

**HOST COMMUNITY PERCEPTION TOWARD THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)**

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ABSTRACT

After the completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Asia will enter a new era of prosperity and progress. This paper investigates the attitudes of the host community toward the significance of CPEC and addresses the implementation issues associated with CPEC. The study would also aid in comprehending the counterplan for Pakistan's development. This study revealed that the majority of respondents had a positive outlook regarding the project. This research will provide Pakistani researchers, policymakers, business executives, and entrepreneurs with current insights.

Keywords: CPEC, Public Opinions, Public Sentiments. Importance of CPEC, Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Many global powers have been drawn to Pakistan because of its geographic location in pursuit of their political and economic objectives. Firstly, Pakistan is located at the crossroads of the Indian and Chinese economies, making it a vital energy source for both (Deling, Diren, & Tiantian, 2016). As a result, China's leaders have turned their attention to Pakistan and its port of Gwadar in order to secure Chinese energy supplies and to build commercial ties between western China and the rest of the world (Shaikh, Ji, Fan, & Reviews, 2016). CPEC is an expression of China and Pakistan's long-standing economic, political, and geostrategic connections (Sajid Ali, Daud, & Ibrar, 2021). However, some experts believe that the project will have a greater influence on China than on Pakistan, even if both countries are expected to benefit from it (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019). Pakistan's low expectations are directly related to the project's challenges. Political instability, weak intuition, an ambiguous regional and geopolitical image, and major security worries are predicted to hinder the country's gain (Hussain & Sciences,

2017). They've faced longer hours, reduced prospects for advancement, and wage freezes as a result of the importance of these concerns yet still remain appreciative. The purpose of this paper is to examine existing publications and social media channels in order to determine the most important concerns and establish a strategy for how Pakistan can benefit the most from the execution of the CPEC. In general, a research paper is divided into four components. Following a brief introduction, a discussion of how Pakistan can benefit from the proposed economic corridor is provided, as well as a proposal for how Pakistan can do so.

Material and methods

Material

Since the 1950s, Pakistan and communist China have maintained a close economic and political cooperation despite their opposing political views. Because of the free-trade agreement between China and Pakistan, the current China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a stable and well-designed cooperation that has resulted in a rise in commerce (Muhammad Ibrar, Kakepoto, Manzoor, & Khan, 2022; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019). The CPEC should be executed for four interrelated strategic reasons for Pakistan. Pakistan's slow investment climate will be bolstered, attracting billions of dollars in Chinese investment. FDI in infrastructure projects such as building roads, trains, ports, and other modes of transportation and communication will increase as a result of the 9/11 attacks (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karan, 2016). Increasing exports to Asia, Africa, and Europe will be made possible, which is another advantage. The oil and gas pipeline along the corridor will provide a reliable source of energy for China's growing economy. Finally, the 4000-kilometer length of the corridor ensures that China's eastern and southern provinces are connected and Pakistan's backward regions are reindustrialized. CPEC is intended to alter China's global economic and political stance in addition to boosting the long-standing economic ties between the two nations (Deling et al., 2016; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022; Rehman, Hakim, Khan, & Khan, 2018).

With the CPEC mega-project, China is hoping to meet the needs of many different parties involved. Although the CPEC's geographic relevance to China may or may not exist, it is widely assumed that it will help China's export-led economic plan through increasing trade (Nilofar, Jiang, Ishtiaque, & Literature, 2014). Experts predict that China's economic links with South Asian countries will be strengthened as a result of the mega-implementation project (Khan, Ahmed, Malik, & Research, 2013). Increasing Beijing's regional military supremacy is likely to be possible as a result. Central and South Asia Development Corridor (CPEC) is projected to expand Chinese political influence in central and southern Asia, which encompasses a wide range of transportation and energy infrastructures (Irshad & Development, 2015). Scientific papers on the China-Pakistan economic corridor have increased during the past two years following a number of debates and discussions. A majority of the reporting has been on the economic ramifications, hazards that may arise, and feasible remedies for both China and Pakistan (Sajid Ali et al., 2021; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019). In both China and Pakistan, the economic impact of the corridor projects was determined to be the same, according to the report. Several

studies have predicted that the project's completion will have a major impact on energy security, development, strengthening of peripheral diplomacy, and globalization (2016).

