

CHINA'S MARITIME PIVOT: CPEC AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONNECTION

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Abstract

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a critical component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with far-reaching implications for regional and global geopolitics. This study investigates the strategic significance of CPEC in China's broader geopolitical strategy, particularly its South China Sea ambitions. The research question guiding this inquiry is: How does CPEC mitigate China's trade security vulnerabilities in the South China Sea region, and what are the implications for regional dynamics and global trade routes? By analysing the impact of CPEC on maritime security, energy trade, and regional power dynamics, this research reveals the corridor's pivotal role in enhancing China's energy security, countering US influence and Indian concerns, and solidifying China's position as a global economic powerhouse. The study also examines the challenges and opportunities arising from CPEC implementation, including its potential to reshape regional alliances and challenge existing global trade patterns. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of China's geopolitical ambitions and the significance of CPEC in advancing its strategic interests.

Keywords: CPEC, China's Geopolitical Strategy, South China Sea, Indian Ocean, Maritime Security, Global Trade.

Introduction

China is as old a country as its tradition happens to be. Moreover, in the stream of traditions lie the long-cherished conceptions of the rise of Chinese power. The long silk route¹ is one predicament to this objective, and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project of Xi Jinping's grand One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.² The study focuses on and explores the geopolitical aspects of the CPEC that qualify this project as a strategic game-changer, considering the imperatives of immense value to China. One of them is China's growing maritime disputes in the South China Sea with the neighbouring states amid its security concerns and vulnerabilities of its trade and energy routes in the Malacca Strait.³

The concept of geopolitics describes factors on national power and international political efforts that laid the foundations for the study as a critical

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approach to world politics.⁴ The research paper postulates that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) significantly enhances China's trade security in the South China Sea by providing alternative trade routes, thereby mitigating its vulnerabilities and reshaping regional power dynamics, which subsequently influences global trade patterns and counteracts US and Indian geopolitical influence in the region. It also shows that regional connectivity initiatives like CPEC are China's revision and evolution of her strategy of being overt in regional and global affairs, and it is also seen as China's response to Indian encroachment in the region.⁵ China is expanding because of a precarious global security environment. It envisages the BRI under the pretext of the Sino-US competitive relationship.⁶

The research outcome will discuss China's regional economic security calculus and Pakistan's economic empowerment. It would analyse the role of BRI in strengthening the Sino-Pak partnership. The role of CPEC in South and Central Asia has been discussed extensively. However, this paper creates linkages between the CPEC and China's South China Sea vulnerabilities by looking at the significance of the CPEC in a larger regional security scenario. The byproduct of this research will propose possible avenues where China and Pakistan can tackle the challenges. The role of CPEC under the umbrella of OBOR (or BRI) will be discussed primarily. The scope of the study presciently blends the historical anecdotes of the Sino-Pak relationship and its modern manifestation in strategic alienations, and it also discusses China's foreign policy through an analytical lens.

Deborah S. Davis identifies that China's geographical and policy dilemmas persist despite its furtive engagements in CPEC and demographic and geopolitical enigmas. Farrell maintains that China is confronting issues because of her desire for a more significant role in global affairs.⁷ Critical trends in Chinese foreign policy and all other underlying pushes are triggering the revisionism in Chinese foreign policy, having combined the dynamics of power, security, and national interest.⁸ The current dispensation of Chinese foreign policy is more endogenous than exogenous, and the domestic push is more worthy of a contributory variable in the revised outlook of Chinese foreign policy. China's ever-increasing demands vis-à-vis population and resources necessitate this change.⁹

China's economic preeminence emphasises its role in international politics, while alarmists exaggerate China's rise, and deniers downplay China's over-push in the global matrix.¹⁰ Chinese perception regarding the present and future are rooted in its past. Horner discusses how China has successfully changed and adapted its historical traditions, institutions, and intellectual understandings according to trade, commerce, military strategy, and political needs. This transition has been under process since the 1949 revolution from hardline socialism to 1979 reforms of capitalism. Now, this change is expanding and engaging everything from trade to strategy.¹¹ Sudha Ramachandran writes in the Jamestown Foundation that CPEC will become a game-changer and decrease Chinese dependence on trade and import of energy resources from the Straits of Malacca.¹² It will give China a balanced import route as China

receives 80% of its energy and imports from the Strait of Malacca, which may create obstacles for its competitors or enemies in the future in times of conflict.¹³

