

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FRAMING OF THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) IN THE DAILIES OF PAKISTAN AND CHINA

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research, entitled "Framing of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the leading press of Pakistan and China," is to gain an understanding of how the press in both countries (the Pakistani newspaper Daily Dawn and the Chinese newspaper China Daily) has framed CPEC in relation to issues such as trade development and economic growth, regional peace and security, job creation, the energy sector, the port of Karachi as a gateway to international waters, the route to the Central Asian Republics. Supportive, unsupportive, and neutral stances towards CPEC and associated concerns are also considered. The study's primary assumptions are that journalists in Pakistan and China would frame CPEC positively, and the international community will respond positively to the project. Agenda setting theory is utilised to analyse the media agendas of both countries, and the theory of framing is used to compare and contrast the two countries' dominant news coverage. From January 1st, 2021 to December 31st, 2022, the news and editorial pages of the chosen newspapers are analysed. To further understand how these CPEC-related challenges are being framed, a content analysis has been conducted. The findings show that both media presents concerns related to CPEC in a positive light and provide largely positive coverage of them.*

**Keywords:** Corridor, Framing, Agenda.

### INTRODUCTION

South Asia's geographic and demographic characteristics have made it a focal point for international attention. Pakistan's launch of the centerpiece One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative has brought attention to the region as a whole. It was formally stated in April 2015 that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will serve as a flagship project of the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative. The multibillion-dollar CPEC project provides Pakistan and the region with much-needed opportunities for economic growth and political stability (Rahman & Shurong, 2017).

China's major ambition to link Eurasia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa via roads, railways, sea connections, and energy infrastructure is known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative. According to HSBC, 29% of the world's GDP and 64% of the world's population live in nations along the OBOR.

The governments of Pakistan and China have recently announced a number of project agreements and memoranda of understanding focused on enhancing Pakistan's energy sector and physical infrastructure. This day in 2015, April 20. With approximately \$46 billion expected to be spent on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, the energy industry would receive at least \$35 billion. It is worth noting that if all these investments materialize, CPEC would be equivalent to all the FDI that the country has received from 1970 till now (Miller, 2017).

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The media have a crucial role in modern society. It has different results depending on who you ask, what you are doing, and how far you are looking. The opinions of people and groups on issues of international relations and foreign policy are strongly influenced by what is presented in the mass media. The media, on the one hand, serve as a vital link between citizens and those in positions of power. On the one hand, politicians look to the media for insight into public sentiment, and on the other, the media serve as the people's primary window into government action. Since 2003 (Soroka).

This triangulation establishes the media as a pivotal player in shaping public opinion and government action. There has been a lot of research into the connection between the news media and public opinion on global events. People's perceptions of the outside world are shaped by what they read and hear in the media, as Lippmann (1922) put it. People rely heavily on the mass media for timely, reliable information about distant events, which has a significant influence on international affairs and wars (Ross, 2006).

As a result of the aforementioned situation, it is necessary and worthwhile to study how the media in both nations have covered CPEC. Pakistan and China have close ties in the areas of nuclear power, the military, and trade. The Chinese and Pakistanis shared the belief that having excellent neighbours is fortunate. Both countries have established diplomatic ties and serve as models of peaceful coexistence between Chinese and Islamic cultures. According to Xiaoqiang (2011), China and Pakistan enjoy a "good neighbour and good friend" relationship.

In 2011, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of relations between Pakistan and China, a "friendship year" was declared. Different events were planned and organised by both states to strengthen the political connection with full enthusiasm (Pakistan Defence, 2012). In the 21st century, China and Pakistan developed a strategic partnership. People-to-people ties were strengthened by China's increased emphasis on economic and public democracy. The resulting closer ties between China and Pakistan have helped boost Pakistan's economy through increased commerce and investment (Niazi, 2006). Ports serve as a vital link between land and water, and there are a wide variety of them in operation around the globe. Because of its natural depth, Gwadar port is ideally suited to receiving and handling container ships (Tangredi, 2009). China's CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) investment in Pakistan relies heavily on the Gwadar port. Pakistan and China's political, military, and economic ties are improving as a result of their increased bilateral trade. China's aim of becoming a global superpower and Pakistan's vision of becoming an Asian tiger both call for the development of the Gwadar port (Perveen, 2016).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was conceived during a visit to Pakistan by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in May 2013. The CPEC links the port of Gwadar in Pakistan to the province of Xinjiang in China. Pakistan's economic infrastructure and electricity-producing plants will be improved because of the corridor (Bhattacharjee, 2015). When it comes to Pakistani infrastructure, CPEC is unprecedented. The strength of ties between China and Pakistan is crucial to their success (Ali, 2015).

