

# Media Dynamics Beyond The Borders: A Comprehensive Analysis Of The Threats And Challenges To CPEC In Global Print Media

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## Abstract

CPEC is one of the most attractive and enriched projects in the history of Pakistan's economic trajectory. Since its inception, Pakistan has been confronted with economic instability and impediments to financial growth through international-level projects and measures. In this context, CPEC has been a valuable addition to the crumbled and fluctuating economic policy of the country. On the contrary, Pakistan is also confronted with a bordered rivalry with India, which always poses threats and challenges to its development in all aspects. Flooded with all these facts, the CPEC project is also facing several threats and challenges to its very existence and implementation. In this context, the current study is an attempt to identify and address the potential threats and challenges to CPEC. The study is approached through content analysis by opting for a quantitative research design. The four major daily newspapers including the New York Times (USA), India Times (India), China Daily (China), and The Daily Dawn (Pakistan) are selected for content analysis published between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2021. The data is analyzed through the SPSS version-21 version to derive statistical facts about the issue. The study finds that the perspective of American and Indian newspapers is alarmingly different as compared to the Chinese and Pakistani dailies in terms of threats and challenges. The study recommends regional cooperation and diplomacy, security measures, social and environmental safeguards, financial transparency, and risk management as sources to overcome, control, and reduce the threats and stabilize the project for more effective socio-economic development.

**Keywords:** CPEC, Daily Newspapers, Social, economic, and political threats, managerial and administrative challenges.

## Introduction

One of the six economic corridors envisioned by China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is advancing several multi-sector transport projects, is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Rana & Ji, 2020). It is now in the implementation phase. With a portfolio of over US\$46 billion for projects in the electricity and transport sectors as well as the creation of new industrial regions along the corridor, the

governing authorities in both nations have great expectations for CPEC (Ali, 2020).

The Chinese-Pakistan economic corridor is the main initiative, and there has been consensus on the route and constraint recommendations, which are a crucial definition of international collaboration (Syed & Raza, 2021). This is because Pakistan's top policymakers have concurred that collaboration across borders is necessary. Given this, Pakistan needs to develop

and polish its foreign policy lens and foster global agreement on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Nitza-Makowska, 2020). A new narrative is emerging against China, reminiscent of the Cold War's early phase against the Soviet Union. China's economy is expected to become the largest in the world by 2024, according to IMF predictions, underscoring the need to restrict the country's growth (Layne, 2020).

However, Pakistan's fragmented factions of politics have reaffirmed their agreement on CPEC and have made it plain that they view it as a major priority, in contrast to Kashmir and the nuclear project (Kuszevska & Nitza-Makowska, 2021). Pakistan has to reevaluate its foreign policy goals and reassess its committed partners and supporters who genuinely want to see Pakistan succeed and stand by it through all of its ups and downs. CPEC has the potential to significantly alter both Pakistan's economic growth and Kashmir's status (Hadi, Batool, & Mustafa, 2018). In Pakistan, a new bipolar CPEC-plus that addresses foreign policy, counterterrorism, and economic growth is long overdue. Only then can Pakistan reclaim its rightful place and role in the twenty-first century (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has emerged as a transformative initiative in the realm of international economic collaboration, symbolizing the convergence of strategic interests between China and Pakistan (Asif et al., 2019). However, the realization of this ambitious infrastructure project is not devoid of formidable threats and challenges that necessitate meticulous examination. One paramount concern lies in the geopolitical dynamics of the region, where the corridor traverses sensitive territories, notably the disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan (Siddique & Shafqat, 2021). This not only engenders diplomatic complexities but also raises questions about the project's vulnerability to regional

disputes. Furthermore, the security landscape along the corridor is characterized by a myriad of internal and external challenges, encompassing insurgency, terrorism, and geopolitical rivalries. The economic viability of CPEC is also subject to scrutiny, given concerns about debt sustainability and the potential for a debt trap scenario (Kazmi, 2014). This research endeavors to unravel these multifaceted threats and challenges, offering an insightful analysis that contributes to a nuanced understanding of the impediments facing the successful implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands as a flagship initiative, emblematic of burgeoning economic collaboration between China and Pakistan. However, as this corridor traverses geopolitical fault lines and encounters diverse regional dynamics, its success is beset by a myriad of threats and challenges. This research seeks to investigate and comprehend these challenges through the lens of print media, employing a comparative content analysis of prominent daily newspapers from the United States, China, India, and Pakistan. By scrutinizing the discourse within these newspapers, the study aims to discern divergent perspectives, narratives, and priorities concerning CPEC. The investigation intends to shed light on how print media in these nations articulate and interpret the threats and challenges associated with CPEC, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding this transformative economic corridor. Through this methodological approach, the study endeavors to provide valuable insights into the shaping of public opinion and the role of media in framing the discourse on the CPEC, thereby addressing a critical gap in the scholarly understanding of the project's multifaceted challenges.

