

***Academic Session: Strategic Dimensions of CPEC***

Venue: Bukhari Auditorium

Chair: Mr. Shaukat Umer

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## **CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC): HUMANISING GEOPOLITICS**

**Ali Shah \***

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**Abstract:** *The paper explores ways for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to create a comprehensive new era and framework of peace and prosperity in Central Asia and South Asia in contradistinction to the contemporary mode of inter-state relations as captured in geopolitics. It advances the concept of regional commons understood as the totality of intra-state and inter-state multidimensional exchanges centered on maximizing peace and its dividends and minimizing conflict and its irritants for maximum regional and human development. The paper theorizes the force field of contending energies in the current inter-state system that surrounds the development of CPEC. This force field can impact CPEC adversely if not understood properly. A multipolar world offers the best chance of sustainable development and operation of CPEC. The agreement between Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies and their harmonization in turn with common policies of countries participating in One-Belt One-Road initiative is of paramount importance.*

**Keywords:** China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, regional commons, geographical lock-down effect, Type-1 & Type-2 revisionism, Modernisation 1.0 and 2.0, equal and unequal interdependence.

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### **Introduction**

The international situation surrounding China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is in need of being apprehended correctly for its rapid and relatively unencumbered development. This is important because it is a bilateral programme between two sovereign states – one a rising global power and the other a big regional power – that by its very nature belongs substantially in the category of inter-state behaviour and relations. In addition to the concern about how it shall be realised on ground with all its projects and routes, there is a need to understand what it signifies in the long-term to have an idea about the kind of changes it should work bring about in the way we approach the problem of the contemporary relations amongst countries, peoples, and cultures. While the on-ground development of the Corridor will require thinking in terms of tactics that need to be employed to construct the Corridor, the question of what meaning it should have for the peoples of China and Pakistan and the world at large presupposes thinking in terms of strategy that will guide the choice and combination of tactics.

Before one can answer the question how CPEC can change the hitherto dominant pattern of inter-state relations, one has to critically deal with the current theoretical construct of geopolitics which organises the conduct of relations amongst not only sovereign states but people along a path that leads inevitably to active conflict or to the threat of conflict. Geopolitics considers the acquisition and maintenance of power as the fundamental, if not the only, goal of international politics and so naturalises conflict into the normal scheme of things.<sup>1</sup>

This observation on the basic principle of the internal arrangement of the subject and practice of geopolitics enables us to understand that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has been inaugurated in a world that is predisposed to pre-set ways of thinking about cooperation and competition.<sup>2</sup> This is a world in which the figure of homo economicus<sup>3</sup> as a being that rationally pursues its own individual interest in every situation to the exclusion of any other consideration reinforces and sustains the idea of a state as a power-based mechanism in which the logic of selfishness underwrites collective interest. It is interesting to note here how rationality and selfishness become interchangeable and then provide an axiomatic basis for the conduct of both economic and political behaviour of human beings. Therefore, all states as all individuals seek their interest as a principal means of seeking security and how they do it is what causes friction, conflict, and corrosive competitiveness.<sup>4</sup> While it is recognised that it does not seem possible at first blush to break free from the dual confinement of conflict-based geopolitics and interest-based economic paradigm, yet it is necessary that a provisional attempt is made to envision how geopolitics could be humanised.

### **Regional Commons**

CPEC can become an active vehicle for humanisation of geopolitics both as theory and as practice. Humanisation would entail the replacement of the conflict-based geopolitical grid with a state of affairs and the affairs of the state founded on the dynamic concept of cooperation that this paper characterises as regional commons. Regional commons presupposes common concerns collaboratively negotiated and tackled to achieve collective goals. It leads to unification of theory and practice and reduces the ex post facto distance between them. It is a concept that is rooted in the common ownership of public goods around which the community-based interaction of individuals is clustered for the management of local resources. CPEC can be developed as the anchor of establishing a regional commons around China and Pakistan, especially in the twin regions of Central and South Asia.

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This regional commons would struggle to dislodge a regional state-of-nature which is nothing but the contrived absence of stability in the region due to durability of traditional notions of self-preservation and perennial conflict. Regional commons derives strength from the eastern traditions of sharing and selfless service that culminate in horizontal distribution of benefits and discrimination in favour of the other rather than self. This prioritisation of others over the self is the ballast of self-satisfied and symmetrical development which in time leads to the comprehensive appreciation of varying needs of different cultures and peoples passing through different stages of development. This well-rounded understanding unshackles the energies of indigenous development in a way that does not suffer from the restrictive concept of an industrialism in which technology is considered in abrasive external terms.

Rather, this mode of development internalises and then universalises technology beyond the second-stage input-output binary of industrial-age thinking to focus on skills and perspectives that can be applied with equal success across the whole spectrum or at any point of the spectrum of equalitarian economic growth and development. These full-spectrum skills become possible only when technology creation and application is based on a prior thinking of benevolent action. This advanced use of technology can only become possible if the ancient idea of benevolence that counsels not to impose anything on others that we ourselves do not desire<sup>5</sup> is scientifically integrated into planning and execution. Chinese land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and sea-based 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road with CPEC as their crucial node should seek to be inspired by this advanced thinking in which technological altruism can function effectively.

While CPEC would seek to create connectivity between western regions of China and Pakistan, it should also make efforts to create convergence between developed and underdeveloped regions in Pakistan. This would remain a challenge even in the best of domestic and regional situations because prolonged lack of development has created a geographical lock-down effect based on a lack of provision of basic services and law-and-order enforcement aggravated by stunted social mobility and information blinkers. CPEC would pass through Pakistani and Chinese regions where this phenomenon can be observed e.g., Balochistan and Xinjiang. This should be a moment of serious concern, especially for Pakistani policy makers, because geography and terrain at domestic should not become obstacles to development in a country which takes pride in its critical geographical position in the region.<sup>6</sup>

## **Two Revisionisms and Two Modernisations**

CPEC has come into being in a world which has become increasingly volatile in which state authority has witnessed conflict-caused erosion in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. This erosion of state apparatuses has multiple causes but it has consistently exhibited a pattern consisting of internal instability compounded by external intervention and aggravation. This international quagmire of crumbling state structures and destruction of societies that were ethnically diverse and enjoyed fairly acceptable levels of development is a reflex of epochal changes that the contemporary world system is undergoing. These changes are primarily based on multi-level interaction and struggle that is going on between forces of two different strands – Type 1 and Type 2 – of revisionism.

Type-1 revisionism consists of attempts to mould the inter-state system to favour the preservation of western influence and force projection. Type-2 revisionism comprises counter-currents from countries such as Russia, China, India, and Brazil which have experienced substantial levels of growth and development and eagerly push against the pressures generated by the activities of Type-1 revisionism.

These two types of revisionism are accompanied by corresponding forms of modernization. The first kind of modernization – or Modernisation 1.0 – is the self-same vertically applied Eurocentric modernisation that has formed the central mode of graduation for most developing countries from pre-modern to modern set of social, economic, legal, and cultural relations. The second kind of modernisation – or Modernisation 2.0 –, while built on the technical and scientific heritage of Western modernisation, aims to deliver a different set of developmental outcomes to developing countries based on respect for equality and autonomy of countries.

The proximity of these two forms of revisionism and two forms of modernization in South Asia would create a set of challenges that would necessitate not one solution but a range of solutions whose strength would be determined by their ability to move back and forth in the varying visions of modernity and progress. Therefore, concept and activities grouped under the CPEC framework need to be balanced against these different rationalisations and realities. The two modernisations employ parallel economic but dissimilar political manoeuvres. This creates an oxymoronic global situation of competitive cooperation or collaborative competition. Policy makers, strategists, guardians, implementers and defenders of CPEC need to come to grips with this resistance.

## **Conjunction of Internal and External Factors**

This situation has come about as a consequence of lateral pressure-caused<sup>7</sup> spill-over which consists of the sustained outbound waves of influence and operations caused by the domestic development of a national territory that has reached a critical mass of accumulation that cannot be productively contained any longer within the national boundaries. Such power-

based spill-over tends to work upon the xenophobic reaction of pockets of pre-modern sociality in developing countries leading them to resist the push of progress through violent and radical non-acceptance of the statist projects of modernisation. Such non-acceptance proves to be especially tenacious when it gets caught up between the competitive jostle of two different forms of modernisation and inter-state world-order revisionism. This happens because tribal society within a country tends to be a microcosm of international society. Just as there is anarchy and loose instrumentation of application of force in international society so there is absence of regulative strictness in tribal society and scant regard for the national process of legal and constitutional enforcement.

Juxtaposition of international competition and domestic backwardness can produce rent-seeking practices in such domestic pockets as a result of which the state degenerates into a personal estate<sup>8</sup> to be exploited and utilised by bands of mercenary politicians and local big men. These pockets specialise in the selective localisation and internalisation of most development-based investment and benefits leading to externalisation of costs and liabilities of backwardness to the nation and state at large. This situation can be aggravated by a *Mackinderian*<sup>9</sup> vision of geopolitics that sees the broad region comprising Caucasus, Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia as “the central zone of global instability”<sup>10</sup> and sometimes when East Africa, North Africa, South Africa, and Xinjiang are also included as the “Trip-Wire Pivotal Corridor (TPC).”<sup>11</sup>

CPEC development needs to be protected from these negative tendencies. The wide-ranging processes of state consolidation have to inclusively embrace all marginalised regions and sections of the Pakistani territory and populace respectively. By means of CPEC, the development of physical and social infrastructures will connect domestic progress to One-Belt One-Road-led transcontinental construction and urban up-gradation in a process that has historically consisted of transfer of skills, knowledge, and technology by means of inter-regional mobility and socio-cultural diffusion.<sup>12</sup>

Such diffusion and mobility was thwarted in the unravelling of the historical Silk Route. The ancient Silk Route ceased to exist as a result of conflict and turbulence at its western (Western and Eastern seaboard of Mediterranean) and eastern (China) extremities.<sup>13</sup> The land-based Silk Road Economic Belt can unfortunately come to naught due to concentration of conflict and instability in the northerly band of the central networking area and integration between Xinjiang and Eastern Europe on one hand and the southerly band between Xinjiang and Levant on the other.<sup>14</sup>

One way of forestalling this disruption in Pakistan is policy awareness of the connectivity, infrastructure, urbanisation, industrial, production, and knowledge revolutions<sup>15</sup> taking place in China. In absence of this awareness, forward movement would be both bumpy and halting. For instance, one immediate ill-effect of this relative ignorance would continue to be a botched comprehension of the mounting demographic pressures in the country and the absence of any domestic urban strategy to tackle these pressures.<sup>16</sup>

If the next-door Chinese best practice of demographic management were to be studied diligently there is no reason why a solution could not be found through a creative adaptation of that best practice to the Pakistani situation as an integral part of CPEC planning. Without this, geopolitics in the region cannot be humanized. This in turn would not be possible as long as big chunks of the national territory were allowed to be perceived and treated as exclusive property of this or that ethnic group.

### **A New Model of Big-Power-Middle-Power Relations**

What is at stake in the successful development of CPEC as an integral node of One Belt One Road is the hope middle and small states would find to steer clear of what this paper calls the power attraction trap i.e., the compulsion on part of middle and small powers to align with this or that pole led by this or that big power to avoid the negative fallout of both partiality and neutrality. This would mean CPEC would truly have to be a cooperative enterprise both in its development and in its subsequent outcomes that enhanced rather than diminished the decision-making autonomy of Pakistan. Therefore, hub-and-spoke model of connectivity in which regional and national prioritisation of one or more than one national or sub-national region takes place at the expense of the relegation of other national or sub-national regions will not be a suitable model for either CPEC or Belt-and-Road development.

How to overcome this model of unequal interdependence is a daunting challenge but not an impossible task. Equal interdependence will be promoted by thinking in accommodative not expansionist terms. Unequal interdependence will be found to be more compelling because it creates quick short-term efficiency effects but leads to long-term harmful effects. On the other hand, equal interdependence picks up slowly but ensures a faster pace of mutual development in the long run. Equal interdependence can provide a way for reducing the fluidity of the power potential of small and middle powers which can and does eventually snowball into major conflicts. Equal interdependence as the foundation of the development of CPEC and One Belt One Road will offer a solid guarantee of peace not only in the northerly and southerly bands of the central networking area but also provide a model of emulation to other big powers.

