Power Politics And Security In The Context Of CPEC

Muhammad Asfandyar Marwat[1] , Minhas Majeed Khan[2]

[1]*PhD scholar Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar.*
[2]*Assistant Professor Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar.*

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the security challenges facing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through the lens of Realism, a theory in International Relations. Security is examined in different dimensions, including political, economic, social, and environmental aspects. The paper analyzes how states, driven by self-interest and national power considerations, navigate the international system to secure their core interests. Using Realism, the paper examines the power dynamics among key actors like the US, India, China, and Pakistan, and their impact on CPEC's security. It also discusses how the anarchic international system influences states' behaviors and interactions. The paper highlights the importance of Realism in understanding the security dynamics of CPEC and how it enriches scholarly discourse on the geopolitics of the region. It concludes by emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts among stakeholders to address security challenges and ensure the success of CPEC.

Introduction

The paper examines the theoretical underpinnings that shape our understanding of security and its intricate relationship with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Security, a multifaceted concept, has evolved through various lenses across different times and regions in human history. This chapter explores the diverse ways in which scholars have conceptualized security and how different theoretical schools within the realm of International Relations offer distinct viewpoints on the subject.

Drawing inspiration from Neo-Realism, a variant of the broader paradigm of realism, the researcher examines its significance in comprehending the complex dynamics of CPEC's security. Neo-Realism, with its emphasis on systemic analysis and factors such as self-help, survival, national power, and national interest, provides a conceptual framework to unravel the security challenges and opportunities entwined with this transformative economic corridor.

Through the lens of Neo-Realism, the chapter navigates the evolving strategic partnerships between key actors like the US, India, China, and Pakistan, shedding light on the systemic shifts that have prompted adjustments in foreign policies. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the external and internal security challenges confronting CPEC, emphasizing the need for robust strategic cooperation to safeguard mutual interests and the pivotal role China plays as a major ally in this alliance.

Exploring theoretical perspectives on security in the context of the CPEC is significant for several reasons. It provides a structured framework for comprehending the multifaceted security dynamics of CPEC. Theoretical lenses help dissect different dimensions of security, such as political, economic, social, and environmental security (Floyd, 2011), offering a holistic view of CPEC's security challenges. Theoretical perspectives guide researchers in framing inquiries and generating hypotheses enabling

policymakers to anticipate security risks and formulate strategies (Walt, 1998).

The chapter is designed to systematically explore the theoretical foundations that inform our understanding of security within the context of the CPEC. It aims to underscore the significance of theoretical frameworks in unraveling the multifaceted security dynamics of CPEC by examining the evolving strategic partnerships between key actors, the conceptualization of security itself, and the application of Neo-Realism as a primary theoretical lens. Additionally, the chapter critically assesses the external and internal security challenges confronting CPEC and emphasizes the crucial role of China as a major ally in addressing these challenges. In conclusion, this chapter provides a structured framework for comprehending and analyzing CPEC's security implications, enhancing our nuanced understanding of this transformative initiative.

Conceptualizing Security

The conceptualization of security, exploring its multifaceted nature across different historical and regional contexts, the evolution of security studies in International Relations, and the variations in security definitions and their relevance to the CPEC is a very crucial aspect of this chapter. It provides a foundational understanding of the security dynamics underpinning CPEC.

Security is a multifaceted concept that varies across time and regions in human history (Floyd, 2011). It encompasses a broad spectrum of dimensions, including political security, economic security, social security, and environmental security. This multifaceted nature of security is highly relevant to CPEC as it involves complex economic, political, and social interactions spanning diverse regions and contexts. Understanding these various security dimensions is crucial for comprehending the

holistic security challenges and opportunities associated with CPEC.

Security studies in International Relations have evolved over time, reflecting changes in global politics and the nature of threats (Buzan, 1991). This evolution has led to the development of various theoretical frameworks and approaches for analyzing security issues. As we examine the security dynamics of CPEC, this historical evolution informs our understanding of how the concept of security has adapted to address contemporary challenges and how different theoretical perspectives can be applied to CPEC's security context.

Furthermore, security definitions have evolved and diversified within the field of International Relations, reflecting the changing nature of security threats (Buzan, 1991). These variations in security definitions are highly relevant to CPEC, where security concerns extend beyond traditional military threats to encompass economic, political, and social dimensions. By considering these diverse definitions, we can better appreciate the range of security challenges and opportunities presented by CPEC.

Theoretical Framework: Neo-Realism

In examining the CPEC and the interactions among China, Pakistan, and the US, the absence of a global law-enforcing authority, as underscored by Kenneth Waltz's perspective on international relations, sets the stage for power politics and strategic maneuvering among these nations. This Realist outlook aligns with the Neo-Realist school of thought, which emphasizes states' rational pursuit of self-interest in an anarchic international system. From a Neo-Realist perspective, the US, and China's actions in the context of CPEC reflect their efforts to secure their core interests and maintain or enhance their relative power in the Asia-Pacific region. The US seeks to counterbalance China's growing influence, while China aims to

strengthen its position and regional alliances. Pakistan, situated at the intersection of these interests, navigates the power dynamics with a focus on its national security and economic development, emphasizing the importance of power politics and state-centric behavior in shaping the geopolitics of CPEC. The research examines the theoretical framework of Neo-Realism, specifically examining key concepts such as systemic analysis, national power, and self-help. An application of Neo-Realism is conducted to further comprehend the security dynamics of CPEC, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the geopolitical implications regarding its security.

