

CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Chinese one belt one road is a huge project which will integrate Asia, Europe, and Africa through roads and maritime routes. Sixty-seven countries are the subject of this project. Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project were announced by the Chinese president Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in September 2013. After one month Xi Jinping purposed the Maritime Silk route project which would connect China with South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe via sea route. Initially, this project was proposed as the ‘New Silk Road’ but was changed with ‘One Belt One Road’ (OBOR) and after 2017, it was named as “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) (Chan, 2019). It comprises two components, first land route is the old Silk Road from China to Europe via Central Asia and the Middle East. The second route contains the maritime Silk Route, which begins from East Asia to South Asia via Gwadar connects Africa and the Middle and reaches from Suez Canal to Europe. One belt One Road will connect 67 countries to enhance economic integration between Asia, Europe, and Africa (Miller, 2017). China has purposed six corridors under one belt and one road. Following are the six corridors: Central-China and West-Asia Economic

Corridor (CCWAC), China Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC), China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB), Bangladesh China India Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC), and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Amir, 2016). Jonathan E. Hillman (2018) director of Reconnecting Asia Project estimated that the investment of this project is from 1 trillion to 8 trillion US dollars (Hillman, 2018). It is said after the US Marshal Plan, it is the biggest plan in the world and it would increase Chinese influence in the world.

KEYWORDS: CPEC, China, Pakistan, Central Asia, USA

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this article is neo-liberalism. According to this theory, peace comes through mutual trade and connectivity among states based on economic relations. The CPEC is a game-changer economic project which would bring closer to many regions like China, South Asia, Central Asia, Iran, and the Middle East. Even it would connect Europe and Africa to this region. Through this project, old rivalries would come to end and a new era of peace and stability would commence. It would change the economic dynamics of Pakistan, China as well as the whole region, even, it would eliminate terrorism which is the greatest threat for not only this region but also for the whole region.

The importance of Gwadar Port:

Gwadar Port is a deep port and situated geo-strategically important place which makes it a geo-strategic, geo-politic, and geo-economic place. American journalist Robert Kaplan visited Gwadar in 2007 and hoped to see Gwadar as the Dubai of Pakistan (Miller, 2017). Gwadar means the land of the air. Geographically Gwadar port is situated in the Arabian Sea with a key position between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East near the Strait of Hormuz gateway of world's **20% oil**. Its depth is 18 to 22 meters whereas Jabal e Ali's depth is 16 meters, Chabahar 12 meter, and Bander Abbas port is 10 meters deep. 120 big ships could be anchored at a time in Gwadar port whereas Dubai port has a capacity of 67 ships and Bander Abbas port 24 ships (Baig, Mera Halia Doura e Gwadar, 2017). Gwadar port will connect four key regions; South Asia, China, Central Asia,

and Iran. Even Russia and Mongolia can be connected through Gwadar port (Khetran, 2015).

A journey from Gwadar to CPEC:

The central theme of building economic corridors is to enhance and excel the economic and commercial activities in the region which will create new opportunities for business and regional development (Butt & Butt, 2015). Pakistan and Chinese friendship is based on the rule of all-weather friends, Tom Miller describes its reason because their common enemy is India (Miller, 2017). A survey was conducted at Gwadar by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1954 and presented a report that Gwadar had the potential to build a port without high cost (Khetran, 2015). Pakistan purchased Gwadar port from Oman for 10 Million dollars in September

1958 during the Feroz Khan government (Baig, Mera Halia Doura e Gwadar, 2017). At that time Gwadar was not more than a fishing village. Ayub Khan Government made a plan to use Gwadar as an alternative to Karachi. The objective was to reduce the economic and naval dependency on Karachi and drew a plan simultaneously on Gwadar and Port Qasim but this dream could not be executed (Khetran, 2015). The USSR's entry into Afghanistan began with the dream to convert Gwadar as port and export of oil and gas of the central Asian states (Miller, 2017). Technical and financial study and the survey was started for the construction of Gwadar port in 1993 (Khetran, 2015).

