

CPEC AND "INDO - MIDDLE EAST - EUROPE", NEW WAR FRONTS

Qudsia Imran^{*1}, Syed Jameel²

^{*1}PhD Scholar of International Relations

²PhD Scholar of International Relations

^{*1}qudsiaimran3300@gmail.com,

²syedjamil257@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Qudsia Imran

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ABSTRACT

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor represent significant infrastructural and strategic initiatives that could potentially influence the emergence of new conflict fronts. The growing competition between the CPEC and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor may exacerbate existing regional tensions and create new geopolitical conflicts. This paper investigates the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, focusing on their impact on international relations and regional dynamics. The study employs a comparative analysis framework, utilizing Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and Geopolitical theories to examine these infrastructure projects' origins, strategic significance, and regional effects. The research method includes reviewing academic articles, reports, and news sources to assess the economic, strategic, and geopolitical implications of CPEC and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor. Major findings reveal that both corridors offer substantial economic benefits and opportunities for regional integration, they also introduce new areas of conflict and strategic competition. The paper concludes that effective management of these projects requires multilateral cooperation, conflict resolution mechanisms, and strategic diplomacy. This study contributes to understanding the evolving geopolitical landscape by highlighting the potential for new conflict fronts associated with these major infrastructure initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

The CPEC and the IME-EC are two colossal projects that have emerged as part of BRI to transform the advanced world trade connectivity and relations in the 21st century. CPEC is the most significant project of the Chinese BRI it was initiated in 2013 (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). Its primary objective is to improve the communication link between the Gwadar port in Pakistan and China's Xinjiang province by constructing roads, railways, and pipelines. This corridor is about 3000 km long and contains several major projects that are aimed at enhancing the infrastructure of

Pakistan and the development of its economy, energy, and transportation, SEZs.

The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor that is in the planning stage is the strategic counter to BRI, which was offered by India and its partners to improve connectivity between South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In this context, this corridor is intended to provide a smooth and efficient channel for trade, avoiding critical points and promoting the connection of the regions involved (Amir, 2016).

These corridors are central to world geopolitics, economics, and security for the following

reasons. First, they embody a new configuration of the world economy and new routes that free actors from the previous sea trade determined by the colonial powers of the West. CPEC opens the Arabian Sea directly for China for the first time which leaves the country free from the control of the Malacca Strait chokepoint. This makes it less likely for China to be locked out from its sources of energy and improves its energy security (Ullah et al., 2021).

Economically, both corridors hold the potential to deliver a range of benefits to the areas through which they pass (Hussain & Hussain, 2017). It is believed that CPEC will create economic development in Pakistan and may turn the country into a trade center of the region. For China, it helps to export goods and at the same time import energy resources more effectively. IMM or the India Middle East Europe trade corridor is designed to enhance the economic integration between India, the Middle East, and Europe region for the mutual development of the region and the formation of new markets for the products and services (Javaid, 2016).

Pakistani Balochistan province where CPEC is under construction is considered an insurgency and unrest-prone area; thus, concerns regarding stability and security. The Indo-Middle East-Europe connecting axis which is in opposition to the BRI shows the rising competition in the region especially between China and India and their associates.

The objective of this paper is to provide a detailed historical background and the current state of CPEC and the IME corridor including their historical background, major milestones, and status and potential conflict fronts. It aims to assess the role of these corridors in contemporary geopolitics and to analyze their impact on the balance of power, the relations between states, and the geography of geopolitical confrontation. The paper analyzed the economic effects on the countries and regions involved in the agreement and evaluate the opportunities and threats of the agreement and its role in the process of globalization and liberalization of world trade. Finally, it will analyze the security aspects with an emphasis on how these corridors are influencing the stability and security policies and conflict probability in South Asian and Middle Eastern regions. By

achieving these objectives, the paper intends to share its findings with the existing literature on international relations and global trade, especially regarding the mega projects such as CPEC and IMETEC that have started to redefine the world order in the 21st century (Ullah et al., 2021).

2 Theoretical Framework

Realism:

In the context of understanding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor, the theory of realism with a focus on power relations and state selfish interests becomes a useful tool. Regarding CPEC, realism brings into focus China's self-interested objectives of diversifying the energy supply route, thereby avoiding the Malacca strait, as well as the expansion of its sphere of power in South Asia (Marwat & Khan, 2023). For instance, the construction of Gwadar port is used as a strategic tool to provide a naval base and secure China's interests in the Indian Ocean. Likewise, Pakistan aims to enhance its economic and military power and check India's hegemony in the region by siding with China (Hussain et al., 2024).

The Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor can be analyzed from the realist's point of view as a strategic move by India to contain China's rise in the said region. India seeks to ensure energy security and achieve greater economic penetration as well as carve out a strategic stake in Middle East Europe relations. This corridor also depicts a partnership between the United States and Europe, and other like-minded states to check the rise of China and maintain the multipolarity in the region. (Nawaz & Murtaza). Security dilemmas emerge because both corridors increase strategic rivalry and animosity between competing states. The development of CPEC in the insurgency-prone Balochistan has led to further military build-up and insurgent attacks, thus, raising issues about security in the region. The Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor also has the potential to increase the chances of conflict due to heightened geopolitical competition, especially in the Middle East which is already volatile and attracts interest from multiple global powers. (Alamgir & Pirkani).

A different vision of the importance of these corridors can be given by liberalism, which stresses economic entanglement and cooperation between countries. From the liberal perspective, CPEC is the perfect example of the possibility of economic cooperation and integration of the regions. The CPEC seeks to enhance the socio-economic development of Pakistan through better infrastructure, energy, and trading connections to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development in the region. The corridor also emphasizes the role of globalization since China and Pakistan cooperate on many projects and all levels of society.

The Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor is an attempt to increase the economic cooperation between South Asian countries, the Middle East, and Europe. Through this corridor, trade and investment will be encouraged to flow in the intended areas hence promoting development, increasing GDP, and development of the participating regions. It emphasizes interdependence that can be fostered in the form of cooperation that allows the states to pursue common economic objectives in support of world peace.

Liberalism

liberalism promotes the centrality of multilateral institutions and norms in the evolution of these corridors. Multilateral, bilateral, and regional development organizations are involved in sponsoring, monitoring and supervising these projects to ensure that they are financially sustainable and follow international best practices.

The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, in the same way, fosters the economic interaction between India, the Middle East, and Europe. This corridor seeks to increase the economic relations and movement of goods, services, and capital by establishing an efficient trade channel. In liberal theory, such economic relations decrease the chances of conflict because countries have stakes in maintaining peaceful and cooperative relations for economic gains.

Constructivism

Constructivism builds on this by analyzing how identity, norms, and discourse affect the

behavior of states. This theory emphasizes the role of perceptions and identities of the states in shaping the behavior of the states. In the context of CPEC, it is not only a business and strategic investment, but also an attempt to build a discourse of China as a responsible global power that brings development and connectivity.

Regarding the case of the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, constructivism can shed light on how India wants to be recognized as a rising power and how it desires to have a significant role in the global system, which has contributed to its participation in the project. The nature of the discourse about the corridor is affirmative and focuses on India's role in maintaining stability and promoting economic cooperation in the region, which contributes to the construction of India's responsible and powerful subjectivity.

Geopolitical Theories

Geopolitical theories offer a further understanding of the importance of these corridors in the strategy. Halford Mackinder developed the Heartland Theory suggesting that the control of the central part of Eurasia is crucial for the world's domination. In this regard, CPEC can be viewed as China's offer to lock in its place in the Heartland and gain a direct line of access to the Indian Ocean making it possible for it to extend its strategic frontiers in the region.

Rimland Theory by Nicholas Spykman also supports the idea that the coastal zones of Eurasia are significant. CPEC helps China to open the door of the Rimland through Gwadar Port and this way, China can play a significant role in the geopolitically sensitive areas of Middle Eastern and South Asia. Likewise, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor seeks to advance India's links with the Rimland to boost its strategic position in the Middle East and Europe.

Alfred Mahan's Sea Power Theory is concerned with the control of sea and sea trade. That is why the development of Gwadar Port and the associated maritime infrastructure within the framework of CPEC is in line with Mahan's focus on the possession of sea lines and naval bases. Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, having an efficient maritime connection,

complies with the Sea Power Theory, which emphasizes the importance of possessing command over key sea trade lanes.

These theories together underscore the conflict of power, economics, identity, and rationality that underpin and define the creation and consequences of such colossal infrastructures.

