

BEYOND NUCLEAR: ANALYZING CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AS A STRATEGIC DETERRENCE THROUGH CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS LENS

Dr. Muhammad Rafi Khan^{*1}, Dr. Muhammad Arshad Bhatti², Dr. Sajid Mehmood Shahzad³

^{*1}Assistant Professor, School of International Relations, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan

²Lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Peking University, China

³Professor, School of International Relations, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan

^{*1}rafi.ro@mul.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Dr. Muhammad Rafi Khan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16758904>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
05 May, 2025	21 June, 2025	11 July, 2025	07 August, 2025

ABSTRACT

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which connects Pakistan's warm waters to China's Xinjiang region, is a first of its kind economic network of roads, rails, and pipelines. This study assumes that the strategic depth of CPEC is instrumental. As part of the China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's CPEC investment is above USD 65 billion. Termed as China's 'big gamble' in Pakistan by many, the CPEC passes through the heart of Pakistan's territory to give China the long desired economic advantage. For Pakistan, CPEC implies that China as investing country would also take an active care of Her investment which is creating not virtual but literal assets possessing real consequences if disturbed, dismantled or destroyed. This investment is linking Pakistan's economic and geographically significant cultural hubs, making them safer, as any harm coming to them would endanger the integrity of the Corridor. CPEC posits as a potential lifeline for China's fiscal integrity amid the current and future economic and military conflicts. Thus, this study elaborates the purpose of deterrence which is to prevent a potential conflict as it has been observed in the case of nuclear or other more destructive weapons. Considering this, the CPEC also serves this purpose, though with a different approach. Any country attacking CPEC, or any installation linked to the Corridor, would enrage Pakistan as the caretaker as well as China as the investor. This study will use Critical Geopolitics as a guiding theoretical approach, challenging the traditional geopolitics, particularly focusing the function of CPEC as a deterrent.

Keywords: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Strategic Depth, Strategic Deterrence, Critical Geopolitics, Conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Geopolitical and Geostrategic Importance

The CPEC has evolved into a multifaceted geopolitical factor with strategic and economic implications at the regional level (Chohan, 2015; Fazle-Haider, 2015; Hussain & Hussain, 2017). It shows the spectrum of opportunities and threats observed for China, Pakistan, and other actors in the given area (Ramachandran, 2015; Ahmad & Mi, 2017). It is recognized as one of the pilot projects for

the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (Duan, Khurshid, Nazir, Khan, & Calin, 2022). It shows how China values the relationship with Pakistan in matters of geopolitics and strategies in a bid to advance regional interests (Hussain & Hussain, 2017). From Pakistan's view, CPEC has economic significance based on the investment on energy sector, infrastructure and for making better connectivity of China with Arabian Sea. It is

considered a basic need for the progress of the country's economy (Rehman, Hakim, Khan, & Khan, 2018). The exact degree of strategic and influence achieved through CPEC within Pakistan,

and whether CPEC is more advantageous for the long term for China are some of the things that are still being discussed (Ahmad & Mi, 2017).

Figure 1.
Highways Network of CPEC



Note. (Ministry of Planning, Development, & Special Initiatives, 2024)

India has criticized CPEC as it sees a part of it passes through an alleged disputed territory between India and Pakistan, over which Pakistan has legal rights. This determines threat perceptions and affects the India-Pakistan geopolitics (Hussain & Hussain, 2017; Farooq, Rao, & Shoaib, 2022). Moreover, there are discussions on possible wider gains to both Central Asia and Iran for integrating CPEC into EU-Asia connectivity (Khan M. A., 2023). But global powers such as the US, and regional powers such as India have concerns over the increasing dominance of Chinese influence in Iran and Central Asian states (McCartney, 2020). However, economic activity and probable jobs that may be generated are still questionable and some critics are undertaking high figures on CPEC economic impact.

How the knowledge about CPEC is produced and disseminated

Academic Research. Pakistani and Chinese scholars, research groups, and think tanks conduct field studies, interviews, data collection and analysis about CPEC related aspects and generate reports,

analysis, frontend and backend data etc., which are published in academic journals, books and policy papers.

Government Agencies. The CPEC Authority of Pakistan (Mistry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, 2020), National Development and Reform Commission of China (National Development and Reform Commission, 2022), and other official bodies produce official data, official plans, and official progress reports for CPEC which contractualize governmental narratives.

Media Coverage. The Pakistani and Chinese media provide significant coverage of CPEC, as they talk to officials and experts and discuss expectations and effects of projects. Coverage can differ in the level of detail and neutrality.

Public Relations Efforts. That is where government PR plays an important role regarding the perception that the public of both nations has about CPEC (Ministry of Planning, Development, & Special Initiatives, 2024). This involves displaying the achievements of a project in official speeches,

websites, advertisements, documentaries, etc., whereas critics counter that information is doctored.

Public Discourse. It is derived from public discussions, which take place on social media, in op-eds, at conferences etc. The discussions can shed light on the concerns of citizens or offer different views compared to the official ones.

Generally, the knowledge on CPEC is derived from various stakeholders. There are numerous factors that should be considered when evaluating knowledge claims about this major project between Pakistan and China, including biases, quality of evidence, and viewpoints.

Key Actors Involved in Constructing the Geopolitical Narrative around CPEC

1. The Chinese and Pakistani leadership who was instrumental in development and negotiation of CPEC. This includes bodies such as China's National Development and Reform Commission and the CPEC Authority of Pakistan.

2. Various Chinese state-owned companies, for instance, China's Road and Bridge Corporation is in the transportation infrastructure industry, and banks involved in the financing and construction of CPEC development projects in Pakistan, i.e., Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Ahmad & Mi, 2017).

3. Bilateral and multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank that are assisting in funding the projects (Menhas R., Mahmood, Tanchangya, Safdar, & Hussain, 2019).

4. Security agencies in the Chinese and Pakistani governments, due to security concerns related to CPEC routes and investments.

5. Scholars, policy institutes, and media scrutinize and support specific discourses regarding CPEC to shape more public and political perception.

6. Other regional actors like India, United States, the gulf countries who build the narratives regarding CPEC in their strategic interest with respect to China and Pakistan. Their media and officials sometimes tend to present opinions adverse to CPEC (Sangkar & Mohd Huda, 2023).

