015).

Hence, the CPEC project is geostrategic interests of India. This is the reason that India has out rightly rejected the CPEC project and raised the claims that the said project underwent through the disputed territory of Kashmir. India in the ardent opponent of the project and the same has been driven by several factors. First, the CPEC project will catapult Pakistan into economic prominence. It will trigger the much-anticipated economic development in the country. India always had been in a hunt for an opportunity to stifle the economic development of the country. It was in this context that India was a stumbling block to ensure the proper division of financial assets. Secondly, India aspires to become a regional hegemon. For that purpose, India has opened a two-front war against Pakistan. It engages Pakistan on its eastern front and uses Afghanistan as a lynchpin to creating security problems for Pakistan. Afghanistan is also to create hurdles for the proper implementation of the CPEC project. India, therefore, has been reluctant to join the project rather it has co-opted Iran to develop its Chabahar port as a rival to Pakistan Gwadar port. Thirdly, the CPEC project will further blossom the relations between the two countries and will elevate it to new heights. Since, the Sino-India conflict if 1962, there has been a consistent improvement in relations between China and Pakistan. China always has supported Pakistan through thick and thin times. China has extended its support for Pakistan on Kashmir issue and supported its nuclear program. China has supported Pakistan economically, politically, and at the forums like the UNO, the SCO, etc. The confluence of all these factors leads to the conclusion that India's opposition to these projects is not surprising as it will reduce the clout of India in the region.

**Russian involvement in BRI & CPEC**



Map Courtesy: <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-Russia-supporting-CPEC-China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor>

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation has usually considered primary Asia as part of its sphere of influence, trying to reconstruct its ties with the countries of the region. As a consequence, the fulfillment of the formidable Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Asia will depend closely on the capacity of the People's Republic of China to interact with Russia in this initiative. In turn, the Russian involvement within the big Chinese undertaking will probably depend upon how a whole lot of Russia and China could be able to find a consensus about the introduction of a consortium many of the unique agencies, associations, and international projects that embrace Eurasia. Certainly, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and of course the BRI (Lin, 2016). consistent with Kaczmarek (2015), if China manages to persuade Russia that it's no longer a zero sum game. Russian Federation may want to permit the EEU and its institutions for use for the status quo of a commonplace communique and transit network between the People's Republic of China and the member nations of the EEU.

As stated by A.U. Khan (2014), China's penetration in Asia and it tries to expand routes with the former Soviet Republics of the region are particularly due to two strategic objectives. The New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor

### *BRI & CPEC: Strategic & Economic Depth for Pakistan*

(NELBEC) is aimed to amplify land-based access to Europe through Russia – in other words, growing and reinforcing opportunity routes to China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC) is to reach Moscow. On the alternative facet, promoting the development of highways and railways so one can link Asia western provinces, linking mainly to the city of Kashgar Xinjiang, that is the terminal of CPEC – in other phrases, linking the CPEC to the alternative infrastructure projects of the BRI (Faisal, 2018).

Consequently, it is no longer surprising that the Russian Federation is currently considered a key player for Chinese geostrategic goals, due to the significance of integrating the BRI with the EEU in Asia. Furthermore, China and Russia can take benefit of the distinct international organizations and multilateral platforms they are both individuals – as an example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa international discussion board (BRICS global forum) – to bolster their strategic partnership for you to counter the Yankee hegemony.

To start with, additionally because of the geographical distance that separates the U. S. A. from the region involved, the Russian Federation has been appreciably indifferent to the implementation of the CPEC with the aid of China and Pakistan. However, the Kremlin has been an increasing number of inquisitive about the Sino-Pakistani initiative, as evidenced with the aid of the declaration issued in December 2016 using the Russian ambassador to Pakistan Alexey Dedov: “Russia strongly helps the China-Pakistan economic Corridor as it is important for Pakistan’s economic system and local connectivity” (Arshad, 2017). Khan (2017), the reason at the back of this hobby is that the CPEC represents for Moscow a unique opportunity to finally attain the warm waters of the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean – the choice to advantage get right of entry to navigable seas at some stage in the year. Russian leadership because the time of Tsar Peter the splendid. For its component, Pakistan may want to welcome Moscow's participation for the successful implementation of the CPEC, for two motives. On the one hand, Islamabad is inquisitive about strengthening its function in the region, mainly against India – at a time whilst its relations with America appear at historical lows. However, Pakistan could benefit from the economic sales received through granting Russia using the industrial port of Gwadar and the consequent direct involvement of the Eurasian energy for the implementation of the CPEC (Hussein, 2018). Even the Beijing authorities may want to welcome an instantaneous Russian involvement in the task – on the circumstance that China maintains within the CPEC – because one of these flows could reinforce Pakistan to counterbalance the Indian impact in South Asia.

In October 2015 Russia signed an agreement with Pakistan, pledging to make investments about 2 billion bucks for the construction of the Karachi-Lahore LNG Pipeline, approximately 1.100 kilometers lengthy to permit to move a huge amount of natural gas liquefied from the northern town of Lahore to the port of Karachi (Bhutta, 2016).

