

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a Threat to the New Great Game

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Abstract

In the current dynamics of international politics, the New Great Game has been embedded with vast perspective from different stakeholders. CPEC under the auspices of OBOR initiative taken by China has created worrisome situation for major stakeholders of global politics with special emphasis on United States of America. CPEC, the connector for three regions that is South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East via trade route, poses serious threats to economic status quo of the United States and to its hegemony. The concept of Arc of Instability clearly supplements this concept. United States is working on the containment policy for China, like as the USSR during the Cold War. New alliances are emerging based on national interests hinging around U.S. myopic policies in these regions; Pakistan is drifting towards Russia and China, whereas India and Afghanistan are acting as U.S. stooges. To counter balance the Chinese expansionism in the South Asian region, U.S. is supporting the insurgencies in the Middle Eastern region, creating instability. The growing tension can be mitigated if joint peaceful interventions are given preference by the major powers. Mutual Trade and economic inter-dependence are the only probable approach to ensure global peace and avoid socio-political turmoil.

Keywords. Great Game; China; Middle East; United States; Oil; Gwadar; CPEC; South China Sea; trade; Interest; Cooperation

Introduction

Factors of economy, strategy, politics and territory help a country in directing and formulating its role in international affairs. Since the emergence of international politics, Central Asia remained a source of attraction for many powerful states due to its geographical location, while also being rich in minerals and natural resources. Recently, the initiative of One Belt One Road (OBOR) and its auxiliary China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has led few countries into alarm due to their anticipated objectives. Previously, pre-Cold War era was considered as “The Great Game”, which was limited to three regions; Britain,

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Central Asia and Russia. However, the new Great Game has now a wider global scope, which has engulfed an extended array of stakeholders.

The Great Game era began in 1830. It was a proxy war fought between the Czarist Russia and the British Empire to secure their interests in a region. Russian territorial expansionism juggernaut was taken as a bigotry and an impediment to British interests; hence British adopted an aggressive policy of containment against Russia. Expansionism towards Constantinople was the focus in early phase of the century, whereas the continuous worries of overrunning of Czarist armies in the Central Asian region raised serious concerns regarding its operations in the mindset of the British. The term Great Game was first ever used by Captain Arthur Connolly, who was serving in the British army for taking control over the old caravan route falling between Near East and China. *"Now I shall go far and far into the North, playing the Great Game"* (Grossman, 1992). Czarist Russia followed the expansionism policy to establish the largest empire in the world. Czarist Russians had already taken control of the southern part of Central Asian Republics and were then in a process to extend its expansionism towards the Indian Sub-continent which always remained under the British rule.

Great Britain played a global might in this era: the conflict of British and the Czarist Russia during the late 18th and early 19th century marks as the era of the Great Game. The British initiated its expansion strategy over the Central Asian region (Fromkin, 2018) as it feared the Islamic Asian region would fall into the hands of the Soviets. The attention then shifted to Persia, Afghanistan and the Subcontinent. It was a hype then that by the end of the 19th century, Central Asia would fall in the domain of Czarist Russia.



Figure 1: Central Asian Map: Source: Department of Field Support Cartographic Section, United Nations: <https://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/centrasia.pdf>

Peter Hopkirk represents three phases of the Great Game. The first phase began with the expansionism strategy of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Central Asia. This phase lasted till 1907 and concluded with the agreement of Anglo-Russian Convention. The second phase began with tactics of spying and manipulation of local tribes in Central Asia by the Russian and British empires. The third phase is marked as the longest duration as it began in nineteenth century with the advent of two world wars (Hopkirk, 1994) and the Cold War.

The Great Game was adopted by the major powers of the 19th century but its players kept on changing due to the prevalence of vested interests. Previously, it was between Great Britain and Russia, later the U.S. replaced Great Britain, whereas Russia is being aided by China. The term New Great Game refers to the resurgence of covert approaches of major powers in re-shaping their policies for exercising its presence in Central Asia and Middle Eastern regions. The United States adopted the containment policy to have control over these regions while ensuring its presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The covert war in Central Asia is constructed as a quest for power for capturing natural resources such as oil, minerals, energy resources and its market for the sale of goods. The United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Iran are termed as the major players of New Great Game (Ahmed, 2018:87). Trends of the Great Game are changing from countries to regions vying for attaining their vested interests. India is investing in an alliance with Iran for the development of Chabahar port to connect to Central Asia (Pathiyagoda, 2018:7). In this way, India will have access to energy resources of Iran (Taneja, 2016). On the other hand, Pakistan and China are pursuing their objectives through the CPEC.