It is from the interplay of these various actors that the discourse around CPEC arises. However, to identify the key narrative framers, it is imperative to

analyze the statements, policies, and actions related to CPEC in the past and present.

Relationship between Narratives on CPEC and Broader Power Structures

CPEC aims to develop infrastructure that forms part of the Belt Road Initiative that seeks to increase connectivity and trade between Eurasia and Africa (Rehman, Hakim, Khan, & Khan, 2018). There are several key aspects to the narratives and power structures surrounding CPEC.

Geopolitical influence. CPEC grants China direct control and entry into Pakistan and the Indian Ocean as well. This has a tendency of shifting the power dynamics in South Asia with India losing some of its dominance (Chohan, 2015; Zaib, 2023). CPEC links Gwadar Port in Pakistan with China's Xinjiang province for a faster and cheaper route than through other conventional routes (Ali, et al., 2017; Lokman, Daud, & Hoo, 2022) the gains are substantial. This access is not only favorable for China, but also puts Pakistan on the geopolitical map of the trade region that could improve its economic status and relevance (Ali A. , 2024; Khursheed, Haider, Mustafa, & Akhtar, 2019). Furthermore, the corridor has been considered as a relative equilibrium to India's dominance in the region due to the intense competition that exists between India and Pakistan. Critics opine that Gwadar might exacerbate the emerging competitive power struggle in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region as the US and China are entering it to establish dominance. It then increases the issue of perception of the US which is that it regards increasing Chinese regional power as a threat. The project is viewed in the context of strengthening the Pakistan and China alliance against the US (Khan & Liu, 2018; Rahim, Khan, & Muzaffar, 2018) more often in Indian Media (Vaid, 2022).

Socio-Economic Effects. Considering the socio-economic effects expected from CPEC on Pakistan, the most apparent are poverty reduction and enhancement in depreciated infrastructure of the country. The objectives of the plan include increasing energy security by constructing power plants and renewable energy plans that the country desperately needs to resolve its ongoing power crisis (Ehsan, 2024; Ali A. , 2024). Moreover, there is an expectation that the corridor will provide employment and promote economic growth since it is seen as a means of connecting distant regions with

the key economic activities and markets (Kanwal, Ren, & Pitafi, 2019; Ali, et al., 2017). For this

several Special Economic Zones (SEZs) (table 1) are being developed.

Table 1.

Industrial Cooperation/Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

No.	SEZ	City	Province
1	Allama Iqbal Industrial City (AIIC)	Faisalabad	Punjab
2	Rashakai Special Economic Zone (REZ)	Mardan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
3	Dhabeji Special Economic Zone (DSEZ)	Thatta	Sindh
4	Port Qasim Special Economic Zone (PQSEZ)	Karachi	Sindh
5	Bostan Industrial Zone (BIZ)	Pishin	Balochistan
6	Model Industrial Zone Islamabad Capital Territory (MICTZ)	Islamabad	Federal Capital
7	Moqpondass Special Economic Zone (MSEZ)	Gilgit	Gilgit Baltistan
8	Mirpur Industrial Zone (MIZ)	Mirpur	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
9	Mohmand Marble City (MMC)	Mohmand Agency	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
10	Industrial Park on Pakistan Steel Mill Land	Port Qasim	Karachi

Note. (Ministry of Planning, Development, & Special Initiatives, 2024)

Generally, the official discourse of both China and Pakistan focuses on the economic returns, societal development, energy security and infrastructural development along the corridor route (Hussain, Sohail, Yu, Manzoor, & Zahid, 2020). However, there are gains that are not mutual as China is gaining more from this arrangement.

Culture & Education. Cultural and educational exchange are one of the necessary measures that are essential for creating trust and cooperation between China and Pakistan in the framework of CPEC (Khalid, Tadesse, Wang, & Deng, 2020). This aspect of CPEC is crucial as it strengthens cooperation between nations and developing youth to deal with challenges in the future international environment (Khalil, et al., 2021).

Security dynamics. For successful implementation of CPEC, stability in Pakistan is critical which is in the interest of China (Mushtaq Officer, 2023). However, some news of terrorism and ethnic conflicts in provinces like Baluchistan pose perceived risks to the activity of Chinese personnel and investments (Ahmad & Mi, 2017). However, these risks are of a negligible proportion considering the might of the project.

Debt Traps. Some critics depict CPEC burdening Pakistan with higher Chinese debts in the future, while China may leverage Pakistan's territory and resources in the future. Lack of project transparency

fuels such sentiments (Khaliq, 2023). Academic discourses have named this as positive sanctions (Shahzad, 2021).

Local tensions. A few opposing factions in Pakistan have accused the CPEC agreement of favoring Chinese companies more than Pakistani firms and workers raising fears that the projects being undertaken may cause some harm to the environment and result in land grabbing (Kovrig, 2018; Kouser, Subhan, & Abedullah, 2019). These internal concerns are seen by Pakistan as local tensions (Kovrig, 2018).

Thus, the CPEC project interacts with regional power dynamics, geopolitical tensions, economic benefits, threats, and internal politics in a manner that shapes both positive and negative discourse on the initiative (Rahman & Shurong, 2017) to form a strategic deterrence (figure 2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The CPEC is a Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure and development project that links Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan province to the Chinese city of Xinjiang (Ahmad & Mi, 2017). CPEC is said to be a component of China's larger "Belt and Road Initiative" aimed at deepening connectivity and trade in Eurasia and beyond (Rahman & Shurong, 2017).

Some of the major infrastructures are Highways & roads connecting various regions of Pakistan, Railway network and pipelines through optic fiber cables. Others are the construction of energy

projects to assist in eradicating energy deficiency in Pakistan (Hassan, Mahmood, Janjua, & Asif, 2022). Estimated investment for CPEC projects is from \$46 billion to \$65 billion in total (Farooq, Rao, & Shoaib, 2022). Majority of the funds are obtained from the Chinese banks and companies in terms of loans, credits, and investments (Menhas R. , Mahmood, Tanchangya, Safdar, & Hussain, 2019). The purpose for which CPEC has been planned is to spur connectivity and synchronization between China and Pakistan which grants China direct land connectivity to the Middle East and Africa markets (Alam, Li, & Baig, 2019).