Theories of International Relations do not appropriately consider the perceptions and intentions of any state in the international political system. Renowned realist John Mearsheimer argues that there is no mechanism available that could detect the intention of any state; therefore, rational states enhance their military competencies and be ready to face the worst (Mearsheimer, 1979).

Neo-Realism, as a theoretical approach, is rooted in the broader paradigm of realism and focuses on the systemic level of analysis in international relations (Waltz, 1979). It emphasizes that states are rational actors driven by the pursuit of their own interests in an anarchic international system. Neo-Realism provides a lens through which we can examine the behavior of states in the context of CPEC, as it seeks to understand how states prioritize their security and survival in a self-help system.

Key Neo-Realist concepts and principles play a pivotal role in comprehending CPEC's security dynamics. Systemic analysis, for instance, underscores the importance of considering the international system's structure and power distribution (Waltz, 1979). In the case of CPEC, this concept helps us assess how the distribution

of power among major actors, such as China, the US, India, and Pakistan, shapes the project's security environment.

Self-help, another Neo-Realist principle, highlights that states must rely on their own capabilities for security (Waltz, 1979). In the context of CPEC, this principle encourages us to evaluate how states involved in the project perceive and pursue their security interests, potentially impacting their cooperation or competition within the initiative.

National power, a central Neo-Realist concept, is integral to understanding how states compete for influence and security (Waltz, 1979). Assessing the relative national power of China, Pakistan, and other regional players sheds light on the power dynamics that influence CPEC's security arrangements.

From a Realist perspective, the long and conflicting history of the region suggests that even big powers could not drive the region unilaterally. This led to politics of alliances like US-India and Pak-China alliances. In this context, Pakistan has a strategic importance but has the potential to make changes in the geopolitics of the region (Ghani & Shah, 2013).

The application of Neo-Realism to CPEC's security dynamics involves analyzing how states' pursuit of their national interests, power politics, and the anarchic nature of the international system influence the project's security challenges and opportunities. By adopting this Neo-Realist perspective, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations and behaviors of key actors involved in CPEC, which is essential for a comprehensive analysis of the initiative's security implications.

Evolving Strategic Partnerships
The chapter, while testing Neo-Realism, examines the evolving strategic partnerships involving the US, India, China, and Pakistan,

examining the changing dynamics, systemic shifts, and adjustments in foreign policy and highlighting the implications of these evolving partnerships for the security of the CPEC.

The US and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have a unique and complex relationship. The relationship between the two countries is often termed as the most consequential relationship in the twenty-first century. Both countries have differences over multiple bilateral and international matters yet cooperate with each other on vital and important bilateral and multilateral matters, except in a few with pertinent disagreements over issues such as North Korea, the South China Sea, cyber security, and human rights. Bilateral trade between these two countries is one of the largest bilateral exchanges of goods and services in the world. Both states roughly produce a third of the total production of the globe. Also, the global share of the two countries is a fifth of the total global trade. A quarter of the world's population is of Chinese and US nationals (Wayne, 2016).

The US emerged as the superpower of the world with the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1989. During the Cold War, the USSR was the only competitor and challenger to the US. When the Cold War ended, many analysts believed that the Uni-polar world had emerged for the first time in modern history. In other words, the US is the only superpower in world affairs. However, there were competitors to the US in the form of Russia and China, though both challengers were far weaker than the US in all respects.

Notably, the field where China poses a substantial challenge to the US is the economy. China surpassed the US economy in the year 2014 in purchasing power parity (PPP), as recognized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). By 2016, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of China reached US$ 21 trillion, exceeding the US $18.5 trillion (Allison, 2017).

China and Russia are not in a position to pose serious challenges to the US, says John J. Mearsheimer. He is also of the opinion that today, the interaction between great powers is not as much a significant feature of the international system as it was before the end of the Cold War era (Mearsheimer, 1979).

China has actively increased its influence in the region. China has settled seventeen out of twenty-three border conflicts with its neighbors, often making concessions to the opposing parties. However, there are six unresolved border disagreements between China and its neighbors (Farvel, 2008).

South Asia holds a position of high priority for both the US and China. Pakistan is an important country in the region. Being a trusted friend and next-door neighbor of China and traditionally an ally of the US in the war against terror, it faces challenges as well as opportunities when it comes to the relations between the US and China in the region and beyond.