Theoretical Model for CPEC and Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor

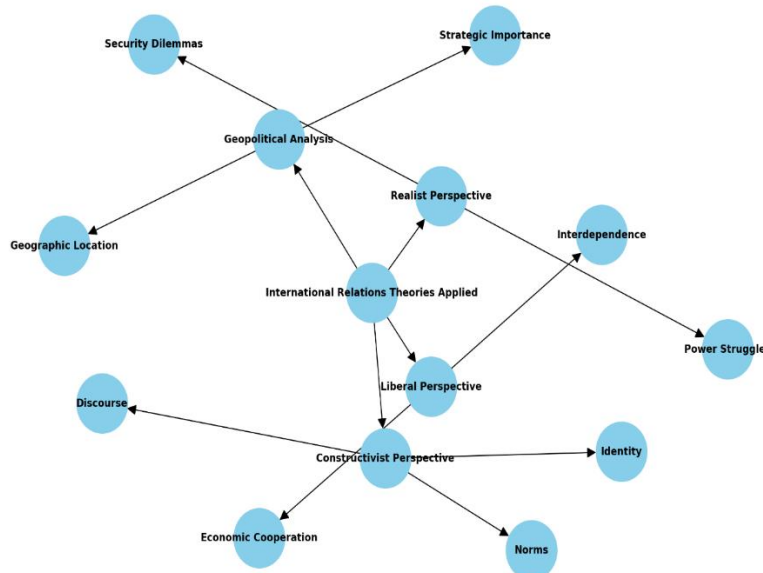


Figure 1 theoretical model for CPEC and IMEEC

3 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
 CPEC is one of the major projects of the Belt and Road Initiative that envisages the development of infrastructure facilities and the improvement of cooperation between China and Pakistan. CPEC was signed in 2013 and it has the connectivity of roads, railways, pipelines, and energy projects from Gwadar Port of Pakistan to China's Xinjiang province with a length of around 3000Km (Afzal & Naseem, 2018). CPEC is said to be implemented with a total investment of about \$62 billion and it is divided into several sectors including transport infrastructure, energy, and development works (Ullah et al., 2021).

CPEC Infrastructural development includes the establishment of Gwadar Port, the Construction of roads including the Karakoram Highway, and the Construction of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The construction industry has also received a lot of attention and many power plants have been constructed to ensure that Pakistan's perennial power crises are a thing of the past (Ahmad et al., 2020). These projects are meant to help develop Pakistan's infrastructure, increase its economic

growth, and connect China to the international markets via the Arabian Sea.

CPEC is critical for both China and Pakistan because of the enormous strategic value it has. In the same manner, CPEC provides direct and safe access to the Arabian Sea for China, thus avoiding the Malacca Strait, a strategic chokepoint. This route increases China's energy security since it guarantees the supply of oil and gas from the Middle East and Africa. Further, it enhances China's strategic position in South Asia and effectively challenges regional rivals especially India.

To Pakistan, CPEC has a lot of potential benefits such as employment opportunities, improvement of infrastructure, and attraction of foreign investment. The construction of Gwadar Port is expected to bring a new face to it and turn it into a major trade center of the region and thus, help enhance the trade and economy of Pakistan. CPEC also resolves the energy issue by increasing the power generation capacity that is vital for industrial and economic development in Pakistan (McCartney, 2022).

In geopolitical terms, CPEC has a positive impact on the strategic position of Pakistan in the region as well as in the international system.

In return, Pakistan gets closer to China, thus becoming more powerful against regional rivals, especially India. Deepening of China-Pakistan relations through CPEC also help Pakistan to have stronger bargaining power in dealing with other superpowers such as USA and Russia (Wolf, 2018).

CPEC has various implications in the region for neighboring countries and the balance of power in South Asia. For India, CPEC is a strategic threat because it enhances China's power in South Asia and boosts up Pakistan. India has a major concern since CPEC is constructed through the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, which India considers as its territory of Jammu and Kashmir. This has escalated the relations between India and both China and Pakistan (Kousar et al., 2018).

For Afghanistan, CPEC has some sort of economic prospects such as trade and connectivity. However, the situation in Afghanistan remains rather unstable and the conflict makes the integration into CPEC rather problematic (McCartney, 2021). It can be mentioned that the successful implementation of CPEC can positively affect the stability of the region through the development of cooperation in the economic sphere, but this depends on the elimination of security threats.

In Central Asia, CPEC has opened an opportunity of a new trade corridor that could help the region to integrate with South Asia and beyond. Transportation infrastructure under CPEC development can also improve connection between Central Asian states and the world economy, thus stimulating the region's economy (Asif et al., 2019).

4 Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor

IMM is a conceptualized corridor that would seek to improve integration and trade relations between South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. This corridor aims to have a system of transport infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports and energy pipelines to form a single through route that excludes conventional bottlenecks. This is an Indian-sponsored project with support from main partners in the Middle East and Europe (Chatterjee, 2023).

