



**China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):
A Study of Obstacles, and Challenges in Hazara Region**

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Abstract:

Hazara division is the part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province located in the north of Pakistan. China and Pakistan are connected through Hazara region and Khunjrab pass. China is the emerging international economic power; it is in the process of becoming a new actor in the international political economy. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will improve the infrastructure, accelerate industrialization, and reduce unemployment in Pakistan and resultantly the living standards of the people of the country in general and that of Hazara region in particular. On the other hand, it will also damage the already deteriorated environmental condition in the area and exhaust already limited resources of the area. Though the project will bring development and prosperity in the countries and nationalities from where it passes but it will also bring challenges for the areas and people inhabiting the region connected to the road. The impacts may be direct or indirect in influencing the regions. It may impact the natural resources of the country. The arrival of multinational companies in the country will start the over consumption and over exploitation of the natural resources of the country.

Keywords: CPEC, Hazara region, challenges, obstacles, culture, deforestation, environment

INTRODUCTION

China-Pakistan Economic corridor in the part of One Built One rout policy of the socialist republic of China is to get access to international market and seek shortest roads to import energy goods and export produced and manufactured goods to the world market. The project will not only connect China to Arabian Sea through Pakistan but will also connect the whole South Asia with Central Asia, Middle East and East Africa. This project will also enhance the prospect of economic and human

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development through broader connectivity. The three major corridors of CPEC will help Pakistan neighboring states; Afghanistan, Iran and India to become part of this broader connectivity (Pak China, 2018).

It is a project of bringing closer the states and nationalities across the region by developing a network of road infrastructure for the proper utilization of the resources of the region for raising the living standards of the inhabitants of the region and making them integrated for the better development of the region. The road will connect the far flung areas of the region and will make the resources of the region exploited in the best interest of different countries of the region (Amir, Bano & Soubia, 2021).

CPEC AND CHALLENGES IN THE HAZARA DIVISION

Though the project will bring development and prosperity in the countries and nationalities from where it passes but it will also pose challenges for the areas and people inhabiting the region connected to the road. The impacts may be direct or indirect in influencing the regions. It may impact the natural resources of the country. The arrival of multinational companies in the country will start the over consumption and over exploitation of the natural resources of the country. The region of Hazara will be exception to the implication of this project though it will bring economic prosperity and development to the area and will make the people employed to earn livelihood for them and their families, but it will have serious implication for the area, its population, people, culture and the natural beauty which the locality has so far preserved due to hard accessibility.

Socio-Cultural Effects on Hazara Division

Culture is generally termed as the living style and patterns of a group of people inhabiting a specific locality in the world. It is determined by the things the people of the locality use, their customs, knowledge, values, language, beliefs, and ideas. It also encompasses their religion, their family structure, and the way they are schooled and educated for the life spending in the world. Media has also played a predominant role in promoting and preserving their culture to present it as a model to the world at large to attract and assimilate people towards their culture. The media of Pakistan has badly failed to fulfil its role in promoting and encouraging its culture in positive and constructive manners. The media of Pakistan care little about the destruction of the cultural base of Pakistani society. The objective of Pakistani media is earning only.

Pakistan has a heterogeneous society with many cultural, lingual and sectarian groups. It has distinctive beliefs, norms, values and ethics which make its cultural life attractive and charming. The culture of Pakistan has been influenced by Arabic, Iranian, Indian, and western culture. As the people of Pakistan are exposed to an onslaught of media campaign, that's way the culture of Pakistan is adversely affected by the foreign cultures (Ahmed & Malik, 2017). The media of every country and cultural orientation has its own vested interest to promote a specific living manner to get its benefits of the nation. In the modern age media is influencing the life and thinking of the people across the globe and the population of Pakistan is no exception to this process. The young generation of Pakistan is flowing in the tide of the media flood influenced by the agendas of the foreign cultural taboos. They have started following the values which are contradictory to their culture and are unethical and immoral according to their religion and culture. For instance, the culture of Pakistan encourages joint family system, but its place is slowly and gradually taken by the

nuclear families. It is part of the culture of Pakistan that the elders and parents should be respected, served, and given time to make them happy but in reality, the old age homes have started to function in Pakistan. The parents are sent to old age homes to get rid of them and their responsibilities (Hassan, 2017).