## Policy Reconciliation and Harmonisation

The reconciliation of domestic and foreign policies of Pakistan preceding the international harmonisation of policies of countries participating in One Belt One Road is a safe way of creating equal interdependence. It seems difficult to imagine any other way of changing the game when CPEC is confidently called a game-changer for Pakistan. The game can change only if it changes equivalently for all countries in the Belt-and-Road regional commons. Domestic reconciliation and international harmonization are inter-locked processes that presuppose the transformation of the current Pakistani state from a mechanism of dissipation of national energies to a motor of transformation of diverse capabilities into national power.

This transformation needs to take place in conjunction with the development of a policy mind-set that yokes the three segments of national territory i.e., urban, rural, and natural spaces, together into a well-layered plan of human development through resources-for-people management approach that thrives not on the misuse of resources and manipulation of people but promotes an inter-generational carefulness in terms of resource allocation and maintains a respectful posture towards people. This policy mindset can only be developed if policy makers are aware that they shall not only be the beneficiaries of their development policies but also the primary victims of these policies if they go awry.

This dual relation of policymakers to their policies can only be maintained through penalisation of political, bureaucratic, administrative and professional malfeasance in the form of legislation the effects of which would resemble the effect every new instance of lying has on the nose of Pinocchio.<sup>17</sup> This legislative Pinocchio effect would mean that any malfeasance would be strictly dealt with in the first instance but any following act in the same class of malfeasance by the same or different individual would be more severely dealt with than the preceding one if it were to be proved to have been committed. Progressive penalisation of wrongdoing would ultimately clear the public sphere for inclusion and participation of men and women of probity. This in turn would increase the chances of reconciliation of our domestic and foreign policies.

Political and economic processes of globalisation have also internationalised the capacity of the corrupt to evade national, domestic or even international scrutiny thereby increasing the global movement of not only the virtuous but also the vicious, of not only clean wealth but also misappropriated financial resources. Politically motivated safe havens for the corrupt become more surely possible as long as geopolitics remains an arena underwritten by conflict. All beef-barrelling should be avoided as it would inevitably introduce asymmetry in the practice of CPEC.

If the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step then the same journey can be misguided with a single misstep that is allowed to go unchecked or un-retraced. Human action, whether it is private or public, remains homologous to the limitations of human language. Just as there is an unbreakable unilinearity in human utterance that can neither be reversed nor undone once spoken in a certain order so similarly all human action remains tied to a rigid sequence in which the space and time given to activity A cannot be occupied by activity B as long as activity A is being executed. The implications of this fundamentally exclusive characteristic of speech and act for CPEC is that any careless action undertaken and any thoughtless word spoken with regard to CPEC would have consequences that could be contained but not undone and would be contained after considerable damage would have been done. Prudent phase-wise development duly recorded and archived with inbuilt sequencing of activities and projects is a cardinal requirement of CPEC's development. Phasing and sequencing when coupled with legislative Pinocchio effect would provide elbow room just capacious enough for change in the direction of domestic development that delivers not dispossesses the peoples of Pakistan.

## 7. Conclusion

It would only be logical to expect that the international situation and contradictions inherent in it would aggravate and accelerate rather than slow down. In the absence of this positive domestic reorientation in Pakistan, the potential for the international situation to cast its pall over the development of CPEC would remain strong. This would mean that the anthropological process of othering that has unfortunately persevered in inter-state relations and by which the cognitive, cultural, and civilizational achievements of adversaries and rivals have been traditionally and historically demonised and distorted even while the technical diffusion has gone on unabated between rivals will continue to undermine the efforts of China and Pakistan to create a regional commons by means of CPEC. This should be of concern to China and Pakistan because what is at stake is not their material development alone but also the question if this material development has the stamina to usher in a new area of a full-fledged equalitarian, non-racial, tolerant and advanced Afro-Eurasian civilisation that transcends geographical boundaries, cultural pigeonholes, and procrustean ideological frames.

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> It might be possible to object to this understanding of geopolitics by saying that geopolitics only studies what is happening at any time between countries in the international realm and that it does not dictate how this inter-state interaction takes place. This would not be an entirely unjustified objection but it misses the fundamental point that any theoretical construct that studies a certain datum of reality in any field or sphere also ends up shaping the organisation of data or facts in that field or sphere of activity. The plea of theoretical neutrality is also problematic because it can sanction a run-away empiricism that will preclude any meaningful understanding of events.
- <sup>2</sup> World here is a cognitive-pragmatic unity that involves both thinking and action.
- <sup>3</sup> Joseph Persky, “Retrospectives: The Ethology of Homo Economicus,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (1995): 221–231.
- <sup>4</sup> The unity of ends can paradoxically become the source of divergence and disarray.
- <sup>5</sup> Confucius, *Analects* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 183.
- <sup>6</sup> Countries become great when they can surmount the challenges of terrain to spread development in all directions within its territory ensuring no pockets of backwardness and underdevelopment continue to exist within its boundaries.
- <sup>7</sup> Nazli Choucri and Robert C. North, “Dynamics of International Conflict: Some Policy Implications of Population, Resources, and Technology,” *World Politics* 24, (1972): 90.
- <sup>8</sup> Ilhan Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan 1947–2008* (Islamabad: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161.
- <sup>9</sup> H. J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 421–437.
- <sup>10</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 161.
- <sup>11</sup> Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan, *Neo-statecraft and Meta-geopolitics* (Zurich & Berlin: LIT, 2009): 81.
- <sup>12</sup> William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1991), xvi.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, v–xxv.
- <sup>14</sup> CPEC is laid out along this southerly band of the central networking area of One Belt.
- <sup>15</sup> Angang Hu, Yilong Yan, and Xing Wei, *China 2030* (Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 43–61.
- <sup>16</sup> Demographic mismanagement would form the massive base if a crisis pyramid were to be created for Pakistan’s problems.
- <sup>17</sup> Pinocchio is the main fictional character in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Italian writer Carlo Collodi’s classic eponymous tale in which the nose of the main character lengthens in direct proportion to his lying.

## **THE CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND SINO-PAK-INDIA-US NEXUS: GEOSTRATEGIC DIMENSIONS**

**Atia Ali Kazmi \***

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**Abstract:** *China became the largest investor in Pakistan once it announced USD 46 billion investment in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in April 2015. Beijing's One Belt One Road project is perhaps as important as Suez Canal's construction in circa 1869, if not more. CPEC is the bellwether of the six economic corridors that will stretch from Malaysia in the East to Russia and Turkey in the West of Asia. The economic corridor is also viewed as an antithesis of American Pivot to Asia strategy that was ostensibly envisioned in 2012 to contain China's rise. Once this provocative strategy began drawing flak, it was restyled to a benign Rebalance to Asia moniker. The strategy still remains suspect, as it does not clearly explain that against what the U.S. is trying to pivot or rebalance. The so-called rebalance has placed the security environment of Asia into a greater flux. India, Vietnam, South Korea and Japan have bandwagoned with the U.S. New Delhi has not concealed its angst at CPEC's development, and has opposed it in clear terms saying that it passes through Jammu & Kashmir's disputed territory. The U.S., on the other hand, has given mixed signals professing that Washington D.C. might be interested in sharing the development pie of the corridor for instance in providing training or technological support. Indian opposition and American mixed signaling indicate a sort of nexus of shared as well as competing interests amongst these four players. Both Pakistan and China have expressed clear determination that they will not let CPEC to be derailed by external strategic actors. With this context, this paper seeks to examine the pros and cons of this emerging nexus through a geo-strategic lens.*

**Keywords:** China, Pakistan, India, United States, mutual cooperation, regional stability, CPEC

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### **Introduction**

China and Pakistan need to align development strategies more closely to realize the dreams of our peoples. Both our countries face the important task of economic development and improvement of people's livelihood. We need to enhance strategic coordination, deepen practical cooperation and work together for common development. We will build the China-Pakistan community of common destiny and set a fine example for such efforts by China and its neighboring countries.

President Xi Jinping<sup>1</sup>

War is a constant of history but history is also economics in motion – so wrote Will Durant and Ariel Durant while discussing war and history in their petite but powerful history book, *The Lessons of History*.<sup>2</sup> Their profound paradigm offers us varied possibilities concerning the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) ranging from war and crises to a transformative economic opportunity that will have impact beyond Pakistan and China.

Accordingly the question that is going to test our discernment would be: Is CPEC a nexus of win-win geo-economic relationships that would bind China, Pakistan and India in a cooperative framework? Or would it turn into a yoke of unsound geopolitical competition that may lead to inadvertent regional crises? This poses a challenge to our ability to forecast the future. This article would undertake a process of speculative judgement by breaking down the issue into three strategic components:

**One** – The rationale behind China's decision to become the largest investor in Pakistan by announcing USD 46 billion CPEC in April 2015 as the flagship element of its *One Belt One Road* (OBOR) policy.

**Two** – How does *American Pivot* or *Rebalance to Asia* policy relate to Chinese OBOR plan? Is the U.S. trying to militarily contain China's rise through economic cooperation with the American partners in the Asia Pacific? What are pros and cons of these approaches?

**Three** – China, India and Pakistan together constitute the most populous region in the world that can choose either of the two futures – realise its immense potential for becoming the powerhouse of the world or become a powder keg that risks conflicts and explosions.

The above-stated breakdown will help us in simplifying the strategic analysis and thereby facilitate gradual understanding of the *Sino-Pak-India nexus* as it relates to *the economic corridor*.

### **China-Pakistan Bilateral Relations through the Prism of CPEC**

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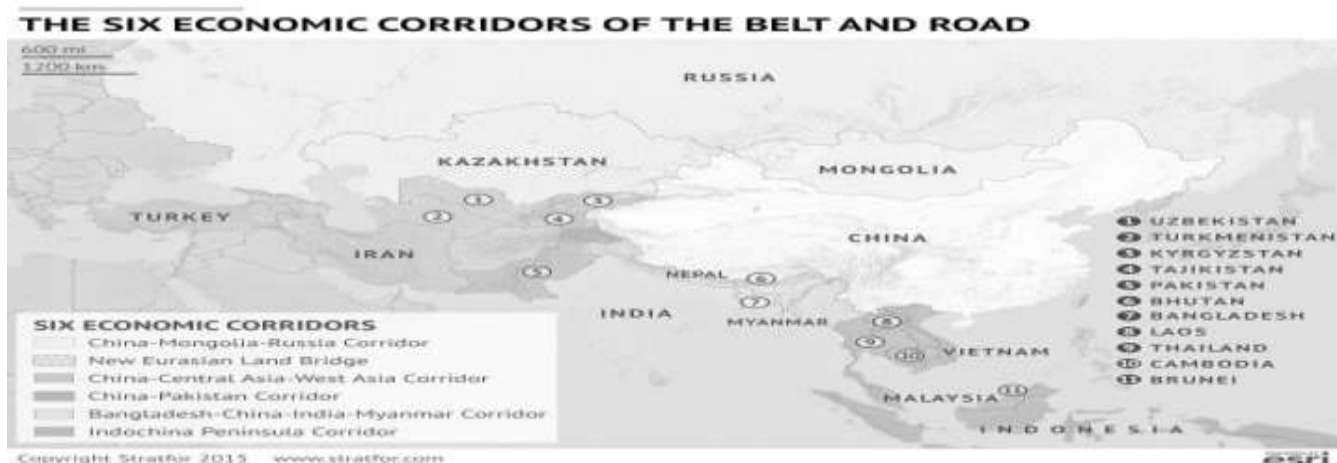
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The Chinese President H.E. Xi Jinping, during his visit to the Southeast Asia and Central Asia in September and October of 2013, pronounced the Chinese initiative of a jointly built Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road (also called Belt and Road).<sup>3</sup> The concept of Belt and Road (B&R) hinges on promoting “the economic prosperity of the countries along the B&R and regional economic cooperation, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations, and promote world peace and development [and] a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world.”<sup>4</sup> It is seen as a world-wide “systematic project” which seeks to integrate the development strategies of the partner and associated nations into a multi modal framework.



