

CPEC: AN ULTIMATE OPTION FOR NTS CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This research paper summarises the findings of the project funded by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan under Start-Up Research Grand Program. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a landmark initiative between the two brotherly nations. CPEC is also the most important part of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which reactivates the old Silk Rout, and rebuilds connectivity between different regions of the world. South Asian region is full of nontraditional security (NTS) challenges. This study aims to discuss the integration of domestic resources and a collective mechanism for security cooperation on NTS challenges. The paper explores out the challenges covering fields including terrorism, transnational crimes; energy security; maritime security and rescue, and environmental degradation. It also analyses the features of NTS challenges, which are transnational and relevant to China and Pakistan. Finally, responding to NTS challenges, paper suggests a collective framework between both (China & Pakistan) and NTS challenges may become the significant part of security concern element that may pose severe threats to smooth and sound manner of BRI strategy in general and CPEC in particular.

Keywords: *Sino-Pak Relations, CPEC, Nontraditional Security, Belt and Road Initiative*

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan terms China as “pillar of its foreign policy”. Their ‘all-weather relationship’ (全天候战略合作伙伴关系) is an evident in the two countries ambitions of implementing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). April 2015 reasoned as a historic month for Sino-Pakistan relations when Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signed an agreement worth \$46 billion for the CPEC, which is the considered to be the largest investment by China in a foreign country and be constructed from 2014 to 2030. Thus, it is a 3000-km-long network of roads, railways, and pipelines - will eventually link China's Xinjiang Uygur region with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. It also integrates the links to Chinese One Road, One Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Route which actually aims at reviving the ancient trade routes that once spanned Asia, Africa and Europe. China would make huge gains once Gwadar port is fully functioning, its previous shipping route passing through the Strait of Malacca, taking 45 days to reach destinations in Europe via the Middle East. Once the CPEC reaches completion, it would take Chinese shipments just 10 days to reach the same places. This economic cooperation is not only complementary in areas such as capital, technology, labour, and energy but also pushes for the integration of their economies and fights against non-traditional security challenges.

Non-traditional security (NTS) issues have created some concern for Chinese investment. These issues cover the fields like terrorism, energy security, maritime piracy, and environmental security. Currently, these NTS issues have become security related concerns for the BRI in general and CPEC in particular. CPEC particularly integrates domestic resources, supply of products, and a strong network based guarantee mechanism for NTS cooperation to address such challenges. Ultimately, responding to and solving all concerned NTS issues would provide a smooth and sound cooperative framework between China and Pakistan and countries along the BRI.

From the NTS perspective, CPEC is a road that endorses continuous connectivity and win-win cooperation. Its practical goal is to promote bilateral and regional cooperation among all stakeholders, and improve bilateral and regional relations. Objectively, it would promote peace, geopolitical stability, development, and win-win across the world (Li, 2014). As mentioned earlier, CPEC involves many NTS issues, but it is a decisive that this project would be constructed with mutual and constructive cooperation between both brotherly states. In this regard, this study claims that CPEC is an ultimate option for NTS challenges in South Asian region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The discussion on non-traditional security should begin with a few explanations on the fundamental concept of security. So, what is security? Actually, this question is very much important in the context of theoretical ambiguities encircling the term 'security' and its imitative notions. It is because "security is essentially contested" (Smith, 2005), and there is no impartial position to obtain a clear statement on the concept of security. According to Smith (2005) "all definitions of security are theory-dependent, and reflect normative commitments" (Smith, 2005). Meanwhile, it would also be claimed that the understanding of security has become questioned only after the Cold War, and due to the processes and developments which have directed academicians to express their views on NTS.

The development of security is the most significant from two perspectives; first, the broadening, and second, the deepening of security understanding. Broadening denotes the expansion of security far away from military dimensions. The empirical evidence of this conceptual change as connected with the emergence of Western agendas of economic, environmental, and energy security. In this context, Japan was the first Asian country, who coined the term "comprehensive security" as a new policy agenda and a logical response to complex security challenges. The dogma of

comprehensive security included diverse functional areas including:- economic, political, and military security. Hence, it categorized and established security policy into many levels: national, bilateral, regional, and international (Dewitt, 1994). The developments related to security have also changed the policy environment. Barry Buzan (1983) was the first intellectual who initiated a comprehensive discussion on the changing nature of security. The main feature of his work was the expansion of the security agenda by adding economic, political, societal, and ecological sectors (Buzan, 1983).