The changing strategic alliances among key actors, including the US, India, China, and Pakistan, have been a prominent feature of contemporary geopolitics (Tellis, 2016). For instance, during the Cold War, Pakistan maintained a strong alliance with the US, while India aligned itself closely with the Soviet Union. However, in the post-Cold War era, the US and India have gradually forged a strategic partnership driven by shared interests and concerns, including those related to China's rise (Cohen, 2004). Understanding these shifting alliances is crucial for assessing their potential impact on CPEC's security landscape.

These evolving strategic partnerships have resulted in systemic shifts and adjustments in foreign policy (Pant & Taleyarkhan, 2017). For

example, India's alignment with the US has led to adjustments in its foreign policy posture as it seeks to balance its regional interests with its global partnerships (Tellis, 2016). Pakistan's longstanding alliance with the US has also experienced fluctuations, influenced by factors such as the War on Terror (Rashid, 2008). These foreign policy adjustments reflect the complex interplay of national interests, regional dynamics, and global power shifts.

The implications of these evolving partnerships for CPEC's security are multifaceted. The US strategic partnership with India, seen as a counterbalance to China's influence in the region, could have indirect consequences for CPEC's security dynamics (Pant & Taleyarkhan, 2017). Similarly, Pakistan's evolving relationship with both the US and China, coupled with its historical rivalry with India, creates a complex geopolitical environment in South Asia that may impact the security of CPEC (Ikram & Rashid, 2017). Analyzing these implications is crucial for assessing the external factors that could influence CPEC's security challenges and opportunities.

Policies are made only keeping in view the elements of national power. If all the elements of national power of a country are strong, then certainly its policies would be executed well. South Asia has been one of the most militarized regions in the world for decades and continues to be in the foreseeable future as well. South Asia hosts three nuclear weapons states: India, China and Pakistan. India and Pakistan are the sibling arch-rivals in the region and have fought four wars and numerous skirmishes on borders between the two countries, from the line of control in Kashmir to the working boundary and international boundary. Both countries went nuclear in 1998, and the concerns of the international community strengthened that South Asia would be the nuclear flash point.

Evolving Strategic Partnerships from a Neo-Realist Perspective

Kenneth Waltz, who first outlined Neo-Realism in his book Theory of International Politics published in 1979, argued that the international system guides states to adopt a particular behavior. States themselves cannot be motivated to determine their behaviors. In other words, states are subjected to the international system, which controls the conduct of the state. In the realm of international politics, anarchy is the leading force that prompts nation-states to pursue their own interests. According to Waltz, two factors hinder states from cooperating with one another in an anarchic world system: insecurity and unequal gains. In an anarchic system, each actor is unsure of the motivations of other actors in the international arena. This uncertainty breeds fear that cooperation by one state may result in other states reaping greater benefits than the former, causing the former to rely more on other actors. "States are reluctant to subject themselves to increased dependence. In a self-help system, security concerns take precedence over economic gains."(Mearsheimer, 1979).

Analyzing the evolving strategic partnerships involving the US, India, China, and Pakistan in the context of the CPEC through a Neo-Realist perspective sheds light on the systemic shifts and power dynamics at play in South Asia (Mearsheimer, 1979). As discussed previously, Neo-Realism emphasizes the pursuit of state interests and the formation of alliances in an anarchic international system). This perspective offers insights into the motivations and implications of these partnerships.

Neo-Realism underscores the significance of systemic changes in international relations. The evolving strategic partnerships in South Asia reflect a response to the shifting power dynamics in the region. The US - India partnership, for example, can be seen as a reaction to China's growing influence and its involvement in CPEC

(Kugelman, 2017). Neo-Realism predicts that states seek to balance power to protect their own security and interests. The US -India partnership aligns with this Neo-Realist expectation.

Neo-Realism also highlights the formation of alliances as a means for states to enhance their security and power (Mearsheimer, 1979). In the case of CPEC, China's alignment with Pakistan is a significant alliance aimed at securing mutual interests. Neo-Realism predicts that states form alliances to counter potential threats and strengthen their positions in the international system. China's strategic partnership with Pakistan reflects this Neo-Realist perspective.

From a Neo-Realist viewpoint, the evolving partnerships in South Asia have implications for CPEC security. The strategic calculations of key actors, driven by power considerations, can impact the stability and security of the corridor. India's concerns about CPEC, rooted in its perception of China's influence and strategic encirclement, illustrate the state-centric behavior emphasized by Neo-Realism (Kugelman, 2017). Neo-Realism predicts that states prioritize their own interests and security, often leading to competition and rivalry.

Differences between the US and China over issues in South Asia are supporting opposite side over nuclear cooperation, growing Indo - US strategic partnership, Sino-Pak growing ties and China's rising influence in the region. The divergence of both Washington and Beijing over these issues in the region is part of power politics. Both countries want to increase their respective influence at the expense of the other, and it fuels competing interests. Firstly, the main diverging area between China and the US is nuclear leverage to Pakistan and India. Theoretically, the US claims that the nuclear race in South Asia must be controlled and well-managed. But practically US supports India in an arms race by ignoring Pakistan, which is one of the key reasons

for the nuclear imbalance in the region. The nuclear cooperation between Washington and Delhi is an example of Washington's biased policy as well as its support to India in terms of Indian inclusion into the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). On the other hand, China emphasizes equal nuclear treatment so that any nuclear mishap can be avoided. For this purpose, China has continuously been rejecting Delhi's desire to be included in NSG. China advocates a criteria-based approach in order to accommodate both countries into this elite group of NSG (Saalman, Hua & Habib, 2011).