Working on Gwadar was started in 2000 when Pervez Musharraf proposed China to build a port in deep water. China agreed to construct this port with the dream to import gas and oil through Gwadar port for China. Phase 1 of Gwadar was completed in 2007 with an expenditure of 200 million dollars (Miller, 2017). Gwadar port was inaugurated on 20 March 2007 (Butt & Butt, 2015). Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) took charge of Gwadar port for forty years but could not complete its task within a given time. President Zardari altered to port to charge from Port of Singapore Authority and handed over the Gwadar port to "China Overseas Port Holding Company" in 2013 (Butt & Butt, 2015) for a 40-year lease (Amir, 2016). Chinese Premier Li- Keqiang in May 2013 visited Pakistan and emphasized the rapid construction of Gwadar port. The CPEC project was announced in August 2013 with the inauguration of the CPEC office in Islamabad. In February 2014,

President Mamnoon Hussain visited China and discussed the Chinese president and Premier for CPEC. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif visited after two months and discussed CPEC in detail (Butt & Butt, 2015). Chinese President Xi-Jin-Ping visited Pakistan in April 2015. Dawn newspaper personified this visit in these words that on the arrival of the Chinese president, a historic ceremony was organized where 51 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) was signed (Mateen & Irfan, 20 April, 2015) worth 46 Million dollars in which 34 Billion dedicated to energy projects and 12 billion dollars for infrastructure and development (Butt & Butt, 2015). During the last meeting in China, the Chief Ministers of four provinces suggested more projects which cause to increase the cost of this project from 46 to 56 billion dollars (Baig, Cpec Ke Fawaid Aor Khadshaat, 2017). For the establishment of industrial zones, China has increased investment by 62 billion dollars (Siddiqui, 2017). Phase I of the Gwadarport contains the Chinese industrial zone and Phase II for the Pakistani industrial zone (Baig, Mera Halia Doura e Gwadar, 2017). China will connect Kashgar to Gwadar where China already built industrial zones (Khetran, 2015).

Alternative ways for Chinese Oil Import:

China is importing 80 percent of its oil from the Middle East and other countries. It is heavily dependent on sea routes for its oil and its trade goods. But is also a problem for China that if in case of any war in the region Chinese three main supply routes can be blocked by its opponent countries. The first way is in the South China Sea, where the US with the help of Vietnam, the Philippines, and other ASEAN countries. The second route which is most critical is the Malacca Strait. This way is very narrow which enjoins the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. Washington can block this route. The third route passes from the Indian Ocean where China's old enemy India can obstruct the way of China. So to avoid any risk, China formatted a plan which stretches on the land area that is called Road and Initiative. But this plan can secure the Chinese route for trade but the Chinese real concern is to secure its oil import route. For this purpose, China is looking for alternative ways. The first way is to import its oil from Myanmar. China has agreed with the Myanmar government and China will construct its oil pipeline from Myanmar to China. But this plan again covering risks due to the Indian rivalry factor because all oil would

pass through the Indian Ocean in the end it could provide a risk to China. Now, China has some land routes like China can pass its oil from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran to Gulf countries. But this and route is also not secure and reliable due to security concerns and the domination of Russia in these countries. Therefore, China needs a route from such a country that is reliable as well as secure, and such a country must be a friend of China, and the interests of both countries must be the same. Thus, neither country is more reliable and the most trusted friend of China in this region than Pakistan. Only Pakistan can provide China in such a way that is not only shorter but more secure than all other routes.

Pakistan also wants to construct an alternative way for its trade because Karachi port can be closed during the war and 1971 war between Pakistan and India is the witness when India had blocked the way of Karachi port and started to attack this port. So with the construction of Gwadar port Pakistan can secure its economy during the war period. In this way, China Pakistan interest is the same due to the Gwadar port. It will make it secure to China as well as Pakistan. Due to this common interest, CPEC was purposed.

This way will not only reduce almost twelve-thousand-kilometer route for China but it will also secure China from Indian risk in the Indian Ocean and the US risk in Malacca strait and the South China Sea.