One of the major projects under this corridor are Iran's Chabahar port which gives India

direct connectivity to Afghanistan and the Central Asian states without passing through Pakistan. It also entails development of roads and rails that connect the Middle East to Europe to enable easy transport of goods and services. Pipelines and power plants are also expected to boost energy security and cooperation among the participating countries and act as investment in energy infrastructure (Minyou & Yao, 2024).

IMME is a very strategic route for India, the Middle East, and Europe in terms of trade and commerce. To India, the corridor offers an option to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative, thus improving its access to important markets in the Middle East and Europe. Through the construction of Chabahar Port, India gets an opportunity to have direct connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asian states, and is a way of not only containing Pakistan but also challenging to China's dominance in the region (Hoh, 2019).

To the Middle Eastern countries, the corridor provides an opportunity for diversification of their economy through improvement of trade and integration with South Asia and Europe. Infrastructure, particularly in the areas of transport and energy, has the potential to increase economic growth and promote stability within the region. Developing European countries on the other hand get to enjoy better market access to the South Asian and Middle eastern markets for trading and investment (Kemp, 2012).

Politically, the corridor helps India become one of the most powerful countries in the region and increases its impact on the Middle East and Europe. Thus, economic integration and connection through the corridor will also help to stabilize the region and decrease conflict risks. The initiative is in tune with the strategic interests of some of the major players in the region thereby providing an antithesis to China's BRI (Sevilla Jr, 2017).

Indo-Middle East-Europe, which is also known as the Middle East-India Europe connection is likely to alter the geography of the regions in question and the distribution of power. For the neighboring countries the corridor provides economic benefits and better access but also presents strategic risks. For instance, Pakistan considers the development of Chabahar Port

and the corridor as a direct threat to its strategic interests because it loses its importance as the transit country for the South Asia Central Asia trade (Anastasiadou, 2019).

In the context of Afghanistan, the corridor is a viable trade route that was instrumental in the country's development and integration into the global economy. The construction of Chabahar Port is beneficial to Afghanistan as it provides the country with an opportunity to avoid using Pakistan's ports and improve relations with India and other countries. However, the presence of conflict and instability in Afghanistan is still a major problem for the realization of the corridor.

In Central Asia, the corridor provides the prospect of deepened economic cooperation and integration with South Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Transportation infrastructure can unlock trade and investment, which is beneficial to the growth and stability of the region's economy. It also corresponds to the Central Asian countries' interests since it offers new trade routes and diversifies the dependence on traditional transit arteries (Panda, 2017).

Summing up, it can be stated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor are the great infrastructure projects that may produce strategic, economic, and geopolitical changes. These corridors are, in effect, two different paradigms of 'connectivity' and 'influence' which define power and economic interaction in the twenty-first century.

5 Comparative Analysis

Infrastructure Development: CPEC as well as the India Middle East Europe connectivity corridor are long-term connectivity projects for infrastructure development. CPEC has already moved a long way with major investments made in the construction of roads, railways ports, and energy projects in Pakistan. It can revolutionize the economy of Pakistan by cutting down the cost of transportation, providing energy solutions, and coming up with foreign investment. The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, despite its current being in its infancy, also envisions such a change by building the necessary pipeline connecting South Asia with the Middle East and Europe for trade relations (Inan & Yayloyan, 2018).

Trade and Investment Opportunities: CPEC holds a great deal of trade and investment opportunities for the participating countries, especially China and Pakistan. Due to the direct access of CPEC to the Arabian Sea, it connects the Chinese market to the Middle East and Africa for trade. It also provides market entry and new investment opportunities in the manufacturing, logistics, and services industries. The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor has similar objectives of boosting the trade connectivity between India, the Middle East, and Europe. This corridor has the potential to raise the volume of trade, investment in infrastructure and industries, and the overall economic growth of the regions in the corridor (Tan, 2020).

