

## China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Significance of Gilgit-Baltistan Constitutional Status

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### Abstract

China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a mega project considering to be a game-changer for Pakistan which will transform Pakistan completely in-terms of the economy and politics as well. But there's a very serious hurdle in the successful accomplishment of this mega joint project between China and Pakistan which is the constitutional status of Gilgit Baltistan region which is the main link and gateway of the project. This is qualitative research and the data collection done according to the secondary source of data. By this research, the policymakers, academics, and researcher will enable to understand the importance of CPEC and the best possible solution of the legal rights and constitutional status of the region of Gilgit Baltistan.

**Keywords:** China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Gilgit-Baltistan, Constitutional Status.

### Introduction

Gilgit Baltistan region (G-B), formally known as “Northern Area” located in the Northern side of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, administered and governed by the federation of Pakistan. G-B took freedom from the rule of Dogras on November 1, 1947, and constitutes its own government for 15 days. After that, the local leadership merge Gilgit-Baltistan unconditionally with Pakistan, because of religious affiliation and later in 1949 signed Karachi agreement. Unfortunately, it is still not a constitutional part of Pakistan. G-B is linked with Great Powers territorially, it shares a boundary with China, India, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan. The geographical location makes great importance of G-B (Zain, 2010).

Once, G-B was a very important route for trade the old Silk Route passes through G-B by the Chinese. Now, the Chinese are again constructing a new Silk Route by which they carry their goods and supply it to Arab Countries and Import crude oil from there. This Project was named as China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Chinese investing 64.7 billion USD in this project which is the key part of Chinese OBAR “One Belt, One Road” initiative (Butt, 2019). It is predicted that CPEC will be a game-changer for Pakistan. The route passes through all over in Pakistan. It will be beneficial for the whole

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country and will change the economical as well as the socio-political aspect of the whole country (Mustafa & Ammad, 2017).

Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway for CPEC because Pakistan shares her border with China by this region. But, there is a very serious issue and a hinder to complete the CPEC due to its optical and constitutional status. The Indian Prime Minister Modi recently claimed that G-B is a disputed territory and it is a part of Kashmir, so China is not being able to cross the CPEC route from G-B (Pandit, 2018).

The Chinese government will not take a huge risk by passing the economic corridor from a disputed area claiming by both Pakistan and India. This is the main reason why Pakistani government is taking a keen interest in making G-B its constitutional part or mulling over its provincial status, while on the other hand, India is also creating hurdles in the way of CPEC by claiming G-B as its own part (Rahman, 2016).

This paper discussed the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan and the significance of CPEC for Pakistan as well as G-B.

### **Literature Review**

*“CPEC: Geo-Strategic and Economic Significance”* by Vahid Pourtajrishi; This article is about the importance of CPEC. The researcher explains how much CPEC is important for both China and Pakistan. For Pakistan, it's a Game Changer this project will completely change the whole social and economic scenario of Pakistan. CPEC will be a chance for Pakistan to make its importance and for a prominent and leading role in the region.

*“CPEC: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan”* by Abid and Ashfaq; The explorers said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor is One Belt One Road project between China and Pakistan. It will demolish poverty and will bring prosperity in South Asia. The peace in South Asia is also concern with this project. This project will link Kashghar western China to the Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea through two thousand kilometers transport route.

*“Constitutional Status of G-B: An Issue of Human Security”* by Dr. Ehsan Mehmmod Khan; This research article is published by Margallah Publications. The writer is currently serving in Pakistan Army as Major General and posted as FCNA commander Gilgit Baltistan. In this research article the geostrategic importance ant the historical, administrative and constitutional voyage of Gilgit Baltistan. How the Gilgit-Baltistan become an administrative division of Pakistan, after the merge with Pakistan what steps were taken by the Pakistan government to give them their rights. How much it is

important to resolve the issue as the CPEC is passing through Gilgit-Baltistan and Gilgit-Baltistan become a gateway for CPEC.