The understanding of deepening security assumes to reveal the matter of referent objects of security. It actually leads towards the discussion of actors, which are other than the state. It is most important in connection with the understanding of deepening security and emerged as the concept of human security. Human security shifted the referent object from the state to the individual. Its importance expended when it was discussed in Human Development Report-1994 under the United Nations Development Programme. The report drew seven key sectors of human security: economic security, health security, food security, environmental security, political security, personal security, and community security, (UNDP, 1994). Further, it also recognized six key human security threats: inequalities in economic opportunities, rampant population growth; environmental degradation; migration pressures; international terrorism, and drug trafficking (UNDP, 1994). Altogether, both broadening and deepening perspectives of security have shifted state security to people security as a referent security object (Jones, 1995).

Rothschild (1995) has made a very good summary of the changing nature of the security concept, which deserves to be quoted in full.

The extension takes four main forms. In the first, the concept of security is extended from the security of nations to the security of groups and individuals: it is also extended downwards from nations to individuals. In the second, it is extended from the security of nations to the security of the

international system, or of a supranational physical environment: it is further extended upwards, from the nation to the biosphere. The extension, in both cases, is in the sorts of entities whose security is to be ensured. In the third operation, the concept of security is extended horizontally, or to the sorts of security that are in question. Different entities (such as individuals, nations, and "systems") cannot be expected to be secure or insecure in the same way; the concept of security is extended, therefore, from military, to political, economic, social, environmental, or "human" security. In the fourth operation, the political responsibility for ensuring security (or for invigilating all these "concepts of security") is itself extended: it is diffused in all directions from national states, including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local government, and sideways to nongovernmental organizations, to public opinion and the press, and to the abstract forces of nature or of the market (Rothschild, 1995, p. 55).

How to understand the exact meaning of non-traditional security from this thoughtful debate? It may be concluded that NTS is everything. If it is the case, then, how would it be connected with human security and comprehensive security? Nevertheless, there is increasing trend of non-military security concern under the shadow of NTS (Caballero-Anthony, 2008). The critics of NTS claim that if all threats will be included into the concept of NTS, it would not only weaken the concern encircling military threats, but also decline the logical value of the concept, which could eventually become illogical (Seidemann, 2011). However, advocates of the NTS have continued with the assumption of non-military security issues for its important development, which can easily be addressed by governmental resources (Caballero-Anthony, 2008). In addition, the advocates also emphasize that NTS threats have become more severe and affecting directly the larger number of people than those of interstate armed

conflicts and wars (Caballero-Anthony & Cook 2013). Caballero-Anthony (2008) conceptualized the NTS issues in a remarkable manner that:

challenge the survival and well-being of people and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources, such as climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, famine, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime. (Caballero-Anthony, 2008, p.510)

This explanation offers a supportive demonstration where anyone can easily understand the notion of NTS and its relevant models. NTS demonstrates for people and states as a very strong referent objects. Moreover, there are two more important features of the NTS definition: First, the notion of NTS is on the bright side of expansion of the security concept excluding military aspects, (terrorism and piracy would stay in the gray area of conceptual understanding). Second, the notion of NTS also matches with the deepening understanding of security, but not in rigid form, to discard state as a possible referent object. It is a very important finding generally in the context of Asia, and particularly for China-Pakistan economic cooperation. CPEC is also actively working to solve NTS challenges. China believes that states need to combat common NTS threats and convert them into catalyst forms for bilateral cooperation.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

Since 1990s NTS issues have gradually risen significantly. Likewise, other nation states, China and Pakistan are also facing the multiple NTS issues, thus, it has increased results for stronger prospects for traditional and non-traditional security cooperation between both nations. The level in which the China and Pakistan have an understanding of its applications and meaning, and of the degree in which other cooperating states on NTS issues are increasingly becoming the similar. China and Pakistan emphasize that NTS

challenges have not only exaggerated the means of traditional statecraft (at present less dependent on military means), but also demanded more reliance on bilateral, regional and multinational cooperation with the role of regional and international organizations (Wang & Song, 2016).

Even though the theme to similar security challenges, diverse historical developments in the different regions of world have feigned the salience that either party imputes at to non-traditional security. China and Pakistan strongly believe that non-traditional characteristics of security flourish with the support of both non-military and military modes. Especially, China always tried to establish the strong bilateral and multilateral cooperation on non-traditional security and believe that it is a practical need. Further, it believes that NTS issues are transnational and can never be solved by single nation or organization, but through bilateral and regional and multilateral cooperation.

Under BRI road map; China has included some key economic corridors with South Asian nations including, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar. Apart from that, it is a “grand passage for China to carry out economic, trading, and cultural exchanges with Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, East Africa, and Europe” (Li, 2017) Thus, all these countries and regions are also directly or indirectly affected by NTS issues. According to Chinese policy makers BRI passage is facing five categories of NTS challenges which are discussed below:

Terrorism

Terrorism is one of the leading NTS challenge for BRI in general and CPEC in particular. Terrorism has affected Pakistan very badly, and its different forms remained key concern for Chinese national security and regional stability too. China and Pakistan clearly understand that once terrorist activities are going out of control, it would certainly threaten economic, trade flow and political stability, and may

undermine the construction of the CPEC. Meanwhile, both brotherly states have enlarged their mutual surveillance against terrorists.

