

Time = 55 minutes

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Q1: Critically evaluate the reasons for slowing down of CPEC projects. What options would you suggest to Islamabad and Beijing to reinvigorate the project and make Phase II a tangible reality?

① CPEC Project

11/20

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an innovative project for increased connectivity among Asian, Central Asian, African and European countries. It was introduced by China's Prime Minister Xi Jinping in 2013 as a part of Belt and Road Initiative. CPEC Phase I mostly focused on infrastructure development and connectivity. The Phase II of CPEC has more focus on energy, projects, information and technology, industrial developments, agriculture sector, special Economic Zones, and social development.

② Recent Slowdown of CPEC Project; Causes

The CPEC Phase II slowed in progress as compared to expectations

that China and Pakistan had. Several reasons caused produced hindrances. Some of them are discussed below;

(i) Enhanced security threats

Pakistan is facing consistent security threats, especially in recent times frequent attacks by terrorists on security personnel, civilians and Chinese nationals were carried out.

(ii) Frequent attacks by the separatist organizations on Chinese

The separatist organizations, such as Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Majid Baigal and other separatists involved in attacked on Gwadar seaport, Balochistan Hub and Quetta. Recently, a bomb blast near Karachi airport killed Chinese. These threats have raised concerns in Chinese government regarding future of CPEC.

(iii) Involvement of TTP and increased attacks on Chinese

Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan is using Afghan soil and it involved in

targetting Chinese. The attacks on Dasu Dam and Bisham were seen as targetting primarily on Chinese. These security concerns threatened the future of CPEC and slowed down the project significantly.

(iii) Attempts by the neighbouring country in compromising Pakistan-China relations

India is the rival of Pakistan and it is involved in state-terrorism in Pakistan. Pakistan found Indian RAW Agent Kulbhushen Yadav on its land. It explicitly showed Indian involvement in rising terrorism and its attempts to threaten CPEC's future and China-Pakistan friendship.

(b) Political instability in Pakistan consistently slowing implementation of CPEC projects

Pakistan's political situation has historically remained unstable. The vote of no-confidence against Imran Khan and then continued electoral confusions for the coalition government legacy have shifted focus from CPEC develop-

ment to the political rivalries in the state. This continued instability has slowed down CPEC project especially phase II materialization. The ongoing talks between PTI government and coalition government also remained without agreements. The state's coercive policies against the opposition are further complicating the situation. These political crisis are playing significant role in CPEC's continuation.

(c) Economic instability of the state compromising CPEC development

Pakistan's continued dependency on foreign lenders create concerns in Chinese officials. Pakistan is engulfed in unending debt crisis and economic policies of the government are producing less results due to lack of proper execution and implementation. This factor is also involved in slowing down of CPEC project.

(d) Global Economic crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic,

Russia-Ukraine war and frequent global conflicts delayed CPEC projects initiation and continuation. The phase II was to be started in 2021 but due to COVID-19 and global wars, it was delayed.

③ Recommendations to Reinvigorate CPEC project

① Ensuring security dynamics

Pakistan should strengthen its security policies. Enhance border security with Afghanistan to prevent infiltration of TTP and control terrorist activities. The country should strengthen its security dynamics, carry out surveillance systems against terrorists to ensure security of Chinese Nationals. This step by Pakistan will enable it to regain trust of China and reinvigorate CPEC phase-II.

② Controlling separatist organisations to ensure safety of Chinese Nationals

Pakistan should reallocate resources and ensure equitable distribution to overcome grievance in minority

alized communities. Equitable resources distribution will revive the trust of Baloch people in Pakistani government. In this way, youth of Balochistan will not be involved in separatist organisation and it will ensure effective running of Phase-I of the great project.

© Enhancing political stability for effective implementation of CPEC Phase-I

The state should focus on development projects rather than focusing on ~~the~~ reason-less rivalry of political leaders. There should be negotiations and dialogues to maintain a stable political environment. It will result in economic stability as well to attract foreign investors and reinvigorate Phase II of the flagship project.

© Balancing regional geo-political dynamics

The US-China rivalry is ongoing. United States Coercive policies to undermine China's influence

can compromise China's BRI. Pakistan should maintain relations with US, at the same time strengthen relations with China and bring a balance in the foreign policy to ensure smooth developments and materialise CPEC Phase-II.

② Transitioning towards sustainable energy

Pakistan should transition from imported hydrocarbons dependency to the sustainable energy such as hydro, solar, wind energy to reduce energy crisis and ensure due payment for the uninterrupted development of Phase-II.