Comparative Analysis of CPEC and Indo-Middle East-Europe Corridor

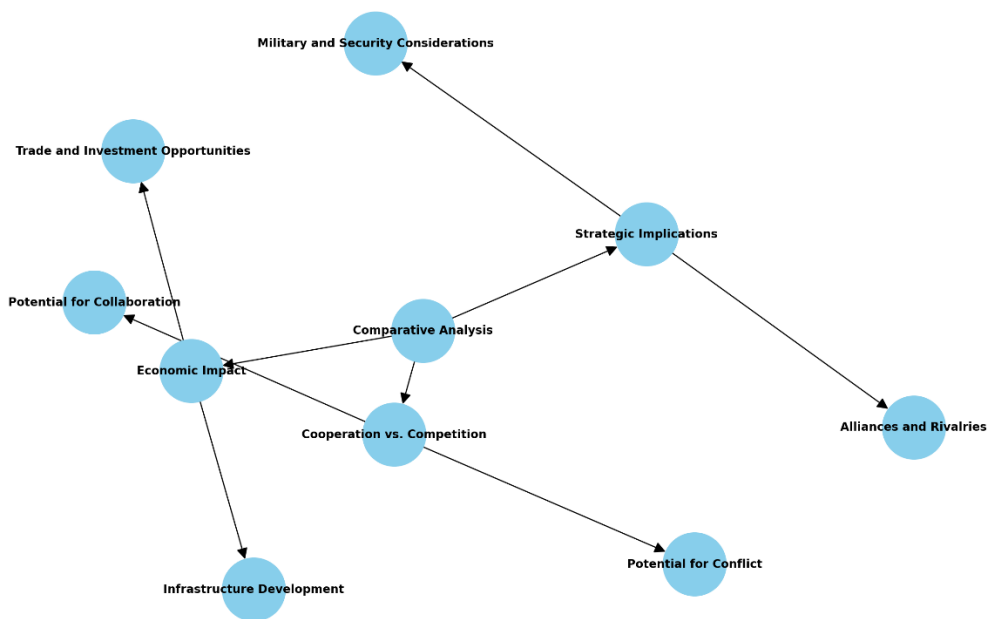


Figure 2 comparative analysis

6 Strategic Implications

Military and Security Considerations: CPEC is not only an economic project but also has military and security importance and is similar to the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor. CPEC increases China’s strategic influence by ensuring that its sea lines of communication are protected and it has a naval base through Gwadar port (Rozman, 2023). This process can have the effect of changing the balance of power in the region and present problems for Indian strategy. On the other hand, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor seeks to effectively balance the Chinese influence by boosting India’s strategic outreach in the Middle East and Europe. The creation of Chabahar Port, for example, gives India a strategic position in the region and boosts its naval force and the protection of its energy delivery routes (Rozman, 2023).

Alliances and Rivalries: In terms of strategy, these corridors are also associated with alliances and rivalry. CPEC enhances the strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan as well as enhances both the nation’s economic gains. It also benefits from China’s Belt and Road Initiative, expanding its leveraging power in South Asia and other regions. The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor, however, is in tune with India’s strategic interest and

strengthens ties with strategic partners in the Middle East and Europe. This positioning makes the two corridors rivals as both are visions of regional integration and power (Chan, 2018).

7 Cooperation vs. Competition

Potential for Collaboration: Thus, there is a possibility of cooperation in some fields between CPEC and the IMEM corridor, although both projects are usually viewed as rivals. Both corridors have strategic objectives of improving the connectivity and economic interlinkage of the regions; the cooperative prospects for trade, investments, and infrastructure development initiatives may hence arise from both. For example, transport and logistics, energy, and industrial cooperation ventures mean that all countries involved can experience optimal gains and mutual complementarity (Blank, 2003).

Potential for Conflict: However, these corridors are also very competitive and, therefore, there is a likelihood of conflict. The strategic rivalry between China and India which has been aggravated by their respective corridors may result in the formation of new hot spots in the region. The mutual and contradictory approaches to regional integration may deepen existing animosities

and generate new sources of conflict, especially in the SAARC and the GCC regions. Also, the integration of regional partners with either of the corridors can also enhance pre-existing geopolitical cleavages and conflict (Mohan, 2019).

8 Potential Conflict Fronts

The emergence of CPEC and the IMEE can be viewed as the creation of new potential sources of conflict. The area of Gilgit-Baltistan which is under a cloud and through which CPEC runs is a major contentious area between India and Pakistan. India's refusal to accept the passage of CPEC through this area provokes hostility and raises the probability of conflict. Likewise, the emerging China-India rivalry in the Indian Ocean and the Middle East can also generate new sources of conflict, mainly in connection with critical seaways and facilities (Cheema, 2020).

Some of the possible hotbeds are Gwadar port and Chabahar port which are nearby to each other. Due to the competitive nature of the powers of the world to control these ports, the powers may engage in naval battles and thus increase the military strength in the region (Khan & Omid, 2023). Furthermore, the construction of transport linkages through conflict-sensitive regions, for instance, Afghanistan, poses security threats and elevates the level of vulnerability to violence and insecurity.