Aside from linking China and Pakistan politically and economically, the CPEC is projected to bring wealth to all of Asia as a result of its implementation (Shaikh, Ji, & Fan, 2016). The CPEC megaproject is not without its dangers and difficulties, but they are not insurmountable. Given Pakistan's existing law and order, terrorism, and religious extremism issues, there is some remaining uncertainty regarding the country's ability to secure its corridor (Avais, Shaikh, Mahesar, & Memon, 2016). The project's start could be delayed if Pakistan's workforce and institutions are undertrained and underperforming. It is also possible that Pakistan's domestic investment is not sufficient to build and maintain the corridor's infrastructure, as (Deling et al., 2016) claims. The discrepancy in industrial structure, trade imbalance, and cultural divides between the two countries might all jeopardize the execution of the economic corridor (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, Rafiq, & Buriro, 2018). Construction and implementation of the CPEC will provide both internal and external problems. The project is more difficult to accomplish because of the country's border tensions with India and Afghanistan, as well as the United States' geopolitical interest in Pakistan (Deling et al., 2016; Hussain & Sciences, 2017)

Method

Since its beginnings, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been the topic of heated controversy and discussion on both sides of the border. There was no way for people on either side of the corridor to participate in or contribute to the project's viability. There has been a lot of discussion on the importance and problems of the China-Pakistan economic axis regardless of their influence. Because of the CPEC's importance, both countries' policymakers have given it a lot of attention (Hussain & Sciences, 2017; Nazneen, Xu, & Din, 2019). We used academic and policy papers, as well as the thoughts of Pakistani students studying in China, to examine the CPEC's importance and potential problems. Participation in a poll was solicited from students at several Chinese universities. Students are an excellent resource for knowledge on this topic because of their familiarity with Chinese culture and their personal involvement in it. These high school kids were asked about the importance of the projects, their value to both countries, as well as what they feared most about undertaking them.

Results

Table 1 shows 79 percent of Pakistani students in China are male, and the remaining 21 percent are female, according to a sample survey of Pakistani students in China.

Table 1: Respondents' gender

Options	Male	Female
Frequency	344	93
Ratio (%)	79	21

Students who have been in China for one to four years are represented in Table 2 by undergraduates (25%), masters (55%), and doctoral (20%, respectively) levels of study.

Table 2: Level of study

Option	Undergraduates	Masters	PhD
Frequency	109	241	87
Ratio (%)	25	55	20

It is shown in Table 3 that 50 percent of respondents learned about CPEC through social media. Public news media (28%), international conferences (9%), government promotions (8%) and university courses made up the rest of the students' sources of information (4 percent)

Table 3: Source of information

Options	Government promotion	Social media	International conference	University course	News media	Others
Frequency	37	209	41	17	123	0
Ration (%)	8	50	9	4	28	0

When asked, "who do you think will benefit the most from the operationalization of CPEC projects?", 62% of the contacted respondents believe that China will reap the greatest benefits, while 32% of the remaining respondents believe Pakistan will benefit most.

Table 4: Who will benefit most?

Option	Pakistan	China	No idea
Frequency	142	271	24

Percentage 32, 62, and 5

People were polled on their views on the significance of the issues raised by social media outlets when it came to demographic questions (Table 5). As for its importance, the majority of those who took the survey believed that the operationalization of the planned projects would have a significant impact on creating jobs and providing infrastructure, as well as encouraging domestic and international investment into Pakistan. While respondents showed a slight interest in energy security and peace stability, it appears that respondents were reluctant to influence the project in order to secure China's and Pakistan's global economic and political position.

Table 5: Significance of CPEC

Options	Job opportunity	Infrastructure for Pakistan	Peace and stability	Global position	Energy security	Investment	Image building
Frequency	421	378	198	113	194	362	245
Ration (%)	96	86	45	26	44	83	56