CPEC is under construction, and we can see numbers of Chinese citizens walking around us at different places like restaurants, malls, and markets. With the completion and functionalization, the number of Chinese people will increase in our country and resultantly they will start to influence our thinking, dressing, speaking and much more in our life. As China is an emerging economic power of the globe and has a mighty population along with modern technology and sense of strong nationalism, it might adversely affect the cultural life of the people of Pakistan in general and Hazara region in particular. It is also said that during the construction of the CPEC, at district of Mansehra, the archaeologists of Hazara University have discovered a huge Buddhist site, which is termed as the largest Buddhist site of the century (Ullah, 2019). It may attract a lot of Buddhists all around the world which may have serious implications for the cultural foundation of the country.

Religious Effects

China is stretched on a vast piece of land along with the largest population of the world. Most of the people do not embrace any religion and they are atheists by belief. Pakistan was created in the name of religion Islam and has an ideological foundation aimed at the preservation and promotion of their distinct religious and cultural identity. The country has strict mores, norms, and values of its own. The project of CPEC is not only a transportation line for the transport of goods rather it will result in the exchange of social customs, beliefs, and languages in the long run. People-to-people contact will become inevitable in the coming time.

CPEC is the renaissance of the ancient Silk Road which helped in the transmission of Islam, Manichaeism, Christianity, and Buddhism across the region. It is generally believed that Buddhism travelled China passing through this Road. The people who travelled on this road, came in contact with people of different religions inhabiting in different localities and took it to their own homelands and started practicing and believing it (Rizvi, 2015). That is why different societies are found in the region of Eurasia. CPEC is the restructuring of the ancient Silk Road.

Similarly, the advantages of the project are numerous ranging from innovation, technological transfer, and the transmission of the knowledge, which are the means of progress and development in the poverty-torn and illiteracy-dominated society of Pakistan. This project will ultimately lead to progress and development of the country in the near future. All around the world communication between different cultures boosts cooperation, technological transfer, and increased commerce (Naizi, 2017). Though China got independence one year later from Pakistan but has attained impressive economic growth and development in the past few decades. We should take it as an example for us which can put our nation on the way of economic growth and development in the future.

Linguistic Effects

Communication plays a vital important role in interaction between individuals and groups. Language is the primary source of communication among the individuals and groups. At present and in the future the interaction between Pakistani people and Chinese people may influence

languages. With the spread of China in the region it will become compulsory for the people of Pakistan to learn the Chinese language to communicate and profit from the extension of China in their country. Foreseeing the future interaction, in Pakistan, many Chinese language centres have been established to learn the language for handling the future course of action in Pakistan. A large number of people are learning the language.

At present English is the frequently spoken foreign language in Pakistan. It is the basic requirement for attaining job in the country. If someone needs job in the country and he can speak fluent English, his chances of getting job increases. We have already seen Urdu losing its significance. Since independence the people of Pakistan has given more importance to English on the cost of Urdu which has minimized the importance and scope of Urdu in the national life of Pakistan. With the appearance of the Chinese language on the national scene of Pakistan, Urdu will be further side-lined and it will lose its remaining worth. The languages not in use die with the course of time. The Chinese government has promised that it will teach the language to the people in Pakistan to make them able to benefit from the fruits of the CPEC in the form of jobs which the companies will offer in future. The Chinese government has sent thousand teachers to teach to the people of Pakistan. Today there is a considerable number of Chinese teachers who are teaching Chinese language all over Pakistan. According to a research Urdu is included in the list of those languages which will die in two to three decades (Naizi, 2017).

