Role of CPEC in Economic Prosperity of Pakistan: Prospects and Challenge

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Abstract

Regional connectivity has become a reality in contemporary world as regional infrastructure projects can prove potentially beneficial for interstate relations. This study is an endeavor to investigate the overall theme of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its economic benefits for Pakistan. The central findings of this research is that CPEC is part of the multi-billion dollar Chinese project of One Belt One Road (OBOR) which will play a key role in harmonious Chinese led regional political system. Furthermore, CPEC will play a central role in economic development of Pakistan. This study has been mainly divided in two section. The first section deals with the Chinese theme behind project of One Belt One Road (OBOR), which is the main Chinese interregional connectivity program and whose one part is CPEC. The second section will deal with CPEC and the economic benefits for Pakistan. The second section discusses the four economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan: energy related benefits, increase in foreign direct investment, improvement in employment rate and improved infrastructure.

Keywords: China Pakistan Economic Corridor, regional connectivity, infrastructure, energy, employment

Introduction

After end of the World War 2 (WW2), regional connectivity has become a key component of global politics. Post WW2 regional connectivity

initiatives have demonstrated that the countries participating in regional connection programs can reap massive benefits. Chinese One Belt One Road (of which China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a part) is much discussed topic in international affairs. Mainly two types of literature can be presented here that look at the Chinese regional connectivity endeavors through diametrically opposed views. One views is this that China is trying to become a hegemon through programs like One Belt One Road (OBOR) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) because soon china will monopolize the economy of the countries on its periphery. Furthermore, this view suggests that China will try to achieve hegemony at global level because baton of pre imminence is gradually shifting from the United States to China. The second view does not look at CPEC with suspicion and suggests that China is trying to create a new regional order of harmonious future which will be beneficial for every state. This research sides with the second opinion and holds the view that Pakistan will be the main beneficiary of CPEC because overall economy of Pakistan will be improved. Four economic benefits of CPEC will be discussed in this study: energy related benefits, increase in employment, and increase in foreign direct investment and improvement in infrastructure. This study is divided in two sections. Section one deals with the overall theme behind CPEC and section two discusses the project of CPEC and four economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan.

The first part analyses the overall theme behind CPEC and OBOR, and analyses the conflicting literature about Chinese intentions behind CPEC and OBOR. One Belt One Road (OBOR) is an endeavor to revive the ancient Silk Road by interregional connectivity through landed project of Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and oceanic project of Maritime Silk Road (MSR). Mainly two types of views about OBOR have been discussed here. The first views is based on the realist assumptions that China is striving for becoming a regional hegemon through OBOR and CPEC. Furthermore, Chinese behavior in future will not be different to the aggressive oceanic powers of recent past. However, the second view suggest that China is not only a nation state as the main identity of China is of civilizational state. China has never threatened any state in past and it will never endanger regional peace and

harmony by becoming a revisionist state in future. Furthermore, CPEC will work as a tool in the Chinese dream of creating a harmonious regional order in which China will play a key role.

The second section deals with project of CPEC. The idea behind CPEC is to expand Karakoram Highway between China and Pakistan and create parallel industrial, railway and pipeline networks from port of Gwadar in Pakistan to the Chinese border. CPEC is thought to bring massive economic benefits for Pakistan as well as for China. China will have easy access to the markets of the countries of the region. Moreover, duration and cost of Chinese variety of imports will be reduced greatly because CPEC will enable Chinese imports to pass through lengthy route of Strait of Malacca. CPEC will also resuscitate the stagnant economy of Pakistan. Four economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan have been discussed. The first economic benefit of CPEC for Pakistan will be improvement in production of energy. Currently Pakistan is going through crisis of energy which is also main reason of lack of interest of foreign investors as well as failure of the domestic capitalist class to compete locally as well as globally. CPEC will prove a great help for energy sector of Pakistan as China is thought to invest \$34 billion in energy production through different methods in 21 agreements.

The second economic benefit of CPEC for Pakistan is discussed as increase in employment in Pakistan. Pakistan is suffering through serious unemployment problem. The venture of CPEC will provide ample chances of employment to skilled as well as unskilled labor. CPEC is envisaged to create 0.7 million jobs in recent future. Pakistan manpower employed at CPEC will be able to achieve important skills and Chinese language which will prove a key in people to people relation between Pakistan and China. Increase in foreign direct investment is taken as the third economic benefit of CPEC. Since the US led War On Terror (WOT), Pakistan is suffering from threatening reduction in foreign investment. Chinese massive investment in CPEC will embolden the other foreign investors. Furthermore, other countries evinced willingness to invest in different projects of CPEC. Therefore, CPEC can prove harbinger of improvement in foreign direct investment in Pakistan. Improvement in infrastructure is the fourth economic

advantage of CPEC for Pakistan. Currently, road and railway infrastructure is not satisfactory in Pakistan. As CPEC is envisioned to pass through far flung areas in Pakistan, therefore Chinese investment in road and railways is thought to improve overall infrastructure in Pakistan.