Practical implementation of CPEC and OBOR may pose a serious threat to the dynamics of the new Great Game. The transformation of the old silk route will not only connect Pakistan and China, but it is expected to enhance trade links of China with Central Asia, Middle East, Afghanistan and Europe. Moreover, this initiative is designated to provide an alternate route to Chinese trade through South China Sea (SCS). Though, India and Iran are also developing a route through Chabahar, which is also stretched to Central Asian Republics for their vested interests but currently, it is facing some inherent issues. CPEC will not only re-shape the old silk route but will also encompasses advanced links, for providing China an easy access to South West Asian and Central Asian states via Gwadar (Hali. 2017: 43-44). Hence, the United States has redefined its global strategy to contain China's expansionism in the South West Asia and Middle Eastern region in order to maintain its hegemony in respective regions. Jim Mattis (National Defense Secretary of US) in 2018 argued,

“Today, we are emerging from a period of strategic atrophy, aware that our competitive military advantage has been eroding. We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security. China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea” (Mattis, 2018).

Brief Overview of CPEC/ One Belt One Road

International politics pave the way for the maintenance of peaceful relations among states, while ensuring the security of their national interests. States cannot survive in isolation; therefore, economic interests expedite peaceful co-existence. Pakistan and China have enjoyed cordial relations for 65 years and these relations have led to Chinese initiative of CPEC under the ambit of its overall strategic concept of OBOR by investing \$ 46 billion in Pakistan (Rifaat & Miani, 2016: 1). CPEC is designated to connect Gwadar with the Xinjiang province of China. This economic corridor will stretch up till 2700 km from Gwadar to Kashghar (Ahmad & Mi, 2017: 2-4). CPEC is considered as a game changer in the South Asian region. This joint venture will not only benefit Pakistan but the whole region. It is expected to provide trade opportunities to the South Asian and Central Asian states and to have road footprints of these regions through the silk route, which is being re-designed with OBOR initiative. It is basically designed to connect three regions (China Radio International, 2015: 1-2).



Figure 2: CPEC Proposed Source: Council of Foreign Relations

CPEC revolves around a regional structure. The countries which might get benefits are not only limited to China and Pakistan, but other regional countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, India, Central Asian Republic, Russia and Europe will also do so. CPEC aims at enhancing China's accessibility to the Middle East, Europe and Africa. In order to develop such accessibility, it is based on building linkages through rails, roads and sea. This will boost interactions among the regions through academic and cultural exchange programs; promotion of trade with frequent transportation facilities will also be enhanced (CPEC, 2018). Hence, it is an initiative for economic regionalization in the globalized world. Central Asia is a region with rich natural and mineral resources (Rakhimov, 2015). It also has the capability of enhancing the energy resources with various countries through joint projects.

Undermining of New Great Game

In the current international scenario, CPEC poses a challenge to the New Great Game. It is a venture, which can bring an end to the New Great Game; or can reshape the New Great Game in the perspective of current western interests with special implication on the United States. The term New Great Game was first used by Rudyard Kipling in his book named "Kim" to provide a description of all the current political scenario among the major global players. The special linkages will be constructed by capturing energy and mineral resources of the Central Asian Republics-CARs (Fatima & Zafar, 2014:623-625).

The United States is a leading super power that gained hegemony in 1990, after the disintegration of U.S.S.R. Hence the U.S. gradually increased its presence in different regions and started playing a dominating role in global politics. However, in recent past, the U.S. hegemony is eroding due to assertive policies of China and Russia. The hegemony of the U.S. is being challenged by enhancement of Chinese and Russian influence, which will result in emergence of multi-polar world. CPEC will give an easy access to warm waters hence providing alternate markets for CARs energy resources. Warm water access to the CARs through Gwadar would eventually give China an upper hand to influence the energy resources of the region (Anwar, 2010: 96-98).

The control of access to the Middle Eastern oil resources has been a focal concern of the United States since the early Cold War days. The major shift in U.S. policy came when oil embargo was imposed on the it in the wake of the Arab Israeli war of the 1970's (Lesser, Nardulli & Arghavan, 2016: 172-174).