Regional integration has become an essential phenomenon in world politics since 1980. Elaborated that regionalism is a top-down process managed by governments and other state actors to provide infrastructure, incentives, and development funds. In his book *Regionalism, Globalization, and International Order: Europe and Southeast Asia*, Jens-Uwe Wunderlich amicably underlines the changes that contributed enough of a positive stimulus to the integration drive. This regionalism is catered on economic grounds that can only be functional if an immense and fertile economic infrastructure complements the trade and other associated channels essential to the integration drive.¹⁴

Regional disagreements over the small oceanic islands in the South China Sea have strained relations among Southeast Asian states. This area is rich in natural resources, fisheries, trade routes, and military installations. A key question is whether these nations can set aside their political animosities for national interest. The Obama administration's 2012 strategy, known as the "pivot to Asia", has been seen by some experts as escalating tensions among these states.¹⁵ Somehow, a quarter of oil reservoirs, fundamentally from the region in the gulf, came up with the oil supply to the following nation-states, which enfold China, Japan, and South Korea. The supply to these states takes its place through the strategically important nerve of Malacca. A considerable amount of oil goes through the strategically important nerve of Malacca.

Given the various geopolitical dynamics and the emergence of potentially hostile alliances, China is concerned that escalating tensions in the East and South China Seas could lead to a maritime blockade of the critical Malacca Strait, threatening its economic stability. Consequently, Beijing has been seeking alternative routes to reduce its reliance on this waterway, aiming to establish a more sustainable energy security policy that aligns with its long-term economic growth and dominance goals. In 2003, then-President Hu Jintao identified the need to mitigate sustains, for which he coined the term "Malacca Dilemma".¹⁶ One route is China's trans-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines. Second, the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor is a development project that will use highways, railways, and pipelines to link the Gwadar Port in southern Pakistan to China's northwestern region of Xinjiang. When fully completed, China can use this land bridge to transport supplies from the Persian Gulf.¹⁷

As part of its Belt and Road initiative, China is developing several major new routes that are likely to reduce China's dependency on the Malaccan Straits as a conduit for oil imports. China trusts that it must overtake the circumstance and shape its cooperation to counter the conceivable antagonistic vibe against China. A critical amount of Chinese trust that permits Taiwan's autonomy marks its passing warrant. They demand that if, at any point later, Taiwan attempts to end up distinctly a different substance, China will have no real option except to dispatch a substantial military activity. Free Japan and Taiwan, with the assistance of Vietnam and the Philippines, can affirm their impact on Chinese-conceived interests in the region and

can choke out China monetarily by denying China its entitlement to the abundance of ocean and exchange corridors.¹⁸ China's quest for a redefined and revamped role in global affairs is one alongside a goal that ensures the favour of China as an overtly crucial player in the regional and global security matrix. Therefore, CPEC is envisaged as the proponent of the proposed strategy.

The peaceful rise of China also makes future predictions that the emergence of China will not only bring peace and prosperity to the Chinese nation but will also raise many other nations on the path of economic freedom and prosperity. The framed strategy of the Obama administration concerning the region of 2012, "The Pivot to East Asia", substantially stressed the bilateral alliances, considering the issue of security, strengthening and cultivating relationships. It underscored the working nature of growing economies, enfolding China, involving multilateral organisations, propagating human rights and corroborating democracies along with the rampant military bases and massive trade and investment. Nevertheless, China is suspicious of the "Pivot to East Asia strategy" as part and parcel of American policy to stagnate and curb rising China's military power and might and economic power. Exponents of the above proposition in China's chief's intelligentsia estimate that the US wishes a crestfallen China would enfeeble and divided into economic, military, and social lines so the US can keep up with its imperialistic and material monopoly over Asia and Africa.¹⁹ In the wake of BRI, China is trying to cope with the foreign policy challenges and dilemmas confronting a redefined assertive role on the global chessboard of politics. The trend of regionalism has grown worldwide, and China is the leading state in the world. In this regard, Beijing is an emerging non-Western power in world politics.²⁰ The rise of Chinese influence is predictable mainly, contingent upon a stable flow of goods to global markets and energy—primarily oil—into China. The geopolitical challenges in the South China Sea are significant, prompting China to consider Pakistan a safer and more direct trade and energy access route. However, this strategy requires internal stability within Pakistan. The successful completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would counteract the US "Pivot to Asia" policy, enhancing China's regional and global competitive position.