As stated by N.A. Khan (2018), triangular relationship between China, Pakistan and Russia in important and South Asia could have the capability to shake the balance of power in the entire region. Especially, the People's Republic of China has a first-rate effect and economic power on an international degree; the Russian Federation stands out inside the data battle; the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is positioned in a geostrategic function of essential significance. As a result, if Russia decides to make investments further extensive resources in infrastructure development and strengthening the internal security of Pakistan and the former Soviet Republics, and if China has no objections someday the CPEC turns into a phase of a hypothetical Russia China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (RCPEC) (Shulin, 2014).

The Russian federation was dormant after years of its collapse. It is very recently that Russia is striving to clinch its geostrategic position by taking on the USA in many regions like the Middle East. Russia under Vladimir Putin is asserting itself in different parts of the world. Russia also has coopted China to surpass USA. Russia has formed the SCO in alliance with China and many other Central Asian States. Besides, Russia has extended support to the BRI and the CPC projects. These things will indirectly lead to improved relations between Russia and Pakistan and the latter has committed itself to various energy projects in Pakistan.

### **From rebalance to Asia policy to free and open Indo-pacific strategy: American concerns for the CPEC and the Sino-Pakistani axis**

USA enjoyed dominancy at a global level was used historically by the USA to buttress its geostrategic importance first against its cold war opponent the USSR and in recent times against rising China. The alliances the USA made many of the countries of South Asia that were made during the Cold war period were driven by the same considerations. The relations which the USA has had with the South Asian states were always transactional in nature. Being an important country of South Asia, Pakistan always had an edge over other countries of South Asia because of its geographical location. This is the reason that Stephen Cohen writes in his book "The Idea of Pakistan" that though history has been unkind to Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest asset. But in recent years, the geography of Pakistan rather than becoming its greatest asset has become its challenge. It is this context that the USA always co-opted Pakistan, whenever it was in need, but always left Pakistan in the lurch when she accomplished its objectives. This was the reason that Pakistan approached for alternatives to manage its affairs.

In sync with transformation at a global level, there are also changes in global politics. First, the end of the Cold war and hence the collapse of the USSR coincided with the rise of China. China until 1991 was in obscurity. It was only when the USSR was gone, it was supplanted by China. Secondly, the end of the Cold war also inaugurated the era dominated by the USA. This has been asserted by George Friedman in his book "The Next Hundred Years" where he posits that

the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the century of the USA. However, such kind of assertion has been falsified by the rise of global jihad and the rise of China. Thirdly and the most important, global politics is shifting towards Asia and Asia Pacific region. Recapitulating the history of global politics reveals that global politics was always confined to the European continent. Major events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century took place in the continent of Europe. However, the rise of China and assertive Russia under Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin respectively has caused global politics to shift towards the Asia Pacific. China is also asserting itself in the South China Seas.

The confluence of all these factors has resulted in the retreat of the USA. These things in the long run do not portend well for the geostrategic interests of the USA. China is spreading its tentacles into the Middle East and Russia is locked into a proxy war with the USA in the Middle East. Such an event reveals that the global dominancy of the USA has been challenged. It is in this context that the USA resorted to various strategies to contain and stem the tide where it sways could be swept away by such developments. The alarming security situation in Afghanistan has increased US' problems in the region. The USA rushed into Afghanistan to topple the regime for the Taliban, however, the USA engaged itself in Iraq's chaotic affairs which caused the Afghanistan conundrum blown into perennial crisis. In 2009, the USA announced its Af-Pak policy which was meant to ensure that the solution for the Afghanistan conundrum could be sorted out. But the solution to Afghanistan's problems is still a distant dream. The USA has started showing much interest in the South Asian region due to the presence of these factors. This thing acquired much urgency after the exit of the Bush administration and his replacement with the Obama's administration.

Since the first Obama administration, America has been actively pursuing the so-referred to as Rebalance to Asia policy, seeking to form robust anti-Chinese economic military partnerships in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean (Berteau, & Cooper, 2014). Yankee overseas coverage towards Asia, many observers have even claimed that the BRI became nothing greater than an instantaneous reaction from Beijing to Washington's attempt to rebalance Asia-Pacific. Indeed, in current years America has significantly elevated cooperation with a large number of countries in the location, specifically with Japan and India. moreover, within the same length the USA and Japan have elevated their naval presence in Asia-Pacific, both for the disturbing and wonderful escalation of Chinese army spending, and for the now appear preference of the People's Republic of China to gather more sea power on the way to prevent get entry to the Yankee fleet to the East and South China Sea (Shimodaira, 2016).

Previous to its abandonment using the Donald Trump Administration in January 2017, one of the maximum crucial contraptions of this policy was the Trans-Pacific Partnership which would have caused the advent of more advantageous economic cooperation with many rising international forums of the Asia-Pacific, that allows you to reduce the dependence of the signatory States from the Chinese government and to deliver them in the direction of the Yankee energy (Rabena, 2015). no matter the abandonment of this wonderful monetary project

employing the USA, the brand new loose and Open Indo-Pacific method essentially contains each premise and objectives of the Rebalance to Asia policy but extends the idea of protection thought Americans for the Asia Pacific additionally to the Indian Ocean, as a result recognizing the need to create a single strategic machine for each region due to the innovative Chinese penetration in the aforementioned area (Valencia, 2018).

