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Q9

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is viewed as a cardinal subset of China's larger 'One Belt One Road' initiative. Give a brief description of CPEC and enumerate the reasons why India has distanced itself from the same. (150 Words, 10 Marks).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS III · 10 marks · Indian Economy

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Core demand of the question

- Describe the China Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of **Belt and Road**
- **Enumerate why India has stayed out:** sovereignty in PoK, process, and strategic risk

Revision summary

CPEC links Kashgar in Xinjiang to **Gwadar** port through Pakistan as the leading **Belt and Road** land corridor.

Projects include highways, power plants, fibre and **Gwadar**, financed largely by China.

The northern alignment runs through Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India objects on sovereignty, lack of consultation, and strategic-debt risk at **Gwadar**.

India skipped the 2017 **Belt and Road** Forum and uses other routes such as Chabahar instead.

Introduction

The **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** is the flagship land-and-energy arm of China's **Belt and Road Initiative** (also called One Belt One Road). It aims to link **Xinjiang** to the Arabian Sea at **Gwadar** through Pakistan. India has kept out of **Belt and Road** forums because **CPEC** is not a neutral trade road. It runs across **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir**, which India holds to be its own territory, and it deepens a China-Pakistan strategic pair on India's western flank.

Body**Brief description of CPEC**

- **CPEC** is a package of **roads, fibre, energy plants and the Gwadar port** connecting Kashgar in China's Xinjiang to **Gwadar** in Balochistan, with related industrial parks.
- **It is presented as a cardinal subset of Belt and Road:** China gets a shorter western outlet that avoids only-Malacca sea lanes; Pakistan gets infrastructure and power capacity, largely on Chinese financing and contractors.
- The corridor's northern legs pass through **Gilgit-Baltistan**, part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir now under Pakistan's control - **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** in India's official map.

- Scale has been cited in tens of billions of US dollars (energy plus transport), with **debt, equity and Chinese State firms** as the typical **Belt and Road** mix.
- **Gwadar** is a deep-water port with civilian trade aims and, in Indian and other strategic readings, **dual-use** potential for the Chinese navy over time.

Why India has distanced itself

- **Sovereignty:** India states that the entire Jammu and Kashmir, including PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan, is Indian territory. Building a corridor there with Pakistan and China **without India's consent** violates territorial integrity. No Indian government can treat that as ordinary connectivity.
- **Process:** India has argued that **Belt and Road** projects should follow **transparency, financial sustainability and good faith consultation**. **CPEC** was designed as a China-Pakistan bilateral fact, not a regional public good agreed in a South Asian table.
- **Precedent:** Accepting **CPEC** as **Belt and Road's** core would look like **legitimising Pakistan's hold on PoK** and China's presence there.
- **Strategic encirclement:** **CPEC** plus Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean (ports in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and elsewhere) fits a **string-of-pearls** worry; a China-run **Gwadar** sits near India's western sea lanes and the Gulf energy route.
- **Debt and politics inside Pakistan:** Large Chinese loans can create **leverage** over a neighbour's infrastructure and politics, which is not a neutral economic club India would join on those terms.
- India therefore skipped the **Belt and Road Forum (2017)** in Beijing and has repeated that connectivity must respect sovereignty. India prefers other corridors (for example **Chabahar** with Iran and Afghanistan, and **International North-South Transport Corridor**) that do not run through PoK.

Comment

- Distancing is not a rejection of **all** Asian connectivity. It is a rejection of a corridor that writes China's and Pakistan's map onto a disputed land and a sensitive sea.

Flow diagram

Belt and Road -> CPEC
 CPEC -> Kashgar to Gwadar
 CPEC -> Through Gilgit-Baltistan PoK
 Through Gilgit-Baltistan PoK -> India sovereignty objection
 CPEC -> Debt dual-use Gwadar
 Debt dual-use Gwadar -> India sovereignty objection

Conclusion

- **CPEC is Belt and Road's Pakistan spine:** Xinjiang to **Gwadar** through Gilgit-Baltistan, with energy and port projects. India stays out because the route crosses PoK, the project was not a consultative regional compact, and the strategic pair of China and Pakistan on that land and at **Gwadar** is a security fact, not only a trade fact.

Facts & figures

CPEC

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: roads, energy and Gwadar port linking Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan.

Belt and Road

China's trans-continental infrastructure initiative (One Belt One Road); CPEC is its leading Pakistan package.

Gilgit-Baltistan / PoK

Territory India claims as part of Jammu and Kashmir; CPEC's northern route passes through it under Pakistani control.

Gwadar

Arabian Sea port in Balochistan developed with Chinese capital as CPEC's maritime end.

Belt and Road Forum 2017

Beijing summit India did not attend, citing sovereignty and procedural concerns, with CPEC as the core example.

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