The project aligns with China’s fifty years old ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’: mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, mutual benefit and equality, and peaceful co-existence.<sup>5</sup> The principle, a brainchild of Chairman Mao Zedong, is seen as an alternative to “power politics, which have been in dominance in international relations over the last few centuries.”<sup>6</sup>

The B&R initiative is intended to be a cross-cutting globalized endeavour running through the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Through the project, China attempts to link some sixty five countries through more than a dozen corridors including the proposed Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Indochina Peninsula, and China-Central Asia-West Asia economic corridors. The B&R maritime strategy aims at connecting major trade routes. In this context, the CPEC and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) have already reached the incipient stage.<sup>7</sup> The CPEC however is rightly called the flagship network as it will be located at the centre of the forthcoming Silk Road. The significance of the CPEC can be understood from the simple fact that China will be investing the majority of the USD 50 billion startup capital for Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank<sup>8</sup> but USD 46 billion for CPEC alone.



The Chinese strategic culture has evolved over four millennia and Beijing places high premium on maintaining smart balance in its economic and military power. Chinese thinking of primarily relying on economic rather than hard power emanates from mixed experiences. Historically, Chinese were defeated by Japan in first Sino-Japanese War in 1894 while the Chinese economy was relatively well-functioning. Interestingly, China defeated India in 1962 War despite that its economy was not faring well even when compared to India. The lesson here is simple – states may always pose rigorous economic



competition while preserving peace and simultaneously retaining enough military power to fight as a last resort if the contingency ever arise.

By developing the Silk Road, China obviously seeks to expand its power through a win-win partnership building strategy. But at the same time, Beijing maintains sufficient military power to deter coercion by a powerful actor in future. The success of CPEC would rest on two major factors: 1) peace and stability in Pakistan and in the region and 2) attracting as many efficient stakeholders in the economic pie as possible.

### American Rebalance to Asia

Chinese economic rise in the last two decades is viewed as a major factor shifting the balance of power to Asia-Pacific. Japan and South Korea, two major economic players in Asia Pacific, depend on American assurances for their security and continue to dwell under the US nuclear umbrella. That said, the world order and the concomitant balance of power is rapidly transforming with America's rebalancing towards Asia in general and Asia-Pacific in particular. These challenges of geopolitical imbalance may exacerbate the regional security dilemma. Critics would ask: is America regaining lost balance, or, is it re-balancing against a particular state that gained considerable power, while the U.S. was outstretched in the Middle East and Afghanistan? The current trends of the pivot strategy can help chalk out its implications for America's congruent actors.

Beyond the Pacific, the rebalance approach encompasses the Indian Ocean and the Western shores of the Americas. Only time will decide as to what extent can America's rebalancing act define the contours of the regional order in Asia Pacific and the dynamics of world geopolitics. Hillary Clinton, while introducing the strategy to the world, was confident that: "The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the centre of the action."<sup>9</sup>

The stated goal of the U.S. pivot to Asia-Pacific is devoting more effort in constituting Asia Pacific's norms through America's existing leadership footprint and for deepening American credibility in both economic and security spheres.<sup>10</sup> Its most uncertain variable is that how Asian giants like Japan, Korea, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, India and, Pakistan would react to this vision. Washington presents it as a win-win strategy and posits, "Just as Asia is critical to America's future, an engaged America is vital to Asia's future."<sup>11</sup> If managed maturely, the strategy may lead to innumerable constructive dividends for all.

The US Department of State set seven constructivist objectives for its future strategy for Asia: modernize and strengthen the US bilateral security alliances; develop and strengthen ties with emerging powers including China; support and engage effectively with regional multilateral institutions; expand broad based economic growth and increase trade and investment; ensure the U.S. military presence in the region effectively supports the full range of American engagement; promote democratic development, good governance, and human rights; and finally, expand people to people ties.<sup>12</sup>

As member of the East Asia Summit, the U.S. keeps in touch with the regional leadership through its annual meetings regarding a variety of issues such as non-proliferation and maritime security. The pivot strategy focuses on America's 'geographically dispersed, politically sustainable force posture' in East Asia, well amalgamated with broadened defence engagements and deployment of its sixty percent forces. Littoral ships are present in Singapore and marines have been deployed to Darwin, Australia. Besides, the alliance with Japan includes agreements such as the Open Skies agreement other than the expansion of joint intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance activities, and information sharing system to address cyber threats.

Viewed closely, it implies that America is pivoting to Asia-Pacific due to the increasing Chinese economic and military footprint in Pacific Rim often labelled as a *String of Pearls* that may stifle American interests. Six of the world's largest military powers in the world lie in Asia-Pacific region. Since World War – II, the U.S. has maintained fifty percent of its military in the Asia-Pacific. The U.S. and its Pacific Rim allies consider rising Chinese military potential as a source of concern, which has prompted the U.S. to increase its military presence. Interestingly, in Chinese thinking, when it comes to Pacific Ocean, prospects for convergence of Sino-American interests is not impracticable.<sup>13</sup>

Economics dynamics is the primary constituent of rebalance strategy as forty percent of America's total trade takes place in Asia Pacific. Total U.S.-China trade rose from USD 2 billion in 1979 to USD 562 billion in 2013.<sup>14</sup> China is currently the second greatest trade partner of the U.S., its third largest export market and its biggest source of the imports.<sup>15</sup>

China is also the largest foreign holder of the U.S. Treasury securities worth USD 1.3 trillion as of November 2013.<sup>16</sup> China purchases these treasury bonds – in other words reduces American debt burden – in order to keep the U.S. interest rates low, while Americans consider it as leverage in Chinese hands, which carry the latent potential for financial instability. The Chinese would, however, view it a huge financial liability in case America defaults. A day's labour strike in the U.S. costs USD 1 billion to the Chinese.

American rebalance has a *Janus* like character and has two facets. It is marked by competition where the interests diverge – like in ASEAN and Trans-Pacific Partnership. It is characterized by cooperation where interests converge – like on security, economic, energy, and human rights issues in the context of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. The friction shall automatically emerge where the American regional initiatives and efforts to create plurilateral forums exclude China.<sup>17</sup>

However, the U.S. and China share the same fundamental goals for the future of the Asia-Pacific. This region is vital to the economic vitality of both the countries. Open and frank dialogue, sustained engagement, and cooperation at every level are necessary to avoid frictions, resolve problems, and build a more prosperous future.

If the two nations can build a ‘new model’ of great power relations, avenues based on cooperation rather than confrontation can actually be realized between China and the U.S. If so, it will be a good thing for countries, their peoples, and the world.

Seen from this perspective, CPEC is a harbinger of peace not only in South Asia but also in the Asia-Pacific region. Its success would be one of the major determinants whether American rebalance rises to its economic potential or military vulnerability. Things become a bit complex once we focus at the Sino-Pak-India nexus.

### **Sino-Pak-India Nexus – Cooperation and Conflict**

New Delhi has not concealed its angst at CPEC’s development, and has opposed it saying that it passes through Jammu and Kashmir’s disputed territory. By implication, India is apprehensive that China will become a party to the dispute between Pakistan and India if Beijing’s economic interests are undermined.

Indian opposition to CPEC gives a different sense if we zoom out and examine the role New Delhi has offered to play in America’s so-called goal of containment of China. It is interesting to note that India has used China as a bogey to win American and Western favours in trade, pursuit of big power status and access to nuclear and related high-end technologies. This apparent alignment has taken place while India has consistently developed economic and military relations with China. Beijing has played an instrumental role in extending membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to New Delhi, and recognizing India’s role in AIIB as well as BRICS forum. Their bilateral annual trade stood at USD 70.59 billion in 2014 and both have planned to have a seven percent increase per year.<sup>18</sup>

Rationally speaking, China can hardly be contained by the US through an India-centric approach. If we see the Indian military developments, New Delhi claims to be prepared for a two front war with China and Pakistan. However, almost ninety percent of its land and air force is deployed along the border of Pakistan. Like Himalayas naturally separate India from China, the mountains act as a natural barrier for Indian forces to envision any strategic posturing vis-à-vis China.

The only leeway for India is to foray in South China Sea with its Russian supplied nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers. But it remains to be seen how Russia and China will react once India attempts to punch above its weight and operate in their zone of influence with respect to the U.S.

Zooming back in to South Asia, Indian opposition to CPEC does not hold water because New Delhi itself seeks better economic ties with China and uses it as a bogey to attract Western economic and political support.

In opposing CPEC, India actually accepts that Kashmir is a disputed territory indeed. If India was genuinely interested in regional peace and development, it would attempt to resolve the underlying dispute. By playing a zero sum game, India may make some short-term gains but its progress and rise can only become sustainable through regional cooperation built on a win-win approach. Both Pakistan and China have expressed clear determination that they will not allow CPEC to be destabilized by external strategic manoeuvring.

Another party to the nexus is the U.S., which might exacerbate regional insecurities by egging India on toward a regional and global hegemon’s role. It is worth noting that the U.S. has not opposed the CPEC and has reportedly expressed interest in sharing the developmental-pie by even providing training to the skilled labour that will be employed in CPEC related projects.

The American interest in CPEC takes its essence from competitive-cooperative relationship with China. If viewed from military prism of American pivot to Asia-Pacific against the so-called *String of Pearls*, the U.S. will have little interest in success of CPEC. However, if the U.S. has its economic interests close to its head and heart, it would view the Silk Road as a big pie in which it can also have a share and would support its flagship project, i.e., the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### **Conclusion**

USD 46 billion investment in CPEC is modern-day equivalent of Marshall Plan that the U.S. implemented for European development. The tangent is that the Marshall Plan was rooted in war while the CPEC strategy heralds a unique amalgam of all the actors in the region and the world at large by bringing them closer through strong, sustainable, and

progressive solutions. Given the Indian stance on CPEC, the Sino-Pak-India interconnection has not taken a desired start. It is up to India of course which of the two choices it makes. It could forge ahead into the best of times with Pakistan and China or trudge towards worst of times risking regional isolation.

The fact cannot be negated that China, Pakistan and India can become the powerhouse of the world and together can play a constructive role in shaping an Asian century of prosperity, peace and amity. As quoted in the beginning, history has been economics in motion amid war as its constant. If we learn from history, we can suppress our pugnacity and divert it to positive energy of competition. It is easier said than done and requires bold leadership that can propel Asia into an age of wisdom instead of times of imprudence.

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## **HEARTLAND AND RIMLAND THEORIES IN CPEC PERSPECTIVE: STRATEGIC INTERPLAY IN 21ST CENTURY**

**Muhammad Manzoor Elahi \***

**Abstract:** *This research evaluates the emerging patterns of geoeconomics and geopolitics of Asia by analyzing the theoretical spectrum of 'heartland' and 'rimland' on China (Heartland actor) and Pakistan (Rimland actor) respectively. As far as the application of these theories is concerned, the research objective is not to continue conventional ascendancy of 'heartland' over 'rimland' or vice versa, rather research raises a theoretical point that it is the high-time to scholarly examine the geostrategic interplay between geographically proximate states in Asia. In addition, a rational and logical comparison of north to south corridors in Asia divulges that the CPE Corridor is feasible and cost-effective access for heartland actors i.e. China and Central Asian landlocked republics. This would further open avenues for them to spread out network of oil and gas pipelines. In short, a rational analysis of growing trends on the geopolitical chessboard of Asia justifies that the days of geostrategic rivalry between 'heartland' and 'rimland' theories are gone now. The dictum of Spykman "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia (world)" vs. Mackinder's dictum of "Who controls heartland (Central Asia), controls the world" do seem to be old-fashioned. These were indebted to imperialism. Therefore, the research accentuates on cooperative interplay between the 'heartland' (China) and the 'rimland' (Pakistan) and divulges that in contemporary world strategic-cooperation is a 'curative key to regional conundrums'.*

**Keywords:** Heartland, Rimland, Critical Geopolitics, Strategic Alternative, Economic Corridor

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### **Introduction**

"It {Geography} is the mother of all strategies." Colin S. Gray

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a novel strategic opening of the world trade corridor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that connects the European, west Asian and African markets with the rising power of Asia, China, via an alternate land route i.e. from Gwadar (Balochistan, Pakistan) to Kashgar (Xinjiang, China). This corridor prompts a shift from classical geopolitics to critical geopolitics where in focus is on 'rational regionalism' and strategic alternatives. China is the rising power of the world and 21<sup>st</sup> century is the century of Asia. The peaceful rise of China and its global reach is merely depending on one dictum i.e. to search for alternatives or 'don't put all eggs into a single basket'.