One Belt One Road (OBOR)

One Belt One Road (OBOR), announced in 2013 by the Chinese premier, is an endeavor to resuscitate the ancient Silk Road by interregional connectivity through landed project of Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and oceanic project of Maritime Silk Road (MSR) (Tsui, Wong, Chi, & Tiejun, 2017). Many project are included under the ambitious OBOR program that will connect Baltic Sea and the Pacific Ocean through a network of sea lanes, roads and railways. It is thought that 65 states will participate in OBOR and colossal amount of \$21.1 trillion will be invested in the project (Hali, Shukui, & Iqbal, 2015). Guangxi Zhuang region will be the starting point of Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and going through many ports in Andaman Sea, South China Sea, the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal; it will finish at the Baltic Sea (Hali et al., 2015, p. 149). The primary projects under the auspices of OBOR will be China-Mongolia-Russia Land Corridor, China-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Corridor, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and China Central Asia-West Asia corridor. The required funding for these ambitious programs will be taken from Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), BRICS New Development Bank, the Silk Road fund, SCO Interbank Association and China-ASEAN Interbank Association (Hali et al., 2015). Some analysts are of the view that OBOR is one of the largest mega-projects historically as the inclusion of more than 60 countries means that 65 % population will participate in the project. In addition to this, the overall investment on CPEC will tantamount to 40 % of GDP globally (Griffiths, 2017). The central philosophy behind interregional connectivity programs is that trade enhances cultural connectivity and eases suspicions (Jacques, 2012).

There are two types of theoretical approaches that analyze OBOR in totally different way. One approach is influenced by realist thinking that posits that through OBOR, China wants to create hegemony at regional level.

Halford John Mackinder, the renowned English geographer, suggested towards the start of the twentieth century that the state which would dominate East Europe would control Heartland; who commanded Heartland would rule the World-Island; who controlled World-Island would command the world (Mackinder, 1996). Such analysts opine that OBOR is serious presage of the much talked "Chinese century" a term that suggests that the 21th century will belong to China because in the absence of any serious competitor, China will become a hegemon. Chinese century is considered similar to the 20th century which was an 'American century' or the 19th century that can be (Rees-Mogg, 2005). Paul Kennedy has regarded as 'Pax Britannica' suggested that the states rise and fall relative to each other and the status of the 'great power' is not constant. The state which is successful in utilizing its resources skillfully usually succeeds in achieving the rank of 'great power'; however, it is pertinent that such 'great power' behaves aggressively to achieve its national interests. History bears witness, according to Kennedy, that states like the Britain, France, Japan, Germany and the United States of America used aggression as key tool in achieving foreign policy goals (Kennedy, 1989). Based on this assumption of Kennedy, John Mearcheimer opines that China's peaceful rise is impossible and China is bound to an aggressive regional and global power of future transform into (Mearsheimer, 2014). Therefore, such analysis suggest that OBOR will work as a key tool for China through which China will dictate its decisions in the region (Yu, 2017).

There is another approach related to OBOR that suggests that China will not threat global peace and harmony. Such view suggests that China is not only a nation state, but China is mainly a civilizational state because Chinese civilization has a history of two thousand years. According to some other analysis, Chinese civilizational history is 5000 years old (Loewe & Shaughnessy, 1999). Martin Jacques has discussed the Chinese identity of 'civilization state' in great detail in his book "When China Rules the World". In this book, he suggested that China had never invaded any state when China was the supreme regional power. China had never threatened its neighbor as China's emperor was responsible for protection of vassal states in the