Role and Interests of the USA: Because of the American stakes in the region, both CPEC and the IME corridor remain important for the United States. The US has concerns with CPEC because it improves China's strategic position in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region which is counter to the US interests. On the other hand, the US sees the Indo-Middle East-Europe as the counter to BRI as a part of the US goal to contain China's growth and strengthen its relations with India and friends (Shoaib, 2022).

Role and Interests of Russia: Thus, Russia has significant stakes in the region for several reasons. While it has always shared good relations with India, it also aims at improving its strategic cooperation with China (Cannon, 2022). For Russia, CPEC is a chance to improve its economic and political relations with China

and Pakistan, as well as to look for cooperation in the IME-EC to increase its impact on the Middle East and South Asia.

Role and Interests of the EU: Hence the European Union has a strategic interest in the Indo-Middle East-Europe connect as it helps the EU get a better connected with South Asia and Middle East for trade and investment purposes. To the EU, the corridor is seen as a way of getting a new trade route that will not be easily blocked like the traditional chokepoints. Although the EU is skeptical about China's Belt and Road initiative, it aims to create mutual benefits between the economic and political aspects, as well as to identify the risks and establish cooperation with China.

Impact on India-Pakistan Conflict: The emergence of CPEC and the India-Middle East-Europe route has certain consequences for the continuing India-Pakistan conflict. In general, CPEC improves Pakistan's strategic and economic status, which may lead to a worsening of relations with India. The area of Gilgit-Baltistan where CPEC runs is still a matter of dispute and therefore raises the possibility of a military clash. On the other hand, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor improves India's strategic standing since it offers other route options apart from the Pakistan route (Cordner & Cordner, 2018).

Impact on China-India Conflict: Thus, the development of the corridors contributes to the intensification of the strategic rivalry between China and India. CPEC enhances china's strategic presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, which undermines Indian strategic interests. The Indo Middle East Europe corridor on the other hand improves India's connection with strategic regional actors and checks China. This competition raises the prospect of conflict, especially in disputed zones and strategic maritime passages.

Therefore, CPEC and IMEM are two rival projects that outline the strategies of connectivity and influence in the contemporary world and determine the strategic trajectories of the twenty-first century. As with most things, there is a dark side to this and it is the fact that they have the potential of generating new hot spots of conflict and tension mainly in South Asia and Middle East (Ahmad, 2018). The interference of external actors like the USA,

Russia, and the EU makes the regional relations more intricate and indicates that the interests and antagonisms of the regional and global actors define the prospects of these innovative infrastructural initiatives.

9 International Relations Theories Applied

Realist Perspective

Security Dilemmas: From the realist point of view, CPEC and IMEE are the best examples of pure security threats. Realism asserts that states exist in an international system that is characterized by anarchy and therefore states have to protect themselves through the acquisition of power and forming of alliances (Marwat & Khan, 2023). CPEC improves China's strategic situation by giving it direct access to the Arabian Sea, unlike the Malacca Straits which is controlled by rivals. This can be viewed as China's efforts to protect its strategic interests such as the supply of energy and the freedom of its sea lines of communication. From the Pakistani perspective, CPEC helps to strengthen the economic and military power, thus improving Pakistan's position relative to India (Kuszevska & Nitza-Makowska, 2021). Indo-Middle East-Europe is also considered as the counter to CPEC to some extent. India through its investments in this corridor wants to enhance its geopolitical power in Middle East and Europe as a way of cutting its dependence on the trade routes controlled by China and Pakistan. This strategic maneuvering by India can be viewed as an attempt to increase the security of the country and exert pressure in an area where China's dominance is emerging.

Power Struggles: The establishment of such corridors shows that the struggle for power between the major actors of the region is still in progress. China and India, which are the main advocates of these corridors, are strategic competitors not only in South Asia but in the greater Indo-Pacific region as well. Realism presupposes that international politics is a competitive and even conflict-oriented process, in which one state's gain is equal to the other's loss (Shah et al., 2020). The strategic infrastructure initiatives that include CPEC and the India-Middle East-Europe connectivity are evidence of the power play as both the countries are in the race for dominance in the region.

Liberal Perspective

Economic Cooperation: On the other hand, liberalism, which asserts that the state of the international system is one of cooperation and interdependence, is available. From this angle, CPEC and the India-Middle East-Europe are viewed as prospects for development of economic cooperation and stability in the region through the connection between countries. CPEC has the objective of improving the economic relations between China and Pakistan which if effectively implemented, has the potential to bring about economic revolution (Shakeel). The corridor will generate employment, enhance the physical facilities, and increase the industrialization of Pakistan which will ultimately lead to peace and stability in the region through the development (Iqbal, 2020).