Mankind has been utilizing geographical settings since ancient times in its greater interest. Lands on the banks of rivers turned into epicenters of civilizations<sup>1</sup>. Later, age of discoveries bridged the gulfs between the continents of the world and opened up doors of connectivity. The British ascendancy on sea routes transformed it into global power whose colonies were stretched from west to east. China's 21<sup>st</sup> century grand design strategy of 'Silk Road Initiative' is also revolving around geostrategic centers of the world and pursuing the framework of inter-regional connectivity via Maritime Silk Road (Sea route) and Silk-Road Economic Belt (land route). This novel phenomenon is infusing a new spirit in the strategic plans of Mackinder (Heartland) and Spykman (Rimland).

Likewise, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the great powers of the world recognized the significance of classical geopolitical theories of 'heartland' and 'rimland' in order to have ones ascendancy over to others. In this game of geopolitical preponderance the British, the Germans as well as the Russians had all been chalking out strategic plans on the basis of such theories. World War II is the testimony of applicability of classical geopolitics when Allies, the Nazis and Russians were combating with each other. It is pertinent to mention here that even after the end of WWII the vendetta of political preponderance being continued by the USSR and the USA. Both great powers were also working on theories of classical geopolitics. The American strategy of containment, based on the principle of Spykman's Rimland, proved lethal to the Russians and restricted their access to world trade sea routes. The US domination over sea routes was a strategic checkmate to Russian on the geopolitical chessboard of Eurasia. In this whole scenario, Pakistan's geographical position for the US was a linchpin in grand strategy. To counterpoise the US containment strategy, Russia invaded Afghanistan in 1979 with a focus to control the significant rims of Asia but its miscalculated geopolitical moves proved wild goose chase and brought about fall of USSR.

Later, in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rise of China and resurgence of Russia are infusing novel spirit in the realm of geopolitics. Therefore, the research raises points on the epistemology of geopolitical dynamics of twenty first century. For example, are twentieth century geopolitical theories of heartland and rimland still applicable in 21<sup>st</sup> century? Does the theoretical legacy of

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Mackinder and Spykman provide an academic platform to discuss geopolitical dynamics of Asia in 21st century under post-area study realm? Can Anglo-American and euro-centric geopolitical doctrines present the thematic grounds of geopolitical moves on Asian chessboard? Is CPEC prompting a paradigm shift from euro-centric Columbian epoch (sea routes) to Post-columbian epoch (land routes)?

### Heartland vs. Rimland: A Geopolitical Discourse of Power

Central Asia constitutes the ‘heartland’ of Asia. Its centrality in the Asian continent is vital because of cross-border mobility between East Asia, Caucasus, Middle East, South Asia and Europe. The precept of heartland was propounded to rekindle the importance of continental landmass and its impact on global politics, because in the defense and security perspective “it (Central Asia) is the greatest natural fortress in the world defended by polar ice caps, deserts, arid tableland and mountain ranges.”<sup>2</sup> Halford Mackinder once aptly remarked: “He Who Controls heartland (Central Asia), Controls the World”<sup>3</sup>

Sir Halford Mackinder<sup>4</sup> stepped in the realm of geopolitics in the first decade of twentieth century. He propounded doctrine of continental power, first titled as ‘pivot area’ in 1904 then rephrased it ‘heartland’ in 1919 and rekindled in 1943. Mackinder was the chief exponent of ‘continental power’ precept. He got much inspiration from the geopolitical notions of Ratzel and Kejellen but his proposition was based on geo-historical analysis. He prompted an epochal shift from Columbian epoch to post-Columbian epoch. He pointed out that “in 400 years the outline of the map of the world has been completed with approximate accuracy”<sup>5</sup> He accentuated that the central and northern plateaus of Euro-Asia, were inaccessible to oceanic powers but this contiguous spatial environment was acquiescent to the drive of cavalry or railways, as it had been umpteen time happened in the history of pivot.

Hence, Mackinder perceived that the dawn of twentieth century terminated ‘Columbian epoch’. He titled the geopolitical vendetta of great powers for the ascendancy in ‘pivot area’ as a ‘post-Columbian epoch’ wherein emphasis was on land-power. Mackinder also propagated a super-continent i.e. Euro-Asia<sup>6</sup>, a contiguous landmass; historically center of great civilizations and epicenter of great empires’ rivalry.

The first version of heartland was presented in 1904 under the title of ‘pivot area’. Initially, Mackinder presented tri-dimensional geopolitics of the world. These can be outlined as follows;

- ✓ The first tier was ‘pivot area’ encompassing Eastern Europe and northern Asia.
- ✓ The second tier was ‘inner or marginal crescents’ adjacent to peripheral orbit of ‘pivot area’ wherein he placed East Asia (China), South Asia, Middle East and Europe (Germany and Austria).
- ✓ Then there was the ‘outer or insular crescents’ which entailed within its preview insular nations of Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, and the United States.<sup>7</sup>

### The Geographical Pivot of History 1904



**Pivot Area:** wholly continental

**Outer or Insular Crescent:** wholly oceanic

**Inner or Marginal Crescent:** partially oceanic and partially continental.

Source: Halford J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal*, 23:4 (April, 1904), 421.

In this tri-dimensional geopolitical precept, Mackinder perceived an apocalyptic scenario that Russo-Germany nexus could be a grave threat to British superiority in Europe because both were the continental powers, former in the ‘pivot area’ and latter in the ‘inner crescent’. In addition to this, he suggested that Sino-Japanese nexus could also vie for world hegemony. In either scenario a lethal combination of oceanic and continental power would thwart British assets in Euro-Asia. That’s why,

Mackinder looked towards land power because the Anglo-Russian rivalry on the geopolitical chessboard of Eastern-Europe, Central Asia, Western Asia and South Asia of the nineteenth century was also in the mind of Mackinder. The waning sway of British imperial power in the beginning of twentieth century was the fissiparous factor which heralded the policy of détente with Japan in 1902 and entente cordiale with Russia and France in 1904. In this perspective Central Asia was very vital for British security interests.

The second version of ‘heartland’ was presented after the end of World War I in 1919 entitled “*Democratic Ideals and Reality*.” Mackinder enlarged the ‘pivot area’ and rephrased it as ‘heartland’. It is pertinent to note that the notion of ‘heartland’ was first propounded by James Fraigrieve in his book, “*Geography and World Power*,” in 1915; wherein he presented tri-dimensional analysis of pivot vs. brim.<sup>8</sup> Unlike 1904, this time Mackinder expounded bi-dimensional or two-tier geopolitical apparatus of the world politics and a ‘core area’ for geopolitical preponderance. This can be summed up as;

- ✓ He presented the notion of great continent [super-continent] of the world comprising Eurasia and Africa which he titled ‘*World Island*’. The core ambit of the World Island was the ‘*Heartland*’ which he described as “a great continuous patch in the north and center of the continent... form the icy, flat shore of Siberia to the torrid, steep coasts of Baluchistan and Persia.” He also said that such area is “inaccessible to navigation from the ocean.” This time, to some extent, central Europe was the part of Heartland.
- ✓ Second tier was a series of off-shore and out-lying islands on the distant peripheral orbit of World Island e.g. Australia, Britain, Japan, North America and South America<sup>9</sup>. (For Comparative analysis, see, A Comparative Map of Mackinder’s World: 1904 Pivot vs. 1919 Heartland)

Moreover Mackinder also propounded a key-formula for world domination in these words; “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World.”<sup>10</sup>

This key-formula was not merely a geopolitical hypothesis rather a ‘grand design strategy’. Once again Mackinder perceived predominant position of Germany and Russia in the imperial race for land-power. Mackinder very sagaciously incorporated Eastern Europe<sup>11</sup> in his heartland precept because this was the only strategic and feasible gateway to Heartland. The other gateways to Heartland were natural bulwarks from invasion by any sea-power due to dead seas in the north and mountains terrain and deserts in the south. Though in the yesteryears land invasions in the ambit of Heartland from west to east or vice versa and even from north to south were wild goose chase owing to inefficient means of transportation. That’s why Mackinder aptly remarked that, “[Heartland is] the greatest natural fortress on earth”<sup>12</sup> because it has unique geopolitical and geostrategic posture.

The third version of Heartland was presented in 1943 under his article, entitled “*The Round World and Winning of the Peace*.” In this article Mackinder rationalized Heartland precept and elucidated in these words: “The Heartland is the northern part and the interior of Euro-Asia. It extends from the Arctic coast down to the central deserts, and has its western limits the broad isthmus between the Baltic and Black Seas”<sup>13</sup>

Mackinder also suggested to British authorities to make Eastern Europe, with some viable states, a zone of *cordon-sanitaire* which would be a rampart to hamper trans-regional Russo-German interplay. He opined that even in case of Russo-German war; whoever overwhelmed other the result would be the same i.e. control of heartland which leads towards preponderance in World Islands.

After analyzing the heartland precept of Mackinder, it is vivid that the ambit of Central Asia was a geostrategic threshold of global preponderance historically. The very region was an integral part of great powers’ security and defensive strategies. In yesteryears, feud over geostrategic springboard was the dominant theme to quell other powers’ interests; whereas in contemporary Central Asia, great powers’ vie is not quest for landmass rather it’s a race for geo-energy.

*A Comparative Map of Mackinder’s World: 1904 Pivot, 1919 and 1943 Heartland*



Source: Saul B. Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System* (Maryland: Rowman Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 18

## Rimland: A Counter Discourse of Geopolitical Preponderance

Pakistan, in South Asia, constitutes the significant part of the Asian rimland and endows with feasible as well as cost-effective transit trade route to northern landlocked states. In this perspective, the region removes the geographical compulsion of northern states. In contrast to Heartland theory, Rimland theory came to light. Nicholas J. Spykman was the chief exponent of it. Prior to him, Alfred Thayer Mahan<sup>14</sup> was the great adherent of oceanic power precept. He accentuated on the vitality of sea power in his writing “The Influence of Sea Power in History” in 1890. His following dictum was the nucleus of oceanic power. ‘Whoever rules the waves, rules the world’.<sup>15</sup>

He analyzed that the British mastery is based upon its naval supremacy across the world. That’s why, he advocated the control over strategic locations of oceanic world would be a great asset for the US. He wanted to see Royal Navy’s command beyond Americas. Mahan’s precept of sea power was the extension of ‘Manifest Destiny’ in the US.<sup>16</sup> It is pertinent to note that Mahan’s precept induced assertiveness among political elites for trans-Americas explorations and to find out strategic space.

Mahan was foreseeing an anticipated rivalry of the US with the sole continental power of Asia i.e. Russia. He was of the opinion that the latter’s land power is predominantly inaccessible that was a liability as well as an asset for it. Mahan presented a zone of conflict between the forty and thirty degree parallel in Asia owing to the Russian, land-power of the north, inherent motive of north to south cut-off strategy and the British, sea-power of the south, stance to ward off former’s southward expansion. This zone was titled ‘Debatable and Debated Grounds’<sup>17</sup> by him. Today the ‘Debatable and Debated Grounds’ encompass significant parts of Central Asia; e.g. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan. In addition to the latter regions, Tibet, Xinjiang, Kashmir, whole of Pakistan – except coastal areas of Sindh and Baluchistan – Afghanistan, Iran, and the Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Georgia – also constitute zone of conflict between sea power and land power.

Similarly, Mahan exclusively discussed about world’s vital and strategic ocean i.e. Indian Ocean. He was of the opinion that ascendancy in the Indian Ocean would simply mean to have a control over world’s trade route. Once he aptly said that: “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters.”<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Mahan, Nicholas J. Spykman<sup>19</sup> did not only talk about mastery in oceanic world rather accentuated on mastery on those areas which are adjacent to oceans. Like his geopolitical predecessors, Mahan and Mackinder, he was also prone to Germanphobia. He was of the opinion that oceanic powers, Britain and America, should build and strengthen their strategic footings on the rims of continental world. He also suggested that through an Anglo-American nexus with Russia’s land-power support, Germany’s imperious design to control World-Island could be ward-off.

