

Current Affairs Mock 8.

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Question no 3

The CPEC marks a significant milestone as both nations celebrate a decade of collaboration. It was launched on April 20, 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signed 51 agreements and memorandums of understanding valued at \$46 billion. Also Chinese President signified the nature of the relationship b/w Pakistan and China with a Chinese saying:

"Strong wind reveals the strength of grass and genuine gold stands the test of fire."

CPEC have made various achievements and progress in the country while also facing multiple failures. To overcome these failures, appropriate measures are required to make CPEC the real benefitting project.

Successes of CPEC

Due the CPEC, our energy sector have transport have made various progress.

- (a) **Investment in energy sectors:** In the history of Pakistan, highest ever investment have been made in the energy sector i.e. \$36B. A series of coal projects have already been completed i.e. approx 4 projects, of 330 MW have been completed. Also, hydropower project each of 720 MW, and LNG project of 1100 MW have been successfully completed.

The biggest problem in Pakistan is of persistent loadshedding and CPEC have is predominantly working to overcome it - Now, we have more installed capacity which would lessen the impact of hydrocarbon also. So CPEC is the savior for energy sector of Pakistan - It not only increases production capacity but is providing us with cheaper electricity.

- Investment in transport sector:

CPEC have highly invested in transport sector of Pakistan. Total accumulative investment is more than \$25B which is broadly divided into 3 parts i.e. motorways, highways and Railways.

The Network of motorways and highways is spread across the country. Eastern and Southern alignment have already been completed. While Ratodero-Gwader motorway, Northern alignment (from Baham to Khunjerab) and central alignment is under construction.

- Investment in Agriculture Sector:

CPEC have ^{Promised to} Invested approx \$20B or even more in agricultural sector of Pakistan. It would include modernization of irrigation techniques, seed development programmes (i.e. sugarcane, rice, wheat, maize, cotton along with fruits) to increase agricultural yield, solarization of tubewells, small dams and canals to store rainwater, establishment of cold storage stations.

"China's plan is to generate more than \$100B from a agricultural sector of Pakistan annually by 2036."

- **Gwader Seaport:** It is a multidimensional project which includes coastal tourism, special economic zones, electricity projects, clean drinking water, educational health projects. Once it develops, it could be Indo-Pacific largest seaport.

- **Special Economic zones:** CPEC has scheduled to develop 9 special economic zones i.e. two each in Punjab, Balochistan and KP while one each in Sindh, Gilgit Baltistan and ATK.

There are total 2400 industries, and as per plan 400 in Allama Iqbal economic zone in Faisalabad, 230 each in Gwader zone and Rashakai (Gardan). So largest textile city in South Asia would be made in Faisalabad.

Shorter access to Market: Through BRI, initiated by CPEC, we would have shorter access to market. China-Europe Corridor would reduce distance by 22000 km, and reduce time from 49 days to 11 days. Also it would reduce distance and time to middle east. Also there would be less transportation cost and timely access to market.

Failures of CPEC.

(1) **Energy sector:**

In terms of energy sector, hydrocarbon based projects were completed at top. out of 8000 MW, 5000 MW were completed, all of which were based on imported hydrocarbons.

Secondly, the installation of indigenous projects is dead slow. For example, Suki Kinari that was supposed to be completed in 2022 is still not completed.

Then Kohala, Pū Mahal, Azad Pattan etc haven't been initiated yet. Wind projects under CPEC are still yet to be completed of 3000 MW and 900 MW of solar.

Moreover, the coal project, a local project of 320 MW haven't

been completed. Bloc 1 is been extensively utilized while Bloc 2 haven't been initiated yet.

Also, Pakistan is one of the worst affecties of climate change so that coal further causes environmental degradation but it should be persued at any cost because two of the largest coal burners i.e India and ~~Pakistan~~ China are Pakistan's immediate neighbours - so there would be an impact on Pakistan, and According to Sindh coal mining departments.

"That coal is the 4th largest silicone coal reserve - if we produce 50,000 MW per day. Its enough for upcoming 150 years"

- ~~Along with~~ Transport Sector:

In transport sector, Railway is in eroding phase and seriously undermined in our country. Power elites have sidelined railways emphasizing more on motorways and highways.

for example MLI is still pending. It should be top priority because its a mass transit project. But the problem is that its still on the paper.