Conclusion

The slowing of CPEC project is mainly because of enhanced security threats, frequent terrorist attacks of Chinese nationals and continuous political instability. However, they can be overcome with sustainable approach to control terrorist organization, working on root causes of these threats so as to materialize the phase II of flagship project for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

Time = 50 minutes

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Question - 2

Islamabad-Kabul tension lingers on due to TTP using Afghan land as a launching pad for terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the situation. Give possible recommendations.

① Islamabad-Kabul Tensions

① Background

11/20

US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 revived Taliban regime in Afghanistan after 20 years of long war-on-Terror. The withdrawal of American troops enabled Taliban to gain control over military bases, they gained sophisticated weapons of NATO and revived their strength completely. Despite a war-torn country, Taliban regime is reluctant to counter-terrorism or cooperate with Pakistani government.

② Terrorists infiltration through porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border
Many terrorists organizations

Al-Qaeda, and TTP regrouped and infiltrated into Pakistan and they continued their jihadist ideology in Pakistan. Their aim is to impose Sharia law in the country and counter west policies.

c) Counter-terrorism strategies by Pakistan

Pakistan has used coercive strategies against terrorist organisations. Many military operations such as Operation Zarb-e-Azam, Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, and zero tolerance policy against terrorist. Due to non-cooperation from US-NATO-ISAF, operation Zarb-e-Azah remained less effective. Had the NATO-ISAF cooperated, Pakistan might have ended the menace of terrorism.

d) Aims of terrorist organisations

Recently, there is a resurgence of militancy and terrorism targeting Chinese nationals, ethnic and sectarian attacks. They want to

control tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Their objectives are of imposing Sharia law and release of prisoners. For such aims they are conducting terrorist attacks, suicide bombing, target killing, ethnic targeting, and casualties of foreign nationals.

(e) Jihadist ideology and exploitation of marginalized population of Pakistan

The tribal areas and Balochistan are continuously ignored and due to grievances of ignorance in such populations led them to involve in separatist movements. Due to this reasons, terrorists have gained a fertile ground to breed terrorism on lands of Pakistan.

(f) Pakistan's direct air-strikes on bases Taliban of TTP

Recently, ~~of rise~~ ~~of~~ unprecedented rise of terrorist attacks moved Pakistan's foreign policy towards dynamic approach and they directly attacked

bases of TTP on Afghan soil. This move by Pakistan aimed to deliver message to the Afghan Taliban regarding prioritization of national interest of Pakistan and establish peace in the region. However, such a coercive move has compromised sovereignty of Afghanistan and ~~in~~ tense the future ties of both countries.

① India's utilization of opportunity to strengthen ties with Afghanistan

India is using the strained ties of Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen its relations with Taliban. It is attempting to alienate Pakistan in the region and increase its influence for economic and political gains.

② Recommendations for a balanced approach

① Formulation of comprehensive policy to address the situation

Pakistan should formulate a comprehensive policy, and adopt a three-tiered approach including economic, political and military approach. Alongwith, military operation Pakistan must make efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties with Taliban regime to gain their support ~~again~~ in countering terrorism.

⑥ Ensuring border security

Bad Afghanistan Pakistan border should be secured to inhibit infiltration of TTP or any other proxy terrorists into the country. The state should control the informal finances coming into the country and ensure security and peace in the region.

⑦ Improving socio-economic status of marginalized community

The state must ensure equitable resource distribution and address the grievances of Baloch people. This will reduce the fertility of soil for terrorist groups as the

Communities will be empowered. Government should build infrastructure such as roads, schools, buildings, hospitals and bridges to gain trust of tribal communities. The state should make efforts to enhance education and provide adequate healthcare facilities as well. These measures would significantly reduce conflicts and bring peace to the region and prevent TTP's influence in the sphere.

④ Strengthening diplomatic ties with Taliban government

Pakistan should strengthen diplomatic ties, engage in dialogues with Afghan Taliban to gain their trust and support in countering terrorism. This will also help Pakistan continue its influence in the region and prevent India from undermining Pakistan's credibility.

(c) Conclusion

Pakistan's attack on TTP bases on Afghan soil has strained their ties. This coercive strategy adopted by Pakistan after unprecedented terrorist attacks on Pakistan's soil undermining Pakistan's credibility and peace in the region. The dynamic policy of Pakistan against TTP delivered the message of prioritization of national interest of Pakistan. However, the country should engage in dialogues with Taliban government while working on socio-economic status of the country to prevent alienation of Pakistan and maintain peace in the region.