



RESEARCH PAPER

**Discourse on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Print Media:
The Case Study of American and Indian Press**

Dr. Malik Adnan¹ Dr. Faiza Latif² Taj Mengal³

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communications, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Ph.D. Scholar, Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan

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Corresponding

Author:

dr.adnan@iub.edu.
pk

ABSTRACT

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a project between China and Pakistan on economic and geo-strategic grounds. This research examines the news reports, editorials and opinions of the leading American and Indian English newspapers. The contents of these newspapers were analyzed qualitatively to find out as to how print media frames the projects of CPEC from 20th August, 2018 to 19th August, 2019. The unified posture of news reporting is identified in all selected dailies of both countries. Reinforcement of negative stance taken by the Indian and American newspapers through their contents shapes public opinion around the world in general and in their countries in particular in accordance with the policies of their governments. America has also opposed the China's investment in CPEC projects to confront Chinese economic supremacy, particularly in South Asian region. The analyses of selected newspapers suggested also an image of what media frame and projects an issue to the world.

Introduction

South Asia is a region which is considered unstable due to the conflicts among neighboring countries, economic crises in the region, corruption, inadequate infrastructure and backwardness. Looking forward to paving the way in attaining the goal of development, it is evident that stability is of basic essence for development of the region (Vaughn, .2006). In May 2013, the Chinese President introduced the concept of CPEC for stability and economic growth of Pakistan in particular and the region in general. 3000-kilometer long CPEC consists of roads, railways and pipelines network, is planned to connect Gwadar Port located in Balochistan province of Pakistan with China's Northwestern province of Xinjiang. This corridor is situated on the intersection of Silk route being one of the main

projects of “One Road One Belt” initiative of the Chinese President (Ahmad, 2017, Muzaffar, et. al, 2018 & Rahim et. al, 2018)

Besides socio-economic development in Pakistan, CPEC will also help China uplift it's under developed provinces including Xianjiang. Through this mega development project, China is committed to providing Pakistan many development schemes worth about \$ 46 billion, which is around 20% of annual gross domestic product (GDP) of Pakistan. The power generation projects of CPEC are destined to increase about 17,000 megawatts, costing \$34 billion approximately. The other projects include roads infrastructure, up gradation and installation of railway lines. All these projects are to be completed by 2030. With completion of CPEC, China's connectivity with Middle East will shorten by approximately 12,000 km from where China imports energy. As few of its projects fall in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, India has reservations about CPEC (Butt, K. M., & Butt, A. A. 2015). However, Pakistan considers CPEC as a game changer to stimulate economic activities in Balochistan province by developing Gwadar Port in addition to open up a new era of development in the whole country, turning this region an economic hub in coming years (Hussain, 2017). Because of its significance for many countries for one reason or the other, the CPEC has been in news across the world making headlines in the media. Indian and American press has also given prominence to CPEC in their news reports with diverse perspectives showing policies of respective governments. In this backdrop, this paper examines Indian and American news discourse relating to CPEC. Press of both countries has been playing their role in shaping opinion of public and policy makers globally. In a press briefing, Chinese Foreign Minister said "the project between China and Pakistan does not involve any relevant disputes between India and Pakistan. Therefore, I do not think that the Indian side should pay too much attention". However, India has been expressing its reservation time and again and this can be seen through the coverage, the Indian media has been assigning to the CPEC.

CPEC: A Momentous Success of Pakistan

CPEC is considered game changer which will create multiple opportunities and bring prosperity through its mega economic development projects. Pakistan considers CPEC as national project to boost economic activities in the most backward province Balochistan by developing Gwadar Port. By virtue of CPEC, Pakistan has enormous opportunities to overcome the energy crisis and financial crunch. It is worth mentioning that Pakistan signed economical agreement with China in year 2014, which makes Pakistan the 1st Asian country to reach such arrangements with China. China is Pakistan's largest partner in infrastructure, communications, sea ports and energy sectors. The Chinese government along with Chinese companies has been investing almost 50 billion US dollars in various sectors to directly benefit Pakistan and make it stronger regardless of its military and political objectives. (Zahir, 2016). The vital projects of CPEC have been continuing in four key areas, such as the energy, transport and logistics framework. The work on the mega project of Gwadar Port is progressing at a good pace.

Pakistan passed through stability phase in recent years and has grown at an annual rate of more than 4%, making it prominent among other countries of Asia (Government of Pakistan, 2017)

Pakistan's Perception about CPEC

CPEC is a framework of connectivity in the region. The enhancement of geographical linkages through CPEC will not only benefit Pakistan and China but the whole region. CPEC will boost Pakistan's economy and has positive impact on stabilizing the troubled province of Balochistan by providing employment opportunities for locals. The benefits of CPEC development projects which include highways, railways, oil and gas pipelines and energy sector, mostly constructed by Chinese companies, through CPEC, China has also significantly facilitated Pakistan to improve the economic crisis and build positive image of Pakistan to attract the foreign investors. The CPEC will also provide enormous opportunities to develop economically and establish good relations with neighboring countries (Ahmar, 2015).