Adding to the U.S. hegemony, threats came from the Chinese influence as they are working towards increase influence in the Middle East through CPEC. It is in a process to reduce their dependence on SCSs where the U.S. already had put the spots in trouble, in order to hamper Chinese trade thereby further aggravating the U.S. concern of maintaining their regional supremacy.

Features of the CPEC

In 2014, the announcement by President of China Xining of an investment of \$ 46 billion under the initiative of OBOR, have not only involved trade but development of other sectors also.

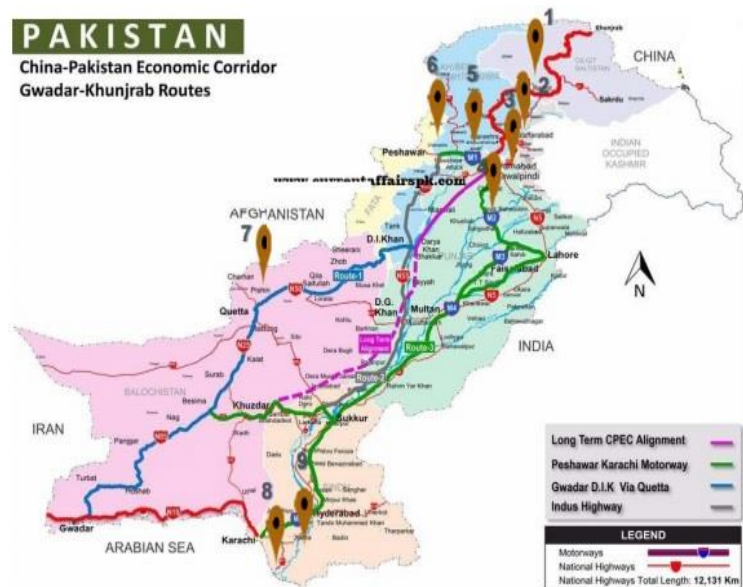


Figure 3: Economic Corridor: <https://cpec-centre.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/WP16-Nine-Proposed-Priority-SEZs-under-CPEC.pdf>

CPEC is intended to bring about various project which might play its role in boosting up the economy of various sectors of Pakistan. Energy projects consume about \$ 33.8 billion, while \$ 11.8 is for development of infrastructure and \$622 million for development of Gwadar port. Under the CPEC agreement, \$15.5 billion is worth of coal, wind and solar while hydro energy projects are expected to add up 10,400 megawatts of energy to the national grid of Pakistan in order to curb the growing energy crisis.

- **Karakoram Route:** Road link with China through Karakoram Highway (KKH) will enable Pakistan to have easy access with Xinjiang Province of China. Such coverage to Gilgit Baltistan including its major towns will enhance connectivity and surveillance capabilities. By the year 2018, the focus of CPEC then might shift towards railways and other infrastructure.
- **Gwadar Sector:** Gwadar seaport is providing China's entry into the Arabian Sea. It is also in the process to increase the allotment of Gwadar seaport Frontier Works Organization (FWO). China's Production and Construction Corps (PCCC), along with telecom companies are responsible for the maintenance of road structure and for provision of up to 100,000 dead weight tonnage (dwt) of dry cargos while 200,000 dwt for oil tankers (Impact Assessment Report, 2016: 36-37)
- **Energy Sector:** Pakistan is suffering from an energy crisis. Two thirds of the CPEC funding is tempted to be utilized to boost up the energy sector of the country. The project includes adding around 17000 MW to the national grid of Pakistan. The Chinese establishment has also invested in power generation segment such as coal, hydel, wind and solar power. Moreover, newly transmission lines are built, which will pass on electricity from power generation in Sindh. Additionally, Shangai Electric, a company in China has showed its keen interest to have its stakes in K Electric Cooperation for enhancing the power generation of the country.
- **Industrial Cooperation:** To boost up the industrial sector is also one of key feature of the CPEC project. The project intends to promote the capacity of the local industry and its production. Such initiatives will also help in eradicating unemployment in the country. This venture is also designated to provide massive opportunities to local industrialists due to the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in the upcoming years of the project.
- **Agricultural Cooperation:** China is in favour of boosting up the agricultural segment of Pakistan as well. This move is designated to make it easy for the both states to have agricultural trade and also fulfill the needs of both. It will mainly focus on harvesting of crops and cotton productivity. These initiatives are included in the project and expected to be successfully accomplished by the end of 2030 (Impact Assessment Report, 2016: 35-40).