China shows great concern over the growing strategic closeness of the US and India, although Washington and Delhi have enjoyed cordial relations for a long time. Nonetheless, the twenty-first century brought more intimacy between both the US and India. The US considers India a counterweight to China and checkmate it in the region. Beijing and Delhi have some bone of contention like Tibet, etc., which makes China uneasy about US-India closeness. China and Pakistan's growing ties are concerning for Washington and New Delhi. Although relations between Beijing and Islamabad have been cordial in the present scenario, both have become all-weathered friends. China's strategic partnership with Pakistan is aimed at countering India's influence in the region. Similarly, the US sees India as a key ally to balance China's growing power and assertiveness. CPEC, a vast infrastructure development project aimed at bringing prosperity to the region, is perceived by Washington and Delhi as a sign of China's growing influence in the area.

Moreover, along with economic ties, Beijing and Islamabad share military ties that cause concerns for the US and India. The last decade saw a historic boom in military relations between Pakistan and China. Chinese firms are also investing in Pakistan to strengthen military weapons manufacturing units. Finally, the area of

divergence is the unprecedentedly growing role of China in the world particularly in South Asia. Today, China is very different from that of the 1970s, when China was busy addressing its internal loopholes. Now, China is emerging as the second biggest economy in the world and the highest in terms of Power Purchasing Parity (PPP). Such economic capabilities allow China to invest in the South Asian region. China is working on the BRI project, which will connect the South Asia region with other adjoining regions. In addition to BRI, Beijing has also initiated work on the revival of the old Silk Road, which will almost connect China to the entire world. These new trends are making Washington uncomfortable, and because of this, Washington considers China's growing influence in the region as a grave threat to her hegemonic designs in the region (Saalman, Hua & Habib, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the important element for China in the changing geo-strategic environment in South Asia is the Indo-US nexus. The driving force behind this nexus is their mutual concern for the rise of China. The major shift in the relations of both countries came at the start of the twenty-first century when China started exerting its influence in the world. From this point, the relations between the two have been termed a strategic partnership and, hence, irreversible. The turning point in relations between the US and India came in March 2000 when Bill Clinton, the then President of the US, made a historical visit to India. The visit also called the Delhi Declaration, institutionalized the relationship and laid the foundation of Indo-US Science and Technology, further translated into the border range of areas from defense to nuclear and space technology.

Denny Roy has aptly put it and says that both the US and China want to have tranquility, but conditional to their respective terms. Some steps taken by China as defensive will be viewed by others as aggressive and assertive. What the US

calls stability is being viewed by China as containment (Roy, 2013). The US has been championing democracy and free market since its emergence to the world stage as a dominant power, and it has fought many wars for democracy with other countries. On the other hand, China thinks that nations can have any government model that suits them the best. China is accepting some Western values being brought from the European continent to China. Now, China, despite being a communist nation, has embraced capitalism.

It seems that the US could not determine the best policy while dealing with China. Its earlier Rebalancing of the Asia-Pacific policy seems to have failed with China's increasing engagement with its neighbors in East Asia and South Asia through BRI. Pakistan is an important part of China's enormous initiative. David Shambaugh in 2001, opined that a divided Congress and a President with a weak mandate will have to work together and sell a new China policy to the public (Shambaugh, 2001).

The US perceives China's claim in the South China Sea, especially the nine-dash lines claimed by China, as threatening and expansionist designs of China in the East Asian Region. China's claim over the South China Sea is also compared to the Monroe Doctrine of the US in the 1820s, which was meant to oppose the entry of European powers into its territory. The US perceives the claim of Chinese nine-dash lines over the South China Sea as China's version of the Monroe Doctrine in the East Asian region. Being the only superpower having interests across the world, the US would not accept the assertive approach of China.

0n the other hand, some academicians and scholars like Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, Elizabeth Economy, James Holmes, Dan Twinning and Aaron Friedberg are of the opinion that it was the assertive attitude and misbehavior

of China that compelled the US to come up with the rebalancing to the Asia Pacific policy. The US felt that its allies in the region were being threatened by the increasing assertiveness of China; therefore, it brought its allies in the region closer to containing China. James Holmes argued that China started to rise years before the article written by Secretary of the State Hillary Clinton for Foreign Policy under the title "America's Pacific Century" in October 2011 (Holmes, 2013).

From the above discussion, it can be argued that Neo-Realism provides a useful framework for understanding the behavior of the US and China in South Asia. It highlights the role of power politics, state-centric behavior, and the pursuit of national interests as central drivers of their actions and policies in the region.