Chinese Perception about CPEC

CPEC is a roadmap towards economic development across the world with peace, progress prosperity. The CPEC has allowed China to enter the Indian Ocean directly and also enhance its influence in Central and South Asia. The Chinese policy makers made two pronged approach to establish relations with developed countries as well as neighboring countries and other developing countries in the region. China has invested a lot in Pakistan through CPEC but also planning to develop Asian Silk Road Economic Belt, Southeast Asia Maritime Silk Road and also South Asian Economic Corridor. These proposed economic corridors will link China with Bangladesh, India and Myanmar. China is also interested to counter the regional influence of USA. CPEC is a pilot project of One Belt One Road Initiatives; it's for Pakistan as a whole and provides multiple opportunities to benefit economic and social development in the region (Summers, 2016).

American Perception about CPEC

The geostrategic location of Pakistan has important role in influencing and shaping the dynamics of the region. Geostrategic importance of Pakistan compelled the developed and neighboring countries to cultivate good relations with Pakistan. Over the past 15 years, USA has given approximately \$ 16 billion to Pakistan as a Coalition Support Fund against terrorism, counterterrorism support and Military financing fund. However, historically USA has never provided any economic assistance to Pakistan for economic activities, development of infrastructure like roads, railways, dams and in energy sector. Through CPEC, China is investing \$ 46 billion in Pakistan. Ultimately, China after investing such amount will also be interested to protect it (Ritzinger, L. 2015). According to the perspective of US think tanks and policymakers, CPEC will never be materialized and the economic projects

will never boost in this region. USA has its own interest in this region and does not want China to become economic power of the world. The USA always looks towards Pakistan through security lens only and never showed interest in economic activities and investment in Pakistan. The American media always portrayed negative image of Pakistan and considered it as failed state (Small, A 2015).

Indian Perception about CPEC

India has consistently expressed concerns to Pakistan and China over CPEC. India thinks that China is increasing its presence in Indian Ocean with strategy of "String of Pearls" and through CPEC connecting Gwadar Port with China. India assesses Gwadar as one of the large scale naval mobilization in the region for China in any worst case scenario. India considers these naval bases a threat to its security, dominating the global sea lanes and also challenging the USA. India is also worried about China's growing investment in economic projects in Pakistan. India has its eyes on the energy reservoirs in land locked Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan, but through economic investment in the region China has captured all such reservoirs (Dhrubajyot, 2015).

Hypothesis

The study has the following hypotheses.

1. Indian press gave importance to the political side over economic perspective of CPEC.
2. The press of America and India has given negative treatment to CPEC.
3. Coverage of CPEC was mostly similar in selected American and Indian dailies.
4. Indian and American press covered CPEC according to their national policies.

Material and Methods

Rationale for Newspapers Selection

The rationale of selection of Indian and American newspapers is that they provide wider viewership in elite class and officials globally. For this study the contents of Hindustan Times and The Hindu from Indian press and New York Times and Washington Post from American press have been selected for analysis.

Hindustan Times

The Hindustan Times is an English language newspaper of India which was founded in 1924. According to statistics from the Indian Audit Office, the

newspaper reported that its circulation exceeded 1.34 million. Hindustan Times is considered as the 2nd largest daily newspaper of India. The daily readership of Hindustan Times around 3.7 million all over in India. The newspaper has published news reports, editorials and articles related to CPEC matters have been analyzed in this study (The Hindustan times, 2019, 23rd June,).

The Hindu

The Hindu is an English language newspaper of India which was established in 1878 and started publication as weekly in 1878, Chennai. The Hindu became a daily newspaper in 1889. According to the report of the Indian Audit Office, it has a circulation of 1.6 million copies and a readership of about 2.5 million people in India (ABC: July to December 2012). The Hindu is the first Indian daily who started providing e-newspaper online version. The news reports, features and columns related to CPEC projects and economic activities between Pakistan and China have been analyzed in this research paper (The Hindu, 2019, 5th June,).

New York Times

The New York Times is a New York-based American daily newspaper with global readership. The newspaper was established in year 1851. New York Times has won 127 Pulitzer Prizes, surpassing other newspapers in America. The New York Times is ranked 18th in the world and 3rd in the United States. The New York Times has long been considered a "national newspaper." The motto of the newspaper is "All news suitable for printing" appears in the upper left corner of the home page. The most expanded newspaper of United States all over the world with bureau offices (New York Times, 2019, 16th July,).