However, Spykman didn’t refute Mackinder’s geopolitical thesis of global power play, rather Mackinder’s inner or marginal crescent was the gist of his triptych (see Figure 4.9). Spykman propounded ‘Rimland Theory’ in 1943 wherein he just changed the dimension of Mackinder’s theory but kept Eurasia as the epicenter of global geopolitical preponderance. He prompted a shift from ‘Heartland’ to ‘Rimland’ or from pivot to brim. But, geopolitical pivot was still Eurasia and at that time the US was, a non-Eurasian geostrategic player, playing a dominant role. In his geostrategic response to Mackinder, Spykman encapsulated the keys of world domination in the following words: “If there is to be a slogan for the power politics of the Old World, it must be ‘Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.’”<sup>20</sup>

For Spykman, the rims of western and southern Europe, Middle East, South Asia and East Asia are the strategic points to curtail the powers of Eurasian Heartland. This was the containment of Eurasian heartland in order to cut off its political and economic linkages with rest of the world. Later George F. Kennan practically applied this theory of Spykman to contain the dissemination of communism during Cold War.

### *Spykman’s Geopolitical World*



Source: “Spykman’s Rimland,” retrieved from <http://www.oldenburger.us/gary/docs/TheColdWar.htm>.

### **CPEC: Heartland-Rimland Strategic Interplay (HRSI)**

It is pertinent to mention here that as per the classification of Mackinder and Spykman, China's geographical location covers both paradigms of geopolitics i.e. 'Heartland and Rimland'. But China's rims are not serving as strategic assets because of difficult mobility and long accessibility towards Asian, African and European markets. Apart from this, Malacca conundrum and the Indo-US naval presence in Indian Ocean is adding fuel to fire.

### **CPEC: A Regional Interplay Model**

To deal this imbroglio, in September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized on reviving the ancient Silk Route and presented One Belt One Road Strategy. CPEC is one of the off-shoot of the geostrategic plan of China. Here we can chalk out some significant points of strategic interplay between heartland and rimland regions.

- ✓ HRSI is a pragmatic answer to 'Malacca conundrum'. Approximately, 80 percent of China's economic life line, OIL, is coming from West Asia and Africa<sup>21</sup>. That sea route is passing through Strait of Malacca and accounts for 12,900 km long distance. Gwadar could play a key role in ensuring China's energy security as it provides a much shorter route i.e 3,000 km.
- ✓ CPEC can also be turned into a 'energy corridor'. China has also shown interest in joining the \$7.4 billion Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and replacing India in this project i.e. Iran-Pakistan-China (IPC) gas pipeline.
- ✓ Gwadar, deep sea port, will ultimately lessen the Chinese rely upon ports such as Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Sittwe in Myanmar and Chittagong in Bangladesh.
- ✓ CPEC is ventilating grievances of separatist Uyghur's in Xinjiang. This will bring them into mainstream politics of China and lead towards its national integration. Xinjiang engulfs a bridge between mainland China and Central Asia. Socio-economic development and political stability in Xinjiang opens up vistas of energy cooperation with 'energy Eldorado' Central Asia.
- ✓ To make this region as China's hydrocarbon reservoir in order to meet the burgeoning demand for energy. (Turkman-China Gas Pipeline and Kazakh-China Oil Pipeline are the testimony of this positivity)
- ✓ CPEC is a feasible and cost-effective corridor for CARs in order to enhance energy and economic cooperation between 'two sister regions' i.e. Central Asia and South Asia.
- ✓ HRSI prompted a paradigm shift in Pakistan's foreign policy i.e. from the western hemisphere to peripheral orbit.
- ✓ Fifty One (51) Memorandums of Understandings (MoUs) were signed in diverse sectors of Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>
- ✓ Natural gas, coal, solar and hydro-power projects are expected to come online by 2017, providing Pakistan's national power grid with another 16,400 Megawatts (MW) of electricity.

### **Conclusion/Analysis**

Under the paradigm of critical geopolitics Heartland-Rimland Strategic Interplay (HRSI) is 'fate changer' for the both ends of CPEC i.e. Xinjiang (China) and Balochistan (Pakistan). These regions are not only the largest but the least developed and volatile in China and Pakistan, respectively. CPEC is opening up new vistas of socio-political and economic development in the aforesaid regions.

The research initiate an academic debate that it's need of the hour to move from archaic geopolitical vendetta of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to inter-state strategic interplay in 21<sup>st</sup> century; wherein stakeholders have potentials for each others. CPEC is an epitome of strategic cooperation. This interplay is also a significant opportunity for European and West Asian markets to have doable, cost-effective and short accessibility towards the Chinese market. CPEC is a strategic answer to Malacca and Palk (straits) conundrums and secures China's oil supply as well as global economic network. Apparently, HRSI looks like a bilateral agreement; in fact, its connectivity is engulfing the bridge between peripheral and extended peripheral actors of the world.

In this geopolitical discourse, the dictum of Mahan/Spykman "Whoever rules the waves, rules the world" vs. Mackinder's dictum of "Who controls heartland, controls the world" seem to be passé. These were designed to have imperial preponderance. In short, the research concludes that today in the post area-study realm the debate of 'heartland' vs. 'rimland' has diminished and is rather making room for trans-regional interplay, wherein states are getting more through strategic interplay that is the 'curative key to regional problems.



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## REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF CPEC: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Shireen Mushtaq \***  
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**Abstract:** *Pakistan and China relations are one of the most significant in international relations due to their uniqueness and steady continuation. The recent act of cooperation by the two states is the initiation of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project in which China has committed to invest \$46billion. This paper focuses on the impact of CPEC on regional politics, the challenges to security and opportunities of peace, the significance CPEC for the revival Pakistan's economy and the implication of CPEC on the relations of China and USA. This paper is based on a qualitative analysis. The results verify that the shift in the political scenario as a result of the CPEC is from a hard power strategy to a soft power strategy. Accordingly, the regional security challenges in the form of terrorism, regional rivalries and trust deficit relations will continue to dominate the region unless steps are taken to neutralize the threat. Peace can be ensured if the economic revival of Pakistan results with leaps and bounds thus improving the overall scenario of Pakistan and the region. Moreover the effects of the project for Pakistan are of vital significance, as it will allow her to become a centre of economic activity in the region. Consequently the relationship of cooperation and competition between USA and China will continue as the role of China in Asiatic region increases. The paper provides a detailed regional analysis of the CPEC keeping in views the strategic challenges and opportunities of the project.*

**Keywords:** CPEC, regional analysis, challenges and opportunities, qualitative analysis

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### Introduction

Pakistan China friendship has been described as higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel. The recent China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one such example of China-Pakistan friendship. CPEC is not only a significant bilateral agreement but it has also the potential to reconstruct the geopolitics of the Asian region. It is a large scale development project having a network of highways, railways and pipelines. The main objective of this project is to connect Gwadar Port in Pakistan to China's northwestern autonomous region of Xinjiang. It has a potential to integrate Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. As Geostrategic Partners, Pakistan and China share a 520 km long border and have enjoyed decades of cooperation and support. China has been benevolent to lend a hand to the Pakistani economy on several occasions and Pakistan has reciprocated by trusted ally and friend in the international community.

### Huge Stride in Partnership

China Pakistan Economic Corridor Project (CPEC) was officially inaugurated when the Chinese Premier Xi Jinping visited Pakistan in April 2015. Premier Xi became the first Chinese Premier to address the National Assembly of Pakistan and referred to Pakistan's support when China stood isolated. Likewise, Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Nawaz Sharif welcomed the speech by stating that Pakistan and China are 'truly iron brother'. The visit was concluded with signing 51 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreeing to construct the CPEC. The project involves the construction of railways, roads and modernization of Pakistan's infrastructure, with China as the financier<sup>1</sup>. The total estimated cost is \$75 billion, of which \$46 billion will ensure that the CPEC becomes operational by 2020. The remaining cost will focus on energy generation and infrastructure development<sup>2</sup>. The CPEC is expected to benefit to meet the demands of China and South Asia, it will also contribute towards regional security, economic integration and regional stability.

### China's One belt, One road(OBOR) Initiative

The CPEC and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) is a part of larger project initiated by China for the construction and resurrection of the Old Silk Road. Both the projects initiated by China focus for the larger integration of the Asiatic region. However, the CPEC lies as the centre piece of these two aforementioned projects.

### The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project

The Chinese Foreign Ministers Wang Yi, remarked in February during his visit to Pakistan that "If 'One Belt, One Road' is like a symphony involving and benefiting every country, then construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the sweet melody of the symphony's first movement"<sup>3</sup>. "In China, connectivity is the shortcut to prosperity. That is what China has experienced in recent decades."<sup>4</sup>

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## **CPEC goals and Proposed Route**

The project entails to build the infrastructure of Pakistan as a system of railway and roads constructed throughout the proposed route to reach up to the Khunjrab Pass and enter into Kashgar, China.

The CPEC is a multi-dimensional project as a professor at Johns Hopkins University, Frederick Starr, an expert on Central Asia, says that “the new corridor has potential to link Europe to China through Central Asia and the Caucasus, and reach onward through Pakistan and India to Southeast Asia, a route that will be in 30 years more important than China’s route to the West”<sup>5</sup>. The CPEC is a promising project for both China and Pakistan; the huge amount of investment being done will open up prospects for development and progress in both the states. Cities along the route of CPEC will serve as economic capitals which the corridor will connect.

## **Strategic importance of Gwadar port and the Malacca Dilemma of the Indian Ocean**

“An all-weather, all-season port, Gwadar is strategically located” near the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup> Due to its location at the mouth of the Arabian Sea, Gwadar port offers a direct access route to the Indian Ocean and bypasses the Malacca Straits; it is also closest to the Strait of Hormuz through which one third of the world oil transported. Similarly, Gwadar Port is important to China because of the increasing tension due to the growing involvement of United States in the South China Sea<sup>7</sup>.

The Former Chinese President Hu Jintao “talked about the ‘Malacca Dilemma’ and the need Hence, in order to secure China’s strategic and economic interests in the region, China aims to decrease its dependence on the Strait of Malacca and maintain presence in the Indian Ocean to secure SLOC’s.

## **Challenges faced by China Pakistan Economic Corridor**

There are several strategic challenges faced by the CPEC which include geographic, social and developmental challenges. The proposed project passes through areas of crucial concern and importance for both China and Pakistan. It passes through Kashgar to Gwadar covering areas of Kashmir, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the province of Balochistan. although the proposed roads system passes through the western flank on Pakistan the integration of these roads passes the east as well. Certain areas of Pakistan and China are plagued with terrorists activities, a cause of major trouble for both states. The route of Kashgar to Gwadar faces geostrategic challenges and economic hurdles that run parallel.

## **Internal challenges faced by CPEC in Pakistan and China**

The current and final route of CPEC’s road and rail network, favor Punjab and Sindh which raises certain questions about the government’s intentions. Several views exist as far as the route of the CPEC is concerned however the government has tried to assure the people that this route was in fact the initially discussed route with the Chinese and is the most favorable at the moment since the infrastructure requirements are already present or can be made operational more quickly as compared to other parts of Pakistan. this does not in any way mean that the other areas will not benefit from the main route as several trajectories will connect all other related areas. The most dramatic challenge to Pakistan is coming especially from the areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, where militancy is a serious threat. The final route almost bypasses Balochistan and Pashtun areas, there are reservations of both KPK and Baluchistan governments that this is an unfair act of the government. The change of route means that the under developed areas are cheated out of the chance of getting their populations involved in economic activity that will be generated by this project.<sup>8</sup>

Xinjiang’s Uyghur Muslim population has expressed their resentment towards the Chinese government regarding various policies in real time. This has become a problem for China as the streak of terrorism has become common in the province, challenging the writ of the government. The problem caused by this region has forced China find ways to integrate these largely backward areas so that the people may be able to compete for a better livelihood and social well-being. Therefore, achieving stability in Xinjiang is a prerequisite and goal for China’s economic ambitions.<sup>9</sup>

## **External challenges faced by China Pakistan Economic Corridor**

There are a number of external challenges faced by CPEC these include activities of violent non state actors, instability of states and other international pressures. the following are but a few:

## **Impact of Instability in neighboring Afghanistan**

While China remains a minor donor of the list for Afghanistan’s rehabilitations it has pledged a hefty \$197 million from 2002 to 2013 and offered an additional \$24 million in official development assistance as China carefully and stability tries to play a role in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> The CPEC route is designed in such a way that instability in Afghanistan will not have a direct impact of the CPEC or the functioning of the Gwadar port although the indirect impact of conflict prevailing in that states as the activities of non-states actors will be focused on undermining this project.