On ~~10~~ Oct 17, a delegation was signed that its cost is reduced to

₹6.67B, and it would be completed soon. Railways are most important bcz its a national project. So MLI should be implemented soon as it could have various benefits for us.

Secondly, Gwader seaport could be the largest seaport ~~but~~ as 120 berths were to be made. But the ground reality is that 3 berths were completed in 2006 and 2 berths were completed after 2014 onwards. So the construction is slow.

- Special economic zones.

The future of any country lies in industrialization and our industrial system is weak. As 9 special economic zones were scheduled to be made but since now only 17 industries

have come from which 5 are mega industries - No sizeable investment have been made in Industrial sector. The possible reason for investment could be fluctuations in GDP of Pakistan for example.

In 2021-22, GDP growth rate was 5.7%, 2022-2023 - less than 1%. then from 2006-2007 - GDP was approx 6%. In 2008-2009, it was less than 2%.

This doesn't attract investors. Also, we have expensive production costs and one has to take approval from max 16 departments to invest in market. Also, due to instability, security issues, investors are hesitant to invest in the market.

- Agricultural sector

The investment is negligible in agricultural sector because the first condition is they want land on lease but our farmers and government is hesitant in doing so we should make policies or do public private partnership. Synchronization is needed in Pakistan and China policies, so that farmers don't get exploited, and agricultural yield also increases. There should be experts from each side i.e. water experts, seed experts, and comprehensive strategies should be made.

To conclude, CPEC is an opportunity to make Pakistan a developed nation but unfortunately the projects are dead slow. There are no sizeable investments made in industrial and agricultural sectors of Pakistan. Also, furthermore we should deal with the rising and multiple security threats across the country. Law enforcement agencies should protect the investments and Chinese locals; increase investment in the navy of country. Also in Gwadar state need to deploy and accommodate local people - once they start benefiting from the state and projects, they would become loyal. There is a need to bring more innovation - Thus CPEC is another East India Company with lifetime opportunity, so we should utilize it properly.

Question no 4

Saudi-Iran Relations ~~Intensified~~ have been strained over several geopolitical issues, ~~and~~ they intensified in 2016 when Shia clerics were hanged by Riyadh ~~Further~~, and Sunni clerics by Iran - Resultantly GCC cut of diplomatic ties with Iran. But Beijing China played the role of mediator and reapproached the relations between Saudi and Iran. Foreign ministers of Saudi and Iran repeatedly met in Beijing and end result was normalization of ties. Both the countries announced to resume their diplomatic ties with each other for example, re-opening of embassies in each other capitals. Moreover, Tehran invited King Salman and Riyadh invited President of Iran. Both the countries principally agreed to resume co-operation not only in diplomacy but also in agreements that were made in 1998 and 2002 for that, both countries have decided to make working groups for that, cultural exchange programs, increase people to people contact, and to remove visa ban on pilgrims. This Saudi-Iran reapproachment have far reaching impacts on middle east as well as Pakistan - let us delve into these implications ~~due~~"

Implications on Middle east:

There ~~was~~ were numerous conflicts in middle east due to conflict ~~between~~ between Saudi and Iran.

Saudi and Iran, both are divided on the basis of sect. So there was a rivalry for dominance i.e strategic dominance in Persian Gulf
If we see

Iraq and Syria -

~~before~~ In 2003, the regime of Saddam Hussain ~~ended~~ was intervened by US military and his regime was ended. Iran became the major beneficiary as Saddam was outrightly against Iran and ~~has been~~ fighting for continuously more than 10 years.
~~was~~
has been

so after him, Iran found ground access to Syria and Lebanon. as Shia dominant government under Nour-al-Malik came in power.

Then in Syria, there was a contrary situation as Sunni dominant country was governed by Shia dictator i.e. Bashar-ul-Asad, son of Hafiz-ul-Asad. Iran ~~has been~~ was supporting Bashar-ul-Asad by sending its ground forces, multiple weapons especially drones, funds and was prevailing Hizbullah in Lebanon to join the war in Syria. While, Saudi supported Sunni rebels (Free Syrian Army), Al-Nusra and declared them as freedom fighters i.e. Jihadists. They purchased weapons from US and sent them to rebels, provided funds to them.

They both did this because of geo-political importance that Syria has for both countries. Also, Syria has been the supply line for Iran to Hizbullah in Lebanon.

Iran - Iraq - Syria - Lebanon.

