**CPEC Challenges and opportunities**

[Dr Shahid Raza](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-shahid-raza/)

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CPEC is a real game-changer with geo-economic importance and gateway to prosperity for the whole region. It is a golden opportunity for Pakistan to promote cooperation on infrastructure, transportation, industrial collaboration,and Gwadar and energy security through CPEC.It is closely associated with the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road run through the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, connected East Asia to Europe, and huge economic potential. Gwadar is the lifeline for China and CPEC. Pakistan-future of “Tiger of Asia” and CPEC can play an important role in this regard and its great opportunity for Pakistan. This great country is full of natural abundant resources from north to south and east to west and has a real geostrategic position. Pakistan being at an intersection of south Asia, central Asia, and China can play a positive role for the greater geo-economic development and in the region by regional connectivity.The total allocated amount under CPEC is 50 billiondollars included 35 billion dollars for energy projects and 15 billion dollars for Gwadar infrastructure, industrial zones. This project needs to be completed by 2030. Energy-related projects need to be completed by 2019. Gwadar development and roads related projects will be completed by 2020. Railways and industrial zones to be completed by 2025. Agriculture, Tourism, and industrial zones will be completedby 2030. China and Pakistan can exploit natural resources through cooperation. CPEC will speed up the industrialization process in Pakistan through its high-quality infrastructure. CPEC is the growth axis and is the engine of the growth for the entire region with aim of socio-economic development, prosperity, and security in the region along with it. It will not only help and benefit Pakistan and China but the whole region including Afghanistan, Iran, India, and central Asia republics with real impact. Road, rail, and air linkages will lead to win-win model for all and is considered a real hope of better regain of the future with growth and development of the economy. India and Afghanistan will join sooner or later this project.  We should strengthen deep strategic cooperation with China and use CPEC to develop infrastructure, hydro energy resources, and industrial cooperation for real fruits and longterm industrialization. No doubt, CPEC is not only for our economic growth but in line with the sustainable development goals(SDGs) and will bring transformation through regional connectivity. The Karakorum Highway (KKH) will link China to the Arabian Sea, central Asia, South Asia and West Asia.

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ML-1 is a great historic and landmark project under CPEC and will bring a real economic revolution for the country with unlimited benefits and opportunities for the masses at gross level with more convenient transportation from Karachi to Peshawar. This project needs revolutionary steps on war footing basis without any further delay and this opportunity should not missed as we missed several opportunities in the past for various sectors and areas including hydel resources.There are some common reservations on CPEC including lack of transparency and non- availability of complete information. Some believe that Punjab will be a major beneficiary while others consider that country would be under heavy external debt and loansdue to this mega project. In the same way, the energy projects missed the hydro side and the mainfocus was on the coal and oil-based projects due to strong oil lobbies which affected and increase oil prices for the general public and industry in the country. Hydro resources should be focused with long term planning with the help and guidance of WAPDA. The Chinese showed concern over negative propaganda in Pakistani media especially by some international forces. We need to re-address these issued and should take CBMs with Chinese leadership. China is to invest more than I trillion dollars insixty countries all over the world to establish six different corridors under its One Belt and RoadInitiative (maritime Silk Road). The special economic zones(SEZS) and industrial parks under CPEC along the corridor are important and need special attention and focus to concerned zone authorities.Pakistanis firms and Chinese companies should be given a level playing field on the same term and conditions. China is planning to relocate its industry along this corridor which needs proper planning. Prefeasibility studies should be carried out by zone authorities with the help of local firms or universities through industry-academia linkages.CPEC projects under special economic zones (SEZs)would help and benefits training and development of skilled manpower. CPEC will provide and ensure defense security in the region especially for Pakistan.

In the end, there is no doubt that CPEC is the game-changer in the region and beyond. Let us work to together to create and have a bright future for Pakistan and China. Both countriesleadership and statesmanship need special attention and focus with dedication and commitment to promoting CPEC and OBOR as a success story but with strong political will, wisdom, vision, for real economic growth and common prosperity for the whole region through regional connectivity.