CPEC the game changer for Pakistan

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Times are changing where the world is transforming and Asia remains at the epicentre of this 21st century transformation. Quite evidently, the centre of economic power is shifting from the West towards the East. In this regard, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) provides Pakistan and the surrounding countries great opportunity by giving and integrating platform for over 3 Billion people in Central, West, South Asia as well as Middle East and Africa. BRI total trade is estimated between $4 Trillion to $8 Trillion. In addition to this, the project will cover 69 countries with 40% of the world’s GDP and 65% of the world’s population. Under the project, there will be 56 economic zones with $18.5 billion investment and the project will also allow relocation of 85 million jobs.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project of the BRI and its vision. Furthermore, CPEC is expected to alter the geopolitical and strategic landscape of Asia and has enormous potential to reshape the economic outlook of regional states. CPEC provides opportunity for Pakistan to become a logistic and economic hub for South Asia, Central and Western Asia, Middle East and Western China. Additionally, though CPEC, a small economy like Pakistan is being physically connected with one of the world’s largest economy. The importance of CPEC project can be highlighted by the fact that this project is game changer for Pakistan as it is expected to address the weakness of the country. Furthermore, CPEC is also the corridor to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan in the infrastructure, power and construction sector. Gawadar Port due to its natural advantages has the potential to surpass the neighbouring ports in terms of trading activity as the port provides the shortest route for China as well as Central Asian Countries.

The CPEC is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects to address critical energy shortages needed to boost Pakistan’s economic growth. CPEC development targets include three stages according to officials: first target which is expected to be completed in 2020 includes period of market cultivation in which major bottlenecks for Pakistan’s economic and social development shall be addressed to boost the economic growth. In addition, the second target, which is expected to be accomplished by 2025, contains periods of expansion and development. The third target is the period of maturity which includes the endogenous mechanism for sustainable economic growth when CPEC will be ready to play leadership role in the region. The third target is expected to be completed in 2030.

Completion of the CPEC project will provide Pakistan with new corridors of success and economic prosperity. Scholars have also linked the success of this project with stable security of Pakistan along with other regional countries. Though hurdles have been witnessed in running the project, yet the scale of development is increasing and officials are hopeful to meet the project deadlines as this would provide new avenues of success for Pakistan in the years to come. CPEC has been compared to the Marshall Plan for the rebuilding of post-World War II Europe in its potential impact on the region, and numerous countries have shown interest in participating in the initiative.

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