**Integrating environmental protection into policy design of CPEC Phase II**

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JULY 22, 2019

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as one of the flagship projects of the Belt and Road Forum (BRI), is expected to become a major stabilizing factor in the volatile and uncertain regional security of South Asia, providing long-term economic benefits to the whole region and beyond. However, the biggest concerns are echoed in terms of exploitation of resources and the environment, displacement of local communities, huge debt etc.

For China, CPEC is important because it can be showcased as a success story for all other routes and components of the BRI, but will it be successful to achieve the developmental goals if we are oblivious to environmental protection in promoting economic expansion in Pakistan?

The government of China itself has pledged to create win-win situation for creating a delicate balance between economic development and environmental protection. China’s Ecological Redline policy is one of their national agenda to address the ecological challenges in China by integrating the values of natural capital for inclusive and sustainable development. This approach is recognized to be meaningful to standardize science-policy interface and reduce tradeoffs between environmental quality and economic development.

*It is recommended that Pakistan must learn from China’s ecological policies and follow their best practices in moving forward with CPEC, both in decision making context as well as meeting the pillars of Vision 2025 aligned with sustainable development goals*

One such approach could be useful to complement a much-needed reflection made by our Prime Minister Imran Khan, while addressing at the opening ceremony of the second BRI conference held in Beijing 2019, who emphasized to bring attention to tackle climate change and poverty in Pakistan in the next phase of the CPEC. One of the five suggested points were to mitigate the impacts of climate change by tree-plantation, along with creating a poverty alleviation funds and encouraging private sector investments (Dawn, 2019).

By considering the full range of benefits and costs associated with the impacts on natural resources and affected people in CPEC,it creates an opportunity to incorporate environmental issues into development planning (short-term plan to be completed by 2020, midterm plan to be completed by 2025 and long-term plan to be completed by 2030). Policies to incentivize resource efficient production in a holistic way to decouple economic growth and environmental protection could be a useful solution to promote sustainable development in the region. Examples are providing subsidies to support green energy technologies, and conserve critical resources such as water and land. Additional policies to conduct extended assessments of the projects to measure the values of national resources impacts and the importance of those resources for the people’s livelihoods to make better management decisions for public welfare and alleviating poverty. Gwadar can serve as pilot demonstration site by assessing the environmental damage costs from business and development activities in the region that may help to influence regional economic policies to integrate environmental protection and benefits generated through conservation and better management.

It is recommended that Pakistan must learn from China’s ecological policies and follow their best practices in moving forward with CPEC, both in decision making context as well as meeting the pillars of Vision 2025 aligned with sustainable development goals.

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