

Foreword

The Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the most important, most ambitious and a centerpiece of his foreign policy project under the title of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. It has been described as the ‘Project of the Century’ with the potential of reshaping the economic landscape of many countries around the world. The main objective of the BRI has been to address infrastructure bottlenecks around the world and accelerate economic growth, development and prosperity for all. The BRI has emerged as a highly successful project and its success can be judged by the fact that more than 150 countries and some 40 International Institutions are now participating in this Initiative.

The development strategy of the BRI builds on connectivity and cooperation through the six corridors, including the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – the only bilateral corridor between the two brotherly countries. The CPEC is considered Central to Pakistan – China relations and is part of the national security of the two countries. CPEC is considered as the lynchpin or flagship project of the BRI. With almost one decade of its launch in Pakistan, the CPEC has performed strongly and contributed positively to its socio-economic development. It has transformed Pakistan’s economic landscape by removing infrastructure bottlenecks, transforming Pakistan from an energy deficit to energy surplus country by adding 8000 MW of generational capacity, built 800km of highways and created 286,000 jobs.

Pakistan and China are entering into the second phase of the CPEC. The book entitled “Pakistan and the Belt and Road Initiative: A Journey through Politics & Economics” is a timely publication. I congratulate the editors and the chapter contributors for undertaking painstaking and rigorous work covering different aspects of the CPEC and BRI. This will also be considered as an excellent addition to the body of literature on this topic.

The book is divided into three parts, that is, regional, national and local, and hence allows readers to gain a holistic understanding of the contribution of the CPEC. The regional chapters explore the geopolitical implications and the potential for regional cooperation, while the national chapters delve into the economic, social, and environmental aspects of CPEC's development. The local perspectives from Gilgit-Baltistan provide valuable insights into the real-life experiences of communities directly affected by the Corridor. As we look ahead to the second decade of CPEC, this book serves as a timely and essential resource for policymakers, researchers, and the public at large.

It offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, emphasizing the need for effective management, stakeholder collaboration, and a focus on sustainable development. I commend the editors and contributors for their rigorous research and insightful analysis. This book is a testament to the importance of academic discourse in shaping the future of CPEC and the BRI. I am confident that it will contribute significantly to the ongoing dialogue on regional connectivity and economic cooperation.

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