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**IMPACT OF CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN PAKISTAN ON CPEC
AND PAK-CHINA RELATIONS**

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Abstract

Pakistan and China have enjoyed extremely cordial relations since 1950. Both countries are collaborating in the area of Geo Economics, technology and foreign policy. In the light of preexisting and current close ties, China trusted Pakistan as part of her ambitious project, One Belt One Road (OBOR), started in 2014. The authors intent to find out the change in impact due to new Government (PTI). Under this huge geo economic development project, China tents to extent to another 68 countries spending aver \$3 trillion on infrastructure. On completion, this mega project it will connect china to Europe, middle east and Africa by using roads, railways, airports, fiber-optic connections, and seaports.

TO measure the impact, document analysis along with review of very specific literature was carried out. In addition to the above primary data was collected from corporate members of CPEAC including both previous and present Government. The collected data was analyzed through qualitative method it was revealed that previous Government seemed more eloquent and accommodating the Chinese terms and conditions. However, it was found that present government keeping a pace succinctly without any hindrance and delay in the CPEC. This research focused on mainly Pak China relation with respect to CPEC. More research may be carried out on other 68 countries based upon their goals. In the scheme, there are regional loops and branches which extend the reach of emerging transportation networks but also connect them at strategic and critical points across the world. When talking about China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar Port is that strategic and critical point of the project which lies on the intersection of 'Belt' and the 'Road' and marries up the two components. In 2016, during the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) tenure, the multi-billion dollars project became partly operational and it seemed that the government completed its tenure without any controversies claiming of rifts between the two countries surrounding the CPEC. However, when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) assumed power in 2018, many ministers of the government claimed that the government was reviewing the project. Moreover, the controversy of inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the project without China's permission also gave an impression that Pakistan and China no longer enjoy the past cordial relations. However, during November's tour of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China, it has agreed to bail out Pakistan from economic crisis. This paper aims to look at: What were the policies of PML-N about CPEC? What are the policies of PTI regarding the project? Has difference in policies affected the ties between the two countries? This paper is a qualitative study and would explore primary and secondary sources of literature to look at the difference between the policies of PML-N and PTI and how the change in policies could impact Pakistan's economy and bilateral relations between Pakistan and China.

Introduction:

The paper looks at the multi-billion-dollar project of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by first exploring the reason for a huge investment in Pakistan by China. This study is based on secondary literature and relies mainly on published articles to answer this question. Some parts of the answer to same question are also dependent on the response of political analysts. It is argued that Chinese investment in Pakistan is partly because of shared vision of both the countries of maintaining peace in the region, and mainly because Pakistan is at a very important geo strategic location, it could provide China easy access to many regions. The paper then analyzes the policies of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) governments regarding the CPEC. The paper for a response to this question mainly depends upon the newspaper articles containing the interviews of PML-N (especially, Focal Person) and PTI leaders. The research also relies on the analyst's response to this question. The paper through examining primary and secondary literatures reaches to a conclusion that despite the PTI's statements to review the CPEC projects, the PTI has not made any major changes in its scope deliverable and timelines policies regarding the project. It has, however, diverted its focus towards more people-friendly projects as opposed to mega projects which PML-N was focusing on.

The study also looks at the intervening variables such as role of military in the policies regarding the CPEC as suggested by Wolf (2016). The paper concludes that military cannot play any

definite role in changing policies that were already agreed upon by the two countries when the agreement was signed by examining the response of the analysts for this question.

Literature review:

a. Ties between Pakistan and China:

Despite Pakistan and China having different ideologies for the governance, both countries have shared friendly relations since the former became the third country in the world and first Islamic country to recognize the latter as an independent state (Chaudhry, 1986, Kumar 2006). The two events that lead to the strengthening of a belief that China is the closest ally of Pakistan were: firstly, the Chinese help in neutralizing the Indian threat during the Pak-Indo war of 1965 and secondly its support to Pakistan in 1971 when East Pakistan got separated from Pakistan and India's aggression on Pakistan's borders, although China couldn't assist like it did in 1965 because of the Russian threat. Pakistan has also extended its support to China in times of need, for instance Pakistan opposed United States move of declaring China as an aggressor in the Korean War, and it has also supported China during Tibet's rebellion (Kumar 2006).