neighborhood of China. China considered itself as "Middle Kingdom" a term that considered China as center of civilization. Threats and aggression were considered as the way of conduct of 'barbarians' those who lived outside of 'civilization' (Jacques, 2012). Therefore, being the center of civilization, China did not need to use coercion to achieve its foreign policy goals. History bears witness to this view as several studies present similar assessments about Chinese past. John Hobson opined in his famous book, titled "The Eastern Roots of Western Civilization" that China was much ahead of its western counterparts prior to European age of Renaissance and exploration. It was only the import of Chinese technology through which Europe was able to come out of the obscurity of Dark Ages (Hobson, 2004). James Petras also gave the statistics that evinced Chinese advantage in its technology and high life standard. For example, China produced 125,000 ton steel in 1078 but Britain was able to produce 76,000 ton of steel in the 18th century. Similarly, China was the primary producer of textile seven centuries before 'textile revolution' in Britain (Petras, 2012). However, despite of this unprecedented economic and technological superiority over other states, China never threatened countries at its periphery. Therefore, this study also takes this view that China will not threat the other states through OBOR because China is still very much connected to its past. OBOR, will prove a harmonious future in which China will be a dominant but peaceful part. Winter presented five primary principles of OBOR: connectivity and cooperation, trade promotion, facility activity, people to people relation and economic integration (Winter, 2016).

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC is a project that will connect Pakistan's city of Gwadar in province of Baluchistan to Kashghar's region of Xinjiang in China. The theme of CPEC is to expand Karakoram Highway between China and Pakistan and create parallel industrial, railway and pipeline networks from port of Gwadar to the Chinese border. Iran-Pakistan-China pipeline project will fulfil the energy requirements of CPEC; however, the main energy component will be the World's largest solar farm that China and Pakistan are

building at CPEC. CPEC will extend Chinese economic reach to the Arabian Sea evading time consuming and costly trips around the Strait of Malacca (Korvbko, 2015). At the start, the cost of CPEC was thought to be \$ 46 billion, however currently the cost of CPEC projects has increased to \$62 billion (Kiani, 2016). CPEC will have salutary impact on Chinese industry. Currently, China is the second largest economy and it is thought that in 2027, China will replace the United States of America as the largest economy. Furthermore, China's economy will be twice to that of the US economy in 2050 (Wilson & Stupnytska, 2007). This unprecedented Chinese economic growth is dependent on import of raw material and energy sources from different regions of world. CPEC will reduce cost and time of Chinese transportation of raw material and will increase volumes of Chinese global and regional trade. Connecting highways are under consideration that will link CPEC with North East China, then to Central Asia and Russia (Mir & Khair-ul-Samar, 2017). China transports almost 80 % of its oil from Strait of Malacca to Shanghai and about 16,000 km distance has to be covered in 2 to 3 months. But, once Gwadar port becomes fully operational, this distance will be reduced to 5,000 km at reduced cost of shipping of goods, oil and gas. CPEC will connect China with the markets of Europe, Asia and other areas of the region. In fact, CPEC is Chinese geopolitical and geo-economic pivots because China will find easy access to the oil fields of Mideast (Korybko, 2015).

Russian analyst, Andrew Korybko, suggested that Pakistan is geographically located to link the economies of Eurasian Union and South Asia. There are two ways through which Eurasian Union can be linked to South Asia. One option is North-South corridor among Russia, Iran and India through the Caspian Sea and Arabian Sea and the second alternative is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is better option than North-South corridor because CPEC involves easy land linkages among the countries of Eurasia and South Asia. The inter regional connectivity program of CPEC can improve the relations among states of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which are yet very tense because of traditional Indo-Pak rivalry. Although Bangladesh China India Myanmar

(BCIM) corridor can connect the four countries; however, scope of the corridor is limited to Northeast region of India and Yunan Province of China. The central aim behind this corridor was to help growth of Chinese and Indian least developed regions. However, the need of another corridor is certain that can link the other regions of India and China. CPEC can prove a best option as it can connect the vibrant economic regions of India with least advanced regions of China_ Xinjiang and Tibet. However, India has to come out of traditional security concerns of Pakistan-China relations and will have to depend on Pakistan and Chinese leadership. In fact, CPEC will work as a bridge for Silk Route that is thought to link 3 billion of people in Europe, Asia and Africa. Once CPEC is operational, Pakistan can work as gateway for the economies of Central Asian states.

Energy Related Benefits

Balance in demand and supply of energy is the major requirement for any economy to improve. Self-sufficiency of a country in energy will make the country attractive for foreign investment. On the other hand, the countries that do not enjoy self-sufficiency in energy find it very difficult to manage their industrial output and compete nationally as well as internationally. Pakistan is a country that is starving for energy as energy shortage in Pakistan is about 4,500 MW which is responsible of annual GDP loss of 2 to 2.5 percent (Kugelman, 2015). Poor capacity in energy production is directly responsible of Pakistan's lagging behind in the process of industrialization because neither foreign investors prefer a country which is not self-sufficient in production of energy nor domestic capitalist class is able to produce goods at competitive prices. This is the reason of Pakistan's over dependence on imports.