*“G-B province: a CPEC prerequisite”* by Afzal Shigri; This news Paper article is published in Dawn on February 13, 2017. The analyst expressed that CPEC is a mega project which will change the whole economic and social-political scenario of Pakistan. But theirs is a very serious issue and hinders to functionalize the project. The Government must solve the constitutional issue of G-B so; the Chinese started this extremely important corridor which will bring prosperity in Pakistan. The writer is a former IGP Sindh and currently a defense analyst.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology is one of the main components of any research without defining the method the research will never be completed. To conduct this research, the researcher opted the following techniques and used the official website of CPEC. This research is explanatory research. This research work deals with the qualitative data and the source of data collection used in this research is secondary sources of data. The data were available in the form of manuscripts, literature, published research works, CPEC official website, research articles, and newspapers. The actual and correct figures of projects under CPEC were taken from the CPEC’s official website. Maps were used to give more inside details of projects and to understand the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The domain of this research work is the constitutional status of the disputed region located in the north of Pakistan known as Gilgit-Baltistan.

### **Details of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

This is famous that the friendship between Sino-Pak is higher than that of mountains, deeper than that of sea, sweeter than the honey and stronger than the steel. The friendship is all-weather tested, durable and sturdy. China and Pakistan share 523 km border from the northern side of Pakistan and the western side of China at Khunjerab Pass. The only road which links China to Pakistan is the Karakorum Highway which is also known as China Pakistan Friendship road become functional with the help of Chinese Engineer. The bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan is now becoming stronger than ever due to the CPEC.

CPEC was signed on July 5, 2013, soon after the visit of the President Xi Jinping president of China to Pakistan. Initially, the cost was \$ 46 billion, now it raised to 62 \$ billion. CPEC will not only fulfill the needs of China in Energy, but it will also develop the western region of China as well. It will uplift the economy of Pakistan and this

project is also beneficial for the people of South Asia to sustain the economy and to maintain the stability of the region (China Daily, 2015).

The extension of Karakorum Highway is planned in CPEC because it links Xinjiang China to the northern region of Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The establishment of many economic hub as well as zones along this corridor and work on energy resources is also the part of CPEC (Ranjan, 2015).

The overall cost and estimated financing are in two different parts. Different Chinese companies are investing directly \$ 34 billion value of projects without any burden of debt on Pakistan. (Hussain I. , 2017). There are further \$ 12 billion which will be concessional loan of mutual government with negotiable terms. It is utmost necessary to expose and disclose the negotiated term and conditions of these \$ 12 billion to ensure the transparency of the said project. If all the facts and terms are disclosed then the speculations regarding being trapped into debt by these projects will itself banished. (Husain, 2017).