In short, CPEC is expected to contribute immensely towards the development of Pakistan and the whole region in general. It is being considered as a game changer, owing to its contribution in energy sectors, industrial sectors, agriculture as well as the social and educational sectors of the region.

Factors Leading to US Apprehensions

CPEC is of keen significance to Russia. It provides an entry point to Russia into Arabian Sea to engage the Persian Gulf region in trade links with the most accessible and shortest route. Despite experiencing turbulent relations, attempts have been made to pave the way for the Russian- Pakistan Economic Corridor (RPEC) (Hussein, 2018).

Quest for Oil

Lord Archibald Wavell (Viceroy to India) said to have argued in a speech to the Royal Asian Society in 1949,

“There are two main material factors in the revolutionary change that has come over the strategically face of Asia (including the Middle East). One is air power the other is oil... Oil, which is the source of air power, concerns very deeply that of Asia (The Middle East) with which this (Western) society deals, since principal known oil reserves of the world lie in the Persian Gulf. The next great struggle for world power, if it takes place, will be for the control of oil reserves. This may be the battleground both material struggle for oil and air bases, and of the spiritual struggle of at least three great creeds- Christianity, Islam and Communism. In such a struggle, the base of the Western Powers must surely be Middle East, the Mediterranean, Western Asia” (Caroe, 1951: 184).

China is seen as a threat to the U.S. because it is also developing friendly relations with those countries which are strategically located on oil lanes, such as Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, South China and Thailand. The U.S is conscious about the aspects of losing control on the Middle East after leaving bases in Saudi Arabia. It plans to capture the Middle Eastern oil and other minerals have always been documented officially. Currently, the U.S. remains the largest oil consumer country. The U.S. consumes one out of four barrels of oil produced in the world. In 2010, the U.S. consumed about 19.1 million barrels daily, out of a total of 84.4 million of total production globally, whereas it produced 5.6 million barrels a day (Banerjee, 2012: 12). Western countries were keenly interested in Saudi Arabia due to its oil; President Roosevelt once said in 1944, “Persian oil, he told the ambassador, is yours. We share the oil of Iraq and Kuwait. As for Saudi Arabian oil, its ours” (Kantowicz, 2000: 165). The growing trend of Chinese expansionism poses a serious threat to the U.S. hegemony in the world. The U.S. on the other hand is adopting various tactics to contain China, as it once did against the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War era. On the other hand, China in the shape of CPEC and

OBOR with invitation to other countries for the use of Gwadar, intensifies its intuition towards its expansionism (Ahmed, 2018, 89).

South China Sea Policy

Land reclamation in the form of islands by the Chinese in the South-China Sea (SCS) have escalated tensions between the U.S. and China. To curtail China from further expansion, the U.S. is providing extensive support to the countries sharing diverse interests with China, such as the Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines in SCS region (Keam, 2018). China is the United States largest trading partner and the only likely military competitor in the coming decades. The SCS conflict has already strained ties between Southeast Asian claimant states and China. It is the key point of diplomatic and strategic tension between China and the U.S. The U.S. and Chinese militaries are accustomed to operating in close and mutually suspicious quarters in SCS waters and airspace (Herscovitch, 2017).

Gwadar, Sea trade

A seaport of Gwadar is one of the main themes of the U.S. containment policy, as it is expected to boost trade not only between China and Pakistan, but many other countries as well. Initiative of CPEC has shattered the ultimate designs of other regional and global players. This route will not only benefit China and Pakistan, but other regional states could easily accommodate this route for their trade purposes (Impact Assessment Report, 2016: 20-60). Gwadar, the latest seaport is the shortest route to Europe and Africa, as compared to water gates via the Middle East. Trade through Gwadar is a giant leap for Chinese expansion hence challenging the international designs of the New Great Game. To contain China's expansionism through Gwadar, regional and international players with divergent interests have collated to disrupt CPEC through Research and Analyses Wing's (RAW) support of insurgent in district Baluchistan (Syed, 2015). This disruption has been commenced using different coercive means, including proxies and economic sanction on Pakistan. China's existence in Gwadar strongly recommends that in case Chinese are threatened in Taiwan, East China sea, SCS and the Middle East or if the U.S. intends to block oil supplies, than as a retaliation, China will block oil supplies of CARs to Japan and Europe via the Gwadar seaport (Baluchistan) and it can also keep its own supplies running from Gwadar. The U.S. also fears the development of a naval base in Gwadar by China, which will stretch from the Middle East to Southern China. According to a classified report presented by Booz Allen Hamilton (U.S. defense contractor), China had already established electronic eavesdropping posts to monitor ship traffic to the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea (Gertz, 2006). Hence, China will have to protect the national interests of Pakistan in order to safeguard its own interests.