In case of Pakistan, anticipated benefits include enhancement of infrastructure, employment generation, reduction in poverty and boost to domestic economy (Sun, Ghani, Pitafi, & Islam, 2020). Concerns are being made about the affordability of projects and the likelihood of the creation of debt traps (Rahim, Khan, & Muzaffar, 2018). The security threat is a greater challenge to the development and completion of the CPEC projects due to the past acts of violence in Baluchistan and KPK provinces (Ahmad, Mi, & Fernald, 2020). Considerable amount of security provided to secure the Chinese nationals and businesses (Mushtaq Officer, 2023).

Critical geopolitics

Critical geopolitics is a theoretical approach in human geography and international relations that seeks to understand how geographical and spatial concepts, constructs and imaginations underpin political strategies, narratives, and actions (Dalby, 1991). It describes how such realities are reduced and operationalized in a manner that supports specific interests and objectives of geopolitics (Kelly, 2006).

The term critical geopolitics was introduced in the 1990s by scholars like Simon Dalby, Gearoid O. Tuathail, and John Agnew who were challenging the premises of classical geopolitical theories. They claimed that geopolitics is not a science, but rather a set of representations and discourses of the rulers (Müller, 2008). It is an approach to the studies of geopolitical representations which is based on the critical method in terms of questioning and deconstruction of dominant paradigms of the geopolitical discourse. It challenges aspects of conventional geopolitical epistemology and rhetoric; how geopolitical discourse is employed to justify

political authority or specific ontologies (Power & Campbell, 2010).

Some of the approaches that have been worked upon in critical geopolitics and which are considered worthy of critique are how geographic representations and images are organized in the discourse of politicians to explain global events or issues in specific ways, how the media cartographically and visually manages bias (Dalby, 1991). Critical geopolitics scholars may employ techniques like discourse analysis, feminism, post-colonialism, among other critical theories to uncover concealed logics and question the naturalized geopolitical truths that tend to reify the existing world order (Aouragh & Chakravartty, 2016). It is a different way of viewing the geopolitics and it challenges power relations and other forms of bias in geopolitical discourses. It is concerned with bringing out the ideological aspects of geopolitical talk and imagery for the purpose of advancing justice in the world (Kelly, 2006).

Strategic Deterrence

The term Strategic Deterrence in relation to international relations is generally understood as the practice of preventing an attack or aggressive actions by an adversary primarily due to the possession of one of credible retaliatory capability (Chassang & Miquel, 2010). It is a strategic action done by one country to compel another country not to engage in certain activities or to launch an attack (Freedman, 2009). The aim is to ensure the perceived costs and risks are higher than the perceived benefits.

Historical instances of strategic deterrence include nuclear deterrence that was applied by the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war. The policy of MAD was intended to prevent either side from using nuclear weapons by the strategy of assured destruction of both parties (Bruusgaard, 2016). Deterrence theory presupposes that national leaders are reasonable, weigh costs against benefits and will not take moves that are too dangerous or too expensive (Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle, & Madensen, 2017). Some people also say that it is weak against non-logical opponents. Threats can be in the form of military counteraction, economic pressures, physical barriers or defense mechanisms and assurances that an ally will come to one's aid in case of an attack. The threats must be credible (Myerson, 2007).

Strategic Deterrence generally entails capability and readiness to employ various categories of weapons

ranging from conventional to nuclear. The invention of new material can boost the deterrence factor. Deterrence breaks down if wrong signals are sent, threats are not credible or if the opponent is willing to take higher risks than anticipated. They do not lead to such miscalculations when diplomacy/communication is continued (Barnett, 1993). Some of the recent strategic challenges are terrorism by non-state actors, cyber warfare by covert ways, and authoritarian rulers with less predictable cost/risk ratios (Patrick, 2023).

Consequently, the theory of structural deterrence presupposes military/economic threats and reliable signaling to deter adversaries' actions but can be unreliable. It means that both capability and the message should match (Zagare, 1995). When applied to the CPEC context, the term 'strategic deterrence' may be used to explain how the project's infrastructure and connectivity may bolster the military, economic or political capacity of China or Pakistan in a manner that discourages threat or competition (Mushtaq Officer, 2023).

Figure 2.
Mind Diagram that Connects Critical Geopolitics, CPEC, and Strategic Deterrence



Note. Developed by the Author.
Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.
CPEC as Strategic Deterrence through Critical Geopolitics Lens Model



Note. Developed by the Author.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used both descriptive and analytical methods of data collection and analysis. It analyzed CPEC using the critical geopolitics framework. A rigorous literature review was followed by a thorough analysis of academic and policy literature, news articles, and opinion editorials on CPEC and Sino-Pak relations. This gave the necessary background and context to examine the strategic implications and consequences of CPEC.

The conceptual framework used in this research links CPEC to critical geopolitics using the theoretical works of Agnew, Dalby, and Tuathail. Therefore, an understanding of the geopolitical and geo-economic configuration of CPEC is offered to

explicate the power relations, spatial epistemologies, and discursive constructions of the strategic imagery of CPEC.

In addition, a new interpretation of CPEC as 'strategic deterrence' in China-Pakistan relations is introduced. This goes a step beyond the military factor and shows how major connectivity and infrastructure projects such as CPEC can have strategic benefits in terms of raising the cost of conflict for both parties, signaling commitments, and deepening interdependence. CPEC was geo-economically and geopolitically reviewed to analyze its functioning as a strategic indicator reducing conflict likelihood.

The author catered official sources like governmental websites carrying policy documents, press releases were the primary sources of this research to understand the discursive formations whereas content analysis based on academic work was considered to unpack the key geopolitical aspects of CPEC within the Sino-Pak relations. The analysis was organized by the critical geopolitics' conceptual themes, i.e., perception and representation, traditional and futuristic assumptions, identities and narratives, etc., to explore the strategic dimensions of CPEC as a new form of deterrence to take form of a strategic depth for Pakistan.

HOW THE CPEC IS IMAGINED AND REPRESENTED?

In India

The CPEC representations in India span from geopolitical and sovereignty concerns to economic risks and have been seeped in nationalist discourse and political strategy (figure 4). This dominant Indian perspective continues to be against CPEC on various strategic, political and some economic concerns (Sangkar & Mohd Huda, 2023).