### **Objectives of the Study**

**Objective 1: Conduct a Comparative Content Analysis**

Analyze and compare the content of daily newspapers from the United States, China, India, and Pakistan to discern divergent perspectives, narratives, and priorities related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

**Objective 2: Identify and Classify Threats and Challenges**

Systematically categorize and identify the threats and challenges associated with CPEC as portrayed in the print media of the selected countries, with a focus on geopolitical, security, and economic dimensions.

**Objective 3: Examine the Role of Media in Shaping Public Opinion about threats and challenges**

Investigate and analyze how the print media in the United States, China, India, and Pakistan contribute to shaping public opinion on CPEC by examining the framing, language, and emphasis employed in reporting on the threats and challenges surrounding the economic corridor.

These objectives collectively aim to fulfill the overarching goal of providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the threats and challenges to CPEC as depicted in the print media of the selected countries, thereby contributing to the scholarly discourse on this transformative economic initiative.

**Methodology**

The research topics and hypotheses of the study were addressed through the use of content analysis. Analysis was done on four newspapers from four different nations including The New York Times, The Hindustan Times, The China Daily, and The Dawn. Data was gathered between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2021.

The study examined the news reports on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). These articles may have discussed the foreign policies of the US, India, China, and Pakistan as well as the potential problems of the project from the perspective of China in the media. However, because the selection of the time is too long—1st January 2016 to 31st December 2021—editorials, articles, letters to the editor, and certain other pieces like Op-Ed were omitted from the Pakistan Economic Corridor. Using certain keywords related to the US, India, China, and Pakistan's foreign policy on CPEC, OBOR, and BRI, the online versions of the aforementioned newspapers were browsed and downloaded as PDF files. All of these files were then imported to the Nexis Uni database, yielding identical data.

The researchers identified six primary topics and dimensions—relationship, connection, development, economic circumstances, infrastructures, risks, and development—to characterize the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in mainstream publications from Pakistan, China, America, and India. For the comparative analysis, English-language newspapers from the USA, India, China, and Pakistan were selected to address the study objectives and hypotheses. This investigation delves into the elite English press of the United States, India, China, and Pakistan. The chosen publications for this study include the Daily Dawn in Pakistan, The Hindustan Times in India, The China Daily in China, and The New York Times in the United States. A coding sheet was developed with the assistance of a pilot study, aligning with previous research on framing studies to ensure a methodologically sound approach.

**Analysis, Results and Findings:**

**Table 1: Validity & Reliability of Threat and Challenges**

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.962	.960	5

For testing the validity of Threats & Challenges questions representing T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5, The Connectivity total (T1+T2+T3+T4+T5) is calculated and then the correlation coefficient of every T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5 is calculated with T total. The coefficient of correlation of T1 with T total is 0.725 with a p-value of 0.000, T2 is .979 with a p-value of 0.000, T3 is .977 with a p-value is 0.000, T4 is .980 with p-value 0.000, T5 is .976 with p-value is .000, with which is significant, hence Threats & Challenges situation is valid and the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data is analyzed by SPSS Version 21. Chi-square is used for association among framing of CPEC in the newspapers' coverage of the New York Times (USA), The Hindustan Times (India), China Daily (China), and The Dawn (Pakistan). Moreover, One-Way ANOVA was also used to make a comparison of the slant of frames toward the framing of CPEC.

**Table-2:**

	Yes		No	
	Count	Row Total N%	Count	Row Total N %
<b>T1:-</b> Do the mentioned newspapers of the USA, India, China, and Pakistan portray any story regarding OBOR/CPEC as a threat to the new great game?	178	20.1%	709	79.9%
<b>T2:-</b> Have the mentioned newspapers of the four countries highlighted any story regarding the main threats and challenges faced by the CPEC in the region?	327	36.9%	560	63.1%
<b>T3:-</b> Does the story refer to more than two sides of the OBOR/CPEC contextualizing negative & positive consequences?	323	36.4%	564	63.6%
<b>T4:-</b> Is there any story regarding internal threats & challenges to OBOR/CPEC?	323	36.4%	564	63.6%
<b>T5:-</b> Do the mentioned countries' newspapers report any story regarding external threats and challenges faced by the OBOR/CPEC?	330	37.2%	557	62.8%

### Stance about threats and challenges in news stories

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	positive	59	6.7	6.7	6.7
	negative	341	38.4	38.4	45.1
	neutral	487	54.9	54.9	100.0
	Total	887	100.0	100.0	

The stance about the threats and challenges of this mega project CPEC is shown in the stance of the four countries' newspapers' portrayal of their stance towards this project 59 stories show their stance towards threats and challenges of this project is positive and their cumulative percent is

6.7%, the stance about the threats and challenges in these stories are negative which is 341 and the cumulative percent is 45.1%, while on the other side, the 487 stories show their stance towards CPEC are neutral and the cumulative percent 100%.

