

1. A critical Analysis of Pakistan's Foreign policy post 9/11

9/11 was a watershed moment in the annals of the modern times. It was an event which shook the world and changed the dynamics of world politics. This all happened when twin towers in America were hit by hijacked planes and the men from Al- Daedalus were said to responsible for the attack. This attack not only resulted in the death of more than 3000 people, but shook the very pride of the US and took the world by storm. What followed thereafter is what is referred to as "War on Terror"⁶. The US was very firm in its stand to wipe out the roots of the terrorism and to perpetrator the attack to justice. In its fight against terror, the US garnered international support and thus began the never ending circle of violence, whose first victim became Afghanistan. Pakistan shared cordial relations with the US which were marred by occasional breakdowns because of the shaping of political events in Pakistan. Disappointment at the US support to India during the Sino-India war and the breakdown of democracy in Pakistan especially after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was removed from office dented the relationship between the two countries.⁷ The shaping of events after 9/11 granted a new lease to the relationship between US and Pakistan. The US needed Pakistan for its strategic reasons, as the latter being the neighbour of Afghanistan could prove a potent weapon in its fight against terror. It was the time when Taliban had maintained a stronghold in Afghanistan and the US believed that Osama was not only hiding there, but was protected by Taliban. After Taliban refused to hand over Osama to America, the latter believed that the sanctuary of terrorists operating from Afghanistan is a threat to world peace and thus decided to invade Afghanistan for which it sought the help from Pakistan. But it was not an easy decision for Pakistan to join the bandwagon of "War on Terror" as the country was already grappling with the security problems and by choosing to be US ally it was inviting more trouble to its already precarious situation, as Ahmed Rashid has rightly described the relations between the two countries after 9/11 as torturous.⁸ Pakistan has always been a country where military has dominated the politics and is always believed to call shots even if there is an elected civilian government. When 9/11 happened, Pakistan was headed by the powerful military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, so the US had no choice but to deal with him and to seek his support. There was a growing lobby within Pakistan consisting of ulemas⁹ who didn't want their country to fight against their Muslim brethren. Also, Pakistan supported the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Moreover, many people take it for a fact that Pakistan's relations with the US are determined by what is in the interest of US, not Pakistan.¹⁰ After initial phase of reluctance shown by Pakistan, it formally joined US and became one of its most important strategic allies. Pervez Musharraf justified this alliance by saying that the country had no choice but to join the alliance as the US had threatened of "bombing it into stone age" in case it declines to join US.¹¹ Thereafter the US was allowed to use the air bases in Pakistan to mount attacks against Afghanistan and also provided a loan of \$1 billion to Pakistan for its cooperation. This also meant signing of Kerry Lugar bill in 2009, which was to provide 7.5 billion dollar of aid to Pakistan over the period of five years, which was later on suspended after Bin Laden Killing.¹² Pakistan maintained the foreign policy of strengthening its relations with the US even though it meant the heavy losses for Pakistan in terms of human casualties.¹³ This also resulted in a further decline in its already precarious relations with Afghanistan as the estranged Taliban directly blamed Pakistan and directed their attacks against Pakistan. In turn Pakistan continued to receive aid from America which it would channel into meeting its security and economic interests.

2. CPEC: prospects and challenges

China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key artery of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers within and outside Pakistan. A blend of investment-loan-grant model of over US\$ 46 billion, CPEC contains projects aimed at building energy and communication infrastructure and industrial zones. Based on the analysis of primary and secondary data, this study aims to answer two questions: first, what are the main socio-economic or geostrategic prospects of CPEC for Pakistan and China? Second, are there any constraints and challenges in the implementation of CPEC projects and how are these going to be addressed? The paper examines CPEC’s potential in bringing about socio-economic development in Pakistan and its financial and geostrategic significance for China. It also explores key constraints related to the fragile security situation and the potential of CPEC to further exacerbate the geopolitical situation in the region, particularly in South Asia, where it could intensify tension between Pakistan and India as the latter perceives CPEC as a Chinese geopolitical and security project. In addition, the long-term financial implications of CPEC are assessed, with particular focus on its potential to become a debt trap for Pakistan in the long run.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor hereafter CPEC) is the flagship of China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative envisioned by president Xi Jinping in 2013 for the economic integration of Eurasia through belts and roads and other infrastructure initiatives. The OBOR is part of China’s grand strategy of its peaceful rise as a great power on the global stage through financial initiatives of \$ 40 billion Silk Road Fund and the 57 members Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to generate new growth engines along the New Silk Road with a win-win and cooperative approach. The OBOR has two international trade connections namely the land based ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and ocean-going ‘21st -Century Maritime Silk Road; the CPEC is the part of the former one. With the former launch of CPEC between China and Pakistan in April 2015 by President Xi Jinping, the CPEC has got a status of “game changer” or “fate changer” and nationalistic fervor in the political, media and public discourses in Pakistan. The multibillion dollar (US\$ 46 bn) CPEC is a network of roads, railway tracks, oil and gas pipelines, fiber optics for communication, dams, ports, airports and economic zones linking the Western part of China to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan running some 3000 km from Xinjiang to Balochistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan. Historically the Sino-Pakistan relations have remained more military- oriented, but it seems that a new beginning has begun to make the relationship more economic oriented focusing on trade, investment and energy cooperation. The CPEC has the potential to further deepen the relationship between China and Pakistan both economically and at public level and can change the geopolitics of South Asia connecting China to the Indian Ocean triggering concerns for India as the latter considers the CPEC, Gwadar Port under the control of China can be turned into a permanent Chinese naval facility in the Indian Ocean though it may not be a reality at least at this stage