The project is viewed as a provocative move by China to secure a foothold and to encircle India in the Indian Ocean region. Critics apprehend that China will utilize CPEC to station its own military equipment in Pakistan and encroach upon India's strategic sphere (Rajagopalan, 2022). Thus, India views CPEC as a threat to its sovereignty because this

project runs through Pakistan-controlled Kashmir region, which India regards as its own territory. This further increases India's opposition to CPEC based on principles (Vaid, 2022).

The right-wing elements in India have come out more forceful in presenting a view of CPEC as a violation of Indian sovereignty and as a China-Pakistan axis against India. This contributes to the formation of negative perception about CPEC in society (Bambawale & Madan, 2023). The Indian opposition parties have accused the government of not doing enough diplomatically to stop or slow down the CPEC process as it poses a threat to India's territorial integrity and regional dominance (Aleem, 2023). This defines the format of political discourse in terms of international relations and government.

Amidst the current tensions between Pakistan and India, some Indian analysts have noted that the CPEC may afford more economic prospects for India, if New Delhi and Islamabad sidestep hostilities. India may consider joining CPEC since it could provide new trade corridors and infrastructure connectivity to the Central Asian region (Sangkar & Mohd Huda, 2023). However, dominant voices see CPEC as a threat that will enable Pakistan to build a strong economic foundation, especially if China establishes special economic zones in Pakistan as proposed in the CPEC framework (Aleem, 2023). This could further augment the existing disparity in economic strength between India and Pakistan.

Figure 4.
How Does India View CPEC?



Note. Developed by the Author.

In the Middle East

The CPEC has attracted the interests not only in Pakistan and China but also in the Middle Eastern countries. Located at the nexus of potential markets in Middle East and Central Asia and China, CPEC is conceptually aimed at providing large economic benefits by improving the returns on transit and

restructuring the economy of Pakistan (Sohail & Chen, 2022). Thus, the project is mostly viewed positively in the Middle East as an economic opportunity but there are the geopolitical and security concerns that influence the way different Middle Eastern states approach or respond to CPEC (Minxing & Sayed, 2022; Qumber, Ishaque, &

Hussain Shah, 2018). To a certain degree, the views differ from one country to another in the region. Generally, the CPEC is viewed as an avenue through which the Chinese government enhances its geopolitical and economic power in the Middle East and Central Asian region (Khan M. A., 2023). This is understood because with CPEC China gets access to the Arabian Sea and places it strategically in the region.

Most of the Middle Eastern countries consider CPEC as an economic opportunity that they can benefit from through trade and investment cooperation with Pakistan and China. The three areas that attract particular attention are infrastructure, energy/power and transport. Many of the gulf countries have shown their keen interest in being involved in CPEC (Alam T. , 2023; Firdous, 2021).

However, there are some issues, particularly in the security domain; these concerns are shared by some of India's strategic partners in the Middle Eastern

region and where India has more diplomatic influence and interests (Rajagopalan, 2022; Vaid, 2022). For instance, there are concerns on the potential of CPEC projects to enhance the defense cooperation between China and Pakistan (Bambawale & Madan, 2023). However, these concerns do not align with the current economic realities on the ground as China has negligible military activity in the Arabian Sea or on or around the CPEC land-based infrastructure (Aleem, 2023). Thus, many view CPEC also as a projection of China's soft power – certain analysis emphasize that with CPEC in place (Munir & Khayyam, 2020), China could increase its soft power and access to the Middle East through cultural exchange, people to people contact, China media and China's political system coupled with the investment in infrastructure (Qadri, Habib, & Salim, 2023). Based on this analysis, the author has provided codes and sub-codes in figure 5 to show how the Middle East perceives CPEC.

Figure 5.

How Does the Middle East View CPEC?



Note. Developed by the Author.

By the US

Some of the major projects which have received attention internationally include the CPEC, a program that has gained a lot of traction even from the United States of America. Several works have therefore examined how the US understands and becomes cognizant of the CPEC. The project is seen as a place of geo-political and geo-economic importance for South Asian region and its effect deep down to strategic level (Ali, Noonari, & Mahesar, 2021). It has been portrayed in a positive light when launched in the media as a transforming measure as well as solving the economic crisis in Pakistan (Manzoor & Yousaf, 2023). The 'peace process' involving the Afghan government and the Taliban has had the support of the US, China and Pakistan for a negotiated political solution in Afghanistan and as part of the great power cooperation that involves CPEC. For the US critics,

CPEC serves Chinese geopolitical security interests and could pose a security threat to the USA's interests in South Asia. Some critics have argued that China might use CPEC to impose its political and military influence in the region (Ullah, Riaz, Muhammad, Khan, & Ahmad, 2020).

In economic relations, some critics consider CPEC an example of China's "debt trap diplomacy" or as "predatory economics" – the provision of significant credit and funding that makes Pakistan dependent on China (Shahzad, 2021). This is causing concerns that it could impair the sovereignty of Pakistan. Others, however, see CPEC as a development opportunity that has the potential of providing investment capital for the development of infrastructure and energy projects in Pakistan (Ahmad, Guan, & Ijaz, 2019). From this perspective, it has the capability to enhance the

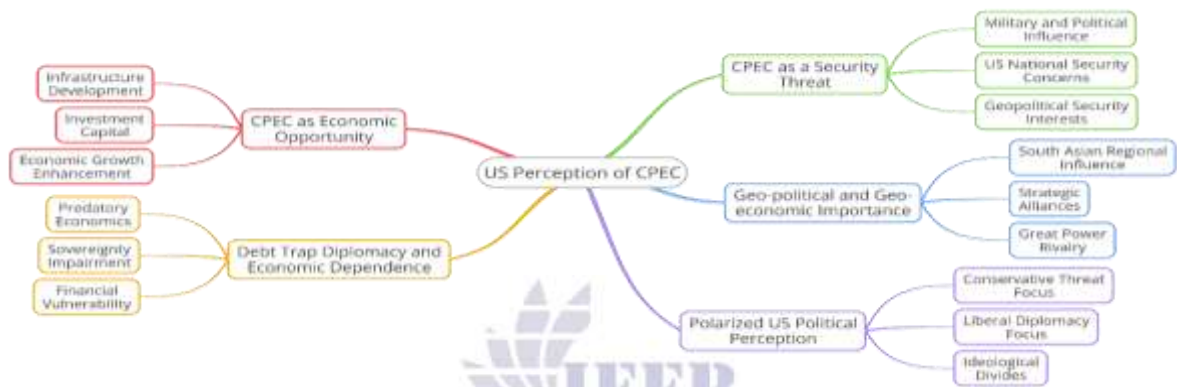
economic growth of Pakistan if effectively and efficiently handled.