China faces immense geopolitical challenges, the resolution of which may take decades. Therefore, prioritising connections and circumventing potential chokepoints is advisable. The effective operation of CPEC is critical for Chinese foreign policy, as it supports the broader One Belt One Road Initiative, which promises economic and trade benefits. Additionally, CPEC positions China as a more secure strategic partner, particularly in the event of escalating tensions in the South China Sea. CPEC represents a mutually beneficial opportunity for China and Pakistan.²¹ For the last three decades, this region of East Asia has seen a relative period of peace compared to the rest of the world. The relative axiom of the study further gets verified in correlation to David's thesis that China, with great reason and diplomatic skill, has used this peacetime for progress and development, which has not only brought development for the region but also added to the economic and political stability of

the region.²² In the long run, it will integrate the entire East Asian region, further expanding its positive influence on the other parts of the region.

Milestones and Processes in the Implementation of CPEC

China Pakistan Economic Corridor is an example of cooperation between the two countries. Despite many challenges of a severe nature, the Chinese government is ready to invest considerable sums in Pakistan. However, the challenges are still there, but none are greater than the benefits expected by both states. Hence, the process is smoothly coordinated and implemented by both states. Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) and a Parliamentary committee of the Senate of Pakistan ensure the smooth flow. The other active forum is the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms in Islamabad, which takes care of the project and sub-projects and devises planning and policy with the coordination of other stakeholders. Originally, CPEC had four major areas.

- Transport infrastructure is based on road construction, maintenance, and railway upgrading. The main aim is the easy and fast mobility of goods from Gwadar port to the intended destinations.
- Pakistan is an energy-starved country, especially facing a crisis in meeting the electricity supply and generation needs for industry and domestic use. Energy production is the second principal component set for the CPEC. So far, the estimates to finance the CPEC energy projects are 33.8 billion dollars, a significant part of the financing needed for the big project.
- Establishing industrial and economic zones in different areas of Pakistan to increase economic activity and reap the maximum benefits of the CPEC.
- The project's primary and most essential parts are the development and operationalisation of Gwadar City and Port. Gwadar City is being built to facilitate economic activity near and around the port and ensure its smooth functioning.

Some of the CPEC projects were completed quickly in a short time to harvest the benefits of CPEC early. These projects were named as part of the Early Harvest Program of CPEC. It included road infrastructure projects and some energy production units that have already started producing energy for energy-hungry Pakistan. Energy projects are being financed using the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) model by Chinese companies and will bear no financial setback for the Pakistan government. Some of the projects Chinese companies finance would be sold to Pakistan after some stipulated time at a price as low as 0.01 dollars or 1 PKR.²³ Other projects are different and are financed by the Chinese government based on low-cost loans to the government of Pakistan. The markup ratios for different loans vary from only 2 to 4 per cent, which is very low compared to other loans taken by Pakistan from other countries and international financial institutions.

These projects and Chinese investment have shown positive results for Pakistan's development and a booster for its geographical significance in the region and beyond. Pakistan's unstable economy is likely to be boosted by China's massive investment of \$ 46.5 billion (and increasing) in the energy, infrastructure, and industrial sectors along with Gwadar Seaport. It is also crucial from a geostrategic perspective, as China has direct access to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Moreover, it has maritime geostrategic and security implications in the Indian Ocean as well. China's BRI is a multilateral framework of development and strategy proposed by the People's Republic of China.²⁴ It includes building one road network along with one maritime route. This is also termed the Silk Road Economic Belt. This initiative underpins China's redefined and more significant role in global affairs, overtly termed China's global push. It also hints at China's overproduction strategy and its lead role in manufacturing. Pakistan is a partner of China in this new Silk Route initiative since China has announced 46 billion projects in the form of the Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan (The total value of the CPEC projects is increasing with the new announcement of projects.²⁵ It would overplay Pakistan's role in regional security calculus and assert Pakistan's robust position in global affairs.