Washington Post

The Washington Post is one of the largest daily newspapers in the United States, which is published in Washington with special emphasis on coverage of American national politics. The Washington Post stands out for political reports on the White House, Congress, and other aspects of the US government and political affairs. This newspaper has the largest circulation area in the metropolitan area of Washington. His slogan "Democracy dies in the darkness". The newspaper has also received 47 Pulitzer Prizes due to his performance. Washington Post has announced closure of regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York as part of his growing focus on political events in Washington and local news coverage of political affairs too (Washington Post, 2019, 10th June,).

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study which analyses the American and Indian press discourses on CPEC. Discourse analysis is widely used in political communication. This analysis is a useful method to comprehend the political interpretation of the

issues. Kress, cited in Kosicki and Pan, (1993) says that statements are an expression of views reflecting a specific belief while, headlines are an indication to the detailed news stories. He further narrates that discourse analysis is an effective method to analyze frames used by the media persons. According to Schnieder, (2013) discourse analysis covers all types of communication which shape the reality around us. While analyzing the text, discourse analysis is like forensic analysis which is taken to explore text. Media frame analysis is also quite similar to discourse analysis which is also used to analyze the perception and policies. In this study, discourse analysis method was employed. Discourse analysis is used to critically analyze the stance on any specific theme or issue which is not dominant in content but reflects how any issue is depicted through specific phrases that attach meaning to it. For this study, the news reports, editorials and articles were selected from 20th August, 2018 to 19th August, 2019. The leading Indian and American newspapers were selected for analyses which are Hindustan Times and The Hindu from Indian press and New York Times and Washington Post from American press. This study examines that how Indian and American print media is giving treatment to CPEC projects. For the purpose, data was collected from leading Indian and American newspapers to analyze as to how did Indian and American press frame the contents about CPEC, their news stories, editorials and articles. Of all the contents covering CPEC related issues, a total of 67 published stories, articles and editorials were selected from the selected newspapers.

Results and Discussions

The leading American and Indian print media gave coverage to CPEC projects in the context of relations between Pakistan and China as well as that of Pakistan and India, through news stories, articles and editorials, portraying China as one of the leading economic power in the world. India is well aware and vigilant about the economic assistance provided by China to its neighboring country Pakistan and also understands its implications for the country. India considers CPEC an issue of sovereignty in South Asia. Both American and Indian press prominently presented the CPEC projects from political aspect and power supremacy rather than economic development in the region. The coverage during this period has also framed with political concerns which reflected that the inclination of American and Indian press about CPEC projects was towards political perspective rather than the development of the region, particularly news reports against routes of CPEC and bus service between Pakistan and China. Due to instability and militancy in the region, the press of both countries predominantly framed Pakistan as one of the major threats to security and stability of the whole region. The American and Indian newspapers presented CPEC projects in undesirable manner portraying the contents negatively against the interest of Pakistan and China. During discourse analysis many a time Indian print media has criticized Pakistan-China relations and framed stereotype negative image in news stories. After going through the discourse analysis of the contents, it was revealed that all leading dailies gave negative treatment to Pakistan and CPEC as per their

policies. The American and Indian press discourse has channeled a wide campaign of criticism against the CPEC and presented that CPEC is not an infrastructure of roads, instead it will only ease China's trade and burden Pakistan's foreign debts. The criticism of American and Indian press gained more impetus after the statement of US Defense Secretary in which he said CPEC would crisscross the disputed territory of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The former Secretary of State also questioned the financial structure of CPEC projects. The US opposition to CPEC is also evident when the Secretary of state argued and cautioned that IMF financial aid for Pakistan should not be utilized to pay off Chinese loans. This statement was widely understood as part of the US strategic confrontation with China and also an extra pressure point on Pakistan's obedience with its demands on Afghanistan. Presently India does not consider its relationships with China through the prism of Pakistan - China ties, India only ruled out its stance on CPEC, which reflects its frustration in India- China relationship. The terrorist activity on Chinese Consulate in Karachi has been highlighted in American and Indian media with great interest where in armed terrorists attacked Chinese Consulate. After hour long shootout, all three assailants were killed whereas two police men were also martyred. A militant separatists group of Balochistan province claimed responsibility of the attack. The incident reflects an attempt to strike at the heart of Pakistan to sabotage the irony bond with China. Like other countries, America and India also joined hands in condemning the militant attack on the Chinese Consulate. But at the same time, India does not recognize Baloch separatist group (Baloch Liberation Army), who claimed the attack, as a terrorist organization. Other Baloch groups have also targeted the increasing Chinese presence in their province but India and Indian media have always highlighted this type of activities in favor of these militant groups. A part of CPEC road infrastructure passes through Gilgit-Baltistan. However, India considers this area as disputed territory and also protests against it at many forums. The above findings aptly explain that American and Indian press through their discourse made negative impression of CPEC in the elite class and the policy makers the world over. American and Indian press discourse on CPEC was found similar. However, the coverage of CPEC in American and Indian dailies varies in frequency; Indian press has extensively covered the CPEC as compared to American press. It also found that the contents published in these newspapers follow the policies of respective governments towards Pakistan and the CPEC projects. The focus of the Indian press has been to ensure national interest of their country in their news discourse. The American press has also supported and emphasized the American perspective through their contents. The media frames also revealed that the press of the both countries wants to minimize the strategic influence of China in terms of CPEC projects in South Asia. They intend to mitigate China's hold on the region, resources and strategic position. The CPEC projects got coverage in international media due to its importance and impact on South Asian region through trade, economic and geo strategic initiatives. The interest of America and India is very clear to target CPEC and pressurize China to shun the economic development activities in Pakistan.