The CPEC often referred to in discussions of China's Belt and Road Initiative in terms of creating connections between China and Pakistan in a global context. This connectivity has an aspect of transportation and economic integration in terms of trade, investment, and the supply chain (Farooq, Rao, & Shoaib, 2022).

Examining debates, analysis and reporting of CPEC within the US proves that it is an emotionally and ideologically charged subject reflecting the optimistic and pessimistic view on China's mega

plan (Aman, Abbas, Shi, Ain, & Gu, 2022; Menhas R. , Mahmood, Tanchangya, Safdar, & Hussain, 2019). The way CPEC evolves will persist to define the US policy debates on South Asia in the future. The CPEC related discussions also have American domestic politics involved in it, mostly polarized on the political aisles (Khaskheli, Wang, Yan, & He, 2023). While Conservatives focus on threats and alerts, Liberals try to focus on diplomacy and mutual interests concerning the project (Neog, 2020; Markey, 2020). As an integrated approach, figure 6 shows how CPEC is perceived in the US.

Figure 6.
How Does the US View CPEC?



Note. Developed by the Author.

TRADITIONAL AND FUTURISTIC GEOPOLITICAL ASSUMPTIONS SURROUNDING CPEC

The CPEC poses a direct threat to hegemonic view of geopolitics by questioning how hard power and territorial control define the influence in the international system (McCartney, 2020). China gets economic and political influence without using force and control of territory by investing over \$60 Billion through development of roads, railways, pipelines, and ports in Pakistan (Alam T. , 2023). This "soft power" could be as useful to China or more than a military approach against the other power (Ahmed, hanif, & He, 2021; Nitza-Makowska, 2021).

However, CPEC also continues some of the traditional geopolitical concepts by extending Chinese influence in a strategic region (Ali A. , 2024). Others regard it as Chinese "String of Pearls" strategy and link it with Beijing's efforts to use infrastructure projects to assert power along the key Indian Ocean supply lines (Shahzad, 2021). In this view, while CPEC might employ economics instead

of a military approach, the objective of gaining a larger sphere of influence is the same (Qadri, Habib, & Salim, 2023).

CPEC disrupts notions of a fixed territorial boundary and sovereignty over the borders. The enormous economic investment of China in CPEC provides Beijing leverage and assets within Pakistan's territory without infringing on the principle of sovereignty (Ali, Noonari, & Mahesar, 2021). This complicates international relations versus domestic matters. A traditional perspective may expect a little opposition in this relationship (Kovrig, 2018).

If economic cooperation through CPEC deteriorates, it is unknown whether China will attempt to advance its stakes using force. Some people believed that China could either turn economic influence into political and military influence if it wanted to, relying on traditional methods of power (Aleem, 2023). But up to now, CPEC indicates that it is possible for great powers to promote their agenda through economic warfare

more effectively than was previously thought (Mushtaq Officer, 2023).

Unlike more traditional power projection methods, CPEC relies on new tools and goals that are still in line with geopolitical strategy (Mushtaq Officer, 2023; Kouser, Subhan, & Abedullah, 2019). It quietly undermines old assumptions about the dominance of military force and 'hard' territorial control, but it may harden some conventional geopolitical paradigms if it provides China latent hard power capacities (Rahman & Shurong, 2017). Only the future will tell which effects will predominate.

CPEC SHAPING NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN PAKISTAN AND CHINA

The economic cooperation and integration through CPEC have had profound effects on national identities and cultural discourses in both Pakistan and China. In both countries, CPEC negotiations and discourses relate to nationalism and cultural values since people discuss the projects in terms of the development of their nations, their status in the international community, the relations with other nations, and their ability to preserve their culture in the face of globalization (Saad, Xinping, & Ijaz, 2019; Ahmad, Guan, & Ijaz, 2019). Thus, cultural imaginaries influence perceptions of CPEC while practical outcomes of the projects change cultural relations as well.

For Pakistan, this project is of vital importance to the progress and development agenda of Pakistan and the region in general. It supports nationalist discourses about Pakistan's progress and its potential in the international arena (Fazle-Haider, 2015). It is hence instrumental in the nationalist positions in Pakistan that stress on Islamic fraternity and a strategic partnership with China as a reaction to relations with the West. However, some cultural changes and issues over the Pakistani identity have emerged due to the CPEC project and the presence of Chinese influence in Pakistan (McCartney, 2020). These undesirable effects reported include loss of local identity and culture and too much influence from China (Kovrig, 2018).

In China, CPEC aligns well with economic imperialism discourses depicting China as a rising superpower that is extending its reach through large connectivity and investment projects. It provides more economic ammunition to nationalist explanations of China's good relationship and

support for Pakistan as an ally and a friend (McCartney, 2020; Duan, Khurshid, Nazir, Khan, & Calin, 2022). Some cultural dynamics from Pakistan are flowing towards western China through CPEC for a potential cultural exchange.

CPEC AS A STRATEGIC DETERRENCE FOR PAKISTAN

This study propagates and considers CPEC a strategic deterrence for Pakistan in several ways. The corridor will help Pakistan to manage its risks, increase its ability and readiness in economic, military and geostrategic regards by stimulating the country's economy, connecting it to China, and strengthening the Sino-Pakistan bond. Considering the following assumptions, a less vulnerable Pakistan makes a stronger and more deterrent force in the South Asian strategic dynamics.

- CPEC gives a message to other powerful nations that China backs Pakistan politically and economically. It also makes Pakistan less isolated in the international community. Some aggression may reconsider their actions against a certain state if they know they will be met with a counterattack from China. This perception of Chinese influence also contributes to the improvement of the deterrence posture of Pakistan.
- In addition to the economic relations, CPEC enhances the defense cooperation between China and Pakistan in terms of the arms purchases, technology sharing and military exercises. This cooperation enhances the defensive and deterrent force in military tension between Pakistan and India.
- The CPEC is to bring economic revival in Pakistan through investment on infrastructure, energy and many other sectors. This economic advantage makes Pakistan more secure and wealthy and less at risk from both internal and external challenges (Ali A. , 2024). An economically powerful country is less likely to be threatened or coerced into any form of action by other countries.
- Through transportation connection, CPEC grants Pakistan a direct connection with China through the corridor. This makes Pakistan less vulnerable to having its access to world markets through the sea lanes of communication being choked. The new trade route to a key economic partner reduces vulnerability (Khan & Liu, 2018).
- The CPEC, which ties Pakistan more with China and strengthens China's influence across the region, has amplified geostrategic importance of

Pakistan and extended the country's reach in the existing international political system.