It will also reduce Chinese freight expenditures. Saudi Arabia is also constructing an oil refinery at Gwadar which will also be beneficial for Pakistan as well as for China.

The Potentials of the CPEC

There are the following potentials of the CPEC project.

CPEC Benefits for China

Gwadar port will bring rapid development to the Chinese economy and give multiple benefits to China. These benefits are in form of the development of the Chinese backward provinces and will provide an economic boost. The CPEC will provide the

shortest route toward the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The CPEC will cause to reduce the US influence in the South China Sea and Malacca Strait and Indian dominance in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, it will provide a strong position for China in the Indian Ocean through the presence of the Chinese navy near the Strait of Hormuz.

Boost the Chinese economy

The CPEC will boost the Chinese economy and provide access to the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. It will provide access to China to new markets at the minimum price of freight (Butt & Butt, 2015). A pipeline will be constructed with the capacity of 1 million barrels of oil per day from Gwadar to Kashgar from 2017 to 2021. Additionally, an oil refinery will be constructed to refine Middle Eastern crude oil at Gwadar and transferred it to China via pipeline (Amir, 2016).

Development of Chinese Backward Provinces

China wants to execute Western Development Strategy (WDS) in its backward western areas. Through this strategy, Xin-Jiang province will get progress (Butt & Butt, 2015). Xinjiang is quite similar to Baluchistan. Its landmass is 56% of China with a 23% population. Like Baluchistan, it is rich in natural resources but the least developed province of China (Khetran, 2015). Gwadar port will provide an opportunity for the western province of Xinjiang to get economic prosperity through the shortest way of 3000 km to the Persian Gulf (Nazar, October 14, 2015). This is the reason that this province boosted its trade by 33 billion dollars in 2013 from 22 billion dollars in 2012. This caused to increase in its GDP in a year by 12 percent (Khetran, 2015).

The safe and shortest route

Gwadar port will provide the shortest route to the Chinese western province Xinjiang to the Middle East and other regions (Khetran, 2015). After bypassing the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean, China will deviate from its energy imports and will use the way of Gwadar port (Jose, 28 May 2016). China imports 60% of oil from the Middle East from the long and unsafe route. This maritime route contains the Indian Ocean, Malacca Straits, South China, East China Seas, and the Yellow Sea. 80% of Chinese oil passes through these maritime unsafe routes. This route requires 45 days but the Gwadar

route covers it within 10 days (Butt & Butt, 2015). China has to Cross 19132 KM from Central China to Europe but CPEC will reduce this way 10 times and this route just requires 2295KM from Central China to Europe. It will also reduce the freight rates from 3000 to just 1000 dollars (Baig, Cpec Ke Fawaid Aor Khadshaat, 2017).

Malacca Dilemma

China imports its energy requirements from the Middle East. Almost eighty percent of the Chinese need oil passes to pass through the Indian Ocean to Malacca Strait and then enter the South China Sea. India is creating problems in the Indian Ocean. The US is giving a tough time in Malacca Strait as well as in the South China Sea. The CPEC is an alternative route for China and to fulfill its energy demand without any obstacles.

The CPEC will cause to reduce the influence of the US in South Asia. The US is containing China from the South China Sea and creating troubles in the Malacca Strait. It is a counter-strategy of China against the US. It will provide Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean as well as in Middle

East (Butt & Butt, 2015). Chinese 80% of energy import pass through Malacca strait (Jose, 28 May 2016). Malacca strait and the Indian Ocean caused great trouble for China from the US and India. Through the CPEC China can recover its injuries by overcoming the Indian Ocean near an important strategic point through Gwadar port.

Chinese Naval Presence

Chinese naval near Gulf will reduce the influence of India and the US in this strategically important region. It will also increase the Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean (Malik, 2012).

Benefits for Pakistan

Pakistan has the following benefits due to the CPEC.