From a Neo-Realist perspective, states, as rational actors, prioritize their own national interests above all else. In the case of the US, its support for India's nuclear ambitions can be seen as an attempt to cultivate a strategic partnership with a rising regional power to counterbalance China's influence. This reflects the realist notion that states engage in balancing behaviors to maintain their security and relative power.

Conversely, China's emphasis on equal treatment and criteria-based inclusion in the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) aligns with its goal of preventing the consolidation of a regional power (India) that may threaten its interests. Neo-Realism would argue that China is engaging in power politics to safeguard its regional influence and security.

Further, Neo-Realism posits that states form alliances and partnerships based on their perceived self-interest and the need to enhance their relative power. The growing strategic partnership between the US and India can be seen as a response to the rise of China. The US views

India as a valuable ally to help contain China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

China, in turn, perceives this partnership as a threat to its regional position and may seek to counter it by deepening its ties with Pakistan. From a Neo-Realist perspective, China's support for Pakistan aligns with its pursuit of a more favorable balance of power in South Asia.

Neo-Realism emphasizes the importance of alliances and alignments in state behavior. China's close relations with Pakistan, including economic and military cooperation, can be understood as a strategic move to counterbalance India's influence in the region. This aligns with the realist notion that states seek to build alliances and partnerships to enhance their own security and position.

We can argue that according to the Neo-Realist perspective, great powers like the US are inherently concerned about shifts in the balance of power in their favor. The US views China's expanding influence in South Asia through initiatives like the BRI as a challenge to its regional hegemony. Additionally, from a Neo-Realist perspective, the US perceives China's economic investments and growing influence as part of a broader strategy to increase its regional power, potentially at the expense of the US. This reflects the realist notion that states engage in power-maximizing behaviors to maintain or enhance their relative power in the international system.

Security Challenges Facing CPEC

The research executes a comprehensive analysis of the security challenges that threaten the smooth functioning and success of the CPEC project. It sheds light on the external and internal dimensions of the security challenges and highlights the critical role of security collaboration in ensuring the viability and sustainable success of the CPEC initiative. The

findings of the study emphasize the importance of coordinated efforts and cooperation between the relevant stakeholders to address security concerns and safeguard the interests of all parties involved in the project.

External Security Challenges

CPEC faces several external security challenges, including complex relations with neighboring countries. For instance, relations between Pakistan and India have long been strained, and disputes over the Kashmir region have the potential to spill over into CPEC's security environment (Chellaney, 2017). Moreover, Iran and Afghanistan, neighboring countries with which Pakistan shares borders, have their own security dynamics that could impact CPEC's stability (Rehman, 2019). Additionally, the presence of non-state actors and insurgent groups in the vicinity of Pakistan poses a significant external security challenge, as these groups may seek to disrupt or target CPEC infrastructure.

Joseph Nye, a prominent scholar, offers a nuanced perspective on the dynamics between the US and China. He emphasizes that the US faces a critical decision point in its approach to China. If the US opts to treat China as an adversary, it effectively sets the stage for adversarial relations in the future. However, if it chooses a more cooperative stance by treating China as a potential friend or partner, it does not guarantee immediate friendship but preserves the possibility of a more amicable future (Nye, 2011).

Contrasting views are presented by Christopher Layne, who argues that the US has historically sought to maintain dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. According to Layne, this historical pattern of dominance, coupled with China's rising power, creates a situation where armed conflict between the two nations becomes increasingly likely (Layne, 2008).

John Mearsheimer adds another dimension to this discourse by suggesting that even if China were to attain significant economic strength, it would not necessarily adopt a status quo posture. Instead, Mearsheimer contends that a powerful China would likely pursue a hegemonic role in the region, potentially leading to heightened competition and tensions (Mearsheimer, 2001).

China, on its part, asserts its uniqueness and distinctiveness, often referred to as "Chinese Characteristics." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) argues that Western norms and values are incongruent with these Chinese Characteristics. The CCP perceives US actions, such as perceived threats to China's interests, as detrimental to American principles, spiritual foundations, and role models. Additionally, there is a belief that the US stands to suffer economically from its confrontational approach toward China. Furthermore, both countries champion differing models of governance and development. China promotes the "Beijing Consensus," while the US advocates for the "Washington Consensus" (Freeman and Li, 2013).

In essence, these perspectives reflect the complex interplay of global powers, differing worldviews, and divergent interests in the evolving relationship between the US and China. The varying viewpoints of scholars and policymakers underscore the critical importance of carefully navigating this intricate international dynamic.

From a neo-realist lens, CPEC's external security challenges underscore the anarchic nature of the international system, where states prioritize their own interests and security. The strained relations between Pakistan and India over the Kashmir issue, as highlighted by Chellaney (2017), exemplify how territorial disputes can escalate and potentially disrupt CPEC's security environment. The presence of non-state actors and insurgent groups in the region, as noted by Dobbins et al. (2017), reflects the security

dilemma where states must safeguard their interests against non-state threats. Additionally, Iran and Afghanistan's complex security dynamics, as discussed by Rehman (2019), demonstrate the regional power struggles that can affect CPEC's stability.

