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## Issue Brief

# How to Remove Misperceptions Surrounding the CPEC?

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The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a full spectrum mega-project to transform the economic landscape of Pakistan. The project is not any province-specific; rather it encompasses every part of the Federation including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Under the CPEC no part of the Federation will be neglected. The CPEC comprehensively includes parts of the federating units to ensure across the board development to lift the economy to commensurate with the needs of the 21st century. Employment generated through the CPEC would open up opportunities for all federating units. Labour, professionals, and businessmen alike would reap the benefits of the progress that would be guaranteed by this project.

Mass employment opportunities whenever are created, bring enormous competition and generate apprehensions about possible exploitations and injustices. At present, the CPEC is suffering from this symptom of mistrust about development on equal footing for all federating units on the basis of equal opportunities. Mercifully, the degree of mistrust is low and manageable because all political parties realise this vital importance of the CPEC for Pakistan

Concerns have been voiced, most prominently by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. The norm developed by the Federal Government in consultation with provinces, however, is that no province would be left behind. In pursuance of that policy all provinces, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan, will get their legitimate share.

Equal and equitable distribution is a *sine qua non* for ensuring shared development and prosperity. The CPEC, in fact, would enhance economic connectivity which, in turn, would reinforce national consensus.

The first All Parties Conference (APC) achieved national consensus on the CPEC mechanism on 28 May 2015. The controversy over the CPEC re-surfaced after the Prime Minister inaugurated the Western alignment of the route on 31 December 2016 at Zhob. The second APC on the CPEC was convened on 15 January 2016 to address concerns, differences, and reservations as well as to remove misunderstandings and misperceptions of the smaller provinces by taking into confidence their leaders.

At the APC, parliamentary parties pledged support to the Federal Government and reaffirmed their commitment to the CPEC. A Steering Committee, comprising all Chief Ministers, has been formed to monitor the progress on the CPEC. The meeting resolved to construct the Western Route of the Corridor on priority basis as was decided earlier.<sup>1</sup>

China has asked political stakeholders to bridge their differences and strengthen coordination on the CPEC to create favourable condition for the project.<sup>2</sup> It is evident that politicisation of the CPEC should be eschewed. There is a dire need that the CPEC is discussed in the Parliament to resolve differences once and for all. A democratic dispensation is the best way out to resolve dissension in regard to the CPEC and build strong consensus around it.

Further, political stakeholders must appreciate that Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian States, even the United Kingdom, and a number of Western countries have pledged their support to the CPEC as a project that would bring about regional economic transformation in Asia. The project is rightly termed as a “game-changer”. Our centre and provinces should collaborate to make it a success.

#### Notes and References:

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<sup>1</sup> *The News International* (Rawalpindi), January 16, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn* (Islamabad), January 10, 2016 & *The Nation* (Islamabad), January 15, 2016.