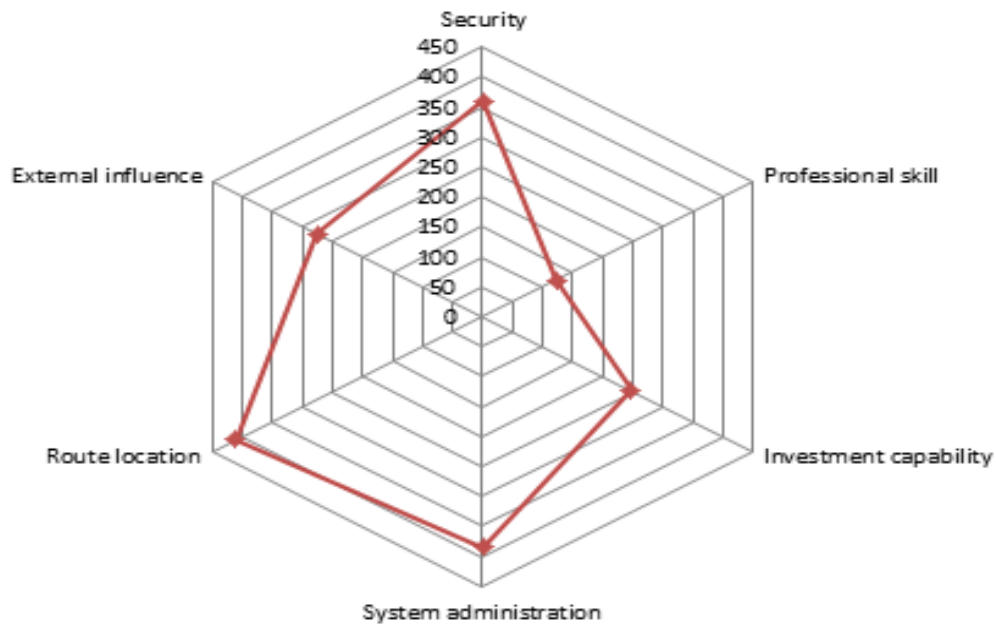
Among the challenges listed in table 6, the change in the corridor's route has been deemed to be the most significant obstacle to the project's operationalization, according to researchers. Additionally, Pakistan's bureaucratic and corrupt public administrations, along with the country's security concerns, needed some attention from the Pakistani government.

Table 6: Importance of the challenges

Options	Security	Professional skill	Investment capacity	System of administration	Route relocation	External interference
Frequency	359	122	246	385	411	275
Ration (%)	82	28	56	88	94	63

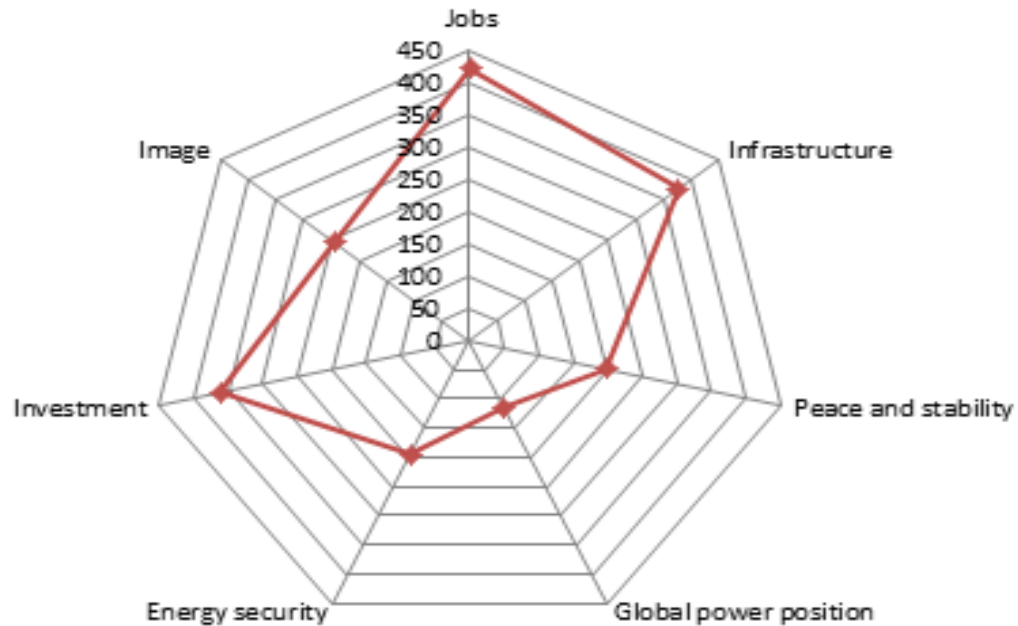
In Table 5, the authors found that the most frequently discussed challenges were: - Regional and national security (Security); -The lack of trained professionals (Professional skills); -Low capability of domestic investment to observe the amount invested (Investment capability); -Bureaucratic and corrupted administrative system (System administration); -Public disagreement on the location of the route (Route locations); and - External.

Figure 1 Challenges for the implementation of CPEC



In contrast, Table 6 in Fig.2 shows the most important concepts discussed in relation to CPEC's significance; -Creation of job opportunities (Jobs); -Long-term infrastructure opportunity for Pakistan; -Bring regional and national peace and stability; -Shifting the economic and political position of both nations (Global power position; Insurance); -Insurance o. - (Image).