Role of Iran was increasing in Lebanon which was a threat to Saudi

it That's why Saudi wanted free and fair elections to end Bashar-ul-Asad regime

Now, due to rapprochement of Saudi and Iran, Iraq will develop a neutral foreign policy. Saudi would also invest in Iran and Iraq and there would be an increased collaboration.

While there are chances of peace in Syria have never been so bright as they are today. Bashar-ul-Asad have been invited to the Arab League conference for the first time after 2011 and rebels in Syria have been declared ceasefire. Saudi and Iran both have initiated diplomatic efforts for longlasting stability and political settlement in Syria.

Yemen:

In 2015, Government of Mr. Hadi was supported by Riyadh with funds, weapons, aerial attacks against the rebels. They declared Houthi rebels as terrorists. They potentially challenged

the writ of state in Yemen - While Iran was supporting Houthi rebels, and declared them as freedom fighters - This was done because of Yemen's Gulf of Aden strategic importance for Saudi Arabia. More of 70% of oil trades pass through it. Hence growing presence of Iran in Yemen endangers trade of Saudi Arabia - They both are primarily responsible for civil war in Yemen.

However, after the reapproachment, both the countries have shown commitment to end the civil war in Yemen, and Houthis declared ceasefire till december 2023. Both Saudi and Iran have paced up the progress of negotiation in Yemen - Efforts have been started for the exchange of prisoners. New power share formula have declared in which Houthis would be accomodated in power structure i.e in elections.

Implications on Pakistan .

Both the countries have been secretly involved in sectarian war in Pakistan. Both of them produced sectarian hate literature to promote their policies. They supported religious seminaries and sectarian militant groups -

Lastkar-e-Thangji operates in Pakistan and Afghanistan and is offshoot of anti-shia party Sipah-Sahaba Pakistan.

Due to this conflict, clerics were being involved giving sectarian hate speeches. There were sect based killings happening in Pakistan for example in Gilgit (Parachinar, D-I Khan), Quetta, Faisalabad and Thang etc.

Sectarian terrorism was a major security threat in Pakistan - Thus whole nation was divided on the basis of sectarian lines. It resulted in hundreds of deaths, explosions, suicide bombings. But

But, Now due to reapproachment, there would be a positive impact on Pakistan. There would be a revival of co-existence of all Islamic countries, and Religious seminaries, clerics who were getting

support would be reduced.

Also, there have been 2 major confusions in the foreign policy of Pakistan i.e US-China Rivalry and Saudi-Iran Rivalry.

There was a confusion that Pakistan should join Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition (IMCTC) or not as Iran was excluded from this military pact, and after much deliberation, Pakistan joined it and gave a clear message that if organization becomes entirely Shia, Pakistan would disengage.

Secondly, Pakistan was confused in sending its troops to Yemen or not. After much ~~thinking~~, Islamabad turned down King Salman's request of sending troops. After that, there was strong retaliation from Saudi Arabia, and we get to see increasing relations with India. Pakistan was being persistent to Saudi Arabia due to number of factors. ~~One of them was socio-economic~~

One of them was socio-economic factor as there are more than 2.4 m diaspora in Saudi Arabia and \$8 Billion remittances come from there. In whole Middle East, 4.5 m diaspora are there and approx \$14B remittances from there. Also Saudi, UAE and Qatar we get have been repeatedly bailing out Pakistan, and we get massive financial support from them during balance of payment crisis.

Then there was a diplomatic factor as it was not Saudi but whole Arab world. Antagonizing Saudi means antagonizing whole Arab world. Also, if we created a vacuum, India would have filled it so it was also a threat to Pakistan. There was also a factor that more we tilt towards Saudi, Iran will tilt towards India.

But after normalization of relations by China, Gwader Chabahar port was taken back from India and given to China. Moreover, now clarity would increase in the foreign policy of Pakistan. We have

already strong relations with Saudi while relations with Iran would be initiated. In terms of CPEC, Saudi is an official partner while chances with Iran would increase. In future, there are chances of Pakistan - Iran - Turkiye railway track to materialize.

Thus reconciliation between Saudi and Iran holds significant implications for Pakistan. There would be a clarity in foreign policy and enhanced diplomatic ties with both of them may foster economic opportunities and collaboration thus benefitting Pakistan's strategic interests. To conclude, therefore it is necessary that Pakistan must navigate its role carefully and foster positive relations with both of them in a way to maximize economic and strategic benefits.