In this context, Joseph Nye's perspective on the US-China relationship aligns with neo-realism by emphasizing the importance of power and security considerations. The views of Layne and Mearsheimer further underscore the neo-realist notion that states, in their pursuit of power and dominance, may engage in competition and conflict, especially in regions of strategic importance. China's assertion of its uniqueness and resistance to Western norms and values reflects the self-help nature of states in international politics, where they aim to protect their core interests and preserve their distinct characteristics. In sum, the neo-realist perspective provides a framework for understanding the security challenges and power dynamics that shape the CPEC's external environment and the broader US-China relationship.

Internal Security Challenges

The internal security challenges confronting CPEC are equally critical for its viability. Militancy, particularly in the province of Balochistan, is a primary concern. Balochistan has experienced separatist movements and insurgency, posing a direct threat to CPEC's development in the region (BBC News, 2020). Political instability in Balochistan further compounds the security challenges, as a stable political environment is essential to successfully implement CPEC projects. These internal security issues necessitate a comprehensive approach to address the economic development and security aspects of CPEC in Balochistan.

Furthermore, the security challenges are exacerbated by political instability in Balochistan. A stable political environment is crucial for successfully implementing CPEC projects, as it ensures that the local and provincial authorities can effectively govern, make decisions, and provide security. In Balochistan, political instability may manifest as governance issues, disputes over resource allocation, or political violence. All these factors hinder the smooth execution of CPEC initiatives.

Essentially, the internal security issues in Balochistan necessitate a multifaceted approach to address both the economic development and security aspects of CPEC in this region. This approach must involve not only enhancing physical security through measures like increased policing and counterinsurgency operations but also addressing the underlying grievances and concerns of the Baloch population. Such a comprehensive strategy aligns with realist thinking, emphasizing that states must secure their investments and interests by dealing with internal challenges effectively. It also recognizes the interconnectedness of economic development and security, as instability can hinder economic progress, and economic disparities can contribute to instability.

Importance of Security Collaboration

The internal security challenges facing CPEC are of critical concern for its overall viability and success. Among these challenges, militancy, particularly in the province of Balochistan, stands out as a primary threat. Balochistan has experienced long-standing separatist movements and insurgencies, posing a direct and immediate danger to CPEC's development in the region. These security issues are not confined to sporadic incidents but rather represent a sustained security risk that can disrupt the implementation of CPEC projects. For instance, attacks on infrastructure, energy installations, or transportation routes in Balochistan could severely hinder the corridor's functionality and economic benefits (BBC News, 2020).

Moreover, the security challenges in Balochistan are exacerbated by political instability within the province. A stable political environment is crucial for the successful execution of CPEC initiatives. Political unrest, protests, or disputes within Balochistan can disrupt the social fabric and impede the smooth operation of economic projects. Therefore, achieving political stability and consensus within the province becomes a significant factor in addressing internal security challenges related to CPEC (Gul, 2019).

In light of these internal security concerns, a comprehensive approach is imperative to simultaneously address the economic development and security aspects of CPEC in Balochistan. This approach should involve not only security measures to counter militancy but also socio-economic initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of discontent and instability. Additionally, fostering political dialogue and consensus-building within Balochistan is essential for creating an environment conducive to CPEC's success.

To ensure the viability and success of CPEC, robust security collaboration among stakeholders is imperative. Pakistan's collaboration with China is of paramount significance, given China's substantial investments and interests in CPEC. The two nations must work closely to secure the infrastructure and protect against security threats (Malik, 2019). Moreover, cooperation with regional partners and international actors, including the US, is essential for enhancing the security environment surrounding CPEC. Multilateral efforts can contribute to stability and mitigate external security risks. The expansive geographic scope of CPEC and its potential impact on neighboring countries necessitate engagement with regional stakeholders. Collaborative efforts with these nations can help mitigate security risks, foster stability, and reduce the likelihood of external

actors exploiting vulnerabilities in the region (Frankopan, 2018).

Therefore, the internal security challenges within Balochistan and the broader region surrounding CPEC underscore the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach. This approach involves addressing the root causes of instability, ensuring political consensus, and, most importantly, securing the infrastructure and operations of CPEC. Security collaboration among Pakistan, China, regional partners, and international actors is vital to safeguard CPEC's viability and foster a stable environment for its successful implementation.

From a neo-realist perspective, the internal security challenges faced by CPEC underscore the significance of states prioritizing their self-preservation and security. The militant activities and separatist movements in Balochistan, as highlighted by BBC News (2020), reflect the state-centric nature of international politics, where sub-state actors may challenge state authority. Political instability in the region further exemplifies the challenges faced when striving for stability and security, critical elements in realist thinking.

The importance of security collaboration between Pakistan and China is in line with neo-realist notions of states forming alliances and partnerships to enhance their security and protect their interests, particularly when significant investments and strategic objectives are at stake. Additionally, the recognition of the need for cooperation with regional and international actors, such as the US, aligns with the realist concept of states engaging with others based on perceived self-interest and security considerations, even in complex multilateral settings. In essence, neo-realism offers a lens through which to understand the imperative of security collaboration in the context of CPEC's internal and external challenges.

