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Article:	Ensuring the Success of CPEC is Equivalent to Overcoming Security Challenges
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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the security threats posed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a major project that employs the Silk Road's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) extension to connect the Kashgar and Gawadar port regions. The CPEC project, which is expected to draw more than \$60 billion in investment and be finished in 2030, is viewed as critical to China-Pakistan political and economic ties. The report underlines the CPEC project's ability to address a variety of border-area stability challenges and prevent outside actors from exploiting internal and external ethnic conflicts. As a result, the project is viewed as a critical tool for developing cooperation, alleviating tensions, and building confidence between the two countries. To ensure the success of the CPEC project, the document notes the considerable security issues that must be resolved. These difficulties include geopolitical rivalries, the threat of terrorism, and extremism. The author emphasizes the crucial part that both governments must play in resolving these issues so that the CPEC project can realize its full revolutionary potential. Working together is the only way for the project to truly shift the game and have a big impact on the region's geopolitical and economic landscape.

Keywords: CPEC, Security Challenges, Domestic Challenges, External Challenges.

Introduction

CPEC is a key component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to improve regional connectivity and economic development. With an anticipated expenditure of more than \$60 billion, it includes several infrastructure projects such as motorways, railways, and energy initiatives. This huge initiative is expected to transform Pakistan's economy and strengthen economic connections between China and Pakistan. Nonetheless, the project faces some security challenges that may jeopardize its economic benefits (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018). Local economies all across the world have been significantly impacted by both natural and man-made calamities such as economic downturns, inflation, epidemics, floods, and terrorism. Modern concerns about security and terrorism touch both wealthy and underdeveloped nations, and these circumstances give rise to particular vulnerabilities. The United States began "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan as a counterterrorism strategy after the terrorist events on September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, this military operation caused an insurgency to spread from Afghanistan to Pakistan, with unfavorable results. The hazards to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United States have escalated as a result of the Taliban's rebirth and use of varied strategies and deception. Pakistan has suffered enormous economic and political losses as a result of the Afghan insurgency, which puts the nation's political stability at risk (Rafique, Anwar, & Analysis, 2014). Numerous internal and external difficulties that Pakistan is currently facing have a big impact on its security. The challenges Pakistan faces are made even more difficult by the poor and ineffective implementation of its economic policies, which has made it difficult for it to allocate strategic resources and make wise judgments. The CPEC is a vast and expansive infrastructure investment program that aims to change Pakistan's regional and economic relations (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karan, 2016). China's One Belt, One Road plan, which aims to build and expand connectivity between Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, includes CPEC as a vital and essential component (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, Rafiq, & Buriro, 2018; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019). The significance and scope of CPEC cannot be emphasized or exaggerated given the wide range of aspirations, interests, and regional and global geopolitical forces involved (see Figure 1). But any undertaking of this size will undoubtedly face numerous difficulties and prompt important queries.



Figure 1. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) proposed a route.

One of the foremost challenges facing the CPEC project is security issues (Chaziza, 2016). The Pakistani government has been battling terrorist organizations that threaten the CPEC project for several years. The execution of CPEC-related initiatives may be hampered or delayed by such security issues.

State of the Art

An enormous network of roads, railroads, and pipelines will be used as part of the CPEC, a substantial economic effort, to link western China with Pakistan's port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea. The initiative, however, has several security issues that might prevent it from being successful. Terrorism, separatism, the existence of non-state actors, cyber threats, and political instability in Pakistan are some of these security problems. Understanding the security implications of CPEC for both China and Pakistan, as well as the role of the military in protecting the project, is critical to handle these issues.

Current research has looked into the security issues CPEC is facing and offered suggestions for how to solve them. For example, (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016) paper titled "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Security Challenges" highlights the security challenges facing CPEC, such as terrorism and separatism. (Afzal & Naseem, 2018) article "China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC): Challenges and Prospects" explores how CPEC may worsen existing security challenges in the region. (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018) paper "Improvement of Large-Vehicle Detection and Monitoring on CPEC Route" discussed security concerns and proposed an advanced approach to detection and monitoring through satellite imagery for safety purposes. (Gill, 2019) article "The Geopolitics of the China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) and its security implications for India" provides an overview of the security challenges facing CPEC and discusses the role of China and Pakistan in addressing these challenges. Finally, (Ahmad, Mi, & Fernald, 2020) paper "Revisiting the potential security threats linked with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)" discusses the security challenges facing CPEC, such as terrorism, separatism, and the risk of political instability in Pakistan, and offers recommendations for addressing these challenges.