Chaudhri (1986) even goes on to draw a comparison between Muslims of the sub-continent and Chinese, saying that both faced similar kinds of oppression after the mutiny of 1857 against the British in the sub-continent, and the Opium War of 1856 that destabilized the Chinese region. He further says that the both countries are involved in integrative relationship which is based on exchange of goods and trade. The relationship between the two is based on maintaining peace in the region that is furthered by common enemy in the region that is India. The geo-strategic position of Pakistan give China access to Gwadar Port that helps in breaking US's hegemony over seas. China has also helped boost Pakistan's defense capabilities and economy by providing military hardware and by signing trade agreement in 1963, respectively (Chaudhri, 1986).

Moreover, both countries share the same goal that is to build peaceful ties with the neighboring countries for the sake of stabilizing the region, which makes them perfect allies and partners in any massive project (Chaudhri, 1986, Abid & Ashfaq, 2015)

However, Kumar (2006) argues that China and Pakistan have, indeed, very strong military and strategic relationships but when it comes to economic relations they are very weak. Most of the China's trade is between the US and a huge chunk with India. The trade volume of China with Pakistan stood at 4.26 in 2005 and with the US and India in the same year was 211.63 and 18.73, respectively (Kumar, 2006).

Despite signing China Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA), the fiscal year report of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for 2017 revealed that the trade deficit of Pakistan has further increased with China (Iqbal, 2018).

b. What is CPEC?

In the light of these preexisting ties and sharing a similar vision, China made Pakistan part of its ambitious project One Belt One Road. China, in 2014, started a huge economic development project called One Belt One Road (OBOR) (Farr, 2017). The OBOR Project comprises of three routes: Southern route that begins from the third largest city in South Central Asia, Guangzhou, and moves towards the western parts of China, connecting Kashgar with Pakistan at Kunjarab and it is from this point that China seeks to connect to Gwadar Port in Arabian Sea; central route

starts from Shanghai and connect the country to Tashkent and all the way to Persian Gulf; the last is the northern corridor that connects China to Russia and European cities (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). China, under this project, during the next several decades will spend over \$3 trillion on infrastructure investments in 68 countries. This new Silk Road initiative, upon completion, will connect China to Europe and Africa using roads, railways, airports, fibre-optic connections, and seaports. In the scheme, there are regional loops and branches which extend the reach of emerging transportation networks but also connect them at strategic and critical points across the globe. When talking about China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar Port is that strategic and critical point of the project which lies on the intersection of 'Belt' and the 'Road' and marries up the two components (Farr, 2017).

China would invest around \$46 billion in Pakistan through the CPEC. Under the project, China would generate around 17,000 megawatts of electricity for Pakistan, costing the former around \$34 billion. The remaining money would be spent on infrastructure, which includes up gradation of the railway line between Karachi and Peshawar (Bhattacharjee 2015).

Through this project, Pakistan could become one of the most strategically important countries in the region, and China could build a naval base at Gwadar Port to neutralize the influence of the US in the Asia Pacific region (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

Moreover, after its construction, it will prove to become a major route for the trade between China, Africa and Middle East. The projects of the CPEC are divided into three phases of which the shortest were completed in 2017 and the longest will be completed by 2030. The route for CPEC will run through several cities of Pakistan (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

c. PML-N and PTI:

The idea of trade route between China and Pakistan was envisioned in the Musharraf era when he said he would be more than willing to facilitate Chinese Navy at Gwadar Port (Mukherjee & Sinha, 2007); however, it was under the premiership of Nawaz Sharif that most of the agreements were signed under CPEC after Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stressed the construction of the CPEC during his May 2013 Pakistan visit (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