Security Challenges Facing CPEC From a Neo-Realist Perspective

Neo Realists argue that there is no higher authority in the international system than the sovereign state itself. It is the anarchical international system that guides actors to behave the way they act in the international system. Most importantly, it is the system that constrains any state's behavior. The biggest concern of the states in the international system is the comparative gains. If they cannot behave in the directives of the system, they must pay for it. in these conditions, states at any cost need to ensure their survival first. Neo Realists argue that the international system is conflictual in nature. If any given state builds up its strength by modernizing its military to have comparative gains, the other state also tries to keep pace by diverting its available resources to build its military strength. This is called a security dilemma because there is always a trust deficit between or among the states where no state can be sure about the intentions of other states and doesn't trust whether it is peaceful or not. Neo Realists are of the opinion that the international system can only be stable if the most powerful countries form the balance of power in the international system. Robert Gilipin in his book War and Change in World Politics, says that if differences between a dominant power and a rising power are not settled through peaceful means, then most likely, war will take place (Gilipin, 1981).

The states in the global anarchical system fundamentally rely on a policy of self-help to ensure their survival in anarchic structure. These states operating under certain, unbridled, and unchecked global order decide their fate themselves, hardly relying on others in the system (Waltz, 1979).

Examining the security challenges facing the CPEC through a Neo-Realist perspective provides valuable insights into the dynamics at play in this critical infrastructure project. Neo-Realism focuses on the pursuit of state interests and power dynamics in an anarchic international system (Mearsheimer, 1979). Examining the security challenges confronting CPEC from a Neo-Realist viewpoint highlights the systemic and state-centric factors that shape these challenges.

Neo-Realism underscores the importance of systemic factors in shaping state behavior. In the case of CPEC, systemic challenges include the broader regional dynamics and the distribution of power in South Asia. The evolving strategic partnerships involving the US, India, China, and Pakistan have significant implications for CPEC's security (Khan, 2016). Neo-Realism predicts that states seek to enhance their power and security by forming alliances and countering potential threats. The US -India partnership, viewed through a Neo-Realist lens, can be seen as a response to China's rising influence in the region, including its involvement in CPEC.

Additionally, Neo-Realism emphasizes the self-help behavior of states in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979). In the context of CPEC, state-centric security challenges emerge from the pursuit of national interests by key actors. India's concerns about CPEC, driven by fears of strategic encirclement and economic competition with China, exemplify state-centric challenges. Neo-Realism predicts that states prioritize their own security and survival, often at the expense of other states' interests. India's strategic calculations regarding CPEC reflect this Neo-Realist perspective.

Neo-Realism also highlights the role of alliances and power balances in international relations (Mearsheimer, 2001). China's alignment with Pakistan in the context of CPEC reflects the pursuit of shared interests and the formation of a strategic alliance. This alignment serves to counterbalance India's influence in South Asia.

Neo-Realism predicts that states form alliances to enhance their security and protect their interests in a competitive international system (Pant & Taleyarkhan, 2017).

From a Neo-Realist perspective, the security challenges facing CPEC are deeply intertwined with the pursuit of power and the protection of state interests. To address these challenges effectively, stakeholders must navigate the systemic shifts in regional power dynamics and the state-centric motivations of key actors. China's role as a major ally in addressing security challenges, as discussed earlier, aligns with Neo-Realist principles of power politics and alliance formation (Ahmed, 2019).

China's Role in CPEC Security

China's role in ensuring the security of the CPEC stands as a pivotal element in the success and stability of this transformative initiative. As a major ally and the primary investor in CPEC, China's involvement extends far beyond economic interests, encompassing a deep commitment to safeguarding the project from security challenges. It is important to examine the multifaceted aspects of China's role in CPEC security, examining its significance, interests, contributions, and the broader implications of its engagement in shaping the security dynamics of this vital corridor. China's proactive engagement in addressing security concerns reflects the intricate relationship between economic development and geopolitical stability in the contemporary realm of international affairs.

China's Significance as a Major Ally in Addressing Security Challenges

China's role in CPEC security is of paramount significance due to its substantial investments and strategic interests in the project (Ali, 2017). China's status as a major ally of Pakistan in CPEC is driven by its pursuit of economic gains, regional influence, and strategic objectives (Khan, 2016). China's economic investments in

CPEC are extensive, including infrastructure development and energy projects. These investments are not only economically lucrative but also strategically important for China's broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its access to the Arabian Sea (Rashid, 2017). Consequently, China's commitment to securing CPEC is intertwined with safeguarding its investments and strategic interests.