Geographic factors, such as its proximity to the western region siding Pakistan and its developmental impacts serving as an alternative to the Malaccan trade route, are central to the CPEC. The study details the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its concomitant prospects and challenges and proposes a policy roadmap for both states. It simultaneously analyses geopolitics, which is concerned with geographic factors as the critical determinants of CPEC.²⁶ The ongoing project has, therefore, received regional and international attention. CPEC is a project of great importance for Pakistan, China, and other states in the region and beyond, as it is designed to connect various territorial entities.

Keeping the ground realities in mind, with varying geopolitical and geographical scenarios and coming of adversarial alliances, China is dreadful of the conflicted region in the South China Sea. Suppose skirmishes and antagonistic alliances ever intensify, and such alliances are rife. In that case, it might eventually impose a naval blockade on the contracted Strait of Malacca and suffocate China in terms of economics.²⁷ Before letting such a situation occur, China wants to preempt it by forming alliances to counter any possible animosity directed against her. The people in China believe that permitting Taiwan's independence will be like signing the death warrant of China; they are also of the view that if Taiwan ever gets freedom and becomes a separate nation-state, China will have no other choice but to launch substantive military action. In theory, if Japan and Taiwan, with the assistance of Vietnam and Philipppians, imposed their hegemony over Chinese interest in the South and the East China Sea, it could hinder the Chinese from getting their share of wealth in the maritime and trade corridor, which in turn lead to the suffocation of China economically.²⁸

Assisting Pakistan to build up its infrastructure is in the broad interest of China and a pragmatic step towards failing the possibilities of Chinese suffocation. The strategic location of Pakistan is observable, and it interlinks northwestern China to the Arabian Sea, a passport to the enriched Persian Gulf countries. Being firm and sturdy regarding its military, economics, and politics, Pakistan will remain a reliable ally of China. China's increasing economic engagement with Pakistan is an essential element of China's efforts to counter and reverse the US aspirations to stagger alliances throughout the region, including Pacific Asia. The "Pivot to East Asia" strategy was conceived by the Obama Administration in 2012. It stresses the cultivation and strengthening of dual and bilateral security alliances, amplifying relationships of a working nature with all the tremendous surfacing economies of the world, including China and India.²⁹ It aims at connecting and bringing together all the regional and international multilateral institutions, propagating and swelling trade and foreign direct investment, ensuring installations of worldwide military installations, furthering the democratic form of governments, and preserving human rights. Nevertheless, China sees the strategy being proposed by the Obama administration, namely the "Pivot of the East", as an overall colossal segment of American intrigue to put a bar to the vast expansion of China, economically and militarily. An advocate of this proposition in China's holding intelligentsia believes that the USA wishes for a weak and enfeeble China mainly on economic, military and social footings so that she continues her reign over the region of South Asia and particularly Africa. The geopolitical situation of both China and Pakistan is central to the CPEC project. Geographical factors are crucial for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The paper discusses the relevance of the CPEC in South and Southeast Asian regions and how this route that passes away from the Asia-Pacific region has far-reaching impacts on Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia. It also gives a general idea of the changes that BRI connectivity brings to the globe.

Global interconnectedness has heightened the nation's curiosity about one another's intentions, fostering a sense of insecurity. Similarly, India is apprehensive about the ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.³⁰ Although there are severe doubts about the other strategic implications of CPEC and China's dominance in the region, there is also no doubt that the costs of manufacturing and transporting goods will be reduced for the member countries. Despite the tremendous economic and strategic benefits attached to the region, CPEC is critically debated in Indian policy circles and Indian media. However, the fact remains that Chinese products will dominate the outflow of other regional goods. CPEC made many news headlines in the region and at the international level. Moreover, investments in infrastructure will be another source of China's vast foreign exchange reserves,³¹ previously held in an arrangement of the low-interest-a-bearing scheme by the American government and their apprehended apparatus of insecurities and securities. Western and European nations made this scepticism clear in the Belt and Road Forum, mentioning the development of sheer criticism and the faceted threat to Indian security in the region. India then repeatedly objected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it passes through the disputed territory of Kashmir and also of

Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, the goodwill gesture that the economic merry was foreseen to shed on the Indo-Pak bilateralism thus had been largely lacking regarding developments concerning CPEC. Thus, in such a situation, India chose to skip the event, and the officials issued a comparatively more powerful statement, which was not only contradictory to the usual language of Indian neutrality and officialdom but was also sparky enough to clarify the Indian stance over CPEC. The most striking statement was: "Connectivity projects must be pursued in a manner that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity". India is convinced that the Gwadar Port and the CPEC projects have underlying strategic intentions.³² China and Pakistan's joint ventures in defence have been a major concern in Indian policy and intellectual scales, denying Pakistan's inherent capacity to build its defence strength. India worries over China's rise in the Middle East, thereby gaining dominance in Southeast Asia. Dated to the recent Malaccan dilemma, the credible presence of Indian naval forces in the Andaman Sea by strategic geography is rightly adjacent to the Strait of Malacca and where the Indian partnering with the US and other countries is seen as a safeguard to the maritime peace reflects that Indian cards are antiparallel to CPEC as they can be translated into support of buildup of a formidable blockade. Pentagon, in its Annual Report to Congress, recently reckoned that the Chinese are most likely to explore the adventurist possibility of establishing naval facilities in friendly countries like Pakistan. However, the Chinese Foreign Ministry brushed off the report. Another plausible solution, as per Indians, is that they are to make something that can rival the BRI. India's projected reluctance to join OBOR is mainly because of the CPEC, which, according to their strategists, violates India's sovereignty in route mapping through the disputed territory. It has also been among the suggested axioms in an academic dialogue that India may shed its reluctance to join OBOR if CPEC is renamed or if China declares CPEC is not part of the Belt and Road initiative.³³ It has been not of much noteworthy apprentice. Thus, it has not been as popular as the Belt and Road Initiative (Toppa) – but the ground fact remains that India has its cross-continental projects going on, namely the International North-South Transport Corridor, which plans to connect India, Iran, Central Asia, West Asia, and Russia, while very conveniently skipping Pakistan both from and on the way. The other project underway is the ITI-DKD-Y corridor – a railway route passage that will connect Bangladesh to Turkey.³⁴ India has sided with the US in the South China Sea disputes, taking it to counter the Chinese move of repeatedly blocking India from joining the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). The 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York postured China's senior officials sided with Pakistan in the India-Pakistan Kashmir standoff, making India even more apprehensive of the fact that China has not done much to appease India.

In addition to analysing a complete frame, scholarly discourses of an optimistic hue emerge, minting that good is seen along the expected lines. Marvin G. Weinbaum, Director of the Pakistan Studies Centre at the Middle East, Washington, in a meeting with an Indian remote approach Institute, said that the two-sided relations between China and Pakistan constantly stayed solid. He specified the new monetary measurement of relations and contrasted it with Sino-Indian exchange ties. He

believes that the Sino-Indian exchange ought to have the capacity to kill any concerns of India about Pak-China relations to a greater degree. In any case, Weinbaum expressed that Pakistan remains the best decision for Chinese engagement and vital progress.³⁵ However, Beijing has been willing to address India's concerns. Hua Chunying, China's foreign ministry spokeswoman, told the media that Beijing is committed to developing friendly and cooperative relations with others and that CPEC would not affect China's position on Kashmir. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, a Swedish-based think-tank, maintains that according to a report, India's opposition to CPEC reflects a concern over the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute and China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean. Although time and again Beijing has been clarifying that CPEC aims only at providing a strategic connection from its Xinjiang province to Pakistan's Gwadar port in Baluchistan, in the Arabian Sea opposite India's west coast, it has nothing to do with the alteration of India's positioned stand on Kashmir, and that the issue be resolved bilaterally by India and Pakistan through talks and CBMs.