Economic stability for Pakistan

Chinese investment in Pakistan will rejuvenate the economy of Pakistan (Jose, 28 May 2016). The CPEC will provide Pakistan a chance for being an economic and trade hub and will establish industrial zones in Sindh, KPK, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan, and Baluchistan. It will cause to enhance Pakistan's industrial sector. Through the CPEC, Gwadar port will become the trade hub of the region. This will cause a great economic boost in Pakistan's economy (Butt & Butt, 2015). For China and Central Asian Republics (CARs), it is the shortest way to trade with the world. It will enhance the economic activities in Pakistan (Khetran, 2015).

Integration of Pakistan

The CPEC will gradually solve security problems related to terrorism, separatism, etc. It causes the integration of all provinces of Pakistan and binds them with each other.

If Pakistan overcomes its security problems, then CPEC will prove as a game-changer for Pakistan (Jose, 28 May 2016).

Energy Projects

34 Billion Dollars are dedicated to energy projects. These projects will not only solve the energy problems of Pakistan but also cause an industrial and trade revolution. Pakistan is working on plenty of energy projects with China under the CPEC. The followings are the detail of these projects.

- I. Neelum Jhelum hydropower plant project, 968MW.
- II. Solar power park thousand 1000 MW.
- III. Suki Kanari (KPK) hydropower project 870 MW.
- IV. Karot under Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) hydropower project 720 MW.
- V. Three wind hydropower projects at Thatta of united energy Pakistan 100 MW etc.
- VI. Thar Coal project 2400 MW accepted to complete in 2018 (Nazar, October 14, 2015).

Both countries are also working on the enhancement of the Karachi Nuclear power plant and Chasma Nuclear power plant. These all energy projects will become part of Pakistan energy and will provide 10400 MW of electricity, whereas many other projects will be completed by 2030 which will add 6000 MW of electricity. Pakistan will import Chinese LNG through a 700 km long pipeline (Amir, 2016).

Infrastructure development

Under the CPEC, there will be constructed roads, railways, and gas and oil pipelines stretching approximately 3000 KM. 11 billion dollars are dedicated to infrastructure development of the CPEC (Wagner, April 2016). It will provide for the construction of roads, railway tracks, fiber optics cable, and airport and pipeline routes. It will enhance the transportation and communication system in Pakistan. Ten billion projects have been further added to the CPEC, which will concentrate on the development of four provinces.

Enhancement in security

China and Pakistan are facing challenges of terrorism, extremism, and separatist movements. With the help of China, Pakistan will try to overcome these problems. Both countries have made special units to overcome terrorist activities.

Expanding naval partnership

The navy of China and Pakistan will be active in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Ocean. For this purpose, China will provide eight submarines to Pakistan (The News, 2018). It will cause to overcome the ambition of the US dominating in the Indian Ocean (Malik, 2012).

People to people contact:

Another important prospect of CPEC for both countries will be enhancing people-to-people contacts. China will provide 2000 training opportunities for Pakistan and will train 1000 Chinese language teachers in Pakistan.

Challenges for CPEC

The CPEC is a game-changer project. It will change the condition of the region. But with benefits, there are many challenges. Pakistan and China have to face these challenges that come from regional and extra-regional actors.

Regional Actors:

India:

One of the biggest criticism of India on CPEC is that India considers that the CPEC route passes from Gilgit which is a controversial region due to the dispute of Kashmir. This is the reason that India has denied being a part of this project and severely criticized this project.

India is playing the role of a regional hegemon in South Asia. A complete operational Gwadar port means Chinese access to the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf, which will reduce the influence of India. The presence of China at Gwadar port means control of China over the Strait of Hormuz (Butt & Butt, 2015). The CPEC is also creating hindrances in the Indian way to get access to Central Asian country's natural resources. India has signed Mutual Cooperation Agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to get access to CARs (Amir, 2016).

This is the reason India is severely criticizing this project and taking part in terrorist activities in Pakistan. The activities of Kulbhushan Yadav (Indian Raw agent) for sabotaging the CPEC, are an example of this enmity (Malik A. R., December, 2016). India shows its concerns on multiple forums regarding CPEC. During the visit of the Indian PM Modi to China, he desired that China should drop the CPEC project but China rejected this proposal (Amir, 2016).

