

Book Review

Minhas Majeed Khan, et al. (eds.). *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—A Game Changer*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). 2016. iii+164 Pages. Pak Rupees 500.00 (Hardback).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—A Game Changer is a collection of essays, written by experts in the fields of International Relations, Political Economy, Current Affairs, and Sino-Pak relations. The book takes its readers on an exuberant journey through the history of Silk Route to the One Belt, One-Road (OBOR) initiative and the political economy of the Sino-Pakistan relations. The book not only underscores the challenges that lie ahead in making the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a success, but it also presents suggestions for making it a real game changer for development and prosperity of Pakistan, and the entire region. The book highlights the economic and political importance of CPEC by integrating analysis with the latest data.

In the first article, Li Xiguang discusses the importance of the OBOR initiative. He asserts that “opening to both the east and the west”, China will become the centre of Central Asia. The idea of OBOR raised by China would not only achieve economic purposes but cultural, religious, and educational exchanges can also be made possible through this project. Historically, Silk Road had its own influence and it helped in shaping the governance and transportation of even the most distant countries and influenced the culture of even the remotest areas. In the past, the area around the CPEC has seen the ascent of the cultural centres of the world. The CPEC, which encompasses countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran has once again put China on the central stage. The author feels that China needs to maintain social relationships and political cooperation with these nations. This initiative is shaping a new world order through common destiny, common interests, values, culture, and security.

In the second article Rashid Ahmad Khan discusses the impact of CPEC on people-to-people contact. Khan states that extension of the scope of participation under the CPEC will prompt more prominent thriving and welfare of the peoples of the two nations. Perceiving the requirements for bringing the people of the two nations nearer, both governments are giving careful consideration to setting up institutional instruments for the advancement of people-to-people contact. To overcome the dialect boundary, the Government of Pakistan, with the help of the Chinese Government, has opened China Study Programmes for the instruction of Chinese dialect in different colleges of Pakistan. Khan also highlights that tourism is another area in which there is an immense potential for expanding social participation and elevating people-to-people contact. In terms of

both religious and recreational tourism, Pakistan can turn into an attractive destination for the Chinese vacationers, if Pakistan puts together the required tourism framework and enhance the law and order situation. The author argues that the joint ventures in the CPEC industrial zones will lead to the workers of both Pakistan and China working together, which will give them a chance to integrate with each other.

The third article, written by S. M. Hali, is about the regional and global aspects of the CPEC. According to Hali, CPEC is a part of the New Silk Route (NSR), which is not only beneficial to Pakistan and China but also to the landlocked countries of Central Asia. He further emphasises the role of CPEC in being potent enough to make the world a global village by connecting at least 60 countries of Europe and Asia through railways, roads and sea channels. He then discusses different international initiatives to revive the old Silk Route as well as making new ones by the European Union, Turkey, and even the USA. Hali concludes by giving an overview of the fruits that CPEC is anticipated to bring for China, Pakistan, the region, and the globe.

The fourth article of the book, authored by Du Youkong, reviews the interplay between CPEC and OBOR. Youkong shows as to how CPEC and OBOR (the combination of land and sea routes, which involves 60 countries) would “complement” and “supplement” each other. He analyses the position of CPEC, which is the “flagship” project of OBOR, and mutual supplementary and complementary roles of the OBOR and CPEC for each other. The author concludes that CPEC and OBOR will bring prosperity in the region and that would further increase the importance of CPEC.

Malik Muhammad Ashraf analyses the Indian factor in the fifth article. Ashraf discusses the Indian opposition to this grand OBOR initiative, and the possible measures to ensure the success of CPEC despite these interruptions. He argues that the refrainment of India to join CPEC despite China’s invitation and India’s historical importance in trade route can be attributed to the historical and political relations between India and Pakistan. The author argues that India’s activities to disrupt CPEC clearly point to the fact that the coming days would witness an exacerbation in the security condition. Pakistan, thus, needs to improve the security situation because the stakes are very high. To improve the security situation, Pakistan will have to promote peace in Afghanistan. To thwart the Indian intentions, their activities should be actively exposed to the UN and the international community, and more diplomatic offensive is required to build pressure on India. At the same time, efforts should be made to resolve disputes with India through bilateral channels or the UN. Internally, National Action Plan (NAP) religious scholars, the media, and society can play a pivotal role in changing the perceptions of the people and urging them to act their due part in ensuring peace within the country. Across-the-board accountability will also curtail the resource constraint and improve the flow of foreign direct investment from other countries in Pakistan.