**Figure 1: Comparison of CPEC route and the current route for trade used by China.**

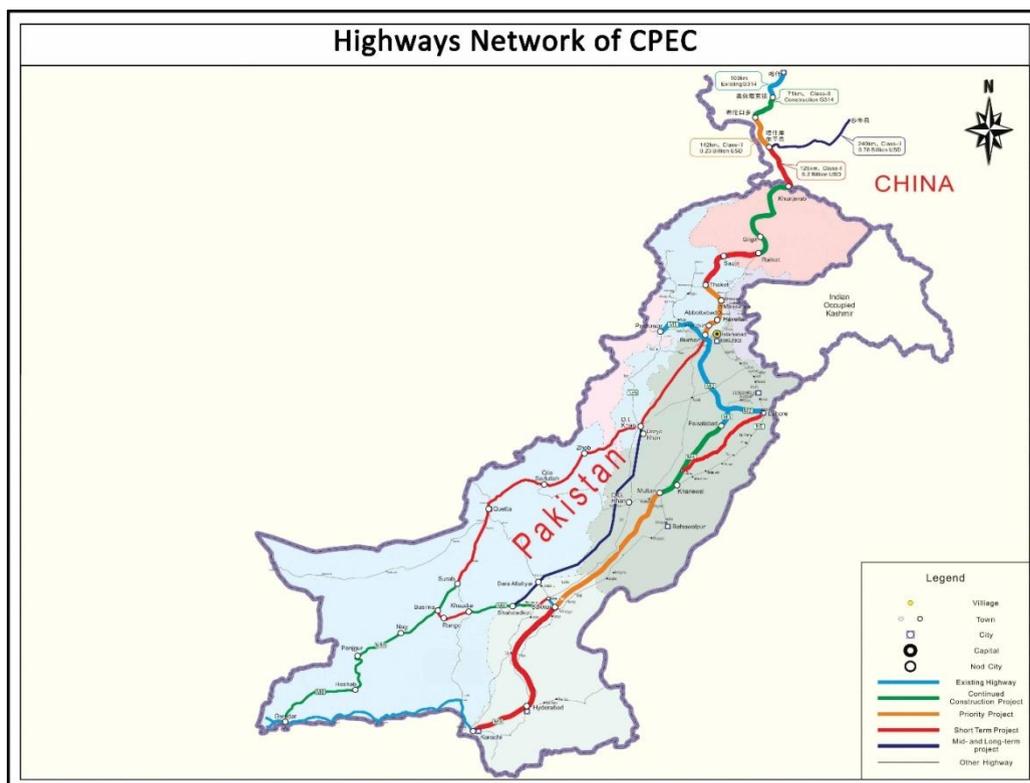


Source: [www.sheir.org](http://www.sheir.org)

The proposed projects under this mega project are divided into two main domains focusing energy and transportation routes including railways, highways and motorways, pipelines of oil and fibers etc. It is estimated that the energy sector will be surcharged

with further 10,000 MW which will directly overcome the electricity shortage and load shedding problem. The projects where coal is needed are once again categorized into two ways where the project of Thar coal- fired will be addressed with the coals of locally mined. The coal which will be imported will be used for the projects based at port Qasim, Qadirabad, Sahiwal, Gwadar, and Rahimyar Khan. Moreover the projects of Hydropower will be established at Kavot and Sukki Karnai. Wind and solar power projects are also part of this mega project.