In 2013, Nawaz Sharif on his visit to Beijing agreed to eight agreements—including construction of 200 kilometers tunnel for the project— which cost around \$18 billion. In 2014, then- president Mamnoon Hussain also visited China to talk about the CPEC and in the same year Nawaz Sharif visited China and agreed to 19 more agreements, which included energy and infrastructure projects. In April 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan and signed 51 agreements (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vehemently supported the project with then-minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal giving many statements in favor of the project; CPEC, according to him, the project was not the manifestation of PML's vision alone or Chinese vision, it was, rather, the fusion of visions of both the countries. He further explained that both PML(N) and Chinese government agreed to complete this project in three phases. however, as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) assumed power it decided to review the strategy regarding CPEC, saying the government would launch a plan to change the project into "real game changer" for the country (Bokhari, 2018). Moreover, Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce, Textiles, Industries Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood also gave a

statement wherein he had said that all projects related to the CPEC must be halted for a year as the projects are benefiting to Chinese companies but not Pakistani companies (Nation, 2018). In response, PML-N's Ahsan Iqbal had criticized the PTI government and said that China has invested millions in Pakistan when no other country was willing and has provided employments to many people in Pakistan (Nation, 2018). These statements gave an impression as if the PTI policies regarding the project are different from the PML-N's policies.

However, Wolf (2016) and Boni (2016) have argued that due to the CPEC, military has institutionalized its role in the decision making of the country and change in civilian government won't have any influence over the CPEC policies as to begin with military has become the major stakeholder in the project. As oppose to Wolf (2016), Irshad, Xin & Arshad (2015) argue that CPEC is China's effort to transform its ties with Pakistan, focusing more on economic ties and less on military aspect.

Research methodology:

This is mainly a qualitative study and explores secondary sources of literature to look at the difference between the policies of PML-N and PTI and how the change in policies could impact Pakistan's economy and bilateral relations between Pakistan and China. However, some primary data has also been collected through interviews of experts on CPEC to corroborate the findings from secondary data. This research also analyzes, though very briefly, the role of military in formulating policies regarding the CPEC.

Interviews:

An interview was conducted with a political analyst and expert on inter-state relations between Asia, Asia Pacific and South East Asia regions, Mian Abrar. During the interview, he was asked about the policies of PML-N related to CPEC, and the policies of PTI related to the project. He was also asked if there was any shift in the policies and if there is any, would that impact bilateral ties between the countries. He was also asked about the role of military in the project as pointed out by Wolf (2016).

Mian Abrar rejected the notion that military has a role to play in changing the course of the policies, saying that all agreements fall under sovereign guarantees and no country can break its promise made to the other country. He elaborated by saying that military cannot change the policies regarding the CPEC as Pakistan is bound to fulfill the commitment it has made with China.

Regarding the difference between PML-N and PTI policies, he said that PTI has not changed its policies towards the CPEC; it has only changed the direction of policies by emphasizing more on people-friendly projects as opposed to the PML-N, which focused more on mega projects.

He said the PTI is more interested in finishing the social welfare projects that are related to education and health as the government wants to avoid taking loans required for the mega projects.

The reason, he cited, for the change in direction of policies was Pakistan's current economic crisis. According to him, Pakistan's economy doesn't allow it to initiate mega projects at the moment. However, he said, China has started to invest in skill development and even established a university in Kohat.

He further commented on the news reports, claiming that Pakistan has made Saudi Arabia third partner in the CPEC, saying that Pakistan never made Saudi Arabia partner in the CPEC, it only made it an investment partner. The analyst said that Pakistan has every right to make investment partners and that is acceptable to China as well. The agreement only states that no third partner could become part of the CPEC before 2020 and after that new partners could become part of the project. He said that Pakistan's move of making UAE and Saudi Arabia investment partners show the region that this project is not a threat to anyone and it is not exclusive, which the analyst regarded as a "good move".