The sixth article by Muhammad Khan discusses at length the domestic and external challenges that may be confronted in the completion of CPEC. Khan also discusses the measures that can convert these challenges into opportunities. According to him, the external challenges include rivalry between China and the US, the regional power play with India, competitiveness with China, and the geographical limitations of CPEC that would require maintenance of the 3000-km long route, including the mountainous region of northern Pakistan. The internal challenges, on the other hand,

include provincial security vulnerabilities caused by remoteness, sub-nationalists in Balochistan, members of banned organisations taking refuge in Southern Punjab, and the sectarian issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Gilgit-Baltistan, and the tribal belt of Dera Ismail Khan. The author argues that the public-private sector institutional mechanism can overcome the governance and accountability shortcomings for the implementation of the project. Khan proposes that these challenges can also be dealt with steps like, All Parties Conferences on CPEC, the capacity building of law enforcement agencies, priority to the projects in the vulnerable areas of Balochistan and KPK, stabilisation of western frontiers, bridging the trust deficit between Islamabad and Kabul, and focus on human resource development to cater unemployment and extremism amongst youth. The author gives due importance to the diplomacy, calling for an institutionalised approach to thwart the propaganda against the project. With this approach, the US, Afghanistan and India should be engaged constructively. He further proposes the reorientation of the foreign policy from constructive engagement to defensive insulation, if India does not agree. A premeditated media campaign should be used along with foreign policy to create a positive narrative at home.

The importance of the Gwadar Port for the economy of Pakistan is the topic of the seventh article, penned by Ahmad Rashid Malik. The author begins with the importance of the Indian Ocean, which, according to Robert D. Kaplan, is expected to play an important role in the new Great Game of Asia. The maritime status not only stands for the modern national power but also assists in seaborne trade, which consists of 80 percent of the overall trade. In South Asia, India is emerging as a maritime and economic power with 76 seaports, while Pakistan has only three seaports. China not only has technological and commercial supremacy in maritime, but also has the world's top three largest cargo handling ports. China also operates eight sea terminals out of the top ten. Malik argues that this Chinese experience and geostrategic location can transform Gwadar into a world class regional hub port. Gwadar can ensure energy supply from Persian Gulf to China, which supplied 51 percent of its total oil imports in 2013. Chinese interest in Gwadar will provide an immense boost to the economy of Pakistan via additional revenue, employment opportunities, transit trade, special economic zones, energy plants, and merchandise trade as Gwadar is envisioned as a hub port for the Central Asian states. In addition, the author recommends the installation of steel mill at the Gwadar Port, ship building industry to be set up at Gwadar, the revival of Gaddani ship breaking industry, privatisation of shipping industry, and development of more ports to enhance merchandise trade and encounter Chabahar port.

The eighth article by Hussain Qazi continues to discuss the importance of infrastructure. After giving brief history of the most ambitious project in the history of roads and highways, Qazi emphasises that Gwadar and CPEC will bring economic prosperity to almost 20 countries of South and Central Asia by connecting three billion people. He states that the land and sea routes reduce the time by half, saving 7 to 14 cents per kg, which amounts to a saving of 10 billion dollars per year. However, an adequate road network is a must for an efficient port functioning. The completion of these projects would link Gwadar with Quetta, Chaman and Indus highway. A "Pak-China Dedicated Freight Corridor" is also expected to link railways from Karachi and Gwadar to Kashgar, and also to the regional rail networks. The Gwadar-Kashgar oil pipeline is another mega

project planned, along with grain and fuel storage facilities, warehouses, and smart cities along the route. However, the author underlines the crucial point that the actualisation still requires institutionalised policy framework in coordination with all stakeholders to ensure transparency. The state should take special measures to address the security situation, which is vulnerable due to internal and external factors. The capacity issue is a huge challenge that can be dealt with projects like National University of Technology and Skills development.

The book is an important contribution regarding CPEC as it analyses various issues, challenges, and problems that stand in the way of making it a success. Even though various aspects of CPEC are being discussed on different fora, there is a dearth of literature available on the topic that analytically discusses the critical issues related to the CPEC. This book, therefore, opens up new avenues for discussion. The book highlights that the suggestions, calling for domestic reforms, are very exigent, but also are a question mark in themselves. In short, *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—A Game Changer* is an important source for its readers—be they policy-makers, academicians, researchers, or laymen—to better understand various aspects of the CPEC.

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