According to Bhatti (2018), CPEC is a supply of concern for the Washington government, as it will provide to China as a result, significantly reducing its dependence on transits in the Strait of Malacca, wherein the maritime force and American have an impact is preponderant. In different phrases, via fixing the Malacca, China will increase its relative strength towards America in Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean, making it extra difficult to contain Chinese expansionism for the Yankee energy. Therefore, from the factor of view of Washington, the CPEC seems as an infrastructure risk on the Yankee maritime method of containing China inside its contemporary borders, seeing that it'll make the Asian giant less liable to its predominance of the seas.

As regards the alliance gadget inside the region, the strong settlement among the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the second USA. Inside the international utilizing Muslim population – may be very traumatic. Indeed, the realization of the CPEC and the synergy created in current years between Beijing and Islamabad may affect the relations between the USA and Pakistan. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the subsequent Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) in Afghanistan, however frequently characterized by using a deep mutual mistrust (Cecinini, 2018).

Sino-Pakistani axis, US desires to get closer to India to engage in Afghanistan and South Asia approach, announced via the American president Donald Trump in August 2017 (Clary, 2017). In January 2018, the U.S. Department of state suspended a bundle of army aids worth approximately 255 million dollars; furthermore, it covered Pakistan within the Special Watch list of nations that restrict religious freedom, according to the International Religious Freedom Act of October 1998. In the same month, the U.S. Department of Defense blocked a help program of about 800 million dollars, even as in February 2018 the monetary action undertaking pressure (FATF) obtained the order to tighten controls at the USA to monitor presumed support of the Islamabad government to terrorists operating in Afghanistan (Hongmei, 2018).

The pressure exerted by US at the Islamic Republic of Pakistan may also set off it no longer to also intensify its ties with China. The suspension of the conventional American aids to Pakistan and the technique of Washington to New Delhi. This remaining move is evidenced now not most effective via the extra Indian involvement in American tasks for Afghanistan and the renewal of the Quadrilateral safety communicate, however also employing the support given in October 2017 with the aid of the U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis to India's grievances about the reality that the CPEC is going through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). The danger for Islamabad is represented with the aid of the



definitive rupture with allied electricity so essential from a financial, army, and strategic factor of view – the alliance with China is not equally comparable. In the meantime, Washington has established a robust alliance with India, considered by way of the USA the most effective regional actor capable of the task the emerging Sino-Pakistani nexus. But the drawback is that American pressure can push Pakistan similarly into the hands of China, accordingly, making Washington's approach completely counterproductive for the functions it had set itself. Particularly, if the American president Donald Trump truly plans to take a tougher stance towards Islamabad, the USA risks dropping an important supply course for its military contingent to Afghanistan.

## **Conclusion**

As explored by Mearsheimer (2001), the People's Republic of China is certainly a revisionist power of the hooked-up order which is trying to take over America because of the hegemonic power of the worldwide system. This would lead to a shift in international governance from the West to the East. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which includes many communication and transit infrastructures initiatives, may be interpreted as a tool of the Beijing government to make bigger its impact is imperative, South and Southeast Asia; in different phrases, it's an expansionist initiative able to constituting an extreme danger to American hegemony and the geopolitical balances of the whole vicinity.

CPEC is one of the central pillars of the BRI, and its implementation has numerous strategic implications limited to the financial sphere and the merchandising of local connectivity. Mainly, New Delhi considers this task a part of a Sino-Pakistani method aimed at encircling the country and restricting its sphere of influence, accordingly, determining the birth of an Indian encirclement syndrome.

If its miles authentic – as Henry Kissinger often repeated – that international relations don't have any permanent friends or enemies. Contextualizing the “OBOR” initiative and its allied projects like the CPEC and many other strings of connectivity projects reveals that gone are the days when states settled their conflicts and manage their affairs through the barrel. It is the time where more than anything else, the concept of carrot and stick approach in the form of economic incentive and disincentive is the viable way of managing state relations. The CPEC project involves the same dynamics. The project is aimed at bringing about the rise of China and ensuring that China's economy is integrated into the world at large. Since the Deng Xiaoping reforms, China has adopted its system on the pattern of restricted capitalism. China is a rising economic power. The projects like “OBOR and the CPEC will be instrumental in the rise of China, though the projects have been resented by many countries in the region and the USA. However, an inclusive and coordinated approach ought to be adopted while implementing these projects which involve many stakeholders.

## ***Hafeez Ullah Khan***

The CPEC project will bring about the much-needed economic stability for Pakistan in the long run. From the very get-go, there were various challenges to the projects. Addressing the genuine concerns will bring about economic stability besides elevating the relations between China and Pakistan to new heights. For the same reason, the project will be instrumental to protect the geostrategic interests of China.

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***BRI & CPEC: Strategic & Economic Depth for Pakistan***

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