Pakistan believes that terrorism is a global problem, while terrorist attacks considered as a conspiracy against Pakistan to dishearten Chinese investment. However, the ground reality clearly confirms Pakistan's argument that highlights terrorist activities against Chinese people and installations. Pakistan has tried its best to combat terrorism and new things in order to normalize them such as economy, tourism and sports activities as restored in this perspective. Contrary to 2013, Pakistan is on the pathway of recovery with a great improvement in the security situation.

Pakistan and China are in touch with all developments related to counter-terrorism efforts; in this regard, the National Action Plan (NAP) has also been launched to protect CPEC. The actual terrorist threats come from Baloch rebels, who are targeting CPEC-related people and projects. Since the beginning of CPEC until now, Balochistan has remained in low intensity of conflict with the narrative of internal colonization of its natural resources. The government of Pakistan believes that it is organized propagating agenda against CPEC, which is targeting the youth of Balochistan.

China is also willing to launch de-radicalization programmes in Pakistan. It believes that when illiteracy, unemployment, and low living standards pervade at the societal level, the consequences will be antagonism, deepening of anger, extremism, intolerance, militancy, violence, radicalization, and terrorism, mainly among the youth. In this pattern, CPEC could be a milestone and game changer for youth in terms of economic and social development conditions come up with alternative livelihoods.

Energy Security

In the 21st century, self-sufficient energy is one of the significant requirements for all nations. Each country wants to produce or import sufficient energy to fulfil the demand and prepare themselves for

future generations. Energy is like a backbone of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is not merely reach the economic circle of South Asia but to Central Asia, West Asia, Europe, Africa and Russia to the West and Asia-Pacific. Under the BRI it covers many rich energy zones around world. Unfortunately, Pakistan falls on the list of those countries who failed to maintain its energy supply and production, which caused severe energy crises. The reason for Pakistan's recent energy crisis is energy policies that were formulated in the 1990s (Aftab, 2014). Those policies concentrated more on imported fossil fuel methods, which could not increase energy demand (Uddin, Ali & Memon, 2018). No doubt, the energy crisis has brought the worst consequences on the economic condition of the country- have also affected socio-economic and political development (Iqbal, 2017).

Pakistan is keen to find a solution to the energy crisis that may push the country on its way to energy security. Many scholars believe that CPEC is the ultimate option for the energy crisis in Pakistan (Iqbal, Chu & Hali, 2019). Policy makers and strategists are also recognizing CPEC as a concrete project for the demand of the energy sector, and they are working to remove all the possible obstacles in the execution of CPEC. China has initiated its conventional energy projects in Pakistan under CPEC to continue the economic wheel of the country (Javed, Raza, Saeed, Shaheen, Iqbal & Shaukat, 2016). Through CPEC, China is investing 35\$ billion in the energy sector, out of the total 46\$ billion investments (Markey & West 2016). This huge amount of investment is a vital opportunity for Pakistan to come out from the severe energy crises.

Maritime Security

It is alarming situation that each year around four hundred ships and vessels falling into dangers in the world (Zhang, 2016). Gwadar port is one of the focal point of CPEC. In this regard, China has also focused maritime rescue and aid activities to look around sea and undertake piracy monitoring and secure sea route. The smooth transportation at sea both countries are cooperating to establish

multilateral collaboration with different states. Chinese first overseas' naval base in Djibouti is also a part of this collaboration.

It is clear that, unless Pakistan sustains good maritime security, CPEC and Gwadar Port itself would not be capable of reaching its destination. The key objective is to give a sea link to BRI corridor transiting the Central Asian region, in order to get economic gains, from the investment of CPEC within Pakistan and make Balochistan centre of financial activity could fail.

The Pakistan military is providing full proof security on land to CPEC with the help of Special Security Division, whereas navy forces with the help of Harbour Defence Force and Coastal Security are protecting the maritime route of CPEC projects. As mentioned earlier that BRI is would include 60 countries that jointly have over 4.4 billion population. In economic terms, it represents about 40 per cent of global GDP (Sacks, 2021). Due to the intensity of trade and communication, maritime route is very crucial for BRI even through CPEC. China firmly believes that the maritime domain should be consisting of:

- Shared maritime security,
- Cooperation on maritime navigation security,
- Conducting mutual maritime search and rescue missions, and
- Consolidation in maritime law enforcement.