**Figure 2: Highways Network under CPEC**

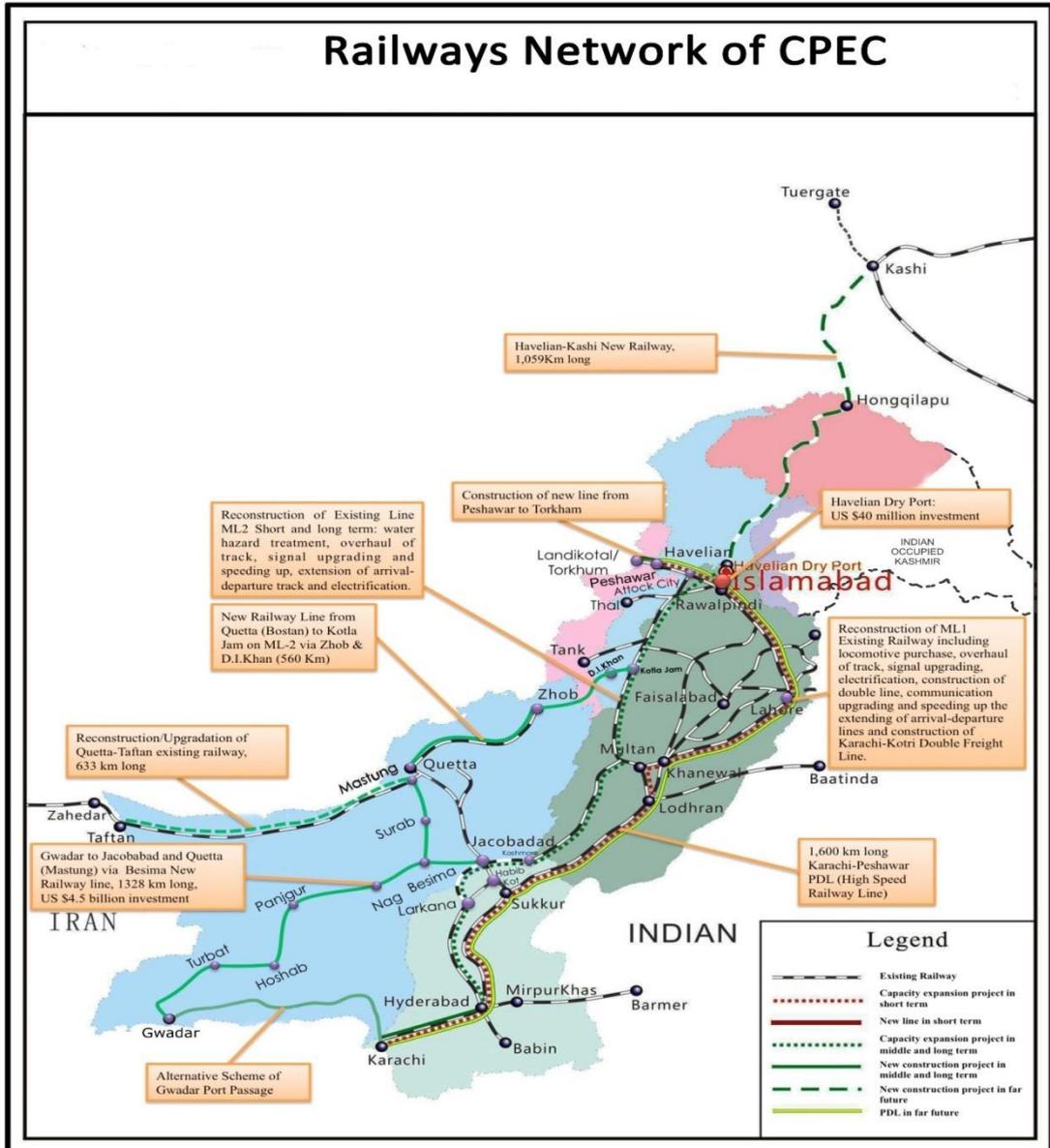


Source: [www.cpec.gov.pk](http://www.cpec.gov.pk)

There are three proposed routes of road transportation focusing both the motorways and highways and these are termed as Eastern route, Western route and the central route. Eastern route's starting point is Gwadar to KKH linking Gadani and Khuzdar of Balochistan, Ratodero and Sukkur of Sindh, Multan, Lahore of Punjab province, Islamabad capital city and Havelian of KPK. Western route from Gwadar to KKH connecting Turbat, Panjgur, Kalat, Mastung, Quetta, Qilla Saifullah, Zhob, Dera Ismail

Khan, Mianwali, Hasan Abdal, Abbotabad and Gilgit. The covered distance till Khunjerab would be 2653 km including the 1300 km KKH which will be upgraded.

Figure 3: Railways Network under CPEC



Source: [www.cpec.gov.pk](http://www.cpec.gov.pk)

(c) Central route will connect Gwadar to Southern Punjab via Dera Ismail Khan via Bhakkar, Rajanpur, Sukkur, Khuzdar, Muzaffargarh, Layyah and Basima (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

Pakistan Railway will be completely transformed under CPEC project. Pakistan Railway will provide quality services to the travelers. Orange Line Metro Service in Lahore is also under the CPEC project Gwadar and Khunjerab will also be linked through railway route passing Gwadar to Quetta 560km, 682km Kotlajam to D.I.Khan via Zhob and Havelian to Khunjerab. From Karachi to Havelian on ML1 the route will be double track. Freight service is also part of project. New railway track from Pehsawar to torkham border also be launched. The railway track from Karachi to Peshawar which is 872 km, up gradation is also finalized. (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

These projects of infrastructure development will uplift the deprived and less developed districts of Baluchistan province and province of KPK and amalgamate these provinces in national economy. There are also some mineral processing hubs and zones which will be established in Baluchistan at Khuzdar, Saindak, Kalat, Lasbela, Qilla Saifullah and Muslim Bagh and these projects will no doubt generate economy in presence of developed infrastructure and country wide connectivity. Further establishment of some industrial processing hubs will create great opportunities of employment at door step to the residents of the deprived areas of Quetta, Khuzdar, Gwadar, Hub, Uthal, D.I.Khan and Dera Murad Jamali. The northern most territory of Pakistan (Gilgit and Skardu) will also avail the same opportunities in terms of establishment of Industrial parks. Thus CPEC will definitely golden economical and political opportunity for the remote areas.

The construction period for CPEC is proposed from 2014 to 2030. The implementation and work on these constructions will be accomplished into three diverse phases as per contract flanked by China and Pakistan. The short terms project will be completed in 2017, the midterm proposed projects in 2025 and the long-term proposed projects in 2030. The short-term project contains the construction and development at Gwadar port around which all the projects revolve.