Social Effects

Pakistan was created as modern nation state for the Muslims of the subcontinent. Though it has multi-ethnic and multilingual orientation, however, Islam was the religion of the general masses. Islam was the uniting and integration force in the populace of the new-born state. The spirit of nationalism can be seen in the national life of Pakistani society. There is a local culture of every province which often proves a centrifugal force in the integrity of the national spirit. It often proves to be the obstacle in the way of growth and development. Since 1971, the rest of Pakistan has remained intact though there emerged regional discontent at times, but the government has been able to address the grievances of these regional groups. Most of the time it was the sense of deprivation of different provinces at different time which made them to voice against the federal government. CPEC project and the functionalization of the other related project will bring economic development and growth which will address the economic problems of the deprived regional groups and will lead Pakistani nation towards a new era of national integration. The interaction of the people of Pakistan with regional and international community will give breadth to the thinking of the people of Pakistan. The interaction of Pakistan with international community of nation will make relation and trade with Pakistan (Ahmed & Mi, 2017).

Internationalism

At present only Chinese come to Pakistan, however, it is expected that in the near future people from other countries will hopefully come to Pakistan for business, jobs and tourism. The fruits of tourism have started to be reaped; Rosie Gabrielle, Canadian girl and a global traveller came to Pakistan and due to the hospitality and loving nature she converted to Islam, on Thursday 9th January 2020 (“Canadian vlogger Rosie,” 2020). In colonizing a national cultural domination plays a very important role, in which the weaker culture is eroded by the stronger one. But in this case no one can call Pakistani culture because it has its roots in history. The Muslims of the subcontinent

co-existed with Hindus in the united Hindus for centuries but kept their distinct identity preserved and protected. In the case of China's dominant role in the region, Pakistan has the ability to keep its culture intact and reap the fruit of CPEC and Chinese friendship. It is the responsibility of Media to stop becoming tools in the hands of political elite and say goodbye to the reporting rating and money oriented. They may present the diversity in a manner which must be attractive and fascinating not by quarrelling and criticizing. They must act neutral and must not blindly follow foreign media. Pakistani media has failed to play its due role in the integration and harmonization of the nation. The elite class of the society is the blind follower of the secular life of Europe, America, and India. Pakistani culture with its multicultural society is under cultural attack. The new generations are at a trade up position what to do? ("Canadian vlogger Rosie," 2020).

As a nation it is our duty to make progress in the international community with properly preserving and propagating our cultural values and norms. If a nation adopts the cultural traits of other nationalities and culture, they will lose their identity and with the passage of time become identityless in the international community. Pakistani culture is a result of centuries of effort which has transferred from generation to generation is the foremost duty of the people of Pakistan to advance its culture by practicing it and make efforts for its promotion and preservation. We should adopt those things from the Chinese culture which does not harm our cultural and those traits which are beneficial for the progress and development of Pakistani Nation.

Environmental Effects

CPEC is a gigantic project. It consists of 3000 kilo metres and will cost about 50 billion dollars in Pakistan. The project has been progressing since several years. It will seriously damage the environment and natural beauty of the area from where it will pass. Hazara division is an area of natural vegetation and beauty which will be seriously affected by the construction work in the area. It is reported that the numbers of trucks working in the project has reach to seven thousand a day (Khan, 2018).

As the CPEC will be a regional and international road, it will provide a huge transportation of trucks and other vehicles which will release toxic gases in the area and will lead to environmental pollution. The transportation between Gwadar and Kashgar will cast adverse effects on the glaciers in the way. The smoke and toxic gasses settle in the glaciers and form a black layer. It causes two adverse effects on the glaciers; firstly, it reduces the reflectivity of the snow and secondly it increases the absorption capacity of snow and results in speedy melting process and lack of formation. The authorities of the time should feel the sensitivity of the environmental changes all around the world and may look into the hasty government and may reconsider the decision taken. This project has both benefits and costs for the environmental condition of Hazara region (Ahmed, 2018).