Pakistan, China and Central Asia have several trade agreements such as the Afghanistan and Pakistan transit and trade agreement (APTTA) and the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit agreement between Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Kyrgyzstan. The main hurdle in the proper utilization of these institutional mechanisms was the lack of proper transport infrastructure, the will of partner states and lack of security. These hurdle can be overcome once the CPEC becomes operational as it will provide a chain of arteries that links key economic centers of Pakistan with other key economic centers of the region<sup>11</sup>. With that said the general peace and security of the region will fall on the shoulders of the partner states who must prioritize it. The uncertain environment of Afghanistan has resulted in reservations regarding the future of trade and transit through her territories as terrorist sanctuaries threaten the practicability of this initiative. Therefore, it is important for the entire region to work together to ensure prosperous economic connectivity as envisioned by CPEC.

### **The Indian Dilemma regarding CPEC**

Pakistan and China's diversity of relations in the economic and security fields raises concerns of India. India has questioned the legitimacy of the CPEC route due to its passage from Azad Kashmir also her role in the CPEC remains undecided as she weighs in on the military potential of Karakoram Highway and the Gwadar port. "The Indian fears were aroused further when the Chinese Prime Minister labelled the CPEC as a flagship project to strengthen connectivity with neighboring." Parallel to this India is also busy developing her own potential alternate route for trade and transit to Afghanistan and by extension Central Asia through the Chabar Port Iran and the BCIM with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh<sup>12</sup>. India fears that securing a route to the Indian Ocean through Gwadar will help China enhance her military presence thus adding to the "String of Pearls strategy"<sup>13</sup>. This 'friction' with China and Pakistan throws India off her game to establish regional or global influence<sup>14</sup>.

### **Common Security Challenges faced by Pakistan and China**

The various common challenges faced by China and Pakistan as far as CPEC is concerned are firstly the underdevelopment and insurgency present in both Xingjian region, KPK and Balochistan due to ethnic economic and political reasons. Consequently, the target areas of this project respectively share features and characteristics, which makes the integration of these areas all the more important.

The primary concern of CPEC is along the lines of Security starting from Gwadar and all the way up to Kashgar. There several violent non states actors that challenge the project with their targeted activities these groups include Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) that challenge overall peace and stability in the region. All these actors individually aim at destabilizing the project in these respective states. Their goals include political, economic, cultural and social instability. Balochistan, KPK and Xinjiang are practically play grounds for these terrorist groups and organizations as they collaborate for training and the targeting purposes moreover the instability in Afghanistan aids their activities. Operation Zarb-e-Azab is a major military operation conducted by the Pakistani army in the Federally administered Tribal areas (FATA) to draw and drive out these terrorist pocket to ensure the security of the Pakistani State and its allies. Consequently the insurgency in Baluchistan and the Xinjiang region is the "Achilles heel" to the CPEC itself<sup>15</sup>. "It is feared that growing militancy will threaten the commencement of projects designed for the corridor. It will thus be a challenge for both countries to quash militant groups and their fighters along and across their borders"<sup>16</sup>. After assessing ground realities some "international observers have argued that China underestimates the hurdles it will face in in Pakistan." However, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif pledged while speaking on CPEC that "the armed forces are ready to pay any price to turn this long cherished dream into a reality." For the purpose of security Pakistan will deploy a 12,000 men security force to protect the Chinese workers and engineers working on the project. Additionally the situation in Afghanistan is also kept under view during President Xi's Visit to Pakistan he said publicly that "China supports Pakistan is playing a constructive role on the Afghanistan issue and will work with Pakistan to advance the reconciliation process and smooth transition in Afghanistan."<sup>17</sup>

### **United States and China: friends and Foes**

China's OBOR Initiative coincided with the New Silk Road revival envisioned by United States that focused on the integration of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Stating about the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road Initiatives President Xi Jinping said "It's more like a chorus, instead of solo by China." The Director USAID in Pakistan, John Groarke said that "While Pakistan would benefit immensely from the corridor, the USAID will have a possibility of investing in the energy sector if everything moves in the direction the Chinese are pursuing,"<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken in March 2015 stated that the Chinese efforts were "consistent" with U.S. goals and could be "complimentary" with U.S. efforts. However the overall the US reaction has been skeptical and negative.<sup>19</sup> The prospects of cooperation between the two initiatives taken respectively by China and USA are immense in a third party region as both major powers would learn to cooperate with each other in order to benefit from this regional integration mechanism.<sup>20</sup> Contextually the international community must give *Peace* a chance by which it means to allow

the CPEC and other such initiatives to develop and work friendship rather than confrontation. Consequently, China and United States should put ideological, economic and strategic differences aside to work on the stabilization of the region. “Asia’s security dynamics are defined by old-fashioned real politik-based great power politics” evidently as the United States attempts to manage its partnership with India and China.<sup>21</sup>

### Potential Benefits of the Project–Regional Connectivity

The five Central Asian Republics Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan present themselves as a perpetual opportunity for China and Pakistan. These States with their unique attributes allow China to become a leading economic and strategic ally. Central Asian has provided markets and a labor force for the Chinese manufacturers and industries and the total trade among these states has increased immensely over the past two decades an estimated total of \$ 527 million in 1992 to a total of \$ 30 billion in 2008. The gate way to this extraordinary regional trade partner is Xinjian of China, from where the trade has either been originated or transited. This relationship is mutually beneficial as Central Asian landlocked states find an outlet in the form of an Asian Dragon.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, there are chances for Pakistan’s to become self-sufficient in energy by developing connections with its regional partners.

Consequently, the construction and eventual completion of this project will benefit not just two partner states but the entire region as a whole and by extension the Asian continent. The geographic proximity of Central Asia with Pakistan is a door still waiting to be unlocked currently Pakistan’s exports and imports from Central Asia are more or less than 1 %.<sup>23</sup> The potential growth of the economic relationship of Pakistan and CAR lies rooted the development of economic corridor like CPEC that will allow the development of transport infrastructure to open up trade routes and access to new markets that will integrate the region to a larger extent.

### Conclusion

The internal and external challenges posed to CPEC threaten the progress and development promised by the project. These challenges and threats while real and constant need to be overcome parallel to the construction of this flagship project. The problem areas such as Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Xinjian of China are the key areas of the proposed route and they are also the hub of terrorist activity in the region. It is crucial that the stabilization and security of these areas be ensured as it is corner stone for the success of CPEC. The immediate challenges have to be overcome by a joint effort on a regional basis as is required with international consensus so as to work together to ensure security of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East which continues to be a hub of terrorist activity.

Accordingly, the potential benefits of CPEC are countless and certainly outweigh the challenges starting in Pakistan and leading to China, this project envisions the integration of the larger Asiatic region. China’s Xinjian has a highly integrated network of roads and railway lines that link it to Central Asia, in the future Pakistan can utilize the infrastructure present in Xinjian to access the Central Asian markets to meet its trade and energy demands. China’s furtherance of the OBOR initiative will allow a connected network of roads and railways with several economic center along the way. Thus the envisioned project has a potential to bring the Asian region in the forefront of International Trade and Commerce. Therefore, the Strategic challenges to CPEC need to be overcome in order to enjoy the fruits of this mega integration project.

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## **EMERGING GEOPOLITICS OF ECONOMIC CORRIDOR IN SOUTH ASIA AND CHINA'S DREAM OF CURRENT LEADERSHIP: AN ANALYSIS**

**Asifa Jahangir \***  
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***Abstract:** Since 9/11, geostrategic and geopolitical realities of South Asia have gradually transformed. This change in geo-dynamics has diverted the attention of great powers towards South Asia in multiple ways. China's strategic interests in South Asia have also extensively changed in the post-9/11 scenario particularly in view of China's "Economic Corridor" strategy launched by previous leadership under Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. Nevertheless, the current Chinese government has been re-shaping this policy under the "China's Dream" vision to be achieved by the mid of this century. This paper maintains that this change of Chinese politics of "one belt, one road" can be understood better, by relating it with the Mackinder's concept of regional-building strategy, which stands for strengthening 'economic influence in periphery'. The research relies on exploratory and analytical research.*

**Keywords:** South Asia, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China's Dream, Chinese Government

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### **Introduction**

#### **Emerging Geo-Dynamics and China's Strategic Interests in South Asian**

Big powers have sought new geo-strategic challenges and opportunities in the South Asian region after 9/11. A United States-based think tank coined the concept of "String of Pearls" pursued by China. Later, the US also introduced New Silk Route strategy in South Asia as a counter-strategy against China. Therefore, region changed into quite a battle field for both nations. South Asia is often a security concern for the US whereas economic necessities are major drivers for China. Ostensibly, the competition between the US and China would increase with the promulgation of China's New Silk Route strategies. but this appears less acute as economic activities seem more beneficial for China than any aggressive approach.

China's domestic factors including state of its economy, need for development in its Western regions and requirement to cater its economic necessities ranging from natural resources to the construction of transit routes have altered its scale of influence and policy of balancing relations in the region. Hence, China's domestic policies have framed its foreign policy conduct and strategic interests in South Asia. China views immense conventional and renewable energy resources as major basis for the socio-economic development of communities along corridors. This approach was firstly founded by Chinese Government of Premier Hu Jintao and President Wen Jiabao. But under current Chinese leadership with Li Keqiang as a Premier and Xi Jinping as a president, China has been reaching out to the potential partners through the politics of "economic corridors." Linking China's strategic policy of "One Belt, One Road" with Mackinder's concept of region-building vision, China has planned developing linkages for cheaper transport, telecommunication and energy networks. China's politics of economic corridor aims to connect Chinese mainland and its Western region with South Asian countries through vast network of roads, railways and seaports.

#### **Theory of Geopolitics: Mackinder's Concept of Construction of communication network**

The nature of global politics has become 'Asianized' with the emergence of a loose multipolar world order wherein the dynamics of political, economic and military powers of Cold War have shifted to the East. Herein, the rising powers in a relationship of strategic partnerships are striving for expanding their influence to different "hearts" of the world beyond their boundaries through various ways of interaction. Geographical factors in world politics have become all the more significant.

Geopolitics emerged as a phenomenal concept within the discipline of International Relations during twentieth century. Gilmartin and Kofman presented the concept of geopolitics as "ideas" of empire/nation-state, war and diplomacy. In fact, geopolitics is the practice of state(s) "controlling and competing for territory" in a specific regional/global setup.<sup>1</sup> In theory, it is defined as "a theoretical postulate in which states' policies and actions are determined by their location, natural resources and physical environment."<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the rising powers in Asian-oriented world political map have once again made Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory of geopolitics relevant in the twenty-first century. Its significance has become visible owing to construction of immense communication network of railways and roads in the pursuit of 'strategic policy/goals' and changing patterns of regions.<sup>3</sup>

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Strategic goals are formulated by political leadership in view of geopolitical understanding because leaders lead territorial strategies.<sup>4</sup> As Prof. Dr. Colin Flint explains that there is a connection between geopolitics and leadership wherein statesmanship is defined as “practice and representation of territorial strategies”<sup>5</sup>. This is to say the leadership focuses on strengthening the state’s internal makeup, extending its external influence and then holding its control over the other territories as much as possible. It is pertinent to note that Hu-Wen government has prepared the grounds as they underlined the perception that China is gradually socializing with the states into its ‘worldview by doing practices with China’s style.’<sup>6</sup> They have worked for getting rapid expansion and reinforcing regional-building under politics of Economic corridor by be a part of existing regional communities in view of prevailing principles of development including economic growth, reconstruction and trading blocs at home and abroad under the Silk Route.

Since 2012, new leadership of China<sup>7</sup> i.e. Li Keqiang and Xi Jinping have been introducing much larger and clearer vision about revival of Chinese nation’s centuries-old greatness and re-building of old Silk Route in its strategic plan. Xi-Ji government has set high goals and determinedly been implementing these plans and practices with concept of China’s “catch-all” strategic plan of China’s Dream.<sup>8</sup> The current leadership is leading the country towards a well-defined and long-term strategic policy of “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) in South Asia with the vision of Asianized Century. OBOR is the policy of Chinese politics of economic corridors for developing an immense network of roads, railways, sea-ports, gas pipelines and cyber-highways, which leadership of Xi envisages stretching throughout Asia.