### **Importance of CPEC Project for Pakistan**

CPEC is a very important project for Pakistan to maintain the economy as well as political instability as well. CPEC is considering to be the “Game Changer” for Pakistan, it will bring economic prosperity and the mega projects will eliminate the energy crisis of Pakistan. On the other hand, the infrastructure development of roads, railways tracks will also play key and vital role in the country’s development.

Currently, Pakistan is facing economic downfall and pursuing loans to meet up the country's requirements, the import is more than export. According to an article in Dawn newspaper, Pakistan's economy is continuously down falling, and Pakistan gets one step down from Nepal's economy. Pakistan will face this issue for the next two years.

To overcome the economic problems CPEC is a very crucial mega project for Pakistan. CPEC will attract the form of investors to invest in Pakistan, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) will increase. As the energy sector in Pakistan is continually facing issue to provide the required energy. The energy project under CPEC will also cover this issue, which will give benefit to the local industrialist, so the congested industry sector will also come up on the mainstream. Tourism in Pakistan gives a huge amount of revenue to Pakistan, this will boost up more when the infrastructure development under CPEC completed.

Gwadar as a port is among the easiest accessible port in the water body of Indian Ocean after the completion of work on Gwadar Port almost all the ships will past by this sea route, and also gives access towards Middle Eastern Countries. Railway lines are also widening throughout the countries will provide a very low fare ticket, easy and comfortable service for traveling. Under CPEC around 50,000 jobs will be created at the end of 2030. This also helps to reduce the poverty level. When the local industries start functioning, jobs will also increase.

Indeed, it's a very long-term project but the short-term project under CPEC will also create a great impact on Pakistan's economy after the completion. Once the economy boost-up and came on streamline then this will bring economic prosperity and will reduce the poverty line. Political stability is also connected with this project, if the economy grows then the political environment will also change and the instability in the country will also be reduced.

### **Role of CPEC in achieving the Constitutional right and status of Gilgit-Baltistan**

Although many barriers are there in the path of CPEC to successfully complete. One of the most important issues need to resolve for successful completion of this mega project is the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. G-B serves as a gateway for CPEC project which connects China with Pakistan and all the trade will be done through Karakorum Highway (KKH), the Old Silk Route is restoring by Chinese to get access the Middle Eastern Countries and to the Indian Ocean for trade. It is very important to clear the status of G-B whether it is a constitutional territory of Islamic Republic of Pakistan or not.

### **Association or linkage of region of Gilgit-Baltistan with Jammu Kashmir**

Generally, Gilgit Baltistan region isn't a part or piece of the province of J&K. Indeed, even geologically, it isn't well-associated with the province of J&K. Actually, this region was vanquished and persuasively attached by Mr. Gulab Singh, who was Maharaja Dogra of Kashmir political territory in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. From that point forward, the general population of G-B has rebelled against the Dogra tradition commonly. They have never acknowledged the Dogra rule by decision. In this manner, in 1947, when the general population of G-B found a chance to get an opportunity, they promptly ousted the Dogra ruling by the assistance from Pakistani troop (Siddiq, 2017). It is likewise a reality that the general population of G-B considerably vary from the Kashmiri individuals ethnically, semantically, religiously and socially. In this manner, when the general population of G-B has gotten freedom, they should not be compelled to again moved toward becoming a piece of the territory of J&K without wanting to. This time the general population of G-B ought to choose their very own political destiny as per the all-inclusive rule of assent of the represented (Malik, 2018).

### **Kashmiri's view regarding the Constitutional myth of region of Gilgit Baltistan**

The dread regarding Kashmiri initiative is that Gilgit Baltistan region is a piece of Kashmir territory and can't agree to annex with Pakistan independently and the increase would be considered as quiet strange submission in the changeless segment of Kashmir territory and will hurt the opportunity battle. The Azad Kashmir (Pakistan) government cautioned the annexing of Gilgit Baltistan region into Pakistan would no doubt heartbreaking and furthermore give a reason to India regarding coordinate Indian held Kashmir with India. The established advisory group framed by past government recommended conceding of a unique/temporary region status with portrayal in Lower and Upper houses (Senate). The equivalent couldn't be affirmed because of complaint with respect to Kashmiri authority. There are various perspectives on the Kashmir question in Gilgit-Baltistan. Dominant part sees that their progenitors freed the area from Dogra ruling area and joined neighborhood Islamic state Pakistan genuinely. They additionally guarantee that we are custodian of particular culture, civilization, tradition, language, and conventions which isolate us from other part of Kashmir (Zain, 2010).