India's Regional Initiative and Its Impact on CPEC

India has objected to some of the projects which are in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. As Kashmir is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan, India objects to the work carried out by any Chinese company or project carried out with the help of Chinese funding. This objection of India instigated the Chinese response, and the Assistant Foreign Minister of China said, "The project between China and Pakistan does not concern the relevant dispute between India and Pakistan."³⁶

Chinese Prime Minister, in his meeting with his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, expressed the wish of China to initiate and build Bangladesh, *China, India, and Myanmar (BCIM)* Corridor. China wishes to include India in its bigger plan for the Maritime Silk Route named BRI. This is an opportunity for India to link with China on the one hand and, on the other hand, with Europe, the ASEAN region, Central Asia and Africa. This has also given hope to New Delhi that Modi's settled targets for economic growth will get a considerable boost by accepting such an offer from Beijing.³⁷

India has gradually strengthened its position among the South Asian nations. Its diplomatic efforts and engagements with major regional and international powers have given India a dynamic outlook in strategy and economy. According to analysts, if India openly supports the CPEC and BRI, it will hamper and go against Indian goals regarding the disputed territories between China and Pakistan. As India states, its position on the disputed territories cannot align with the roads built in the regions India Claims to be her. India's support to CPEC or joining of CPEC would indirectly mean that India also supports the roads passing through Gilgit and Baltistan regions, which were part of the princely state of Kashmir before the independence and division of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan and India. India has openly claimed the

rights of these specific areas, and in this manner, joining CPEC or supporting it would not be easy.

On the other hand, China and Pakistan are strategic partners with a typical strategic rivalry with India regarding the control of territories. Hence, China's BRI in Pakistan can be taken as Chinese investment and stakes in Pakistan, further strengthening the already existing strategic ties between the two allies; this is a kind of equation that the Indian strategic community dislikes and takes as a counter-alliance against India. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) represents a crucial element in China's broader strategy within the Indo-Pacific region, extending its influence beyond South Asia. By enhancing connectivity, facilitating trade, and bolstering economic ties, CPEC serves China's interests and reshapes regional dynamics, potentially altering the balance of power. As this initiative progresses, its implications will resonate throughout the Indo-Pacific, highlighting the interconnected nature of contemporary geopolitical interests and the complexities that arise in this multifaceted arena.

Conclusion

The abovementioned arguments show several contending views about India-China relations and their impacts on Pakistan. The Pakistani state machinery seems comfortable with the increase in Sino-Indian trade relations. Improvements in Sino-Indian trade cooperation are viewed as "Positive Developments" in the Pakistani intelligentsia. Scholars and think tanks believe that this growing economic cooperation is of great relevance and importance for Pakistan concerning Pakistan's dependence on Chinese assistance in the fields of economy in general and strategy in specific.

Strategically, the region, with the building of CPEC, would change dramatically. Pakistan and China would be able to connect better with each other and change the Indian hegemonic design in the South Asian region. The USA's nurturing of India as a balancer to China would face a significant setback, and China's strength would increase. China could avoid the Malacca dilemma, but its strength and position would remain unhampered. However, her trade would be conducted better. Indian efforts to develop Chabahar as a parallel port to Gwadar and tap South Asian markets depend partially on peaceful relations with Pakistan as India would need a passage on land through Pakistan. However, it would not dent the business of Gwadar a great deal. Gwadar will remain the jewel in the crown of CPEC.

BRI and its concomitant implications will reshape the regional strategic and political landscape. The international relations literature thus bears witness to the assumption that there is no such thing as permanent and indifferent. No state machinery can work in its dormitory if it does not affect its neighbouring countries, be it of a positive or negative sort. The equation of the India-China relationship is essential since its larger contours will define the posture of regional stability. When

the cooperation between India and China increases, it will weaken Pakistan's position in Chinese foreign policy, as the bases of support for Pakistan from China are majorly rooted in a common threat and animosity from India. When this element of typical rivalry diminishes, cooperation from China on the strategic front may weaken. However, the cooperation between Pakistan and China will increase in other areas. Therefore, the theoretical and practical constructs concord with the axiom that CPEC promises much if the balance of compromise is elevated to the level of much from that of a bare minimum one.

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