He added that China is more than willing to make Afghanistan partner in the CPEC and that is the reason Pakistan is also pushing for the peace process in Afghanistan. He also rejected the notion that change in direction of policies could have an impact on bilateral ties, saying that the project is to be completed by 2030 and it doesn't matter whether the mega projects are finished first or other projects that are also part of the CPEC.

Another expert, Dr. Ejaz Hussain, who is a professor at Iqra University Islamabad and has also written extensively on CPEC, was also interviewed. According to him, the PTI government wanted to own CPEC by de-linking it with the PMLN. Thus it generated controversy in its early days. The military got to intervene to settle it. That's a major difference in terms of handling the project. Secondly, like the N, this government too wanted due share in CPEC projects for its industrial core. Thirdly, under this government, focus is on energy and communication projects such as dams and airports. The previous one focused more on road and rail infrastructure development, ie Orange Line. Last, under this government, some infrastructure and energy related projects have slowed down mainly due to lack of coordination between the two governments. Overall, CPEC is moving on!

Discussion:

As mentioned in the literature review that China invested in Pakistan because of the shared vision of maintaining peace and stability in the region. However, many countries in the region and US see it as China's effort to dominate the region and say that China is trying to expand its great power ambitions through this project. The project is particularly threatening for India as both Pakistan and China don't share cordial ties with it (Markey & West, 2016, Ahmad, 2016).

It has also been pointed out by Markey & West (2016) that China is also keen on establishing this corridor to counter the threat posed by members of Xinjiang's ethnic Uighur community who are fleeing from China because of its discriminatory policies towards them and finding refuge in Pakistan-Afghanistan borders. These people are also joining al-Qaeda and Taliban posing a security threat to China. So, through CPEC, China also aims to neutralize this threat.

It is also pertinent to note here that the Pakistan Navy organized a tour of CPEC routes for journalists and strategic analysts in 2018 and one of my students was also part of it. During the tour, she noticed growing presence of armed forces but that is not strange as there are many threats to the CPEC due to unrest in the region. However, what was more interesting was the fact that most of the institutions that imparted modern education were under armed forces' control, particularly in Balochistan. On their visit to one of these schools in Turbat, children gathered and recited the national anthem as to reassert their allegiance to the country. The same could not be observed when they travelled towards Sir Creek, which comes after traveling through many

impoverished areas of Sindh, there she couldn't see a single school run by the armed forces. She asked the Navy DGPR, whether the reason for the presence of schools administered by the armed forces in Balochistan was to counter separatist elements. The Navy DGPR didn't respond to this particular question. Pakistan and China are also aiming to change attitude of people towards the country in the areas where they can predict unrest and that is what they are doing through education in Balochistan. This was also evident from the interview I conducted of a political analyst, who said that through the CPEC, a focus has also been on establishing universities.

Further, China and Pakistan are not only interested in maintaining peace and stability in the region as pointed out by many authors; there is more to it than meets the eyes. According to an article published in The New York Times (2018), China and Pakistan are also furthering their military interests under the guise of the CPEC. The report said that Pakistan is expanding its military capabilities and China is aiming to militarize space.

However, owing to the much mystery surrounding the actual project, the real purpose of the project is extremely difficult to be ascertained.

PML-N & PTI:

The assumption that the policies of PTI government are different from the PML-N government emerged when Abdul Razak Dawood, advisor for commerce, textile, industry and production, and investment, gave an interview to Financial Times, saying that the PTI government is rethinking its role in the CPEC.

He had said that the PML-N government negotiated "badly" over CPEC and gave away a lot. He was of the view that the Pakistani companies would be at disadvantage here as opposed to Chinese companies.

Dawood had also informed the international daily that Prime Minister Imran Khan had formed a committee for the purpose of evaluating the CPEC.

He had also suggested that Pakistan should halt the project for a year so as to think thoroughly.

Finance Minister Asad Umar in the same article had also said that they don't want to take the same decision as Malaysia has taken—of cancelling three projects sponsored by China and placing another project under review.