The CPEC's security issues highlight how crucial it is for China and Pakistan to resolve these issues to assure the project's success. The literature offers insightful information about the nature of these difficulties and the steps that can be taken to lessen them.

CPEC and Security Challenges

As the CPEC is essential for preserving stable and secure trade and development relations between Pakistan and China, ensuring its security poses a sizable challenge. For CPEC projects to be completed on schedule, security obstacles must be overcome. While Gwadar and Kashgar are important locations along the CPEC route, other places also pose serious security risks that should not be disregarded. China has developed five business zones in Kashgar to safeguard the CPEC routes and the workers in the short and medium term, and Pakistan has been aggressively attempting to address the nationalist movements in Balochistan. Even though Pakistan's military is working to curtail terrorist activity there, the threat still exists and cannot be completely removed (Siddiq, 2011). The need to safeguard the Chinese labor force is paramount, and Pakistan has responded by creating the Special Security Division (SSD), which is made up of paramilitary units, army battalions, the Frontier Corps, and Rangers (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). CPEC faces threats from various militant groups. These threats pose significant security challenges to the project.

Afghanistan's Nuristan and Kunar regions are well-known for being the Taliban and other militant groups' strongholds, and they have been the scene of numerous attacks on the CPEC (Rehman). The security of the project is seriously jeopardized by the activities of Al Qaeda, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Turkestan Islamic Party, and the Movement of Islamic Uzbekistan, all of which are known to operate in the area (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). Both internal and foreign challenges, like the Baloch separatist movement, face the CPEC project. Due to their belief that the CPEC will only benefit Chinese and Punjabi elites and not the Baloch people, the Baloch separatist organizations have taken part in numerous attacks against the project (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). To address these security concerns, both China and Pakistan have taken action. These actions include setting up a special security force to protect the CPEC, sending more troops to the region, and increasing the number of checkpoints along the route. However, despite these safety measures, the CPEC project still faces security risks, and the security environment is still precarious.

Domestic Challenges

Significant internal security issues are currently present in Pakistan and demand a quick response. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and other western parts of the country are facing an increasing tendency of Talibanization, which is the biggest problem. As it has the potential to destabilize the entire region, this trend poses a serious security threat to Pakistan. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the tribal regions and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as separatist insurgencies in Balochistan and religious and ethnic conflict in Punjab and Karachi, pose possible security challenges to the Pakistani government, (Sindh) (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016).

The ongoing existence of these militant organizations and the resulting unrest pose the possibility of developing into significant risks to the accomplishment of the CPEC project. The CPEC is a multibillion-dollar infrastructural project that links the Xinjiang region of China with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. Security of the project is of the highest importance because it is strategic and economically significant for both China and Pakistan (Muhammad Ibrar,

Takepoto, Manzoor, & Khan, 2022; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018; M Ibrar, Mi, & Rafiq, 2016). The second issue Pakistan is dealing with is religious extremism and terrorism, which not only put the nation at risk but also specifically the CPEC project. More than 30,000 civilians and security personnel have perished in terrorist strikes since the 9/11 attacks. To combat the threat of terrorism and its root causes, such as religious radicalism, Pakistan has adopted a tough posture. The security and stability of the nation and the region as a whole are, however, seriously threatened by the persistence of extremist groups and the spread of radical beliefs (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). The third issue Pakistan confronts is intervention from outside parties, notably from nearby nations like India, which views the CPEC project as a strategic danger to its military and economic interests (Khetran, 2017). India disagrees with the CPEC project because Pakistan has gained a tactical edge along the Arabian Sea because of it. Reliable evidence suggests that RAW, the Indian intelligence service, has established a specific unit to undermine the CPEC initiative in Pakistan. For the CPEC project to be implemented successfully, Pakistan must confront the significant challenge of outside entities meddling in its internal affairs. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which sees Gwadar as a potential threat to its perceived monopoly over trade in the Gulf nations, is Pakistan's fourth challenge (AFRIDI & KHAN). The Chabahar Port, which India is actively marketing as a substitute to connect Central Asia and Europe, has a bigger influence on the UAE than Gwadar. Pakistan's aspirations to make Gwadar a regional center for trade and commerce are significantly hampered by this competition for trade routes and ports in the area (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). Finally, the Afghan Pashtun tribes have consistently supported the militants and are supported by the insurgency (Johnson & Mason, 2008). The Norzais, Ghilzai Alekozai, Durrani, and Eshaqzais tribes have strong ties to the Taliban, and the Wazirs, Ahmadzai, and Mahsud tribes in North and South Waziristan have helped the rebel group by hosting their gatherings in Afghanistan (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). The security of the CPEC project is seriously threatened by these tribes' continuous support of the conflict and their participation in it. To achieve the successful implementation of the CPEC project, Pakistan must solve these internal security issues in their entirety.