### **Statement of the problem**

The study's overarching goal is to use Content Analysis to determine whether or not the two selected newspapers (The Daily Dawn and The China Daily) have adequately covered the CPEC and how they have handled the topic from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

The goals of the research are as follows:

The primary goal of this study is to

1. To determine how extensively the CPEC was covered in 2022 by the chosen publications (The Daily Dawn and The China Daily).
2. The second objective is to look into how the two newspapers (The Daily Dawn and The China Daily) framed CPEC in 2022.
3. To compare how two publications (The Daily Dawn and The China Daily) covered the CPEC in 2022 and how they handled it that year.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In 1963, Pakistan and China inked their first trade pact. After that, in 2006 and 2009, free trade agreements (FTAs) were ratified. Both countries have an interest in maintaining calm in the area. Free trade and economic cooperation agreements were among the several inked by China and Pakistan.

Having China as a commercial partner is encouraging for Pakistan because it is the country's second largest trading partner after the United States (Javaid & Javaid, 2016).

Pakistan and China have been friends and allies through thick and thin. They also have a highway in common: the Karakoram Highway, often known as the China-Pakistan friendship highway. The Karakoram Highway is linked to the ports of Gwadar and Karachi via an inland line of roadways (Ali, 2015). The 9/11 attacks brought a new dimension to the relationship between Pakistan and China. The Chinese government made significant investments in Pakistan's Gwadar port in 2002 and approved the renovation of the Karakoram Highway in 2008. In contrast, China handed up control of Gwadar Port to Chinese Overseas Port Holdings in 2013 (Small, 2015).

China and Pakistan have embarked on a massive endeavor to improve their political and economic ties through increased commerce. When this massive project is finally finished, it will be good for business between China, the Middle East, and Africa. Oil from the Middle East will have a shorter journey to Chinese ports because to CPEC (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). In April 2015, Pakistan and China signed 51 MOUs related to the CPEC project. Pakistan and China also signed agreements in May 2014 for their Metro Bus and Orange Line track projects. Both countries' economies will benefit from increased exchange of goods and services. By 2017, bilateral commerce between Pakistan and China is expected to reach US\$25 billion, up from the US\$16 billion it reached in 2015 (Nation, 2015).

The OBOR (One Belt One Road) announcement in March 2015 served as inspiration for the CPEC. To facilitate the growth of energy and economic zones, this road links China with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. When the One Belt One Road initiative is finally finished, everyone in the region will benefit from it, not only Pakistan and China (Hussain, 2017). When the CPEC megaproject is finished, Chinese investors and businesspeople will be able to pour money into Pakistan. Additionally, the Corridor links China to the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East. The exploration of the region's natural resources using China's cutting-edge technology is another major upside of the project (Irshad & Xin, 2014).

## **THEORETICAL GROUNDING**

The study bases its theoretical arguments on agenda setting theory and, more specifically, on the supra-specialty of agenda setting paradigm, which is framing. McCombs and Shaw (1972) defined agenda setting theory as the interaction between the media and the public on a variety of problems. They discovered the media's political agenda on election days and how agenda shaping was used to bring certain concerns to the forefront.

Media's role in shaping public opinion, values, and priorities was articulated (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to the theory of agenda setting, influential people in the media decide which stories will be covered extensively and how they will be framed for the public. The premise of Baran and Davis's (2012) frame analysis theory is that people construct meaning of their experiences using preconceived notions. Frames are identified by Reese (2010) as pervasive socially shared organizing principles that symbolically construct the social environment (p.17). According to Van Gorp (2010), the enterprise of journalism carries a lively process of construction of meanings and continuously structures social reality through a systematic process in which a journalist is entitled with the role of presenting alternative interpretations of events and issues in the form of news articles (p.84).