However, the same day Abdul Razak Dawood denied that he had made such statements, saying that "part of his interview was taken out of the context".

The whole fiasco happened the same day as the news made rounds that the officials from Pakistan and China held a meeting and decided that they might open CPEC for third country whose involvement is beneficial for both Pakistan and China.

Dawood had received a lot of criticism for making these statements but it is important to mention here that he had made similar statements before the PTI government came into power as well. For instance, in an article published before in Dawn on January 9, 2018, Dawood claimed that the Chinese companies were getting benefit out of the CPEC, while Pakistani companies were gaining nothing out of it.

Dawood is also a chairman of Descon, an engineering company that has been recently awarded the contract for Mohmand Dam Project (Dawn, 2019).

Before Dawood's statement, Senator Shibli Faraz, who is also a member of the Senate's standing committee on planning, development and reforms, gave an interview to Arab News and said that the PTI government will review the projects that fall under the CPEC and will only keep those projects that are in Pakistan's favor (Arab News, 2018).

The senator had said at the time that the agreement would be honored but they intend to open project to other countries as well so it could become as beneficial for Pakistan as it is for China. He had also criticized the PML-N government for not disclosing terms and agreements of the projects in front of the parliament and had assured that the PTI government wouldn't hesitate to share terms and agreements of the projects that fall under the CPEC with the parliament.

In an interview with the same channel on the same day, Ahsan Iqbal had dismissed PTI senator's claims and said that everything was disclosed to parliament. The former planning minister had also warned PTI against reviewing CPEC, saying that it wouldn't be internationally acceptable if the agreement is reviewed. He warned the PTI government, if the project is reviewed, "no country will sign an agreement with you in future" (Arab News, 2018).

On September 17, 2018, in the wake of Ahsan Iqbal's statement wherein he had claimed that the PTI has made financial cuts in the projects that fall under the CPEC, KhusroBakhtiar dismissed the remarks and reiterated that CPEC has great potential for boosting Pakistan's economy (Pakistan Today, 2018).

Moreover, the PTI ministers have also made conflicting statements when it comes to including third parties in the. For instance, on September 20, 2018, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry had said that they had extended an invitation to Saudi Arabia to become part of the CPEC (Pakistan Today, 2018).

His statements came after Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Pakistan Today, 2018).

At that time, he said, Saudi Arabia is the first country Pakistan has asked to become partner in the mega project and had even announced that the actual amount Saudi investment in the project will be declared after its delegation's visit to Pakistan in October 2018 (Dawn, 2018).

However, in the first week of October, the information minister and Planning and Development Minister KhusroBakhtiar again announced in a press conference that Saudi Arabia won't be included in the project and instead the investment made by it would fall under a different agreement (Dawn, 2018).

On October 7, 2018, the prime minister had openly said that the CPEC projects are under review. During his visit to Balochistan, he confirmed that the current government is reviewing the CPEC projects so that they benefit Balochistan more (Dawn, 2018).

On October 18, 2018, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang was asked by the media about the reports that the PTI government has decided to review the CPEC projects among other

things. To this, Lu Kang had dismissed media reports and had said that the China has full support of the PTI government when it comes to the CPEC projects (Daily Times, 2018).

He had said: “The fact is that if you could adopt a comprehensive perspective regarding the new Pakistani government’s attitude towards the CPEC, you will notice that the Pakistani government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan continues to voice their support for the CPEC which they believe serves the long-term development of their country” (Daily Times, 2018).

On the other hand, on April 12, 2019, KhusroBaktiar admitted to cutting CPEC funds. The minister told the media that the government had diverted Rs24billion from different projects, including the projects that fall under the CPEC (Pakistan Today, 2019).

This article published in Pakistan Today (2019) further said that the move of slashing CPEC funds shows that the PTI government is less interested in the CPEC as compared to the PML-N, however, this paper argues against this.

