



Extension of CPEC to Afghanistan

Why in News

Recently, **Pakistan has discussed [Taliban-led Afghanistan](#) joining the multibillion-dollar [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#) infrastructure project.**

- China has proposed **construction of the Peshawar-Kabul motorway** as an extension of CPEC in Afghanistan.
- Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and China emerging as a major challenge in the form of the extension of its ambitious CPEC, has **raised India's concerns on economic, political and security fronts.**

Key Points

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor:**
 - The CPEC is a **bilateral project between Pakistan and China.**
 - It is intended **to promote connectivity** across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects.
 - It aims **to link the Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan** via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan.
 - It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port, **enabling China to access the Indian Ocean.**
 - CPEC is **a part of the [Belt and Road Initiative](#).** The BRI, launched in 2013, aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.
 - **India has been severely critical of the CPEC,** as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.



▪ **Implications of Afghanistan Joining CPEC on India:**

- **Filling the Void:** In Afghanistan, China is trying to fill the vacuum created after the US forces left Afghanistan economically and gets its Belt and Road (BRI) initiatives going.
- **Undermining Chabahar Port:** The foremost concern with Afghanistan joining CPEC is that India is apprehensive of its investment in [Chabahar port in Iran](#).
 - India is wary of undermining the **India-Iran-Afghanistan trilateral** that gives Afghanistan access to sea via Chabahar port.
- **Weakening of India's Economic Influence:** Attempts to extend CPEC to Afghanistan may undermine **India's position as economic, security and strategic partner of Afghanistan**.
 - India has been the biggest regional donor to Afghanistan committing more than US\$2 billion for the developmental work that includes construction of roads, power plants, dams, parliament building, rural development, education, infrastructure and much more.
 - With Extension of CPEC, China will play a leading role in Afghanistan **overpowering India's economic influence in Afghanistan**.
- **Terrorism and Strategic Concerns:** Given **India's limited strategic depth** in Afghanistan, **China is in better position to leverage its strategic advantages** in Afghanistan.
 - Further, Afghanistan's inclusion in the CPEC will definitely help in the economic development, but it will also help **Pakistan gain the strategic advantage and upper hand in Afghanistan at the cost of India**.
 - In this situation, **Pakistan may augment use of terrorism against India**.
- **Control of Strategic Air Base:** Besides its issues with the CPEC, India will be wary of the likelihood that China may try to take over the Bagram air force base in Afghanistan.
 - The Bagram airport is the biggest airport and technically well-equipped as the

Americans kept it for their use till the end, instead of the Kabul airport.

- **Exploitation of Rare Earth Minerals:** With the extension of CPEC, China is also looking to exploit Afghanistan's rich minerals and highly lucrative rare-earth mines.
- Rare-earth metals, which are key components for a host of advanced electronic technologies and hi-tech missile guidance systems.

Way Forward

- For the success of CPEC in Afghanistan and to a large extent in Pakistan's troublesome territories, it becomes imperative for China to stabilise the security situation in the region.
- Improved infrastructure and security situation in Afghanistan may help India to conduct its economic and trade activities in a smoother way.
- However, given the hostility of China, Pakistan and Taliban against India, Afghanistan joining CPEC will certainly be a strategic advantage for China and a loss for India.

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