Central Asia-A Door to Opportunities

The Central Asian Republics possess a huge market potential. With the breaking of the Soviet Union after the end of Cold War, the region was divided into seven states with fewer opportunities for exploration. On the other hand, the U.S. has shown its keen interest in developing this region. It intends to enable the Central Asian governments to diversify their customer base needs towards the global market and to be open to global markets (Blank, 2007:3-4). The US intervention of 2001 in Afghanistan has provided a door to it for maintaining a long-term presence in the region. The elimination of terrorism was not the only interest of the U.S., but it also wanted an access to check on the developments taking place in the sensitive geographic location of the CARs. The support to Central Asia in various field has remained a prime objective of the U.S. establishment since last two decades. Democratic support was provided for independence to five princely states after the September 11 attacks. Hence, a path for Americans to enhance its influence was provided in the rich region of the CARs.

Natural resources carry a significant importance besides garnering economic opportunities. Afghanistan provides an alternative route for transfer of natural resources of Central Asia, including gas pipelines. To have its full control, the U.S. intended to uphold its control over production and supply of Central Asian natural resources in the guise of security objectives. These resources will only be provided to the countries, which are not a threat to its hegemony in the region. In order to secure its supply routes, it was essential for the U.S. to have a military presence in the region. The routes and ports established for the trade and supply of natural resources is expected to be utilized for both military and commercial purposes. The alternative routes of pipeline projects are of vital interest especially for the U.S. It is interesting to note that President Trump held a meeting with Mr. Shaykat Mirziyoyey, the President of Uzbekistan for the beginning of the strategic partnership. Wilbur Ross, secretary of commerce praised the strategic opportunity and at a business forum stated to Uzbeks that the United States “is committed to be a strategic partner in your growth and development, through trade, investment, and your outreach to other nations in Central Asia” (Ross, 2018).

Strategic partnership between the U.S. and Central Asian states is not only beneficial in energy sectors only, but in economic terms as well. Investment in the region will help boost up the markets in the region. Besides, it will provide an opportunity for the U.S. to increase its trade with almost 70 million people. In the meeting of C5+1 held in Washington, the hope continued for market access. The prime objective of the project by Central Asia Business Competitiveness (CABC) is to increase business opportunities and exports of the U.S. into the new market.

It (the U.S.) also intends to construct a transit route for easy and quick transport linkage with the Central Asian borders. Agreements, like the Trade and Investment agreement (TIFA) was signed between the U.S. and Central Asian region regarding trade and economic prospects in the region. The agreement has led to the establishment of Intellectual property (IP) (working group), which will further provide protection to these groups and enhance policies for economic cooperation and growth in the region. The U.S. also intends to explore the economic opportunities possessed by the region. Special emphasis is made on enhancing its market opportunities, with space for foreign investment (Walker and Kearney, 2016). The continuous presence in nearby countries is a sign of control in the region on the basis of saving this belt from terrorism (in Afghanistan). Providing extensive support to Israel and making India stronger by having bilateral deal is a strategy to have a counter balance against Russian and Chinese expansionism.

In order to enhance its strategic partnership, the American President Donald Trump has signed an agreement of law with the International Development Finance Cooperation (IDFC) for directing more U.S. development initiatives to counties, which can be subject to China's developmental projects; of which Pakistan in terms of CPEC is one key point.

The United States reluctance to withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan stems from fears of losing of hegemony in the region (Sellin, 2019). To have a close watch on the overall region, the U.S. has established two air bases: one is in Uzbekistan; and the second one is in Kyrgyzstan. Many analysts are of the view that these air bases were opened for the control of extremism in Afghanistan and the U.S. is reluctant to withdraw. Fear of losing its hegemony has also led the United States to sustain its air bases in the region while making security threats to their investments, with energy and economics as a tool.