The term "framing" has been used to describe the method by which a news item is structured in order to transmit a specific interpretation of the event it is reporting on (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Reese, 2007). According to Reese (2001), media frames "are organizing principles, which are shared socially and continual over time, they symbolically labor to build the frame of social realm." (p.11) Entman (1993) provides the most widely accepted definition of framing when he writes that framing is "selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and to make it more prominent in the content of communication in such manner that it reflects a special problem definition, moral evaluation, causal interpretation, or/and recommendation for treatment" (p.52). Some researchers have zeroed emphasis on narrative-specific or alternative notions of framing. By way of illustration, Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) recognized media framing as the overarching notion driving news stories, which provides a framework and suggests what the issue is through the strategic use of emphasis, selection, elaboration, and omission (p.277). According to Gamson (1992), a frame is a method of organization similar to a plot. Many researchers, including Iyengar (1991), Entman (1993), and Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), believe that framing is used to define and build issues by

emphasizing the most important aspects of a social reality that the target audience already knows. They believe that the frameworks journalists use help the general public comprehend complex news stories.

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) describe framing as "the kinds of presentations that communicators and media practitioners use to communicate more complex issue in such a manner that makes them understandable to the general audience" (p.12). In his research on news framing, Lugalambi (2006) claims that journalists assist the framing dominance that ultimately aids the status quo by their selective determination of the exclusion and inclusion of content. According to Brewer and Kimberly (2010), who set out to categorize media frames, partisan-frames, for instance, are frequently sponsored and constructed by players in a given circumstance with the intention of moving people's opinion in a way that is congruent with presupposed policy outcomes or positions held (p.139). Other than narrative and documentary frames, the media also uses abstract and theme frames, issue and substance frames, game and strategy frames, and frames based on policy ideas and games (p.160). Iyenger (1991), in his early description of media framing, elaborates as follows: "For episodically frame the news event is to focus on the isolated cases or events, where to frame it thematically is to forward events and issues within their broader way context." Nelson and Wiley (2001) classify the various media frames as either issue, communal, or both.

Doing, deciding, reporting, and presenting to an audience. They go on to explain that "issue frames," which are typically used to address political discourse, are the discourse-specific frames, while "collective action frames" are the focus of research into social movements, protests, and other forms of collective action. They contend that "news framing can be understood in the form of endogenous and exogenous," but the use of "decision frames" focuses on interpretations for comprehending specific texts. They go on to point out that while the former are externally applied on the content of news and attached with the production and structural elements of the news content, the latter are often the result of the way in which the modern media industry operates at a procedural and institutional level. Finally, "issue frames" (p.246) are the observable result of the framing process in terms of individuals' perspectives. Researchers Valkenburg et al. (1999) found that "the media have the ability not only to tell people what issue to think about but also how to think about them" by studying the effect of framing on readers' perceptions and the ability to retain information delivered earlier in the story. "A frame is important because it can determine whether an audience understands, notices, and remembers the issue and how an audience considers and decides to respond on the given issue" (p.131), as stated by Lugalambi (2006).

Two major English-language newspapers, Pakistan's Daily Dawn and China's China Daily, are evaluated to shed light on the media's priorities when it comes to conceptualizing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The study's core hypothesis and query is:

**Hypothesis:** The CPEC is portrayed favorably in both countries' print media.

The analysis chapter also discusses other sub-hypotheses that are related to the categories.

**RQ.1:** In what ways did a few newspapers cover CPEC and associated topics?

## METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this investigation is a content analysis. Berger (2011) defines content analysis as a research method, explaining it as "the systematic description and classification of content of communication according to certain often predetermined categories" (p.205). He realized that the same method could be utilized in both the quantitative and qualitative research (Ibid). In line with the opinions expressed by Wimmer and Dominick (2006), he highlights the essential steps a researcher should take, such as implementing a systematic coding system and making sure there are measurable score units (p.209-211). Using a social scientific framework and a linear perspective on the content of communication, Bertrand & Huges (2005) describe it as a method devised to study the news and other mass media. According to Paisley (1964), content analysis is the act of converting a communication's message into a form of data that can be contrasted, summarized, and drawn conclusions from. The results of a content analysis might be both inferential and descriptive. In contrast to the exploratory nature of the descriptive kind of content analysis, the inferential type of analysis is used to extrapolate the results to the entire population. One could even argue that it is the connection between situations and their respective contexts. In research, content analysis is used to provide a "systematic, objective, and quantitative explanation of the manifest content of the communication," as Berelson (1952) puts it.