China's Interests and Contributions to CPEC's Security

China's interests in CPEC's security are multifaceted and include protecting its economic investments, ensuring a stable environment for project implementation, and mitigating potential security risks (Ahmed, 2019). China has made substantial contributions to CPEC's security through diplomatic efforts, intelligence sharing, and collaboration with Pakistani security forces. Additionally, China has pursued efforts to enhance regional stability, such as engaging in dialogue with Afghanistan to address security concerns related to CPEC (Xinhua, 2020). China's involvement in CPEC security extends beyond bilateral cooperation with Pakistan and involves broader regional engagement.

Implications of China's Involvement in Shaping CPEC's Security Dynamics

China's involvement in CPEC security has far-reaching implications for the project's dynamics. China's proactive role in ensuring security not only demonstrates its commitment to the success of CPEC but also enhances the overall stability of the region. China's security contributions may have implications for regional politics, particularly in its relations with neighboring countries like India and Afghanistan. Moreover, China's involvement underscores the interconnectedness of economic and security interests in the context of large-scale infrastructure projects like CPEC. This interplay between economic and security considerations highlights the complexity of modern geopolitics

and the evolving role of major powers like China in shaping regional security dynamics.

China's Role in CPEC Security from A Neo-Realist Perspective

China's involvement in CPEC security aligns with Neo-Realism's focus on state-centric behavior within an anarchic international system (Mearsheimer, 2001). As a major ally of Pakistan, China plays a critical role in addressing security challenges posed by both external and internal factors. For instance, China has actively supported Pakistan in countering threats from non-state actors in the region. This support includes intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and coordinated efforts to secure CPEC infrastructure (Ali, 2017). These actions reflect Neo-Realism 's expectation that states prioritize their own security and collaborate with allies to achieve shared objectives.

Since Neo-Realism emphasizes the pursuit of power and the protection of national interests (Waltz, 1979), China's interests in CPEC's security are primarily driven by its economic investments and broader strategic goals. Richard Weitz is of the opinion that economically developed China would less likely threaten to use force especially when it has vast access to global trade, information technology and investment across the globe. The more it involves in the international economic system the less it will be aggressive because its aggression could weaken its trade ties with other countries as foreign trade is the source of its strength (Weitz, 2001).

China's substantial financial commitments to CPEC, including investments in infrastructure projects and energy ventures, underscore its economic interest in the corridor's success (Rashid, 2017). To safeguard these investments, China has made substantial contributions to CPEC's security. One notable example is the establishment of the Special Security Division (SSD), a dedicated force tasked with protecting CPEC projects and personnel. The creation of the SSD reflects China's commitment to securing its economic interests and the corridor's viability (Ahmed, 2019).

China's active involvement in CPEC security has implications that align with Neo-Realist principles of alliances, power balances, and strategic interests. For instance, China's strategic partnership with Pakistan counters potential challenges from regional rivals like India (Khan, 2016). The alignment of interests between China and Pakistan serves to enhance their collective security in the face of potential threats. China's diplomatic efforts to engage with neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan, to address security concerns related to CPEC exemplify its role as a regional power player (Xinhua, 2020). Neo-Realism underscores the importance of such alliances and regional influence in the pursuit of state interests.

Conclusion

This paper has undertaken a comprehensive examination of theoretical perspectives on security and their relevance to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It began by acknowledging the multifaceted nature of security throughout history and its diverse conceptualizations. Drawing inspiration from Neo-Realism, a theoretical framework within international relations, the chapter explored its application to understanding CPEC's intricate security dynamics. Neo-Realism 's emphasis on self-help, alliances, and power balances offered valuable insights into the motivations and actions of key actors involved in CPEC security, particularly China. The chapter further dissected China's role as a major ally in addressing security challenges, emphasizing its interests, contributions, and the implications of its involvement. Through a Neo-realism lens, China's proactive engagement in safeguarding CPEC was shown to align with principles of

state-centric behavior and strategic pursuit within the anarchic international system.

The exploration of theoretical perspectives on CPEC security holds significant implications for both future research and policy considerations. First, future research endeavors should continue to investigate and refine theoretical frameworks that can shed light on the evolving security dynamics of large-scale infrastructure projects like CPEC. Scholars should explore how various theoretical lenses, beyond Neo-Realism, can enrich our understanding of the complex interplay between economic development and geopolitical security.

From a policy perspective, it is evident that CPEC's security is intertwined with the interests of multiple stakeholders, especially China and Pakistan. The chapter's findings underscore the importance of strategic collaboration among these stakeholders to address security challenges effectively. Policymakers should prioritize mechanisms for information sharing, intelligence cooperation, and diplomatic dialogue to maintain a secure environment for CPEC's successful implementation.

Moreover, the chapter highlights the need for proactive diplomacy and conflict resolution efforts to manage potential tensions arising from CPEC's geopolitical implications. Building trust among regional actors and addressing historical conflicts will be crucial in ensuring the stability and security of the corridor.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a theoretical foundation for understanding CPEC's security dynamics, with a particular focus on Neo-Realism. It has unveiled insights into the role of major actors, such as China, and their contributions to safeguarding CPEC. The implications for future research and policy considerations emphasize the importance of ongoing scholarly inquiry and proactive

diplomatic efforts to ensure the success of this transformative initiative.

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