It is, however, important to note that the prime minister is scheduled to visit China at the end of April and for this reason a meeting was held on April 11, 2019 (Dawn, 2019). According to Dawn (2019), during the meeting, the prime minister had reviewed the CPEC projects. The prime minister made it clear that the government would focus on agriculture, education and other sectors during the meeting.

Despite the assumption that the PTI government is less interested in the CPEC projects, both Chinese and Pakistani governments had expressed confidence in each other various times.

On March 19, 2019, Pakistani foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during his visit to China. During the meeting, Qureshi and Yi held discussion on CPEC among other things. They both had reiterated their “commitment to CPEC” (Dawn, 2019).

The Foreign Ministry of Pakistan had released a statement after the meeting wherein “negative propaganda against CPEC” was dismissed (Dawn, 2019).

Similarly, on April 2, 2019, the Chinese government had lauded the prime minister for breaking the ground for the construction of New Gwadar Airport, a Chinese-funded \$230 million project that falls under the CPEC (Pakistan Today, 2019).

According to Pakistan Today (2019), Chinese Foreign Ministry’s Spokesperson Geng Shuang had said that “we appreciate the prime minister’s attendance at the ceremony and we have every confidence in the prospects of our practical cooperation”.

On April 9, 2019, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua-led delegation met with China’s Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou and had expressed satisfaction with the speedy progress being made in the projects. On April 11, 2019, the prime minister had met with the 15 representatives of Chinese companies accompanied by Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing partaking in various CPEC projects. The premier during the meeting had assured that CPEC projects are PTI government’s top priority (The News, 2019).

Moreover, despite the remarks made last year about reviewing the CPEC projects, Express Tribune on March 22, 2019, reported that the PTI government had cleared a CPEC project worth Rs80 billion in a haste and without reviewing it thoroughly. The project pertains to western route of the CPEC. The Planning Ministry had approved the project only after 12 hours it had received the PC-1 of the project (Express Tribune, 2019).

The article published in the Express Tribune (2019) further explained that the PML-N government had given priority to eastern route as compared to the western. KhusroBakhtiar had said that the PTI government has preferred the western route over the eastern because completion of the eastern route would benefit economically neglected areas (Express Tribune, 2019).

It is interesting to note that during the early days of government formation, the PTI ministers gave controversial statements or they were made controversial, however, with the progressing of time their statements became less and less controversial.

PML-N leaders reacted very strongly to these decisions and statements, with Ahsan Iqbal, who used to head the ministry that oversees CPEC progress, saying that the PTI government should continue with the policies of PML-N drafted for the CPEC (Dawn, 2018) and Shehbaz Sharif saying that that PTI is acting like Pakistan's "enemies" when it came to the CPEC (Express Tribune, 2018). Ahsan Iqbal has specifically been more vocal in criticizing PTI and promoting PML (N)'s stance on CPEC. While talking to students at FC College Lahore on April 01, 2019, he explained his government policies towards CPEC in detail. Economic development, according to him, was his government first priority and CPEC is the most important means to achieve this goal. He emphasized that CPEC is a well thought out joint project of two neighboring countries-china and Pakistan. Pakistan's geo-strategic location (located at the intersection of China, South Asia and Central Asia) offered a huge temptation to china to plan for building this corridor so that it may connect different markets for generating new demands to stimulate its production sector. He further argued that both Pakistan and China agreed that development through CPEC will be based on scientific planning; it will be in three phases; and the easy path will be taken first. He further explained that PML (N)'s vision was to make a shift from geopolitical to geo-economics goals. He clarified that in the first phase by 2020, infrastructure will be built in different sector to fill the gap in our existing infrastructure. Second phase from 2020 to 2025 will focus on industrialization by establishing industrial zones equitably divided among different provinces. In the third phase, from 2025 to 2030, regional connectivity will be improved after filling gaps in our infrastructure. According to him, PML(N) government had set out four parameters : first one was the diversification of energy portfolio by including hydro, wind, coal and nuclear energy; second, to build a state of the port at Gawadar which will probably become the busiest port in fifteen years; third, modernization of road and railways networks through CPEC; fourth, fiber optic cable would be made functional soon. He also claimed that all the projects related to CPEC entail complete transparency. He considered political stability the most important requirement for the timely completion of this mega project. He reacted to the allegations of the concealments of many details about different projects associated with CPEC by saying "we are also Pakistani; we can't even think of doing anything against the interests of our own country". He categorically ruled out the possibility of CPEC turning into Chinese imperialism. He rather clarified that China wants Pakistan to an industrial economy. At the end, he criticized PTI for making CPEC controversial.