To fail CPEC India has shackled hands with Iran through the construction of Chabahar port against Gwadar port. The strategic location of Chabahar is suited to Indian design to sit near the Strait of Hormuz and counter the Chinese tactics. India has invested 85.6 million in Chabahar for

building roads and infrastructure, and for gaining access to Afghanistan and CARs (Amir, 2016). India is also developing relations with the UAE against this project. India and the

UAE nexus can cause insurgencies in Baluchistan to fail the development in the province (Butt & Butt, 2015).

India has made many military agreements and joint exercises with the US for countering the influence of China in this region.

India has two choices regarding CPEC. First, India can get benefits to become part of C. India can get access to Iran, Afghanistan, and CARs via the shortest route and can enhance trade with these countries. There are also many pending projects of gas and other natural resources between India and these countries, India can complete all these projects through CPEC and the other choice is to continue opposition and sabotage this project (Amir, 2016).

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with a population of 32.5 million sharing borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, and China. The biggest trading partners of Afghanistan are Russia, China, India, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. Most of the Afghan trade was accomplished via Karachi. Afghanistan link from Gwadar port will reduce 600 km. Afghanistan has the opportunity to get a land way towards the Indian Ocean through CPEC (Amir, 2016). Afghanistan and Pakistan will plan to link both countries through Peshawar and Kabul motorway 265 KM long. Afghanistan has also accessed this project through Chaman leading towards Gwadar port just is 600KM. These routes will link Afghanistan to another world. Afghanistan will integrate with other regions and can trade with India and other world and can boost its economy. It will revolutionize the Afghan trade and economy and makes it a prosperous country (Butt & Butt, 2015). Pakistan being a trading partner of Afghanistan wants to increase its trade with Afghanistan from 2 billion dollars to 5 billion dollars in the next year (Amir, 2016). In this way, the CPEC can play a game-changer role for Afghanistan. It is up to Afghanistan to improve its relations with Pakistan and leave the Indian agenda based on an anti-Pakistan policy for a better future.

Iran

Iran is situated in a very important location in the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and the Caspian Sea with neighboring countries like Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Turkey, and Pakistan. Rich in energy resources, cement, chemical, carpet, and fruits (Amir, 2016). Iran has the world's ten percent oil reserves (Nazar, October 14, 2015). Iran shows its great concerns over the CPEC due to endangering of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas ports (Malik, 2012). Iran has joined India against the CPEC. India has provided 30 billion dollars and linking both countries through airways. India has also provided 85.21 million for the development of Chabaharport and the development of infrastructure, roads, and air services in both countries as a counter port to Gwadar port. Iran can get benefits from CPEC. This is the reason that Iran is showing its interest in this project at the end of 2015 (Butt & Butt, 2015). Iran can get benefits to be part of the CPEC through Iran Pakistan India (IPI) pipeline or it can be redesigned as Iran Pakistan and China (IPC) pipeline. Good relations between Pakistan and Iran will cause the execution of Pakistan to Iran and Turkey train service which will integrate South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe (Amir, 2016). Being one of the world's largest oil consumers China can increase its oil import from Iran as a part of the CPEC (Nazar, October 14, 2015).

Central Asian Republicans (CARs)

Most of the Central Asian countries are landlocked and rich in gas, oil, and other resources. The CPEC will facilitate Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan access to sea routes which will cause connectivity with another world (Malik, 2012). Cars are heavily dependent on Russia and China to export their oil and gas. Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan export their oil and gas to China and Russia through pipelines whereas trading with other world is quite hard for these countries. This is the reason, they have to use the Russian territory for their exports. CPEC route will provide them an alternative and short route to connect them with other world and cause to increase regional trade activities (Amir, 2016). Mamnoon Hussain the President of Pakistan wished CARs to be part of the CPEC (Nazar, October 14, 2015). Through CPEC routes Tajikistan will connect with China and Pakistan through train and can trade via Gwadar port to other

regions. Kyrgyzstan also shows its interest in this project. This project will release the influence of Russia on CARs. It can also facilitate even to Russia. The CARs can export their goods to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe through this project (Butt & Butt, 2015).