Solutions for Domestic Challenges

To comprehensively handle the country's internal security issues, the Pakistani government has taken several actions in partnership with the military. To start with, the government has created specialized military units in Sindh and Balochistan to guarantee the security of the CPEC and related projects. These teams are in charge of protecting the infrastructure connected to the CPEC and securing the area around it. In addition, the military began Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 to fight militancy. It was first restricted to Afghanistan's border regions but eventually expanded to include the entire nation (Javaid, 2016). This operation aims to secure the CPEC project and ensure a "terror-free Pakistan". The operation will go on until this goal is met, according to the army leader. The administration has established Apex Committees at the province and federal levels to coordinate decision-making in aspects of internal security in addition to military operations. These committees, which are made up of representatives from the government, military, and bureaucracy, are in charge of carrying out the National Action Plan (NAP) and planning security operations around the nation (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). The creation of these committees has reduced the ability of policymakers to make decisions and increased the influence of the military and bureaucracy in questions of internal security.

These tactical moves have made a big difference in tackling Pakistan's internal security issues and in protecting the CPEC project. To ensure the effective implementation of these measures and to safeguard the security and stability of the nation, the administration and military must continue to collaborate.

External Challenges

A variety of outside threats could have an impact on Pakistan's security and economy. India's opposition to the CPEC is the first barrier and might have strategic ramifications for India's military and economic interests in the region. A geostrategic struggle has resulted from this resistance, with India supporting the Chabahar Port as a substitute for the Gwadar Port, a vital component of the CPEC (Butt & Butt, 2015). Multiple security threats have been present in the Pakistani region, particularly along the western borders with Afghanistan. The support of Pashtun tribes in Afghanistan for the insurgency, which has tight ties to the Taliban and other militant groups, is one of the major issues. The stability and security of the area are at risk as a result of this support from the Pashtun tribes. The second issue is foreign sabotage, particularly that carried out by India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Foreign entities like the RAW may engage in actions that enhance militancy and unrest, which could have detrimental effects on the stability and security of the region (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016).

Pakistan must take a comprehensive approach that includes political, economic, and military measures to handle these foreign problems. To address the underlying causes of the insurgency and advance regional stability, diplomatic efforts must concentrate on cooperating with Afghanistan and other regional nations. To address the root causes of militancy and advance prosperity, economic policies must concentrate on fostering economic development in the region (Clinton, 2010). Military measures must focus on countering the insurgency and ensuring the security of the region.

Along with security issues, Pakistan's support for Afghanistan has alarmed several nations, including India, Russia, and Iran, who are actively attempting to destabilize Pakistan. The CPEC's successful execution, which is essential for Pakistan's economic development, is significantly hampered by this. In terms of geopolitical and economic interests relating to the CPEC, China is up against competition from countries like Iran and India in particular. The construction of the CPEC infrastructure close to the Afghan border could be hindered by Pakistan's political unrest and security concerns. A significant worry is also the ongoing proxy conflict with India and the deteriorating relations with Western neighbors (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). The proposed CPEC is seriously threatened by the ongoing power struggle in Afghanistan between several regional players in the wake of the US exit.