Likewise, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor is also viewed as a tool for improving the bilateral cooperation in trade and economy between South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Through the development of transport networks and boosting of trade connectivity this corridor may help to enhance economic relations among the participating countries. In the liberal theory, such interdependence decreases the probability of conflict since states are more concerned with the economic well-being of their countries and therefore would prefer to work towards non-violent relations.

Interdependence: Both corridors also embody the concept of the liberal theory of international politics which assumes that states are linked in multiple ways, including economic, social, and political. The establishment of these corridors is not only a form of strategic rivalry but also the building of relationships whereby mutual dependency may produce enhanced cooperation and order (Saoud, 2019).

Constructivist Perspective

Influence of Identity: Constructivism is interested in the part played by identity, norms, and discourse in state action. From this point of view, CPEC and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor can be considered as projects that embody the identities of the initiators. CPEC is a part of the BRI which is not an economic venture alone but also an ideological

project of China as the global leader in connectivity and development. This narrative defines China and how other states relate to it (Siddiqui & Din, 2023).

For Pakistan, CPEC supplements its role as one of the strategic partners of China and an important factor in connectivity. The discussion on CPEC is mainly focused on Pakistan's relevance and its contribution to the promotion of trade and development in the region. Thus, this narrative plays a role in constructing Pakistan's national identity and its foreign policy.

Norms and Discourse: Similarly, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor is the reflection of the Indian identity and its dreams. The project is presented as a part of India's long-term strategy for strengthening connectivity within the region and expanding economic cooperation, which fits the country's image of the emerging great power. The discursive frame of this corridor focuses on India's role in the stability and development of the region and supports its image of a responsible and capable state (Siddiqui & Din, 2023).

Constructivist theory also emphasizes norms and discourse in the determination of the state's actions. The promotion of these corridors entails the formulation of standards regarding international cooperation, connection, and advancement. These norms affect the conduct of the participating states, and the policies and relations within the framework of the projects are formed following the general objectives (Avcu, 2023).

Geopolitical Analysis

Strategic Importance: Geopolitical theories give a conceptual background on the strategic value of geographical spaces in the conduct of relations between countries. CPEC and the IMME corridor are important strategically because of their locations and the area they span (Ibañez, 2020).

Heartland Theory: Halford Mackinder in his Heartland Theory advanced the opinion that whoever controls central Eurasia or the Heartland, controls the world. In this sense, CPEC can be described as China's attempt to guarantee its presence in the Heartland by acquiring direct access to the Indian Ocean,

which would expand its strategic presence in the region (Farooq & Khawaja, 2020).

Rimland Theory: Rimland Theory by Nicholas Spykman also highlights the Rim States, that is, the coastal regions of the Eurasian land mass. CPEC also helps China to have better access to the rimland through Gwadar port and can exert more power and control in the Indian Ocean and beyond. Likewise, the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor increases India's access to the Rimland and strengthens its strategic profile in the Middle East and Europe (Ibañez, 2020).

Sea Power Theory: One of the most significant theories in the context of this paper is Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power Theory. Thus, the construction of Gwadar Port and other infrastructure facilities within the framework of the CPEC meets the goals of Mahan to dominate the important sea routes. The Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor that aims at improving the connectivity through the sea is more in tune with the Sea Power Theory where the power of the sea is perfectly underlined based on the control of sea trade routes (Hussain & Jamali, 2019).

Thus, the analysis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor with the help of the key theories of international relations - Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and Geopolitical Analysis - gives a broad understanding of the reasons for their establishment, their consequences, and significance. These theories point out the fact that the creation and effects of such large scale infrastructures are influenced by issues of power, economics, identity, norms, and strategy.

10 Recommendations

Strategies for Regional and International Actors:

1. **Promote Multilateral Dialogue:** About CPEC and IMEE, there is a likelihood of conflict and thus the importance of diplomacy through negotiation among the countries involved including China, Pakistan, India and the Middle Eastern countries. The formation of special venues for the discussion of these corridors' advancement and administration could certainly alleviate these concerns, create confidence, and minimize misunderstandings (Isaksen et al., 2018).