UAE

The CPEC project has faced great resentment and opposition from the UAE. The UAE considers Gwadar a potential threat that will disturb its trade and economic activities (Malik, 2012). A complete operational Gwadar port means the reduction of 70% of the trade of the Dubaiport. UAE is openly opposing this project and has made an alliance with India on a strategic basis. The UAE is also severely criticizing Pakistan over the Yemen issue where Pakistan denied sending its troops against Houthi rebels (Butt & Butt, 2015).

Extra regional actors The United States

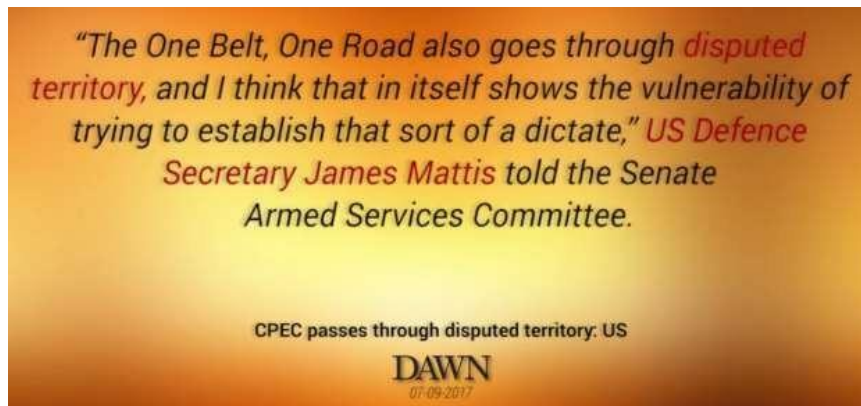
It is important to know about the intention of the US regarding CPEC. Whether the US is happy or not happy. There are many opinions regarding this assumption but broadly it is divided into two categories. The first category of scholars considers that the US is happy with China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The second category of scholars has contrary opinions. Let's examine these opinions.

Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt and Anum Abid Butt support that the US is in favor of the CPEC because it will integrate the region in economic prospects. It also helps to overcome the menace of terrorism and extremism in the region. They wrote in their article "Impact of CPEC on Regional and Extra Regional Actors" that the United States appreciated the CPEC project and showed best wishes for this project. Through Sino-Pak economic relations, the US can overcome terrorism and extremism in this region. The US state department official showed best wishes for this project and it would bring integration and prosperity to this region (Butt & Butt, 2015). But on the other hand, the US may have concerns about the Chinese presence near the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf (Malik, 2012). This concern shows through the US actions that the US investor has withdrawal 71.9 million dollars in 2016 whereas in 2015 the US has withdrawal 197.1 million of its investment from Pakistan. Wilson Centre of the US predicted the up-gradation of the US

relations with India and deterioration of relations with Pakistan (Siddiqi, November 15, 2016).

The US is also watching CPEC with a lot of concerns due to the concerns of India. This is the reason that the US Defense secretary has stated that CPEC is passing from disputed territory.

American Intelligence director Danial Courtus warned that CPEC is providing safe heaven and easy targets for terrorists.



The US has also developed its relations with India and started many military exercises and projects in the Indian Ocean for countering the influence of China in this region.

Conclusion and recommendations

The CPEC is not only strengthening the economies of Pakistan and China but it also causes the economic recovery and integration of this region. Pakistan and China need to make maximum countries part of the CPEC despite making it a bone of contention. There are many countries like Afghanistan and CARs that can revolutionize their condition through this project whereas some grievous factors like India UAE and Iran, do not want to see this project in execution. Pakistan and Chinese foreign policymakers are required to work hard on these factors and make them part of the CPEC. This project has the potential

to change the conditions of these countries India can get easy access to Afghanistan and CARs which can boost Indian trade volume. Iran can get land access to India and China and can sell its oil and gas and other accessories through land routes and import goods from these countries. UAE can increase the volume of trade with China and can be agreed upon any solution which can minimize the loss of Dubai port. The US should support the CPEC for integration and durable peace in this region.

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