Measures by the United States to Jeopardize CPEC / OBOR Initiatives

Denuclearization of Pakistan

Pakistan has an important strategic position in the international arena as it is geographically linked to both Central Asia and Middle East region. This junction is of vital importance for the U.S. Moreover, Pakistan is the only Muslim state with nuclear capability. The U.S. intent to denuclearize Pakistan was already on cards, however the quest has increased manifold since the initiation of CPEC. During 2010, President Obama (former U.S. President) announced US plans to leave Afghanistan by 2014. This was endorsed when he was re-elected in 2012. Obama's second tenure also ended without complete U.S. exit from Afghanistan, however a

drawdown of forces was observed. Contrary to the U.S. exit strategy, President Donald Trump adopted a policy of increased troops in Afghanistan for elimination of terrorism. This new U.S. strategy also entails enhanced role for its emerging regional ally India to bring peace in Afghanistan. The hidden agenda of U.S. to keep its troops in Afghanistan also includes its covert approaches towards denuclearization of Pakistan. The proximity of the U.S. military to western borders has brought Pakistan's strategic assets in minutes range of U.S. air strike capability (Sadiq, 2016: 238-239).

U.S. and NATO presence in Afghanistan on the plea of eliminating terrorism also provides an ability to keep a strong check on China's expansionism. The U.S. as yet has not been successful in achieving these goals, however it continues to pursue its agenda of undermining Pakistan and containing China. One of the initiatives was taken in 2004-2005 by U.S., India and its alliance of developing similar assets (Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan – TTP) in Afghanistan and Pakistan's border areas which could be utilized to target its interests (Sadiq, 2016: 238-239). The Washington Post confirmed the allegations in 2013 of the United States after 9/11 engaging in training war prisoners to use in proxy wars or activities against Pakistan (Sadiq, 2016: 267). The new U.S. policies in the region entail strict control over Pakistan, while empowering India for a greater role in Afghanistan and the entire region. Moreover, initiation of CPEC has geared up the American measures to achieve its desired goals in the region. Afghan army is not only being trained to counter terrorism, but it also emerges as a potent force to pose threats to Pakistan from its western borders. Afghanistan's premier intelligence agency, National Directorate of Security (NDS) is already involved in covert operations against Pakistan. India has its own vested interests and malicious designs against Pakistan and these designs are presently in convergence with U.S. intentions in Pakistan and the region. Denuclearizing Pakistan would bring back the Indian hegemony in the region.

Empowering India

Enhancing stronger strategic ties and increased progress in India and United State's relations over the past two decades cannot be denied. Considering its geo-strategic location, India currently is of vital importance to the U.S. For the United States, India is one of its allies in the South Asian region like Israel in the Middle Eastern region. The need for more bilateral relationship between the two states is on surge due to convergence of interests (Curtis, Scissors, Lohman, Carafona, Mohan, Rajagopalan, Joshi 7 Sood, 2013). Currently, more than 30 different themes are relevant in the process of bilateral U.S.-India projects. India's increased military cooperation with the U.S. is more than any other country's military cooperation (Curtis, Scissors, Lohman, Carafona, Mohan, Rajagopalan, Joshi 7

Sood, 2013). Moreover, it is gradually providing more space and role to India in Afghanistan, thereby threatening Pakistan's strategic interests.

The U.S. considered India's nuclear explosions in 1974 as a fate accomplished (Feroz, 2013: 135). Henry Kissinger (U.S. Secretary of State), during his visit to India and Pakistan indicated by "preferring India as preeminent power in the region" and public assurance of continued supply of nuclear fuel for India's Tarapur reactor (Kux, 2001: 214-215). Civil Nuclear Deal between the two was initiated in 2005 and was materialized in 2008. This deal is to provide energy material for peaceful uses, which can be easily turned into the weapons of mass destruction. As a part of its deal, U.S. approached Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to grant a release to India for nuclear deals with other countries. India is the only country with nuclear weapons that is not signatory to Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Agrawal, 2017). Thus, empowering India makes it emerge as an economic giant by becoming the largest selling industry of South Asia is key towards the containment of China in the region.

Defending Israel

Middle East is a region of utmost interest, which underlies the need of Israel as a strategic ally in the region. Pakistan, the only Muslim state with nuclear capability and with potent missile technology can also be a threat to Israel's security in the region. As Pakistan might come to the rescue of the Gulf states due to knot of traditional and religious context, in case of Arab Israeli escalation of tension in the region. In addition, principally Pakistan also stands for the Palestinian cause. As U.S. and Israel are close allies and share common interests in both of the regions, it has always looked up to its political inspiration, economic, military as well as diplomatic assistance (Sharp, 2016: 1). U.S.- Israel relations are endorsed since 1948 when it favored the creation of Israel, but passed on to strategic interests during 1960, (the Cold War era) when it was used as a strategic proxy of American power. For decades, Israel demonstrated as to be allied with U.S. in order to oppose any instability in the Middle East, prior to threatening of U.S. interests in the region (Sohns, 2017).