However, these controversies are not new; even during the PML-N's tenure it was reported that the party lawmakers and military are not on the same page regarding the project and China had reportedly expressed its displeasure over this as it was slowing down the progress of the project (Dawn, 2016).

The purpose to mention the rift among PML-N lawmakers, and between military and PML-N is to point out that the complete consensus couldn't even be reached during the PML-N tenure but that didn't mean that CPEC and Pak-China ties were in jeopardy.

The same is true for the PTI government as well, however, the analyst in the interview section has pointed out a minor difference between PTI and PML-N's approach towards the CPEC, which is that the former has emphasized more on social welfare projects, whereas the latter was keen on completing mega projects.

There are no changes in both governments' policies, it is just that the PTI has different approach towards the priorities of the projects that should be completed earlier; it wants people-friendly projects to be completed first as opposed to the PML-N which emphasized more on mega projects.

The PTI government even before elections stated that they would focus more on social projects. For instance, the PTI had stated in its 11 points before the elections that the government would focus on education and health more, and would avoid taking loans (Daily Pakistan, 2018).

Imran Khan visited China on November 3 to discuss this shift towards agriculture and creation of jobs from infrastructure (Dorsey, 2018).

Moreover, the PML-N itself admitted that its focus was on infrastructure development; the party launched its manifesto few weeks before 2018 elections and it said that now Pakistan has a strong infrastructure, so the party could focus more on agriculture and creating jobs after winning the 2018 elections (Dawn, 2018).

Furthermore, the analyst in the interview section suggested that this re-orientation of policies wouldn't have any impact on relations between China and Pakistan. According to him, China does not care whether mega projects are completed first or the social welfare projects as all these projects fall under the CPEC. Both countries just want the CPEC to be completed on time.

So, the PTI has made no move to get its ties estranged with China. In fact, quite the opposite, during Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to China in November, China has agreed to provide economic assistance to Pakistan to relieve the country from mounting economic crisis (Pakistan Today, 2018).

Conclusion:

Both countries are aiming to boost their economies through this project and, in addition to that, both countries are also aiming to become major players in the region when it comes to military capabilities and strategic policies. China's economy would benefit massively as the route will make it easier for China to get access to the other countries, meanwhile, it will also give a boost to Pakistan's economy. As mentioned above, both countries are also developing their military capabilities under the guise of the CPEC projects.

When it comes to the role of military in the CPEC, I would rely on comments of the analyst I interviewed who was of the view that a country cannot break its promise made to another country under the international law. They are bound to fulfill their commitments made to each other; if military has a role to play it would have been pre-decided and wouldn't change with the change in civilian governments.

Moreover, there is very less truth to the speculations that the PTI has started to review the CPEC projects; the government has just prioritized social welfare projects as compared to the mega projects that were focus of PML-N. The PML-N has also declared in its manifesto before the 2018 elections that it would shift its focus from infrastructure to agriculture and health sectors.

Further, Pakistan has made no such policies regarding the CPEC that could harm its ties with China, be it during the tenure of PML-N or PTI. The only difference between the two parties' approach towards the CPEC is that PML-N prioritized infrastructure projects and PTI is prioritizing social welfare projects that fall under the project. China only wants the CPEC to be completed by 2030 and the country doesn't really care about what projects are completed first.

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