Environmental Security

Environmental degradation is a universal problem; China and Pakistan recognize this problem as their biggest NTS threat. They are working for sustainable and environment-friendly measures as a priority, even in CPEC projects. The development of Gwadar port is in accordance with international environmental protection standards, and could be presented as the model for the region to pursue, with regard to combining sustainable economic growth. China is following Paris Climate Agreement in its own ecological and development

policy for environment protection, which can be good model for development policy of Pakistan. The possibility of environment contamination along the CPEC is quite the prominent. Both neighbouring states are recognizing and trying to combat against such NTS issue.

Chinese government has promised to build win-win situation for making a compatible balance between environmental protection and economic development (Aslam, 2019). In this context, the two states are following the same ecological policies in the CPEC progress to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. In the light of full costs and benefits related impacts on affected people and natural resources in CPEC, it produces prospects to deal environmental problems into development progress. Policies are the key element of motivation which actually makes resource production effective in a way to separate environmental protection and economic growth into valuable solutions to encourage sustainable development. CPEC is full of examples like, subsidies to green energy and technologies, and preserving critical resources such as land and water (Aslam, 2019).

CPEC AS AN ULTIMATE OPTION

Non-traditional security issues related to China Pakistan Economic Corridor coexist and are all posing direct and indirect threats to the security of both states. Terrorism, energy security, transnational crimes, maritime rescue and aid, and environmental security are very much interwoven with CPEC. Thus, these NTS issues would pose threats to all kinds of ties with the economy, society, culture, and politics of the country. This kind of situation may make the disposal process harder and longer with more comprehensiveness.

In geographical perspective, the security assurance of BRI in the South and North depends on the strategic concept of the Bangladesh-China-India-Burma Economic Corridor (BCIBEC) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which can connect 'two corridors' to each other. Facing traditional and non-traditional

security challenges in South Asia is not obvious, but actual and productive collaboration depends on playing the role of a 'pivot' state (Haiquan, 2017). In general, BRI has common areas, essentially with Pakistan and India in this region. China and India have a long history of traditional disputes, so China has to pay more attention to Pakistan's 'pivot' contribution. In this situation, both brotherly states partnership (CPEC) can safeguard all traditional and non-traditional security challenges.

China can use CPEC as a potential option to gain more influence in Afghanistan and its own geopolitical settings, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) terrorists and other various terrorist organizations to secure the western part of China. China can easily use the historical affiliation between the United States (US), and Pakistan to connect and strengthen traditional and non-traditional security cooperation between the US and China. China can also use hostility between Pakistan and India to restrain India and to decrease its security density from the southwest border. CPEC is providing opportunity to China to become a part of the coastal state of the Indian Ocean. China can easily use the local Pakistani media to play a part in Indian Ocean affairs, to safeguard sea lanes. CPEC provides a strategic location for China for the fight against maritime piracy in the Indian Ocean west coast safeguarding energy security in the Gulf region, transnational crimes from Afghanistan, and mutual environmental security cooperation opportunity (Haiquan, 2017).

To make CPEC successful, both brotherly states are working hard to fight against NTS issues. At the present time, terrorism is a key and direct threat to Chinese investment. Pakistani government is all set to allocate Rs15 billion for security related projects. The money would be utilized for security purposes for CPEC projects (Haider, 2017). On the other hand, energy is in desperate need of Pakistan, and China is investing thirty-eight billion dollars out of forty-six billion dollars in the energy sector (Arif, 2016). To safeguard energy and infrastructure projects of CPEC; Pakistan has established a special force for security.

Pakistan is also getting full assistance from China to maintain good command on transnational crimes, maritime rescue and aid, and environmental security.

CONCLUSION

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the belt and road initiative has changed the global environment. It has also challenged the hegemonic powers and posed some threats to China. On the other hand, NTS issues have opened new fronts to tackle; it is increasingly occupying the resources and time of national and international security experts. The NTS challenges are irregular and difficult to tackle. BRI in general and CPEC in particular provide a multilateral approach to formulate wide-ranging policies to tackle NTS threats.

No doubt that China Pakistan Economic Corridor is facing the various non-traditional security challenges - the NTS challenges facing the CPEC mentioned above - wherein traditional security challenges are also matters a lot. CPEC has the potential to play a vital role and paves the way to develop such an environment in which BRI can cross all the traditional and non-traditional obstacles. It would provide open options to all stakeholders to strengthen peace, human and economic development through win-win cooperation.

In future, mutual cooperative attitude of Chinese policy makers would lead China to work with all the countries and actively respond to all NTS issues, and successfully not only implement the CPEC but also BRI. Ultimately, China, Pakistan and all other countries would become a community of destiny and 'a community of interests. It would help safeguard Chinese national interest and security, and develop an encouraging international environment.

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