Considering its own hegemony in the region, the U.S. supported Israel more specifically in military terms than economically. Currently, the U.S. aid to Israel is mostly based on military assistance (Israel Religiously Divided Society, 2016). The U.S. has played a major role for transforming Israel's armed forces into more sophisticated one. To strengthen its "Qualitative Military Edge "(QME) over its neighboring or equivalent threat, U.S. intends Israel to have better equipment and skillful training for compensation of being much smaller in land and population than its potential adversaries (Sharp, 2016: 1). For decades, Israel has been the

leading recipient of American aid, far surpassing other countries. The new deal, signed, provides \$3.3 billion annually for weapons, including F-35 fighter jets, with a guarantee of \$500 million more every year for missile defense (Editorial Board, 2016).

Besides, the U.S. also helped Israel in becoming a nuclear power for enhanced security or deterrence capability against its adversaries. The U.S. has also established permanent military base in Israel (Judah, 2017) to deter threats, which can come from emerging powers.

Emergence of ISIS

Syria is another region that has been facing internal conflict to a large extent since 2011. Many people were against the Assad Regime and the opposition has been getting bold. The rebels have become more effective and extreme (Tabler & AY, 2018). In 2014, internal conflict erupted among the Opposition Forces in the Syrian Civil War. Large opposition groups are fighting with each other, including: The Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Army of Mujahedeen, the Islamic Front, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State – according to the regional Arabic resources has about 10,000–100,000 fighters (estimated number, the figures are extraordinarily wide-ranging) (Ross, 2015), alone, which is equal to the strength of other rebel groups together. Syria due to its failed or weak state system is an easy victim to rebel movements, like the ISIS (Shamein & Zoltan, 2015: 365-378).

The U.S. might have some role behind the emergence of IS in order to sustain its dominance in the region which is threatened by the rise of China as an emerging power. To indulge states in proxy wars will result in lowering down the economy of the states. Adopting such approach also provides an opportunity to U.S. for long-term presence of its troops in the Middle East.

Blame Games

To contain the expansionism of China in the South Asian region, U.S. has been pressurizing Pakistan through blame games. Pakistan helped the U.S. several times, firstly during Afghanistan's intervention and then with full participation in "Global War on Terror". Pakistan is blamed by the U.S. establishment of providing grounds to terrorist organization instead of appreciating its efforts in countering terrorism. China, on the other hand is in favour of Pakistan. The current U.S. national defense strategy clearly states that its policies are against China's developmental initiatives in Pakistan. Due to the prevalence of CPEC, U.S. has suspended financial aid to Pakistan, which was provided for the War on Terror.

The aid was suspended as Trump and his administration believes that Pakistan was not doing enough to eliminate the terrorist groups, rather provides grounds for them to flourish (Mohammed & Londav, 2018).

Conclusion

The mega project of CPEC has become a golden opportunity for both Pakistan and China. Simultaneously, it also became a bone of contention between major powers such the U.S. and China. This competition among various global players will negatively affect global peace and will create some major hurdles in the successful implementation of the projects. The CPEC does not only revolve around Pakistan and China but it is the matter of connecting three regions and providing shortest trade routes for Central Asian Republics to China via Gwadar. Major Powers like the U.S. and China are pursuing their economic ascendancy by avoiding direct confrontation and are countering each other's interests in different playgrounds through their allies, including state and non-state actors. The current growing conflict of U.S. blocking google access and other related application in Chinese manufactured mobile of Huawei is a sign of economic warfare.

From Pakistan's perspectives, CPEC will not only develop communication lines but it will also enhance the energy and agricultural sector of the country. It is said to be the game changer, which will ultimately reduce Pakistan's dependency on U.S. and have far-reaching impacts on the regional landscape. On the other hand, the U.S. in order to counter-balance the Chinese expansion in overall framework of Belt and Road Initiative and being CPEC a part, have raised an array of concerns against Pakistan in different domains. The allegations include, sponsoring terrorism, branding Pakistan as an irresponsible nuclear state and its inclusion in gray lists of FATF etc. To maintain peace in the South Asian region and the world in general, major players need to develop some consensus of peaceful co-existence. This will not only lead these states to maintain peaceful relation but also will provide an opportunity for enhancement of confidence building measures via trade relations.

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