### **Karachi Agreement and future of Gilgit Baltistan**

In 1949, an agreement later familiarized as Karachi agreement was agreed and signed among the representatives of Government of state of Pakistan and personnels of Azad Kashmir (Pakistan Held) and the All J&K Muslim Conference at Karachi Pakistan

regarding power regulation in Gilgit Baltistan by federation of Pakistan. According to this agreement, Gilgit-Baltistan is considered as territory of disputed Kashmir as well as control of Gilgit-Baltistan is handed over under the Ministry ministered by Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas. There were no representatives from the Northern Areas or Gilgit Baltistan. No constitutional status is given to the Gilgit-Baltistan region in the agreement despite ensuring direct control of the Government of Pakistan (Purl, 2009).

28<sup>th</sup> of April, 1949 was a day when federation of state of Pakistan inked the agreement named as Karachi agreement with government of AJK (Pakistan held Kashmir). According to a point of this agreement, it was agreed by the parties that all the issues of Gilgit Baltistan region will be addressed in accordance with the legislature and laws of Pakistan keeping in mind its territorial relation with government of AJK. Further the region of Gilgit Baltistan and related territories will be run by the bureaucrats under Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, as Gilgit Baltistan region at time was known as Northern area. This agreement was signed without any representation from Gilgit Baltistan region and it was against the consent of people of the said region.

### **United Nation’s role towards the Status of Gilgit Baltistan**

When the Kashmir issue was taken to the United Nations, advocates of Pakistan claim G-B also as part of Kashmir. It was considered by the concerned personnel from Pakistan side that the newly annexed area of Pakistan Known as Northern Area (Gilgit Baltistan region) was an issue of mutual understanding. That’s why both India and Pakistan agreed to a solution from UN- led decision. Both the parties were also sure that the people of the said region will cast a ballot in favor of Pakistan in any circumstance if UN directly involve the personnel from Gilgit Baltistan.

The UN urged and recommended both the concerned parties to expel their armed forces from every contested region, with the goal that an UN-regulated choice of the referendum could happen. Neither one of the countries was set up to relinquish domains under their control nor did the issue go into cold stockpiling.

The UN target of a resolution no. 80 of March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1950 both Pakistan held Kashmir as well as Northern Areas were incorporated inside the terms of areas under J&K territories as independent from both the parties before issuing any plebiscite. As indicated by Alistair Lamb proposal and as well as acknowledged by UN Security council objective, Northern area which was an annexed area of Pakistan considered an issue related to Kashmir contest (Shad, 2014).

## **Constitutional right and Status of Gilgit Baltistan region and the role of India**

Indian enthusiasm for Gilgit-Baltistan is apparent from the way that as of late an individual from Indian Parliament, BharatiyaJanta Party forwarded a bill in the assembly (Lok Sabha) with the purpose of reserving five seats as representation for Gilgit Baltistan region in Lok Sabha and as well as one representative from the said region in Rajya Sabha. In the assembly of Indian held Kashmir, there are 25 empty reserved seats to represent Gilgit Baltistan region. Ajit Doval who was an advisor in National security of India, 2015 in conversation with BSF India presented the view that India also has 106 km length area touched with Afghanistan. In 2016, PM of India also showed his reservation regarding Gilgit and Baluchistan. As indicated by the Indian Prime Minister, the general population of Gilgit-Baltistan has expressed gratitude toward him for expression for the general and human rights infringement (Kreutzmann, 2008a).

### **India's reservation on CPEC due to Gilgit Baltistan**

India is consistently bringing up issues regarding development of CPEC project through the region of Gilgit Baltistan being contested. India is likewise contradicting a conceivable annexation of Gilgit Baltistan (Northern Area) with Pakistan. India consider compromised by expanding Chinese impact and influence and CPEC in the district of said region. India has a supposed case on Gilgit Baltistan region as its basic part and furthermore, Indian authority maps delineate Gilgit Baltistan region as a piece of an Indian area. In 1994 Lok Sabha, Indian Parliament passed a consistent goal that "the area is an essential piece of India with the excellence of its increase in 1947. India as of late responded pointedly on descision that Commission under Sartaj Aziz has requested to accept Gilgit Baltistan region as the fifth constitutional province of Pakistan, naming it completely inadmissible and the J&K is a fundamental piece of India. On this, historical decision BJP is considering to take back the article 370 of the constitution which confers unique status to J&K. There is no enemy of Pakistan slants in the region of Gilgit Baltistan or a trademark against the historical project of CPEC. Indians are breathing in a ridiculous situation needing to win support in Gilgit-Baltistan (Hunzai, 2013).