*Comparative analysis of the Framing of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the dailies of Pakistan and China*

From January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, the news, editorials, and columns published in the Pakistani and Chinese English-language dailies "Dawn" and "The China daily" served as the study's universe. The news, editorials, and columns from the aforementioned publications over the specified time period constitute the study's population.

The term China Pakistan Economic Corridor (abbreviated CPEC) and the subheadings are explained follow. The study's sample is not representative of the community at large because only 207 editorials and columns appeared in all four newspapers over the course of a year. As a result, it was decided to conduct a census-style examination of all the articles. This research will examine the news and editorial pages of the chosen newspapers. To analyze how CPEC was framed in the top Pakistani and Chinese newspapers from the beginning of 2022 to the end of that year, we created the following rubric.

- A. Economic growth and the spread of trade
- B. Opportunities for Employment
- C. The Energy and Power Sector
- D. The Corridor to the Central Asian Republics.
- E. Regional stability and security
- F. Action taken by national actors
- G. International Stakeholders' Reaction
- H. Harbor of Entry to Foreign Waters

All three of these perspectives—positive, negative, and neutral—were considered.

**Analysis of the Data and Findings**

SPSS was used to examine the data once it was entered based on eight predetermined categories. Table 1.0 reveals that out of a total of 207 News and Editorials from both the Daily Dawn and the China Daily, 65.2% were from the Dawn (29.0% of the news and 36.0% of the editorials) and 34.8% were from the China Daily (16.9% of the news and 17.0% of the editorials). Daily China, on the other hand, reported that 85.9% of its news and editorials were good, 11.9% were negative, and 2.2% were neutral. China Daily, on the other hand, only published positive stories and opinions.

TABLE 1

News Paper	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions		
				Positive%	Negative%	Neutral%
Daily Dawn	29	36.2	65.2	85.9	11.9	2.2
China Daily	16.9	17.9	34.8	100	0	0

Collectively, Daily Dawn and China Daily publish in the directions shown in Table 2.0. Of the eight areas reported on in relation to CPEC, the first, "Trade Development and Economy," had the highest percentage of coverage (29%) while the remaining seven categories received between 5% and 1%. Category 2: "Energy and power sector" saw 17% coverage overall, with 15% positive coverage and 2.4% negative coverage.

Category three, "corridors to central Asian states," was assigned a weight of 12.6%, with a positive response rate of 12.1% and a negative response rate of 0.5%. In addition, 7.7% of all data fell into category four, with 7.2% of those reports being good and 0.5% being negative. There were 16.4% reports of the category 5, with 15.5% positive and 1.0% negative. The total percentage of statements in frame six was 3.4%; 2.4% were reported favourably, 0.5% negatively, and 0.5% were neutral. Out of a possible 8, only 7.2% of responses were favorable, with the majority of those responses falling into category 7. Also, category eight saw 6.3 percent coverage, and all editorials and reports were positive.

TABLE 2

Category	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions		
				Positive%	Negative%	Neutral%
Economic growth and the spread of trade	14	15.0	29	25.1	3.4	0.5
Energy and Power Sector	8.2	9.2	17.4	15.0	2.4	0
Corridor to Central Asian States	4.8	7.7	12.6	12.1	0	0.5
Opportunities for Employment	2.9	4.8	7.7	7.2	0.5	0
Regional peace and Security	9.2	7.2	16.4	15.5	1.0	0
Response by National Stakeholders	1.0	2.4	3.4	2.4	0.5	0.5
Response by International stakeholders	3.4	3.9	7.2	7.2	0	0
Harbor of entry to international waters	2.4	3.9	6.3	6.3	0	0

Table 3.0 shows how Pakistani and Chinese newspapers have covered eight separate problems relating to CPEC. Eight hypotheses are interpreted as follows. The "Trade Development and Economy" of Pakistan has been portrayed favorably in both Pakistani and Chinese print media, supporting the first hypothesis. Table 3.0 shows that, in accordance with the first hypothesis, major newspapers in both China and Pakistan have written favorably about the progress of trade and the economy as it relates to CPEC. The "Energy and Power Sector" of Pakistan has been portrayed favorably in Pakistani and Chinese print media with reference to CPEC progress, according to Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis is accepted in light of the data presented in table 3.0, which shows that major publications in both China and Pakistan framed stories about the country's energy and power sectors favorably by mentioning CPEC.