- i. CPEC has economically connected China and Pakistan more than before. India is wary of this alliance which it considers a threat (Qadri, Habib, & Salim, 2023).
- ii. Chinese investments to Pakistan deepen China's economic and potential political and even military presence in the region (Qadri, Habib, & Salim, 2023). This challenges India's power and leadership in South Asia and complicates matters in an already strained nuclear armed rivalry between the two countries (Vaid, 2022).
- iii. There is a high probability that China and Pakistan could leverage CPEC aligned infrastructure in Afghanistan and hence positively affect the peace process (Korybko, 2021).
- iv. CPEC is part of the massive Belt and Road plan to boost trade and influence internationally, with a heavy reliance on Pakistan as a guardian of the CPEC (Ahmad, Guan, & Ijaz, 2019). The corridor provides China with the potential of overland energy supply routes from the Middle East, thus bypassing the maritime supply constraints like the Malacca Strait (Menhas R., Mahmood, Tanchangya, Safdar, & Hussain, 2019; Firdous, 2021). It largely favors and carries the potential for the country to dramatically boost economic gains.

CPEC as Strategic Depth for Pakistan

The CPEC has a strategic and economic importance in terms of investment in infrastructure and energy. More importantly, it reflects strategic interest in the core intertwined relations of Pakistan, India, and the United States. Through the lens of critical geopolitics, it is seen that Pakistan has managed to find a new strategic partner, and a strong one at that, in China, which will help it to effectively respond to the dominance of India in the region through the construction of a road and transportation network. The investment on CPEC is so heavy, and the stakes are so high that it can easily be understood for all parties opposing Pakistan or China in the region that if CPEC is disturbed in any form, it would inevitably enrage China and can turn into a security conflict. China's support to Pakistan using its might also informs the U.S. that Pakistan can look for other sources of support rather than counting on the Americans.

The size of the planned CPEC investment that China will consume around \$65 billion which is evidence of how important Pakistan is for China's

overall BRI initiative (Alam T., 2023). Transportation connections with Gwadar Port and further to the Middle East provide western China additional access to the ocean that minimizes dependence on sea routes controlled by competitors (Alam, Li, & Baig, 2019; Khan M. A., 2023). In return for these advantages, China obtains Pakistan's loyalty and appreciation making the gain of a compliant regional ally.

This is because both China and Pakistan are set to benefit significantly in terms of economic and strategic gains in case, they achieve the objectives of economic and military security through this corridor. It has the potential to become a symbol of growth for Pakistan and strategic reinforcements that strengthen the entire geopolitical position of the whole country. Despite the risks involved, overall, CPEC could rewrite Pakistan's economic destiny and provide the much-needed strategic depth to Pakistan as China continues to extend its influence globally.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

References

- Ahmad, R., & Mi, H. (2017, January). China-Pakistan economic corridor and its social implication on Pakistan: How will CPEC boost Pakistan's infrastructures and overcome the challenges? *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 08. doi:10.4172/2151-6200.1000265
- Ahmad, R., Mi, H., & Fernald, L. W. (2020). Revisiting the Potential Security Threats Linked With the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Journal of the International Council for Small Business*. doi:10.1080/26437015.2020.1724735
- Ahmad, S., Guan, X., & Ijaz, M. (2019). China-pakistan economic corridor and its influence on perceived economic and social goals: implications for social policy makers. *Sustainability*, 11(18), 4949. doi:10.3390/su11184949

- Ahmed, Z. S., hanif, A., & He, B. (2021). China's Soft Power in Pakistan: The Representation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Local Newspapers. *East Asian Policy*, 13(4), 5-18. doi:10.1142/S1793930521000258
- Alam, K. M., Li, X., & Baig, S. (2019, February). Impact of Transport Cost and Travel Time on Trade under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Journal of Advanced Transportation*, 2019, 1-16. doi:10.1155/2019/7178507
- Alam, T. (2023, December). China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Opportunities and challenges for implementation. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 6. doi:10.52337/pjia.v6i4.927
- Aleem, S. (2023, October 23). CPEC and Pakistan: Navigating Challenges Posed by India. Retrieved from Modern Diplomacy: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/10/20/cpec-and-pakistan-navigating-challenges-posed-by-india/>
- Ali, A. (2024). From Silk Road to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Comprehensive Analysis of Economic, Geopolitical, Socio-Cultural and Environmental Landscapes of Pakistan. *Annals of Social Sciences and Perspective*. doi:10.52700/assap.v5i1.329
- Ali, I., Noonari, I. A., & Mahesar, P. A. (2021, February). Understanding Pak-China Relations through CPEC: Geostrategic implications for South Asia. *Asia-Pacific - Annual Research Journal of Far East & South East Asia*, 38, 182-201. doi:10.47781/asia-pacific.vol38.iss0.3004
- Ali, L., Mi, J., Shah, M., Shah, S. J., Khan, S., & BiBi, K. (2017). The Potential Socio-Economic Impact of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Asian Development Policy Review*. doi:10.18488/journal.107.2017.54.191.198
- Aman, J., Abbas, J., Shi, G., Ain, N. U., & Gu, L. (2022, March). Community Wellbeing under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Role of social, economic, cultural, and educational factors in improving residents' quality of life. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.816592
- Aouragh, M., & Chakravartty, P. (2016, April). Infrastructures of empire: towards a critical geopolitics of media and information studies. *Media Culture & Society*, 38, 559-575. doi:10.1177/0163443716643007
- Bambawale, G., & Madan, T. (2023, November 1). How India Sees China's Ties with Pakistan and Bhutan. Retrieved from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-india-sees-chinas-ties-with-pakistan-and-bhutan/>
- Barnett, W. P. (1993, January). Strategic deterrence among multipoint competitors. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 2, 249-278. doi:10.1093/icc/2.2.249
- Bruusgaard, K. V. (2016, July). Russian strategic deterrence. *Survival*, 58, 7-26. doi:10.1080/00396338.2016.1207945
- Chassang, S., & Miquel, G. P. (2010, November). Conflict and deterrence under strategic risk. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 125, 1821-1858. doi:10.1162/qjec.2010.125.4.1821
- Chohan, U. W. (2015). Geostrategic Location and the Economic Center of Gravity of the World. McGill University Economic Publications. Retrieved 8 15, 2024, from <https://www.mcgill.ca/channels/news/geo-strategic-location-and-economic-center-gravity-world-249376>
- Dalby, S. (1991, September). Critical geopolitics: discourse, difference, and dissent. *Environment and Planning D Society and Space*, 9, 261-283. doi:10.1068/d090261
- Duan, W., Khurshid, A., Nazir, N., Khan, K., & Calin, A. C. (2022, May). From gray to green: Energy crises and the role of CPEC. *Renewable Energy*, 190, 188-207. doi:10.1016/j.renene.2022.03.066
- Ehsan, M. (2024). Examining the Impact of Pakistan-China Energy Collaborations on Poverty Reduction in Pakistan. *Research Journal for Societal Issues*. doi:10.56976/rjsi.v6i2.224
- Farooq, M., Rao, Z.-u.-R., & Shoaib, M. (2022). Surge in Economic Growth of Pakistan: A Case Study of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.900926