### **Economic Corridor Strategy of Current Chinese Government: China’s Dream and Its Dimensions**

Xi Jinping has re-defined the country’s strategic goals as China is in the pursuit of rejuvenating its primitive historical identity. He summarized the idea of “China Dream” in March 2013 as follows:

In order to build a moderately prosperous society, a prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmonious modern socialist country to achieve the China Dream of great rejuvenation of the nation, we need to achieve national prosperity and revitalization of the happiness of the person, which deeply reflect the Chinese people’s dream today and is in consistence with our glorious tradition. The realization of the China Dream must rely on a China Way which is Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The China Way does not come easy, it originated from the great practice of reform and opening up for the past 30 years and 60 years of continuous exploration since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, as well as the course of 170 years of the development of the Chinese nation in modern times....The China Dream fundamentally is the dream of the Chinese people, the realization of the China Dream closely relies on the people’s effort and in return benefiting the people...

Considerably, new leaders have determined C-5 stars<sup>9</sup> strategic goals of China’s Dream: (a) Chinese nationalism in search of self-identity (b) Confucius and Communist ideology; (c) Economic development; (d) cultural diplomacy; (e) Peacemaking with peripheral neighbors and distant neighbors while continually interacting.

Xi Jinping’s national goal also focused on ‘great rejuvenation of Chinese nation and its glorious traditions of the past’. However, Xi’s dream about China’s revitalization is comparatively broad, ‘catchall’ as a good mixture of all his predecessors’ policies.<sup>10</sup> Strategically, this dream of Xi seeks to revitalize Chinese primitive greatness. With those contours in mind, he has launched well-defined pragmatic regional strategic policies employing the concept of Economic Corridor.

On October 25, 2013, he articulated about the policy of China’s neighboring countries during a conference in Beijing on “the diplomatic work on neighboring countries.” He talked about working closely with neighboring countries as China’s “centenary goals for its own development as a moderately prosperous society by 2021 and a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and modern socialist country by 2049.”<sup>11</sup> This neighboring policy was labeled as 20\*21\*49 catchall strategy of new leadership. He emphasized the importance of neighboring countries with respect to geography, economy and security, and diplomacy. This paper will further explore various dimensions of Xi’s vision policies including strategic policies and economic actions.

### **Strategic Dimension**

One of the major considerations of Xi-Li government’s policy has been the significance of ‘geographical’ factors in strategic terms in regional and international affairs. This leadership has strategically designed to connect China’s Western and southern regions with its neighboring countries in South Asia allowing China “march westwards”<sup>12</sup> via “New Silk Route”<sup>13</sup>. Its western region is near to Pakistan and southern regions are adjacent to India and Bangladesh. Keeping in view OBOR, economic corridor politics of Xi-Li government is aimed to create a ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ along the two strategic routes of OBOR project: (1) the land-based ‘New Silk Road’ (in which firstly road network will be made accompanied with railways system through Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East); and (2) a ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ (construction of sea-port network throughout South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Africa) [See Map 1].

On this basis, under “New Silk Road,” new leadership has selected Pakistan for developing vast communication network in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and then connect this land route with Gwadar Port in Balochistan,



Pakistan which is considered the first point of Maritime Silk Road. CPEC is strategically significant because it will link up China's Western region with Central Asia at one side and with Middle East at other side via Pakistan in South Asia. In 2014, China has pledged to provide \$ 46 billion to set up 2242 kilometer long Kashghar-Gwadar route. Before paving the foundations of ancient Silk Route economic corridor with Pakistan, China commenced BCIM corridor with India. BCIM is the multi-modal corridor project for extensive cross-border flow of people, trading goods and exporting services among the four partners. An ambitious visionary plan is to establish wide-ranging connectivity from Kunming to Kolkata linking China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India. In 2013, China has promised \$40 billion to establish 2800 kilometer Kolkata-Kunming route.<sup>14</sup> However, utility of economic corridor projects under CEPC has been found to be far greater than under the framework of BCIM. Therefore, Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015 was made for giving green signal so that work should be started on the game-changer project.

It is widely argued that new leadership is reaching out to every South Asian state as per its core strategic interests and national policies. Regrettably, China's South Asian gist is not "a la cart"<sup>15</sup>, China mostly emphasizes on establishing bilateral relations with the 8 countries of the SAARC aimed at border issues, expansion of seaports policy and enhancement of economic opportunities. As per Chinese saying, in foreign policy "the neighboring countries are of first importance and the major powers are the key."<sup>16</sup> According to the political observers, China's relationship with Pakistan overlies in its South Asian policy and is for offset purposes against India. Moreover, China's OBOR wouldn't only cause the socio-economic transformations of western China but also South Asia, Central Asia and adjoining region of Southeast East as well, stated by Andrew Small, a US-based China scholar.<sup>17</sup> India has raised objections on CPEC. However, President Xi clearly affirmed that there is unity of thought not just between the governments of both Pakistan and China but also among the people of the two states who seek a common destiny. While President Xi has highlighted the broad parameters of the "Chinese dream," it has been reaffirmed that the Pakistani dream coincides with the same.<sup>18</sup> Prof. Dr. Xiao Jianming from Kunming University is of opinion about Li-Xi government's policy towards Pakistan regarding CPEC, "China maintains a neighbor-favoring and neighbor-benefiting policy, especially to our all-weather brother, Pakistan, so if China develops well, Pakistan can also benefit from it. China and Pakistan should speed up our cooperation in each field to benefit us two, no matter what others do."<sup>19</sup>

Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed on a new security plan, "featuring mutual trust, reciprocity, equality and coordination for comprehensive, common and cooperative security" because "security cooperation is the common need of all."<sup>20</sup>

Some analysts are of a view that China's inclination towards this region especially Pakistan is because of its strategic interests including security concerns vis-a-vis India. As Andrew Small states, although China continued military and now massive economic assistance to Pakistan is a great irritant for India, "the role of the China-Pakistan axis in the geopolitics of the region in tying India down in South Asia is still central – India wants to look east, while China wants to ensure that it still has to keep a close eye on its west."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, a Chinese Prof. Sun Hongqi states that "the warm relationship of China and India does not mean that China pays less attention to Pakistan, since the latter is China's closest friend. When Chinese premier Li Keqiang visited Pakistan after visiting India, he cited the term of "Iron brother" to describe the relationship between China and Pakistan, and he affirmed, "If you love China, please love Pakistan also."<sup>22</sup>

It goes without saying that unfortunately a power competition between China and the US in Southeast Asia often lead the China's governments to lose focus on economic corridor approach. The Indian analysts perceive that China's South Asian policy is revolved around 'balance of power' politics.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Trends of militancy in South Asia are increasingly affecting Xinjiang region which can threaten China's overall security interests. Therefore, this government has taken concrete steps to develop the Economic Belt under regional-building and infrastructure policies Moreover, militant threat to China's Xinjaing province via Afghanistan can't be handled without Pakistan's help Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated during Xi Jinping's visit that "Pakistan considers China's security as its own security."<sup>24</sup>

## **Economic and Political Dimensions**

Premier Li Keqiang elaborated upon China's neighborhood diplomacy while delivering the government report of in the opening meeting of the second session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5, 2014.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the issuance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The Chinese people love peace and cherish development, and China needs a long-term stable international environment for its modernization. We will continue to hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit; unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development; and unwaveringly implement a win-win strategy of opening up. We will resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests, and fully protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens and legal persons overseas. We will comprehensively advance China's neighborhood diplomacy, and strengthen friendship and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with our neighbors. We will safeguard the victory of World War II and the postwar international order, and will not allow anyone to reverse the course of history. We will strengthen unity and cooperation with others developing countries and uphold our shared

interests. We will deepen strategic dialogue and communication and pragmatic cooperation with other major countries and promote the sound growth of relations of long-term stability with them.<sup>25</sup>

China prefers to tie up with key players more closely with South Asia through its ‘infrastructure development strategy (One Belt, One Road) involving trade, improvement of regional financial safety networks.<sup>26</sup> Under the ‘One Belt, One Road’, Xi leadership is following ‘region-building strategy’<sup>27</sup> to integrate Central and South Asia with Southeast Asia through land and maritime networking infrastructure. China is building smooth relations with its neighbors through economic-oriented strategic partnerships, leading to win-win reciprocity outcomes. This joint working relationship has further accelerated through interconnectivity under the ‘Silk Road Initiative’. This policy has also been referred to as Iron Silk Road policy.<sup>28</sup> China is speeding up the establishment of free trade zones with neighbors ‘as the foundation stone’ so that ‘a new pattern of regional economic integration’ is set in motion.

This culture of strategic partnerships has indeed been forged by Hu-Wen leadership and has further been reinforced by new leadership through exporting China’s technological advancement and developed communication system with the help of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Ben Yunmo Wang, a researcher of *Eurasia Group’s Asia Practice* has marked Xi-Li’s era ‘a new dawn for China’s foreign investment’.<sup>29</sup> Xi-Li’s novel ‘Going Out’ policy is subcategory of the OBOR strategy—an aspiring idea of renewal of trading routes of the ancient Silk Road in Asia to Europe aimed at to expand Chinese influence by exporting high-valued Chinese goods, technological equipment and high speed railways. For this, Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have devised fixation with natural resources procurement. In view of this plan, China’s SOEs play critical part in building a massive infrastructure network alongside the dual planned routes by land and sea. In this manner, he says that ‘Xi-Li has planned widespread monetary funding SOEs institutions which are Silk Road Fund Corp comprising of the US\$ 50billion and the multilateral Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with the supposed initial capital of US\$ 100billion. Moreover, Xi’s government has established the Asian Infrastructural Development Bank (AIDB) to revitalize peaceful co-existence policy because it seeks to institute ‘diversified civilization and socio-economic institution setup so that it can “co-exist” and “co-develop.”’<sup>30</sup>

Analysts view that despite being the big player, China has built trust with all partnering states through its regional-building strategy and passive cross-regional diplomacy. So, China’s current strategies of region-building and ‘neo-interventionism’ is the result of peaceful co-existence, cultural diplomacy and neo-strategic partnership—in which identity, authority and geographical boundary of other partner(s) will be respected equally. Compromising Strategic Partnership making culture has been initiated through pro-active political reforms, opening up the markets and enacting Free Trade Agreements. Moreover, Russia and China have jointly extended the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation by accepting the permanent membership request of India and Pakistan at BRICS session in Ufa, Russia by June 9–10, 2015.<sup>31</sup> Prof. Sun Hongqi illustrates that ‘the current situation in the sub-continent requires China and Pakistan joining hands heartily in more areas, including construction of CPEC, reconstruction of Afghanistan, and cooperation with the members of SCO and SAARC... a bright future is waiting for both countries.’<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Li-Xi government is pragmatically trying hard to connect South Asia with China through politics of economic corridor by re-opening old Silk Route that links China with South Asia. Idiosyncratic approach of the current Chinese government has shaped the Chinese economic corridor strategic policy in changing geopolitics of Asia in general and South Asia in line with its internal economic needs. Therefore, its policies and practices under OBOR reflect a vigorous approach involving national (domestic) and foreign affairs and a counter strategy to rapid involvement of US and concomitant hegemonic designs of India in Asia-Pacific geopolitics.