It is not only the transportation which will cause environmental costs but also the projects aimed for the power generation will cause serious environmental changes in the region. The authorities of the country are optimistic regarding the installation of the power generation project under the auspice of CPEC project. The power projects are expected to play a very decisive role in forthcoming industrialization in areas connected to CPEC. Energy sector is the only sector which can overcome and control the engulfing energy crisis. Energy crisis is the leading obstacle in the way of economic

growth and industrial development of Pakistan in general and Hazara region in Particular. It is generally believed that most of the projects of energy generation will be coal oriented means the energy will be generated by burning coal. Coal is the cheapest means of power generation in the modern age and Pakistan has a huge reservoir of coal and it will be utilized and mined for the generation of energy and will have serious implication for the environmental security of Hazara region of Pakistan (Aziz, 2019).

The utilization of Coal in large amount will cast serious implications on the environmental health. Unfortunately, the project connected to CPEC about power generation lacks economic cost benefit analysis in the country. The former state minister of environment has expressed serious concerns about the environmental future of the area (Baloch, 2018).

In Pakistan about forty-six percent of the emission was emitted by the burning of coal for the purpose of power generation in 2012. Pakistan has doubled down the use of coal for the generation of energy. All around the world the use of coal was reduced to two percent in 2016. China reduced its utilization of coal by 1.5 percent while United Kingdom claimed to have reduced its coal consumption to 52.5 percent (Baloch, 2018).

In the contemporary world China is the living example. She has achieved a phenomenal economic growth and progress in the past few decades along with a catastrophic damage to its environmental security. The environmental damage is mostly due to the use of coal for the generation of power projects in China which is contributing in large amount to the economic development of China. The people living in the big cities of China suffer from various diseases of lungs and other diseases of the kind resulting in the reduction of life expectancy in the country. The coals are generally used for medium and short-term planning and are not used in the long-term projects due to its serious implications for the health of environmental security of the world (Gardiner, 2017). Though the environmental issues linked with CPEC cannot be avoided however, it can be decreased by adopting precautionary measures in the use of coal and other material used for the generation of power.

Deforestation and CPEC in Hazara

CPEC is a huge project and passes through the forest covered mountainous region of Hazara. The construction of this road will cause serious damages to the beauty, vegetation, and forest in the region. The mountain is drilled, forests are cut down and diverse Wilde life is threatened by extinction in the region. We inhale oxygen in every breath in our life and that oxygen is provided by these trees in shape of forests in a country or area. The area under forest is already drastically less than the ratio fixed by the environmental experts and further damage to the natural vegetation in the region will lead to serious environmental problems in the future. The growing dilution of the nature will cause health problems in the Hazara region. The wildlife is no exception to escape the adversities of natural dilution and pollution. The already scarce water resources will feel greater pressure in the economic growth and economic development of the area. Soil erosion will also increase in the face with the decreased vegetation. Land sliding and flooding will increase in the region (Ebrahim, 2017).

It is the foremost duty of the ruling elite to intercept various projects and analyses it value regarding its damaging and environmental impacts. The government is required to give the institution responsibility regarding the assessment of the damage caused by the projects to the

environmental security one by one. Means each individual project may be assisted on the basis of the damage it causes to the environment and its benefits for the people. The academician may contribute to issue by researching on the project-to-project analysis on the basis of cost and benefits. The environmental cost of each project must be addressed to make the economic development of the region sustainable and durable economically and environmentally. The government should not be careless about the environmental challenges which are expected to be faced by the people of the region in future. It is the foremost duty of the government to take serious steps for the future of coming generation in the locality. The futures of the coming generations are linked with the preservation and protection of the environment (Ebrahim, 2017).