Figure 1 Significance of the implementation of CPEC



Discussion

For decades, governments have used specialized economic corridors as a way to strengthen economic and political ties. It can be a tool for strengthening one's political and economic power, or it might be an opportunity to reinforce long-standing international ties, depending on your point of view (Shujahat Ali, Khan, & Aftab, 2021; Deling et al., 2016). The China-Pakistan economic corridor is one example of the long-standing relations between the two countries. In spite of ideological differences, China and Pakistan have maintained long-term political and economic ties since the 1950s (Khan et al., 2013; Nazneen et al., 2019). Upon completion and operation, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is anticipated to have a favorable impact on the economies of both nations and the surrounding area (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018). According to some political and economic experts, the CPEC may benefit China more than Pakistan (Shujahat Ali et al., 2021; Hussain & Sciences, 2017).

Due to Pakistan's need to execute pre-construction work, the shortage of specialists and financial funds is considered a hindrance for the project. The project's implementation

could be affected by Pakistan's global socio-economic image and the political interest of numerous outside actors in the country (Abbas, 2019; Haq & Farooq, 2016; Naz, Ali, & Fatima, 2018) . Furthermore, some of the debates surrounding the implementation of the project revolve around the possibility of giving an unfair advantage to the one with the greatest production capability and ability to produce large quantities of goods (Kanwal, Pitafi, Pitafi, et al., 2019; Rehman et al., 2018; Shoukat, Ahmad, & Abdullah, 2017).

The vast majority of respondents in the study supported the implementation of the China-Pakistan economic corridor. A significant finding from a recent sample survey is that the majority of respondents believe that China will gain more from the implementation of CPEC megaprojects than Pakistan (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018; M Ibrar, Mi, & Rafiq, 2016; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019; Makhdoom, Shah, & Sami, 2018; Ozbay, Ozmen-Ertekin, & Berechman, 2003; Xie et al., 2015).

Roadmap for Pakistan benefit

Countries of equal economic and political importance develop a wide range of economic and political ties based on the nature of their natural and man-made resources. To use just one example, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was established as a result of prior Chinese-Pakistani free trade accords. Chinese companies stand to gain economically from product diversification even if the initiative has been agreed upon by both sides and is designed for their mutual benefit (Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2019; Khalique, Ramayah, Hina, & Abdullah, 2020; Nilofar et al., 2014; Shoukat et al., 2017; Tehsin, Khan, & Sargana, 2017). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor benefits can only be fully realized if Pakistan's national government reexamines its original planned and execution procedures. Table 7 shows the methods and policies that can maximize Pakistan's economic and political benefit from CPEC.

Table 7: How to maximise Pakistan's profit from the CPEC economic corridor

Aims and Strategy	Plan of action
<p>establishing a public administration that is devoted to openness and accountability</p>	<p>Provide quality service at all levels of government by developing a national strategy that is in line with the corridor's policies and strategies.</p> <p>Each public office activity should have clear, transparent, and rule-based guidelines.</p> <p>Synchronize the service offerings of supporting institutions with the economic corridor's overall plan</p>
<p>Making the route's location more accessible to the general public</p>	<p>Improve the public's understanding of why the route needs to be changed;</p> <p>Facilitate the second phase of the original route's construction; Create an all-inclusive meeting with all interested parties.</p> <p>Enhance the nation's economic assistance to the country's most underdeveloped regions.</p>
<p>Ensuring national security</p>	<p>Create enough jobs for the young generation; control national spending; invest in people and infrastructures; and create a high-quality workforce; all while facilitating national economic growth.</p> <p>Enforcement of federal laws and orders must be ensured.</p> <p>The fight against terrorism and the preservation of common ground for all people and groups are intertwined.</p>
<p>The development of a mechanism to deal with external interference</p>	<p>Boost economic and political ties with countries in the region that are not China.</p> <p>By signing bilateral economic agreements, you can open up new markets.</p> <p>Rally allies and isolate threats through diplomatic relations;</p> <p>Through technology and manpower, strengthen the nation's defense."</p> <p>Promote civil defense and emergency preparedness among the public.</p>
<p>Boosting domestic investment and encouraging it to grow</p>	<p>Enhance banking and customs performance so that they can support economic strategy; Invest in manufacturing and service firm modernization and internationalization to support the economic strategy.</p>

Conclusion

According to the findings of a recent public opinion poll, the China-Pakistan economic corridor poses a number of challenges (CPEC). There has been an increase in public awareness of the project and its social media interactions, as well as the necessity for the

government to include public opinion into its implementation. The Pakistani people are hopeful about the CPEC, despite the fact that some issues are considered to constitute risks. When it comes to economic and political aims, Pakistan's government has a vested interest in ensuring that CPEC negotiations go well, and this paper provides a 'vision' for how this can be done.

The use of a limited sample size in the questionnaire survey may have impacted the reliability of the study's conclusions. Further investigation on related topics is still needed.

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