- Fazle-Haider, S. (2015). A Strategic Seaport – Is Pakistan Key to China's Energy Supremacy? Foreign Affairs. Retrieved 8 15, 2024, from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143227/syed-fazle-haider/a-strategic-seaport>
- Firdous, J. A. (2021). Future prospects of pakistan china relations: a case study of china-pakistan economic corridor (CPEC). *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 4(4). doi:10.52337/pjia.v4i4.330
- Freedman, L. (2009, August). FRAMING STRATEGIC DETERRENCE. *The RUSI Journal*, 154, 46–50. doi:10.1080/03071840903216452
- Hassan, M., Mahmood, Z., Janjua, S., & Asif, N. (2022). Evaluating Megaprojects From a Sustainability Perspective: A Case of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*. doi:10.1108/jcefts-10-2021-0063
- Hussain, F., & Hussain, M. (2017, May). China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its geopolitical paradigms. *International journal of social sciences*, 1, 79–95. Retrieved from <http://www.ijsshe.com/index.php/ijsshe/article/download/22/10>
- Hussain, S., Sohail, A., Yu, C.-X., Manzoor, S., & Zahid, A. (2020). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Cpec's) Socio-Economic Impacts on Pakistan. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*. doi:10.51594/ijmer.v2i6.176
- Kanwal, S., Ren, C., & Pitafi, A. H. (2019). Support for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Development in Pakistan: A Local Community Perspective Using the Social Exchange Theory. *Journal of Public Affairs*. doi:10.1002/pa.1908
- Kelly, P. (2006, March). A critique of critical geopolitics. *Geopolitics*, 11, 24–53. doi:10.1080/14650040500524053
- Khalid, S., Tadesse, E., Wang, M., & Deng, L. (2020). SWOT Analysis of Pakistan Education System: Impact of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Middle Eastern Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*. doi:10.47631/mejress.v1i2.99
- Khalil, I. U., Hena, S., Ghani, U., Ullah, R., Jan, I., Rauf, A., . . . Jingdong, L. (2021). Development and Sustainability of Rural Economy of Pakistan Through Local Community Support for CPEC. *Sustainability*. doi:10.3390/su13020686
- Khalique, A. (2023, May 16). Pakistan's debt from China becomes burden as CPEC does not generate enough growth. Retrieved from CADTM: <https://www.cadtm.org/Pakistan-s-debt-from-China-becomes-burden-as-CPEC-does-not-generate-enough>
- Khan, M. A. (2023). Effects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on the Economies of China and Pakistan. *Bbe*. doi:10.61506/01.00134
- Khan, S., & Liu, G. (2018, November). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): challenges and prospects. *Area Development and Policy*, 4, 466–473. doi:10.1080/23792949.2018.1534549
- Khaskheli, M. B., Wang, S., Yan, X., & He, Y. (2023, January). Innovation of the social security, legal risks, sustainable management practices and employee environmental awareness in the China-Pakistan economic Corridor. *Sustainability*, 15, 1021. doi:10.3390/su15021021
- Khursheed, A., Haider, S. K., Mustafa, F., & Akhtar, A. (2019). China – Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Harbinger of Economic Prosperity and Regional Peace. *Asian Journal of German and European Studies*. doi:10.1186/s40856-019-0044-2
- Korybko, A. (2021, July 6). BRI would be the best thing to happen to post-withdrawal Afghanistan. Retrieved from CGTN: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-07-06/BRI-would-be-the-best-thing-to-happen-to-post-withdrawal-Afghanistan-11Gkfn1uDrq/index.html>
- Kouser, S., Subhan, A., & Abedullah. (2019). Uncovering Pakistan's Environmental Risks and Remedies Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*. doi:10.1007/s11356-019-07428-5