2. **Enhance Economic Cooperation:** The economic rivalry between the two corridors can be eased by enhancing cooperation in joint business ventures, trade and commerce, and the construction of infrastructure projects. Thus, as investments that affect more than one country, it is possible to create common economic interests that will not let conflict situations emerge (He & Li, 2020).

3. **Strengthen Regional Institutions:** Countries in the regions like SCO and SAARC need to be more proactive in the management of conflicts and cooperation. These institutions can act as forums for discussions, solving conflicts, as well as cooperation in connection with the corridors.

4. **Involve External Powers Constructively:** It is crucial to address regional stability by engaging the external powers constructively and this includes the USA, Russia and the EU. These actors can also provide mediation services, have economic incentives and security arrangements to manage conflicts and bring together the stakeholders of CPEC and IMEEC corridors.

5. **Promote People-to-People Exchanges:** Measures such as exchanges of students, teachers, artists, and other members of the populations of the involved countries can go a long way in creating goodwill and understanding. Therefore, by providing the grounds for people to interact, the probability of conflict decreases, and cooperation increases (Sheng et al., 2022).

11 Conflict Resolution

1. **Bilateral Negotiations:** Bilateral negotiations between major stakeholders, for instance, China and India on one hand and India and Pakistan on the other, should be on specific issues of concern as regards the corridors. Positive actions and written commitments regarding conflict solving techniques can be created for matters like trade route directions and infrastructure effects (Sheng et al., 2022).

2. **International Mediation:** It is for this reason that third party nations or even international non-aligned organizations can be of great importance in helping to solve the conflicts (Muhammad et al., 2019). United Nations or any other international organization intervention can help in setting up the structure

of arbitration and conflict solving which would be fair for both parties.

3. **Economic Incentives for Peace:** Rewards like development aid or preferential trading arrangements can force the parties to work together instead of engaging in a conflict. Self-interests associated with the attainment of economic gains that are likely to accrue from the prevention of violent conflicts can act as a force to ensure that different parties resolve their differences amicably.

4. **Joint Security Arrangements:** Security issues that may be associated with the infrastructure projects can be solved through the development of mutual security deals and cooperation in sharing of intelligence. Joint endeavors in the protection of assets and prevention of threats in specific regions contribute to stability and trust between parties (Abbas et al., 2022).

11 Future prospective

1. **Continued Investment and Expansion:** CPEC is also expected to continue to invest and expand while the Indo-Middle East-Europe corridor is also anticipated to increase in size. The economic benefits of these infrastructure projects will be realized as the projects go on; this may spur more investment and participation from other countries.

2. **Potential Shifts in Alliances:** It acknowledges the fact that there could be changes in the political systems and relations hence altering the relations between different nations. That is why countries may fine-tune their approaches to utilising these corridors to the maximum possible extent, taking into account their security concerns and the competitive aspect (Suri et al., 2024).

3. **Increased Regional Integration:** In the long run, economic integration created by these corridors could enhance the level of regional integration. These could lead to the formation of regional markets, supply chains, and other collaborative economic activities for development and stability (Suri et al.).

4. **Risk of Geopolitical Tensions:** However, there are risks to regional peace and stability as China and India, and other regional conflicts may continue to be a source of strategic rivalry. Mitigating these tensions will remain a diplomatic process that entails the use of

conflict-solving approaches and the active participation of all the stakeholders.

Conclusion

The study of the CPEC and the IME corridor establishes the influence of both regional and international politics and their possibility to open new fields of conflict. CPEC through the vast network of infrastructure connects China with Pakistan and improves China's strategic position in South Asia and the Arabian Sea region. However, the Indo-Middle East Europe corridor gives India an option of trade and connectivity with the Middle East and Europe in a much stronger way.

The comparative analysis points to the fact that both corridors bring considerable economic value and cooperation prospects for the regions' integration while opening new geopolitical confrontation vectors and potential conflicts. Thus, the rivalry between the CPEC and the IMME corridor can deepen existing tensions and generate new geopolitical tensions, mainly in South Asia and the Middle East.

Explaining these corridors, theoretical approaches of Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and Geopolitical Analysis show how these affect power relations, economic integration, and regional consciousness. This will entail healthy multilateral relations, creative conflict-solving mechanisms, and diplomatic continuity in the management of the intricate projects.

CPEC and the IMEC corridor signify breakthroughs in the connectivity and development of the region but at the same time, they point to the fact that the new rising tensions must be managed prudently. The further evolution of these corridors will likely define the world's political and economic processes, which is why regional and international actors need to manage these processes with the utmost skill and in cooperation for the sake of stability and the accomplishment of common goals.

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