**Table-3: Newspaper \* Threats' Stance Cross tabulation**

	Count			
	T -stance			Total
Newspaper	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
New York Times	0	55	12	67
Daily Dawn	2	42	84	128
Hindustan Times	0	233	48	281
China Daily	57	11	343	411
Total	59	341	487	887

Note:  $df = 6$ ,  $\chi^2 = 5.295E2$ ,  $p = .000$

T- stance shows the responses of four newspapers The New York Times, Hindustan Times, China Daily, the Daily Dawn. The statistical information shows the mentioned results, the first is the degree of freedom (df), and the Chi-Square test of independence is 6. The Chi-square test statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) is a measure of the independence between the two variables.  $\chi^2 = 5.295E2$ , p-value: associated with the Chi-square test is .000. With a low p-value, ( $p = .000$ ), reject the null hypothesis that the two variables. In other words,

there is a statistically significant relationship between the choice of newspapers and the response "T-Stance" The Chi-square test of independence suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between the choice of newspapers and the response "T-Stance".

#### Discussion:

The study's objectives focus on how US and Indian newspapers frame news related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and shape their media agenda in the context of foreign

policy, particularly about this significant mega project. These newspapers strategically prioritize key themes such as relationship dynamics, connectivity, development, economic conditions, and infrastructure status. Additionally, they shed light on the potential threats and challenges associated with the CPEC.

The news coverage from these sources brings attention to issues framed within the context of prevailing geographical and territorial differences among Pakistan, India, and China. Notably, The Hindustan Times stands out for its extensive coverage and emphasis on territorial and regional disputes, particularly highlighting the Kashmir issues with Pakistan. The newspaper positions CPEC as contrary to the national interests of India. This comprehensive coverage by The Hindustan Times tends to be more critical, and the analysis of data suggests a notable divergence in how CPEC is framed in the media coverage of India and the United States of America. In essence, this divergence becomes apparent in the substantial differences observed in how the CPEC is portrayed and analyzed within the media narratives of both India and the United States.

### **Threats and Challenges to CPEC in the Selected Newspapers (Major Findings):**

In analyzing the stances of four prominent daily newspapers, The New York Times, Hindustan Times, China Daily, and Daily Dawn towards the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a nuanced understanding of the perceived threats and challenges emerges.

#### **The New York Times:**

The Daily New York Times extensively covered CPEC, focusing on various dimensions. The newspaper highlighted geopolitical tensions among the US, China, India, and Pakistan. The US expressed concerns about China's expanding influence through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, including in South Asia. India, in particular, raised objections due to territorial disputes, specifically in Kashmir. Security

challenges, including terrorism and regional instability, were discussed, emphasizing potential implications for project implementation. The coverage also investigated the US-China rivalry within the BRI and CPEC context, touching on issues like debt diplomacy, technology competition, and regional influence.

#### **Hindustan Times:**

The Daily Hindustan Times maintained a critical stance towards CPEC, primarily due to territorial disputes. The newspaper objected to the route passing through Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a region claimed by India. Hindustan Times expressed concerns about threats to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, emphasizing security risks, including potential military and strategic advantages for Pakistan and indirectly for China in the region.

#### **China Daily:**

Contrasting with the critical tones of Western and Indian media, China Daily portrayed a positive stance on the CPEC project. Emphasizing regional connectivity and economic development, the newspaper highlighted CPEC as a major infrastructure initiative connecting Gwadar port in Pakistan to China's northwestern region. Positive aspects included economic development, job creation, energy generation, infrastructure projects, and the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to attract foreign investment. However, security concerns were acknowledged, particularly in regions like Baluchistan, prompting China to express worries about the safety of its investments and personnel involved in CPEC.

#### **Daily Dawn:**

Daily Dawn provided extensive positive coverage of CPEC, focusing on economic opportunities for Pakistan. The newspaper reported on Chinese investments in various infrastructure projects, energy generation, job

creation, and economic growth. Coverage included progress reports on CPEC-related infrastructure projects, debates on the terms of Chinese loans, and discussions on regional implications and improved connectivity. Environmental and social concerns were also addressed, highlighting the impact on local communities and the environment.