- Kovrig, M. (2018, July 24). National Ambitions Meet Local Opposition Along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The Diplomat. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/national-ambitions-meet-local-opposition-along-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>
- Lokman, R., Daud, S., & Hoo, C. P. (2022). CPEC and South Asia's Geopolitical Complex: Powers' Rivalry. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (Mjssh)*. doi:10.47405/mjssh.v7i9.1741
- Manzoor, A., & Yousaf, Z. Z. (2023, February). Economic Spheres! Media framing of CPEC in Pakistan. *Journal of Media and Entrepreneurial Studies*, 3. doi:10.56536/jmes.v3i.34
- Markey, D. (2020, April 8). How the United States Should Deal With China in Pakistan. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/04/how-the-united-states-should-deal-with-china-in-pakistan?lang=en>
- McCartney, M. (2020). The Prospects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): The Importance of Understanding Western China. *Contemporary South Asia*. doi:10.1080/09584935.2020.1855112
- Menhas, R., Mahmood, S., Tanchangya, P., Safdar, M. N., & Hussain, S. (2019, November). Sustainable Development under Belt and Road Initiative: A Case Study of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's Socio-Economic Impact on Pakistan. *Sustainability*, 11, 6143. doi:10.3390/su11216143
- Menhas, R., Mahmood, S., Tanchangya, P., Safdar, M. N., & Hussain, S. (2019). Sustainable Development Under Belt and Road Initiative: A Case Study of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's Socio-Economic Impact on Pakistan. *Sustainability*. doi:10.3390/su11216143
- Ministry of Planning, Development, & Special Initiatives. (2024). CPEC Secretariat. Retrieved August 3, 2024, from <https://cpec.gov.pk/>: <https://cpec.gov.pk/>
- Minxing, H. M., & Sayed, M. (2022, December). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Geostrategic Development In The Middle East. *Journal of Pakistan-China Studies (JPCS)*, 3, 37-52. doi:10.55733/jpcs.v3i1.50
- Mistry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives. (2020). A Bill to Provide for the Establishmen of China Pakistan Economic Corridor Authority. Retrieved from Pakistan National Assembly: https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1612267873_350.pdf
- Müller, M. (2008, March). Reconsidering the concept of discourse for the field of critical geopolitics: Towards discourse as language and practice. *Political Geography*, 27, 322-338. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2007.12.003
- Munir, R., & Khayyam, U. (2020, June). China-Pakistan economic corridor and the impact of Coal-Based energy projects on tropospheric ozone in Pakistan. *Polish Journal of Environmental Studies*, 29, 3729-3747. doi:10.15244/pjoes/112895
- Mushtaq Officer, M. S. (2023). Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia: Security Imperatives. *Strategic Studies*. doi:10.53532/ss.042.02.0012
- Myerson, R. B. (2007, November). Force and Restraint in Strategic Deterrence: A Game-Theorist's Perspective. Tech. rep. doi:10.21236/ada474684
- National Development and Reform Commission. (2022). Retrieved from People's Republic of China: <https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/>
- Neog, R. (2020, November 12). CPEC and U.S.-Pakistan Relations. Stimson. Retrieved from <https://www.stimson.org/2020/cpec-and-u-s-pakistan-relations/>
- Nitza-Makowska, A. (2021). Can the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor help Beijing Win Pakistanis' hearts and minds? Reviewing higher education as an instrument of Chinese soft power in Pakistan. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 28(3), 274-289. doi:10.1080/10286632.2021.1962849

- Patrick, S. (2023, September 12). Rules of Order: Assessing the State of Global Governance. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/09/rules-of-order-assessing-the-state-of-global-governance?lang=en>
- Power, M., & Campbell, D. (2010, June). The State of critical geopolitics. *Political Geography*, 29, 243–246. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2010.06.003
- Pratt, T. C., Cullen, F. T., Blevins, K. R., Daigle, L. E., & Madensen, T. D. (2017). *The Empirical Status of Deterrence Theory: A Meta-Analysis*. Routledge eBooks, 367–395. doi:10.4324/9781315130620-14
- Qadri, N. S., Habib, N. M., & Salim, N. M. (2023, July). CPEC: Challenges, Opportunities and Socio-Economic Impact on the Muslim World. *International Journal of Social Science & Entrepreneurship*, 3, 257–271. doi:10.58661/ijss.v3i3.201
- Qumber, G., Ishaque, W., & Hussain Shah, S. M. (2018). Regional Security Implications of ChinaPakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Global Regional Review*. doi:10.31703/grr.2018(iii-i).04
- Rahim, N., Khan, A. M., & Muzaffar, M. (2018, June). Problems and Prospects of CPEC for Economic Development and Regional Integration. *Global Economics Review*, III, 21–30. doi:10.31703/ger.2018(iii-i).03
- Rahman, S. U., & Shurong, Z. (2017, January). Analysis of Chinese Economic and National Security Interests in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Framework of One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 08. doi:10.4172/2151-6200.1000284
- Rajagopalan, R. P. (2022, August 9). India's Latest Concerns With the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/08/indias-latest-concerns-with-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>
- Ramachandran, S. (2015). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Road to Riches? China Brief (The Jamestown Foundation), 15(15). Retrieved 8 15, 2024, from http://www.jamestown.org/programs/china-brief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44233&cHash=ca403ad0c1bccb4a37fcfbf723d59029
- Rehman, A. U., Hakim, A., Khan, K., & Khan, I. U. (2018, July). Role of CPEC in development of trade, transport and economy of Pakistan. *Romanian Journal of Transport Infrastructure*, 7, 77–92. doi:10.2478/rjti-2018-0005
- Saad, A., Xinping, G., & Ijaz, M. (2019, September). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its influence on perceived economic and social goals: Implications for social policy makers. *Sustainability*, 11, 4949. doi:10.3390/su11184949
- Sangkar, M. A., & Mohd Huda, M. I. (2023). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Threat to India's Border Security. *Business and Economic Research*. doi:10.5296/ber.v13i2.20717
- Shahzad, S. M. (2021). String of Pearls: Chinese Economic Strategy Concerning the IOR Amid Growing Security Dilemma, with an Emphasis on the CPEC. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 41(2), 399–408. Retrieved from <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/998>
- Sohail, M. T., & Chen, S. (2022, November). Public perceptions About Foreign Investment, A PLS-SEM Analysis toward republic sustainable infrastructure. *PLoS ONE*, 17, e0277673. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0277673
- Sun, Y., Ghani, U., Pitafi, A. H., & Islam, T. (2020). Social-Cultural Impacts of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on the Well-Being of Local Community. *Journal of Transport and Land Use*. doi:10.5198/jtlu.2020.1724
- Ullah, H., Riaz, A., Muhammad, M., Khan, H., & Ahmad, R. (2020, July). US-Taliban peace talk: CPEC perspective. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 53–73. doi:10.24193/cs.q.32.4

Vaid, D. (2022, August 8). Why India is wary of others joining China-Pakistan project. Retrieved from Deutsche Welle: <https://www.dw.com/en/cpec-why-is-india-wary-of-others-joining-the-china-pakistan-project/a-62744243>

Zagare, F. C. (1995). Classical deterrence theory: A critical assessment. *International Interactions*, 21(4), 365–387. doi:10.1080/03050629608434873

Zaib, M. S. (2023). CPEC: A Great Leap Forward in Pakistan and China Relations. *Jheds*. doi:10.59219/jheds.03.01.22.