One major benefit of CPEC is that China is interested in massive energy production in Pakistan which will enable Pakistan to meet its energy requirements. Energy is the primary sector that will be focused in CPEC as \$34 billion has been invested on energy requirement for the project (Zubairi, 2017). CPEC includes 21 agreement related to energy that are envisaged to provide 16,400 MW of energy till March 2018 which will assist Pakistan to

balance energy's demand-supply. Electricity will be generated through fossil fuels, wind power and hydroelectric. In addition to this, the largest solar farm throughout world will be constructed in Pakistan under the auspices of CPEC ("Quaid-e-Azim solar Park: Solar energy's 100MW to arrive in April ", 2015). The power plants at Jhelum and Neelam rivers are expected to yield 969 MW; Diamer Basha Dam 45000 MW; Karot Dam 720 MW, Quaid E Azim Solar Park will generate 1000 MW, Karachi Nuclear Power Complex will produce HPR 1000 and Jhimpir Wind Power Plant is expected to produce 300 MW power (Mir & Khair-ul-Samar, 2017). It is said that 17 energy projects will be in functional position till 2019. Out of these, 11 are under construction. Only one energy project of CPEC _Sahiwal power plant_ is thought to meet the energy requirement of around 10 million people ("CPEC projects to addess eenrgy problem: China ", 2017).

Furthermore, Pakistan is unable to store water reserves; as a result, this water flows to the sea, Joint venture of CPEC will enable Pakistan to build new reservoirs of saving huge quantities of water. This water will work as cheap source of hydro-energy and will be highly beneficial for energy production as well as agriculture sector of Pakistan (Ramay, 2018 Similarly, Pakistan can work as a bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. The vast reserves of energy of Central Asia can reach to energy deficient states in South Asia; while South Asian products can reach to the markets of Central Asia states through CPEC (Zubairi, 2017). CPEC is also important for China's energy requirements. At first CPEC will open a new route of oil supply for China from Central Asia. Oil is considered as the second largest energy consumption source in China which accounts to almost 20% of total energy consumption in China. China consumes almost 10.7 million oil barrel per day in 2014 and it is thought that this oil consumption will rise up to 20 million barrel per day till 2040. China has already become the largest global oil importer in 2014 replacing the USA. About 80% of Chinese imports come through Strait of Malacca to Shanghai in two to three after covering distance of 16,000 kilometers. After the operationalization of CPEC, this distance will be reduced to 5000 kilometers. In addition to this, China is thinking of building refinery and oil storage facilities at Gwadar to enable transportation of oil to China through Xinjian region (Thambi, 2017).

Increase in Employment

A simple definition of unemployment can be ratio of those persons who want to work but are unable to find job because of scarcity of opportunities. Unemployment is devastating for any economy. Furthermore, increase in unemployment is directly related to adverse law and order situation. Unemployment rate in Pakistan is more than 12 percent which is equitant to 113 million unemployed people (Nizami, 2010). The defense minister of Pakistan, Ahsan Iqbal, suggested that CPEC will improve employment ratio of skilled as well as unskilled labor. Higher employment ratio will increase production capacity of Pakistan and Pakistan's export. This will also provide valuable vocational training and high paid jobs to Pakistan labors (Ahmad, 2017). The Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Yao Jing, informed that already 70,000 Pakistani have been employed in different programs of CPEC in the previous five years. Furthermore, he suggested that CPEC will create further 0.7 million jobs in future. He went on further and said that development of different projects under the auspices of CPEC like food processing zones, economic zone, water plan, power plant and vocational training institutes all will require local population to join the project (Achakzai, 2018). A report by the United Nations suggested that CPEC is envisaged to decrease the rate of unemployment in Pakistan. Due to the massive investment in CPEC, economic growth in Pakistan is expected to remain around 5 percent. Pakistan's fiscal policy is becoming expansionary along with time due to CPEC (cpecinfo, 2017). CPEC will create two types of jobs in Pakistan_ direct jobs like of a construction worker doing work on a road, and secondary jobs like a businessman who owns a restaurant on CPEC route. In addition to this, language training of Chinese will also enable Pakistan businessmen and students to participate in CPEC projects with the Chinese. ("CPEC: The initiative for economic prosperity, opportunities and institutions ", 2018). Ayub Mehar is of the view that investing one billion rupees on road infrastructure in Pakistan has potential to increase per capita income in Pakistan by Rs. 371 permanently and can bring people bring out of poverty. Pakistan is currently at 128th number in supply of electricity, 100th in infrastructure and 115th in telephone lines (Mehar, 2017).

Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign Direct Investment plays a key role in uplifting economy of developing nations. The miracle behind "China's Rise" is opening of Chinese Southern coastal areas to the foreign investors after the announcement of Open Door Policy of Deng Xiaoping in post-Maoist China. Foreign investment helped China in becoming a key player in regional as well as international economic affairs. However, if we have a look at situation of foreign direct investment in Pakistan, the conditions are not good. Especially after Pakistan's participation in American led War On Terror (WOT) proved highly detrimental for foreign investment in Pakistan because the foreign investors place life security as the number one priority while deciding about investment.

CPEC is a project that can change the thinking pattern of foreign investors about Pakistan as by investing colossal amount of money in Pakistan, China is giving a message to the world that Pakistan is a safe country to invest. Already a number of regional countries have offered Pakistan to invest on CPEC and linking CPEC to the Central Asian states. Pakistan Board of Investment (BOI) declared that because of CPEC, inflows of foreign direct investment in Pakistan has increased to 74 % in the first four month of 2017. BOI suggested that China was the major investor country with \$631.7 million in 2017-18. This investment increased from 224.6 million in 2016-17. The huge portion of this investment is invested in infrastructure and energy projects of CPEC ("CPEC boosts foreign direct investment by 74% ", 2017). The Chinese investment on CPEC is thought to be almost equal to overall foreign direct investment in Pakistan since the last four decades (Rakisits, 2015). Chinese investment in CPEC is considered as Chinese Marshal Plan for Pakistan (Salim, 2016). It is thought that about 2.3 million jobs will be created by CPEC from 2015 to 2030, which will have salutary effect on overall economic growth of Pakistan as it will enhance about 2 to 2.5 on annual basis (Shah, 2016).

Infrastructure Related Benefits

A study by the World Bank suggests that development in infrastructure is directly related economic growth as it has positive impact on per capita income at purchasing power parity (PPP) (Dunning, 1993). The current situation Pakistan infrastructure is very poor as about 3.55 % GDP is lost because of transport inefficiency (Kiani, 2017). The project of CPEC will revolutionize the overall situation of transportation in Pakistan as its projects are thought to pass through far flung areas inside Pakistan. A 1100km long motorway worth of \$11 billion will be constructed from Karachi to Lahore. Similarly, the Karakoram highway between Rawalpindi and the Chinese border will be completely reconstructed. The railway line between Karachi and Peshawar will be upgraded. The railway network of Pakistan will be extended to Southern Chinese Xinjiang Railway. Gas will be imported from Iran through a network of pipelines and oil can be imported from Middle East. According to some reports, four new mega projects have bene added to the program of CPEC at the fifth meeting of working group of CPEC. A road of worth \$200 million has been added to the project that will link Nok Kundi and Panigur. Similarly, another project of cost \$2.5 bn will link Mirpur and Mansehra. Another 354km road will link Gilgit and Chitral. The funding for these projects will come from Asian Development Bank (ADB), French Development Authority (FDA) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The ADB will give US \$335 million loan; AFD and AIB will give \$75 million for these projects (cpecinfo, 2016). As CPEC will pass through many under privileged regions of Pakistan, therefore it is expected that CPEC will modernize the overall system of infrastructure. In addition to this, Pakistan work force, employed on CPEC, will learn useful experience about infrastructure from the Chinese.

Conclusion

This study intends to look for two phenomena: overall theme of Chinese vision of CPEC and its economic benefits for Pakistan. This study

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suggests two points. At first, regional connectivity initiatives of China are not intended to threat other countries as Chinese government is not interested in using these connectivity plans as tool for achieving hegemony at regional level. Secondly, CPEC will prove very helpful for overall improvement of economy of Pakistan. Four economic benefits for Pakistan as result of CPEC are discussed in the study. At first, CPEC will improve the energy production capabilities of Pakistan because China is investing in a number of joint ventures with Pakistan to produce energy from a number of ways. Secondly, huge Chinese investment on CPEC will revolutionize infrastructure in Pakistan which will prove beneficial for economic growth of Pakistan. Thirdly, CPEC will provide massive opportunities of jobs and skill for Pakistanis. At last, CPEC will encourage the foreign investors to invest in Pakistan who were hesitant to invest in Pakistan because of debilitating security conditions in Pakistan.

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