TABLE 3

Category	News%	Editorial%	Total%	Directions Daily China			Directions Daily Dawn		
				+ve %	-ve %	NI%	+ve %	-ve %	NI%
Trade development and Economy	14	15.0	29	100	0	0	80.5	17.1	2.4
Energy and Power Sector	8.2	9.2	17.4	100	0	0	79.2	20.8	0

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Corridor to Central Asian Republics (CARs)	4.8	7.7	12.6	100	0	0	91.7	0	8.3
Employment Opportunities	2.9	4.8	7.7	100	0	0	88.9	11.1	0
Regional peace and Security	9.2	7.2	16.4	100	0	0	91.7	8.3	0
Response by National Stakeholders	1.0	2.4	3.4	100	0	0	71.4	14.3	14.3
Response by International stakeholders	3.4	3.9	7.2	100	0	0	100	0	0
Gateway to international waters	2.4	3.9	6.3	100	0	0	100	0	0

Third Hypothesis: Both Pakistani and Chinese print media have presented Pakistan's "Corridor to Central Asian Republics" in a favourable light in light of the CPEC initiative. Since the problem of the corridor to central Asian states in relation to CPEC had been framed positively by both the Pakistani and Chinese press, it was decided to accept the aforementioned hypotheses for the purposes of this study. Fourth Hypothesis: Both Pakistani and Chinese print media have portrayed Pakistan's "Employment Opportunities" as a result of CPEC growth favorably. Based on the data presented in table 3.0, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is correct; the press in both Pakistan and China has written favorably on the topic of job openings as they relate to the CPEC project. CPEC progress has been portrayed favorably in Pakistani and Chinese print media, supporting hypothesis 5. Table 3.0 shows that the hypothesis is accepted because of the positive way in which the media in Pakistan and China have framed the topic of regional peace and security in relation to CPEC.

Sixth Hypothesis: Pakistan's "Responses by national shareholders" to the CPEC project have been portrayed favorably in Pakistani and Chinese print media. According to the data in table 3.0, the aforementioned hypothesis is supported by the data, as the prominent newspapers in both Pakistan and China reported positive responses from national stakeholders.

Pakistan's "Response by international stakeholders" to the CPEC growth has been portrayed favorably in Pakistani and Chinese print media, supporting Hypothesis 7. Based on the data shown in table 3.0, it can be concluded that the study's null hypothesis was incorrect; the problem of the international response had been reported favorably by the prominent press of China and Pakistan. The "Gateway to international waters" of Pakistan has been portrayed favorably in both Pakistani and Chinese print media with reference to CPEC. According to table 3.0, the aforementioned hypothesis is correct because both the Daily Dawn (a Pakistani newspaper) and the China Daily (a Chinese newspaper) have published favorable articles on the subject of the gateway to international waters.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to the findings, both Pakistan's Daily Dawn and China's China Daily have published positive coverage of all eight CPEC-related topics. However, very few news stories or editorials presented the issues in a negative or neutral light. According to the study's findings, the prominent press of Pakistan is contributing significantly to the success of CPEC by positively reporting on matters like the economic, security, employment, etc.

The response to the study question is that there is a significant disparity between the types and levels of coverage. There was significantly more coverage of the story in the Daily Dawn (65.2% to China Daily's 34.8%) than there was in either paper combined. Next, there is a huge gap between the two publications' coverage of CPEC issues and dimensions. Trade growth and the economy, the energy and power industry, and regional peace and security are the most widely covered topics. They account for 29.1%, 17.4%, and 16.4% of the total coverage, respectively. The concerns are framed differently by the Daily Dawn and the China Daily. The China Daily presented all eight issues in a positive light,

while the Daily Dawn presented them in a negative light, with negative ratings of (11.1%), (8.3%), (20.8%), and (17.1%) for employment opportunities, national stakeholder interests, energy and power, and collective trade development and economy, respectively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the breadth and depth of the CPEC phenomenon, this study serves as a foundation for future research on the relationship between the CPEC and the media. In order to have a better grasp on the problems, the study's author suggests looking into how the press in countries like the United States and India, which are hostile to the CPEC, has covered the project. To better comprehend the issue of employment opportunity, trade development and economy, and the interest of national stake holders, the researcher has taken the liberty of proposing a comparative analysis of vernacular and elite press framing of the CPEC in Pakistan. These studies can aid in a more nuanced comprehension of CPEC and provide guidance to the media in developing more effective policies for covering the topic.

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