### **Role of People Republic of China towards the provision of Constitutional right or Status to Gilgit Baltistan region**

At the point when President of China Xi Jinping divulged the outline for the huge \$ 46 billion costed Economic Corridor (CPEC) venture a few years ago, Pakistan was justifiably satisfied. The Pakistani government considers the venture a distinct advantage for its delicate monetary structure. This thrill mostly originates from the nation's unstable

monetary exhibition as of late, which has seen it miss the mark regarding GDP and other money-related targets. The task has likewise raised Islamabad's vital association with the territorial superpower. CPEC is seen as a lifesaver for Pakistan, yet three potential hindrances could yet crash this multifaceted venture.

Gilgit Baltistan region which is the starting point is the gateway of Pakistan and also the only route to connect China with the rest of Pakistan and to head China towards access to Gwadar port. The Chinese are deeply concerned with the constitutional right and current status of the gateway of the project (Gilgit Baltistan) and the reservations of the Indian side regarding the ownership of the region.

China can't stand to contribute billions of dollars on a project that goes through a contested domain asserted both by India and Pakistan" This is the motivation behind why Islamabad is presently attempting to give Gilgit-Baltistan protected status by making it a province or by giving a new setup (Lambah, 2016).

To give constitutional status to the Gilgit-Baltistan region will be hard and as well as a bold step for the government of Pakistan because India is also claiming the region and Government of Pakistan itself related and annexed this region to the Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Aspiration of People of Gilgit-Baltistan for regional identity and Constitutional Status**

Since the liberation of G-B. it has gone under the banner of Pakistan, yet up to this point, it is neither spoken to in Pakistan's National Assembly nor in its Senate. It is denied of its social equality and has endured all types of separation, for example political, social, economic and so forth. The figure above speaks to the Kashmir and Northern Areas and the account of the debate. The locals of Northern Areas gave themselves to pull in the political, social and financial consideration from the administration of Pakistan.

This is an admitted and observed fact that the masses of Gilgit Baltistan region have much concerned with Pakistan and have keen attachment with the annexed country despite of deprivation and political status. The wars with India of 1965 and 1971 at Siachen and well as at Kargil proved it. The general public of the said region is totally faithful and also everyone feels proud to sacrifice their life for the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. Nishan e Haider, the topmost military award of Pakistan to a resident of this region, Lalik Jan from Ghizer district also favors the above statement. The general public of this region only needs their status and right under constitution of Pakistan and representation in the upper and lower houses. Hence, India would be very

much discouraged regarding the issue of Gilgit Baltistan constitutional right is conferred by State of Pakistan (Kreutzmann, 2008b).

## **Conclusion**

One Belt One Road (OBOR) is one of the very great economic transformations of this era it will transform the whole world economically as well as politically. It will also bring some major shifts of regional and major powers. China Pakistan Economic Corridor is its main corridor from which China will export its products to the countries of middle east and import from them, the crude oil which will reduce the distance of approximately 1000 KM. This route is important for both the countries and Pakistan will also get a huge benefit from this project, the energy crises will also reduce, infrastructure is developing, communication will become faster and easy job opportunities will be created because of CPEC project.

India is defiantly not happy with this project and raising voice against this project giving a reason that Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed and uncertain territory between Satate of Pakistan and India under the UN Resolution of Kashmir Issue. But the general people and public of Gilgit-Baltistan consider themselves a patriotic citizen of Pakistan. The Legislative Assembly of GB recently have passed a consistent resolution with consensus to turn into the fifth constitutional part of Pakistan. The People of Gilgit-Baltistan just demand the constitutional status or a permanent setup for the region within the constitution of Pakistan. This region wants to be with Pakistan as the fifth province or with a setup like Azad Kashmir.

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