The government of Pakistan must have a visionary approach in handling the influx of the potential challenges in Hazara region of the province. It is generally believed that it is a game changer for Pakistan, but its damage and side effects must also be considered prudently for the future of Pakistan. Otherwise, it will cause a catastrophic damage to the environmental condition of the region. These challenges may be termed as the necessary evil for the development of Pakistan; however, these damages can be minimized by the timely steps and decisions of the government to plan and prevent it. It is the responsibility of the government to make it compulsory for all the truck drivers and other vehicles to install catalytic converters to have little environmental damage in the region.

In the installation of coal-based industries the latest technology should be used to minimize the environmental damage in the region. The latest technology for the coal-based industry causes less pollution as the gas-based plants. Its efficiency level is high and has a less fuel consumption per Megawatt. The problem of the deforestation in the region is addressed by planting more and more trees. In this regard the previous government of KP has started the project of billion trees tsunami in Pakistan in general and Hazara division in particular. As the result of this project the government of KP has planted a huge number of trees in the region to secure the environmental security of the region. The government should be very cautious and prudent decisions must be taken in the implementation of their plans about the satisfaction of the needs of energy in the region to avoid the potential harms of these energy projects.

The Impact of CPEC on Pakistan's Industrial Sector

Industrialization plays a crucial role in the development of Pakistan and Pakistan is no exception in the process. It has a very important role in the development of a country. Industrial sector may be termed as the backbone of the economic growth and development of a country. It is a fact that whenever a country develops, industrial sector is always there to make the development successful in a country (Amir, Rizwan & Bano, 2018). In Pakistan the share of Industrial Sector in the economic development of the country is very large. Its contribution is about twenty-five percent in the gross domestic product of Pakistan. The sector consists of small, medium, and large scales. The contribution of the large-scale industry in the economy of Pakistan in the initial years of independence was 1.8 percent in the gross domestic product of Pakistan. At that time, however, the contribution of the small-scale industries was more than the large sector. At that time its share was 4.6 percent to the GDP. At present the situation has improved to some extent, in the fiscal year of 2010-2011 the share of large-scale industries increased to 4.4 percent and that of small-scale industries increased to 7.5 percent. It may be deduced that in the decades after independence the

contribution of the industrial has remained not so impressive and encouraging for the rest of the history. Though Pakistan has a lot of potential to be developed industrially however, the non-seriousness behaviour and imprudent decisions of our ruling elite has remained the main hindrances in the way of industrial development of Pakistan. Industrial sector is the only sector, if developed properly, can cure all the ills of the economic system and economic development of the region (Sadaf, 2012).

Like the other underdeveloped state, the industrial sector of Pakistan is facing strict competition with in the national and international market. At present the most important competitor of Pakistan is China. There is a competition between Pakistan and China's industrial sector. In the internal economy China has a gigantic share. It became the member of World Trade in 2001. Since then, China has given a tremendous boost to trade in the international market. The world saw a great increase in its exports. China is rising as a new economic power in the world. It is also influencing the economies of other underdeveloped and developing economies of the world (Amir, Rizwan & Bano, 2018). It is evident that the economic system of the countries connected to China will be influenced by China. China is preparing to play a deceived role in the international political economy.

CONCLUSION

Hazara region plays a vital role for China's mega project (CPEC), which is passing through this region. After the completion of the project, it will help the social and economic development of the region but it has also created some challenges and hurdles for the social life of Hazara peoples. The study showed that the communities from the majority of the Hazara region viewed realistic, ideal effects of CPEC on the region's socioeconomic domains. CPEC is a huge project and passes through the forest covered mountainous region of Hazara. The construction of this road will cause serious damages to the beauty, vegetation and forest in the region. The mountain is drilled, forests are cut down and diverse wilde life is threatened by extinction in the region. We inhale oxygen which is provided by these trees in shape of forests in a country or area. The utilization of coal in large amount will cast serious implication on the health of the environment.

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