Validity of Hypothesis

The American and Indian press has given discourse on CPEC in historical context through the news reports, editorials, articles and statements. According to the first hypothesis the press of India remained more focused on the political aspects of CPEC as per political interests of India, covering the political point of view instead of economical perspective. The reported news in Indian press includes the strategic influence of China in the South Asian region through development of CPEC projects and its effects on India. The hypothesis stands approved, because Indian media tend to focus on the political aspects of CPEC. As the crux of the news discourse, Pakistan, due to increased militancy and Talibanization, poses a major threat to regional security and instability.

The second hypothesis the press of America and India have given negative treatment to CPEC also stands correct as the discourse analysis has unfolded that the American and Indian press has always condemned China's initiatives and given undesirable stereotype coverage. The press has criticized China for supporting Pakistan and ignoring India's concerns. The American and Indian press covered a wide range of issues concerning China's border infiltration and human rights violations, CPEC routes going through Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan depicted as disputed territory. Both press have covered the militant activities especially terrorist attack on Chinese Consulate at Karachi with great interest in the news reports and did not report the China's perspective, which is crucial to the objectivity of the news. China supported Pakistan's defense capabilities and extended CPEC as another extension. Similarly, the highlighted news discourse frames are turning more to CPEC. The news frames also highlighted the Geo Strategic situation of the region. This discourse supports the hypothesis that American and Indian newspapers gave negative treatment to CPEC.

The third hypothesis of the study, "Coverage was mostly same in the American and Indians selected dailies" also stands correct, because the same problems and issues have been raised by these dailies. The discourse on CPEC related content differed in appearance because certain dailies widely report CPEC projects, while other reports are less frequent. These findings suggest that the news discourse of American and Indian press is similar in the overall context and portrayal of CPEC. According to fourth hypothesis, "Indian and American press covered CPEC according to their national policies", and the focus of the Indian and American press remained to ensure national interest of their countries in the news discourse.

Conclusion

The CPEC contains a lot of development projects aimed at upgrading road infrastructure in Pakistan and strengthening the economic relations between China and Pakistan. The CPEC will link Gwadar, the city of Balochistan, south-western province of Pakistan with China's Xinjiang province with Chinese Belt and Road

Initiatives. This kind of economic development will be extended to many other neighboring countries to cultivate strong relationship with them in the region. The Chinese intentions of restoring ancient Silk Route and development of CPEC depend on the security and stability in this region. It is very pertinent to provide greater support in materializing these initiatives. Stable, economically strong and peaceful countries in the region will ultimately forge new opportunities for trade, employment and collaboration for economic development among all regional countries in addition to connecting the Central Asian landlocked states. The analysis of American and Indian press discourse reveals that press helps in shaping the image in the desired direction all over the world on any matter.

After analysis of content of the newspapers, it is concluded that the American and Indian media gave more importance to the political aspects of CPEC than the economic aspects. Moreover they gave unfavorable treatment and used negative framing to CPEC and Pakistan-China relationships. Negative treatment given by Indian and American press can influence the public opinion across the world in general and their countries in particular. American press has opposed the China's investment in CPEC projects to counter Chinese economic supremacy in the region. Same is true in case of India that has always opposed the CPEC projects. The unified posture of news reporting was identified in the dailies of both countries which specify that American and Indian media is well aware about their national concerns towards CPEC and Pakistan-China economic activities. The discourse on CPEC was different in appearance because Indian dailies gave more coverage than that of American press. While covering the projects under CPEC and Pakistan-China relations, American and Indian press followed the policies of their respective governments on CPEC, Pakistan and China. Discourse analysis concludes that America and India believe that China is trying to have control on South Asia by supporting Pakistan and countering India. It is the time to do away with uncertainties in the region for turning dream of CPEC into a reality. Media houses of both China and Pakistan must work together to create awareness and build opinion for the success of CPEC.

Recommendations

The analyses of selected newspapers suggested also an image of what media frame and projects an issue to the world. The Pakistani print media should have a responsibility to frame a real picture too.

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