### **Conclusion**

The Chinese ambitious infrastructure developmental project CPEC is a flagship and leading project of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. The CPEC is a trade bridge between China, the Middle East, and Europe through Pakistan, and CPEC is viewed as a game changer for the economy of Pakistan. The CPEC project is a gateway to a landlocked, hydrocarbon-rich central Asian state. Pakistan also considers China as a time-tested and all-weather strategic partnership, signifying the unique state-to-state and also the close people-to-people connectivity and goodwill for the whole region. It is well-understood and known fact that the opponents of One Belt One Road flagship project CPEC intend to strongly oppose it, and they consider this initiative a threat to global peace, threat to regional security, threat to the completion of the project they also consider this mega project to reveal an international threat against the economic project between China and Pakistan.

The Chinese One Belt One Road initiative has a big challenge in the region, the “String of Pearl” strategy, China tries to isolate India by strengthening Chinese trade relations, with South Asian countries in the Indian periphery like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal. On the other hand, “Necklace of Diamond” policy of India in this strategy, India improved relations with important countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, and Vietnam to counter the Chinese strategy with its policy i.e., “Necklace of Diamond” through which India has developed

military relations with key countries in the Indian and Pacific Ocean and its neighboring countries to challenge any Chinese initiative in the region.

In conclusion, the diverse perspectives presented by these newspapers reflect the multifaceted nature of the CPEC project, encompassing geopolitical rivalries, security challenges, economic opportunities, and environmental and social considerations. Understanding these varied viewpoints is essential for a comprehensive analysis of the threats and challenges associated with the CPEC from different regional and international perspectives.

### **Practical Recommendations for Addressing Threats and Challenges to CPEC:**

#### **Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Diplomacy:**

Addressing the multifaceted challenges surrounding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) requires a comprehensive approach centered on enhanced regional cooperation and diplomacy. This involves establishing open and transparent communication channels among China, Pakistan, India, and the United States to facilitate regular dialogue and address geopolitical tensions. Additionally, diplomatic efforts should be intensified to resolve territorial disputes, particularly those related to Kashmir, fostering consensus on CPEC's regional impact. Crucially, the creation of a multilateral forum that includes relevant stakeholders is recommended to promote mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration. Such a forum would serve as a vital platform to mitigate potential security risks and geopolitical challenges, cultivating a cooperative environment essential for the success of CPEC.

#### **Comprehensive Security Measures:**

Ensuring the security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) necessitates a

comprehensive approach involving collaborative efforts between China and Pakistan. To achieve this, security protocols for CPEC should be reinforced, particularly in regions marked by instability, such as Baluchistan. This entails implementing advanced technologies and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to effectively counter potential security threats, including terrorism and other disruptive activities. Moreover, joint military exercises and intelligence operations are recommended to guarantee the safety of investments and personnel involved in CPEC, addressing the security concerns voiced by various stakeholders. By adopting these measures, a robust security framework can be established to safeguard the successful implementation and operation of CPEC projects.

### **Social and Environmental Safeguards:**

Ensuring the social and environmental sustainability of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) requires a proactive approach centered on social and environmental safeguards. First and foremost, prioritizing and rigorously enforcing stringent environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for all CPEC projects is crucial to guarantee compliance with international standards and mitigate adverse effects on local communities and ecosystems. In addition, establishing effective mechanisms for local community engagement is recommended, actively seeking their input in project planning and implementation to address social concerns and avert potential conflicts. To enhance accountability and transparency, collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is essential. This collaboration would involve continuous monitoring and assessment of the social and environmental impact of CPEC, promoting sustainable development practices and responsible investment throughout the project's lifecycle. This comprehensive approach ensures

that CPEC aligns with international best practices, fostering positive social and environmental outcomes.

### **Financial Transparency and Risk Management:**

Addressing financial concerns associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) involves a strategic focus on financial transparency and risk management. Firstly, enhancing transparency in financial transactions and loan agreements related to CPEC projects is crucial to alleviate concerns about debt diplomacy and ensure financial sustainability. To further safeguard long-term investments, establishing a robust risk management framework is recommended, systematically assessing and mitigating financial, political, and economic risks. Collaboration with international financial institutions and experts is pivotal for this endeavor, involving regular audits and evaluations of CPEC projects. This collaborative approach not only enhances accountability but also promotes transparency in financial dealings, fostering confidence and ensuring the enduring viability of CPEC investments.

Implementing these practical recommendations will contribute to addressing the diverse threats and challenges associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), fostering a more secure, sustainable, and mutually beneficial environment for all stakeholders involved.

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