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## **CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND IMPERATIVES FOR REGIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

**Salman Ali \***

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***Abstract:** China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is deemed to be the strategic game changer not only for Pakistan and China but for the whole region. Political landscape of the region has both strategic and economic dimensions associated with the power structure in the twenty first century. India and China both have troubled pasts and are prime competitors in contemporary politics whereas Pakistan is stuck in a power cycle structure. The paper examines the role of corridor in the contemporary strategic scenario of the region. It seeks to answer the following questions: What are the dynamics of regional security environment? What are the system level orientations casting influence over the regional political dynamics? What are the state level imperatives playing significant role in the regional strategic milieu? A qualitative assessment of the situation with application of theoretical traditions of international relations such as structural realism and complex interdependence will further explore the strategic dimensions associated with the economic corridor. Viewed with lens of levels of analysis and structural realism, the project outlines political changes in contemporary global and regional politics.*

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**Keywords:** Economic Corridor, Regional balance of Power, Geo-economics, Conflict Resolution

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### **Introduction**

With focus on economic relations between both the countries, Chinese President Xi Jinping visit to Islamabad in April 2015 is viewed as a ‘fate-changing visit’.<sup>1</sup> President Xi Jinping in a historic address to the joint session of Parliament hailed Pakistan and China's long-standing ties and lauded Islamabad's anti-terror efforts. On the occasion, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chinese President Xi Jinping signed 51 agreements and memorandums of understanding worth \$46 billion. It included the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) between Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea and China's Xinjiang region, up gradation of certain strategic roads and rails, and construction of power plants besides others to be built over 15 years<sup>2</sup>. Beside massive economic activity, the project has definite strategic impacts primarily in the region. A major strategic imperative of CPEC is related to the threat perception matrix in South Asia. Magnification of Chinese stakes in Pakistan contends for greater stability in the region denying strategic space to India. India would need to adhere to the emerging new trends in geopolitics restricting it to maneuver on strategic chess board. Outstanding conflicts in South Asia would achieve new dynamism putting India in uncomfortable situation. The conflict resolution scenario in the region would also be affected greatly with the politico-economic significance of the project. Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Zhou Gang,<sup>3</sup> has done structural analysis by terming Pakistan China cooperation as a means of guarding against international hegemony and unilateralism. He said, “China and Pakistan must guard against hegemony and unilateralism, and safeguard their own sovereignty and security interests. They must learn the lesson of turbulences from West Asia and North Africa, firmly safeguard their domestic security and stability, steadily promote their reform, and oppose the interference of foreign forces in their internal affairs.”<sup>4</sup> China is fostering its influence in Indian Ocean by strengthening its naval power and the Silk Road and Belt project in order to safeguard its energy security, defense water channels, economic sustenance and stability<sup>5</sup>. China has tied its future to these corridors in which Pakistan's geo-strategic location is central. This equation requires greater stability in the region for the successful execution of Chinese idea of international relations.

### **Regional Security Environment**

Regional security environment has emerged as the most complex milieu in 21<sup>st</sup> century regarding the scenarios of conflict, conflict management and security dilemma. Region is host to three nuclear weapon states while fourth is in the offing. It is standing at the historical, political and strategic cross roads of both Asia and Middle East. Age old territorial conflicts play important role in the strategic calculus of the region. Robert Kaplan, US geo-strategist in his work observed that the greater Indian Ocean, stretching eastward from the Horn of Africa past the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian plateau and the South Asian region, all the way to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, may comprise a map as iconic to the new century as Europe<sup>6</sup> was to the last one. It is an area which will be the true nexus of world powers confrontation in the coming years. It is also volatile and has a recognizable geography which already forms center stage for the challenges of the twenty-first century world's ocean water politics<sup>7</sup>. Power cycle in the region has complicated the situation for the last five decades primarily. Two big powers influence each other in both political and strategic realms while it catches the small power in the circle which it has to contend and anticipate<sup>8</sup>. The strategic competition in the region has evolved into politico-economic strife between the regional heavy weights. From strings of pearls to economic corridors, and from cold start to hot pursuit, these drivers of both stability and hegemony are shaping the geo strategic landscape of the region. The patterns of alliance in the region further complicates the security environment with Iran pursuing a nuclear program, building Chabahar port with Indian

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help posing a Shiite political challenge to the Wahabi regime of Saudi Arabia which has alliance with Pakistan building Gawader with Chinese help<sup>9</sup>. Conflicts in Middle East have bearing in the region. Military power stays important in the regional and global politics, socio-economic interaction and regional cooperation will gain greater salience.<sup>10</sup> The region has massive potential in various resources the geographical space contains 62 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, 35 per cent of its gas, 40 per cent of its gold, 60 per cent of its uranium, and 80 per cent of its diamonds<sup>11</sup>. Quest for dominance and energy requirements shapes the dynamics of politics in the region complicating the security environment between the South Asian contestants.

The dynamics of system also influences the region in multiple spectrums of power cycle both at regional and global level; the pressing scenario faced by statecraft today is incorporation of China into the system of great power. When China's long accelerating rise on its power cycle suddenly inflects into decelerating rise, a discontinuity in its expectations regarding its future foreign policy role and security is likely to occur. Political uncertainty will cloud decision-making throughout the system. By comparing historical applications of the principles of relative power change embedded in Power Cycle Theory to China's future power trajectory, policymakers can observe the challenges China is likely to face<sup>12</sup>. The take away in the scenario is the lack of immunity to structural change to which emerging state strive for greater policy role, but this role cannot come at the expense of others, the last system transformation in recent past has imprints of future transformations. For China, the system will give space to slow growth with harmonious engagement and no entanglement until the hiatus is widened enough to accommodate the dragon. The economic dependence of Pakistan on Chinese aid, allows China to use Pakistan as her security proxy and a low-cost deterrent option against India's growing regional and economic status<sup>13</sup>.

### State level imperatives

Pakistan an unfortunate state that inherited a hostile neighbor and a complex territorial conflict has been facing various political, strategic and economic challenges since its inception. The challenges have often been translated as existential threats at crossroads of our history; particularly when the episode of 1971 happened, the state apparatus found its primary focus in the security and defense. Cold war politics has kept Pakistan on its toes in the global politics while the advent of nuclear weapons in 1970's has cornered it in the region while contesting not only for a substantial role but also security imperatives shaped its peculiar Indo-centric foreign policy. It embarked upon nuclear path while fighting against soviets and strengthened its alliance with China. Relationship with China has always been considered as the cornerstone of foreign policy expecting it to play a role of balancer in the region. The partnership has got matured in 21<sup>st</sup> century in form of great strategic and economic ties mutually beneficial to both parties, the latest development is this significant project of economic corridors taking a great leap forward in the bilateral relations and what is deemed as game changer for Pakistan – particularly in the region and generally in the globe. Sino-Pakistan relations have always undergone an upward path. In 2010, the two countries signed a deal of two new nuclear reactors to be installed in Karachi. Moreover, there are claims that People's Liberation Army has a presence in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan which instigate Indians to face the reality of a Chinese presence on both the eastern and western sides of the unstable Kashmir region<sup>14</sup>. The reincarnation of silk route i.e., New Silk Road Economic Belt aims to connect China across Central Asia and Russia to Europe and link to the 21st century Maritime Silk Road through the Malacca Strait to India, the Middle East stretching to East Africa. The belt is supposed to work as a new logistics channel between China and the world<sup>15</sup>. The politics goes beyond the region because Indian Ocean is important for the globe. It is a dangerous flash point of global significance<sup>16</sup> which has changed the character of international politics due to strategic, economic, and commercial value of the world. At this juncture of history, the interests of USA, India, and China converge and diverge in Indian Ocean. The key actors, the dominant, the competitors, all are entangled in the game of achieving and defending national interests<sup>17</sup>. As the world's strategic center of gravity shifts from the Euro-Atlantic region to the Indian Ocean as Kaplan argues that – the Indian Ocean is where global struggles will be played out in the 21st century.<sup>18</sup>

India faced similar problems in the backdrop of independence, dealing with domestic crisis, chosen hostilities with neighbors, and occupied a territory which became the biggest territorial dispute of all times. Nehruvian foreign policy determined the direction of state identifying the dynamics of geo-strategy and geo-economics. Allied with the then Soviet Union entered into competition with China contesting for role and security against Chinese territorial claims and strategic advances particularly nuclearization. Wise enough, India remained neutral in the cold war while having good relations with the Russians. In the region, it has faced Pakistan as a major strategic irritant particularly on Kashmir issue, having been in active conflict in both conventional and sub-conventional levels of warfare. India has been sailing through difficult waters facing the strategic alliance between China and Pakistan while also dreaming to become a major power. After the unexpected nuclearization of Pakistan it is living in the environment of delicate deterrence stability while finding it very hard to create space for conflict on a limited scale. With china emerging as a major power in recent times, India is forging alliance with United States signing land mark nuclear cooperation agreement. Lately it has embarked upon a path of development achieving high GDP, effective soft power and viable economic alliances across the globe. Eying permanent seat in UN Security Council and major power status in the global politics India is facing challenges at regional front with a pugnacious Pakistan countering its influence and a stable recognized major power China while considering the project of corridor as strategic weakness. This scenario has emerged as a great concern for strategic environment of India as China is developing multiple ports in the Indian

ocean, building a naval base in Burma, and doing wise investment in East Africa securing major interests of raw materials and natural resources.

China has emerged as a major power in the non communist world with a magnitude that has not only surpassed many power but also changed the dynamics of traditional international relations. Major powers didn't resort to the orthodox strategies of containment instead endorsed the status of China. Dealing with internal challenges of politics it has created stakes for world in it. Utilizing both geographic and demographic mass China translating into mega economic success it has convinced the world over its Authoritarian one party rule. Defining itself as a power pursuing 'peaceful rise' China is facing great challenges of sustainability of its society and economy. The energy challenge is by far the most pressing issue at hand. Big giant needs huge energy which has been the primary catalyst in the global politics. To overcome this challenge and achieve peaceful rise China views harmonious world in form of greater economic integration and interdependence. "China is developing its navy at a great rate. Its ambitions in the Indian Ocean are quite clear." He identified responding to China's "aggressive modernization plans"—along with safeguarding energy security, protecting sea lanes<sup>19</sup>. The project of corridors the silk road and belt project is deemed as greater breathing space for china contending these challenges of economic sustenance and stability. China has tied its future to these corridors in which Pakistan's geo-strategic location is central. This equation requires greater stability in the region for the successful execution of Chinese idea of international relations. As far as China is concerned, in its quest for securing strategic resources it has cast its net worldwide, from Australia to the Russian far east and from west Africa to the heart of South America. China is building a navy that will safeguard its far-flung economic interests and its extended sea lines of communication. Shrouded in opacity, the Chinese Navy's expansion plans are being pursued, with steely resolve, in all three dimensions. Many new classes of surface combatants and a fleet of 60-70 submarines are in the offing. An aircraft carrier might appear one of these days<sup>20</sup>. China has been the world's fastest-growing major economy for many years; it is now the world's second largest economy after the US, the largest exporter, and the second largest importer of goods<sup>21</sup>. Analysts estimate that China will carry on this course of 7-8 per cent annual growth for the next twenty years or so. If real GDP in China and America continues to grow at the same annual pace, China's volume of GDP would surpass America's in 2022<sup>22</sup>. China's overall trade was close to US\$ 3 trillion in 2010, with exports and imports of US\$ 1.6 trillion and 1.4 trillion<sup>23</sup>. The upward trajectory will definitely depend on the political, strategic and economic influence it gains in the region. The project of economic corridors is the bench mark of what China call a peaceful rise in its perceived harmonious world.

## Conclusion

The stakes for India Pakistan and China in the politics of Indian Ocean for strategy and economics are very high and the strategic equation is very complex for any kind of convergence<sup>24</sup>. China has clearly shown its cards by announcing its new silk route's one belt one road policy. A mega financial institution has also been created which to Indian surprise has got global endorsement as well. Pakistan is utilizing the golden opportunity it got to change its fate and status in the region forever. The space for India is less and unfavorable – for it would be pushed to compromise its influence and growth trajectory. China with help from system will compel India to adhere to the new emergent order<sup>25</sup> in the region which is deemed as integral part of its plan for the establishment of neo-world order inspired by Beijing Consensus<sup>26</sup>. China's defence budget is two and half times more than that of India casting significant strategic, military transport, energy, and commercial implications for both countries. It is significant that 90 percent of Chinese arms sales are to Indian Ocean littoral countries, which also, as it happens, virtually surround India on three sides<sup>27</sup>. The pace of implementation of strings of Pearls policy with the initiation of CPEC has changed the dynamics of the region which is facing fate of economic and strategic rise of major powers along with age old territorial conflicts that too under the umbrella of nuclear deterrence<sup>28</sup>. The day when first ship arrives at Gwadar port and the goods would be transported to Shanghai via Kashghar would be different day for the whole region. A new dawn.

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