The cost of production is another crucial element that has been disregarded in the implementation of the CPEC, in addition to security and geopolitical considerations. Industrial clusters' strong demand for raw materials could lead to price increases, which would be counterproductive to the CPEC's main objective of promoting economic growth (Ali, Daud, & Ibrar, 2021). Additionally, resource depletion, pollution of the environment, and altered climatic patterns could result from this. A new pipeline being built as part of the CPEC also poses a threat to Russia's monopoly on the oil pipeline in the Caspian region that runs to Europe and beyond. China's presence in the Indian Ocean complicates India-China geopolitics yet more (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018).

Several projects with Central Asian counterparts have been made possible by Iran's strategic location, which acts as the shortest link between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. Pakistan's ambition of a corridor has been made more difficult by the country's substantial reliance on Russian energy supplies and communication facilities, which are linked to Kazakhstan. Despite these obstacles, the Commonwealth independent states (CIS), like Azerbaijan, play supportive roles that are essential to the corridor's success (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). Therefore, to ensure the success of the CPEC and foster regional stability and prosperity, Pakistan must adopt a comprehensive strategy to address these issues.

Solution for External Challenges

Pakistan's complicated relationship with its neighbor India has consistently posed a danger to its security. The two nations have a history of tense diplomatic relations that have resulted in four major wars and seen both sides use a variety of strategies to undermine the other's economic and physical infrastructure. A significant threat to Pakistan's security is the expanding strategic alliance between India and the United States, which is a component of the containment strategy against China. India has forged a tighter partnership with the US as a result of its desire for regional domination and its competition with China. This was made clear during Prime Minister Modi's "Act East" policy alignment with the US's strategic pivot towards the area during President Obama's 2015 visit to India, which encouraged India to coordinate its efforts with the US (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016).

Territorial conflicts, particularly those involving Kashmir, have further fueled the ongoing hostility between Pakistan and India. Multiple violent incidents stemming from the border dispute have led to the deployment of military forces by both nations in the area. The stability of South Asia and the strategic importance of the region have both been impacted by the conflict between the two countries (Ganguly, Smetana, Abdullah, & Karmazin, 2019). The war has become more complex as a result of the involvement of outside forces like the US and China. As part of its geopolitical pivot towards Asia, the US has shifted toward a more pro-India position, endangering Pakistan's strategic interests in the area. This change has led to a stronger alliance between the US and India, one that now includes intelligence sharing, trade, and financial investment in addition to defense cooperation. Pakistan is becoming more isolated as a result of this cooperation, and its strategic and economic interests are being threatened (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2016). Pakistan has taken a variety of actions to address these issues, including diplomatic, military, and economic plans. To counteract India's expanding power, it has sought stronger ties with other nations in the area like China, Iran, and Russia. To thwart any prospective invasion from India, Pakistan has also worked to improve its defensive capabilities, including developing nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's complicated relationship with India, which has been characterized by territorial disputes and violent confrontations, is the main danger to Pakistan's security. Pakistan's security issues have become more challenging as a result of the US and India's expanding alliance as part of their containment strategy against China. Pakistan has responded by enacting a variety of measures, including bolstering its partnerships with other nations in the area and improving its defense capabilities, to combat these problems.

Conclusion

The CPEC has been essential in enhancing China and Pakistan's collaboration in the fight against terrorism. Inhabitants of both countries must place a high priority on the timely and

successful completion of this project as well as reinforce current security measures. Security issues yet persist, including possible dangers from Pakistan or the western Chinese province of Xinjiang. The security of the corridor is of the utmost importance since the CPEC is crucial to the economic and developmental connections between Pakistan and China. Therefore, both countries must cooperate closely and put comprehensive security measures in place to address the security issues related to the CPEC project. The revolutionary promise of the CPEC can only be fully fulfilled in this way. Along with improving trade and economic ties between the two countries, the successful completion of the CPEC project would also be a significant symbol of Pakistan and China's strategic alliance. To improve their bilateral collaboration, promote stability, and reduce the dangers of potential challenges to the project, both countries must prioritize the security of the corridor.

The security of the CPEC, as well as the strategic alliance between Pakistan and China, are essential to the growth and success of this project. To solve the security issues related to the CPEC, both nations must work closely together and put in place extensive security measures.

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