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The Hymn of a Reaper: How are China's Investments Reflected in Perceptions of Different Segments of Pakistan's Society?

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***The Hymn of a Reaper: How are China's Investments Reflected in Perceptions of
Different Segments of Pakistan's Society?***

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the perception of Pakistani stakeholders on the impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through comparison between the working and elite class in Pakistan. It provides an overview of the progress so far as well as the importance of this corridor for both China and Pakistan. Moreover, the study dissects CPEC's development within the context of exploring class relations. It explores the perceptions of 20 individuals, belonging to the working and elite class, and discusses their views on the matter. Through synthesizing the academic literature and analysis of the results, the study provides some policy implications in the final chapter for which factors can be considered integral to CPEC's success. It suggests how the state of Pakistan can reform policy to reap the maximum amount of benefits from CPEC while maintaining its sovereignty and distributing the gains equally to its population, which is heavily divided among the lines of social class.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning (s)
BLA	Baluchistan Liberation Army
BRI	Belt Road Initiative
CCP	Competition Commission of Pakistan
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
DIG	Deputy Inspector General
E 1-10	Elite Class (participant #)
E.U	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NRO	National Reconciliation Ordinance
PM	Prime Minister
PAS	Pakistan Administrative Services
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-E-Insaaf party
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League N party
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
RQ	Research Question
SQ	Sub Question(s)
SEZ's	Special Economic Zones
W 1-10	Working Class (participant #)
WB	World Bank
UAE	United Arab Emirates
U. K	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1: Introduction

The strengthening of ties between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan over the last decades has signaled greater cooperation to come between the two states across different fields such as economic and political. China's incredible rise to power in the 21st century can partially be attributed to its economic prosperity through dominating global trade. To maintain control, China has heavily invested in The Belt Road Initiative (BRI), of which the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an integral component and the focus of this paper. CPEC is a bilateral mega project that encompasses numerous infrastructure development projects such as railways, pipelines, roads, dams, ports, and other critical infrastructure (Zhiqin: Yang, 2016). The economic corridor stretches some 2000 kilometers from Kashgar in western China to Gwadar port in Southern Pakistan aimed to develop special economic zones, routes for mass transit, motorway expansion and redirect the focus on energy production. Since the inception of the project in 2013, an estimated \$60 billion has been invested in the project, promising numerous employment opportunities, vocational training, and societal development to the general Pakistani populace (Zhiqin: Yang, 2016). This mega project is of paramount significance to the state of Pakistan with comparisons drawn against the Marshall Plan in the post-war U.S.A, with regards to societal development (Zaidi, 2016). It is dubbed a game-changer by some analysts who suggest that this unprecedented investment could potentially make Pakistan the next Asian tiger and bring great economic prosperity to Pakistan (Zaidi, 2016) (Kousa: Rehman: Nasir,2018). The development of CPEC and its underlying effects has been the center of discussion on different platforms such as the national assembly, government briefings, media panels, academic debates, and so on.

Pakistan is a country facing many challenges, including poor economics, energy crisis, security issues, and poor infrastructure (Kanwal et al., 2019). Multiple studies discuss the economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan but are these modest in comparison to how the power dynamic between Pakistan and China may change in terms of international relations (McCartney, 2020). This makes one question the geopolitical and economic development motivations of China (McCartney, 2020).

This paper seeks to determine the impact of Chinese investments in CPEC on Pakistani stakeholders. It attempts to do so by analyzing the perception of two major groups of stakeholders within Pakistan that is the ruling or elite class and the working class. The ruling class is represented by individuals belonging to three groups that wield the most agency and

influence on public policy formulation: bureaucrats, politicians, and armed forces. The elite or the ruling class in this paper are conceptualized as “people in high positions, who are literate, articulate, self-conscious and with the power, resources, and expertise to control information and protect their reputation” (Jabeen, T., 2013).

The working class is represented by individuals holding occupations within the blue-collared sector and unskilled labor (Ahmed, 1996). It is worth stating that there is often a conflict of vested interests between the ruling elites and the working class, even more so in Pakistan due to the high presence of income inequality and the traditional feudal system (Butt, 2019).

Moreover, the study measures the current and expected impact of CPEC on Pakistan’s economy and foreign policy by comparing the perceptions of the working and elite class. Exploring the phenomenon through class perceptions may provide the study with more detailed insights and the current on-ground situation. The paper will further discuss the dominant themes related to CPEC as identified in the literature review and discuss the possible policy implications. To summarize the identified concerns, the researcher provides 20 recommendations that could be insightful for policy formulation regarding CPEC.

Relevance of study

The scope of the research presented is significant about critical developments in the arena of international relations as China and Pakistan are key players. The academic relevance is so that while numerous existing studies measure the impact of Chinese investments on the economy, only a few have looked into the perception of stakeholders towards the project. The way this thesis differentiates from other existing studies is perception is gauged differently for the ruling class and the working class rather than grouping them to discover whether there is a convergence or divergence in the respective views, so it begins a discussion on the matter. Moreover, this study is conducted at the city level instead of microtargeting a village or areas that are near CPEC’s infrastructure, and sample selection (Akhtar et al., 2021). This is the first study as per the researcher’s knowledge regarding CPEC to go for a division based on social class for the chosen variables. In addition to this, previous studies have rarely employed qualitative interviews as a tool, the use of which in this thesis can provide further insights into what various people from completely different socio-economic backgrounds understand of the CPEC and how that translates to policy implications for the government. This research can be

useful for further academic research, raising awareness of public perception of CPEC and the formulation of public policy for state actors.

The objective of this paper is to investigate how does the population of Pakistan view CPEC? The study then divides the population into two different classes as that is the prevalent social structure of society in Pakistan (MacPherson & Maddison, 1972) (Hafeez: Nayyar,1985) (Zaidi,1988). It will examine the respective perception based on the information they have. This paper, therefore, aims to look at the following research question(s).

RQ: How are China's investments reflected in perceptions of different segments of Pakistan's society?

SQ1: *What is the perception of the general population of Pakistan regarding CPEC?*

SQ2: *How do the views between the ruling class (politicians, bureaucrats, armed forces) and the working class (blue-collar jobs) compare against one another?*

SQ3: *What policy recommendations can be drafted from the literature, research results, and discussion?*

This study will be of particular use for Pakistani public officials and policymakers who can get further insights into how the domestic populace and key stakeholders are affected by the development of CPEC and the strengthening of state relations (Zaidi, 2016). This can be particularly useful in tailoring public policy to suit the expectations of the domestic populace and identifying integral factors on which the success of the project lies (Kousa et al, 2018) (Zhiqin & Yang, 2016). This study potentially holds great practical value as it intends to collect primary data from key stakeholders that will provide an overview of the perception of Chinese investments in Pakistan, insightful for public policy formulation. An example demonstrating its utility is analyzing how the public opinion has shifted since the inception of the project, with regards to the fulfillment of state promises that gathered support and manufactured consent for approval of the project. Social support and acceptance are important for CPEC to be able to succeed.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework starts with an emphasis on current literature through a literature review, providing the theoretical framework that this research will operate in, and lastly, operationalizing the core concepts of this research. In the first part, the paper discusses some existing literature regarding the impact of CPEC in Pakistan as experienced by different stakeholders. It introduces the reader to the major themes that were dominant in existing literature including public perception and the impact of investments.

The first part of the literature review explores public perception through a discussion on 1) the impact of investments on stakeholders (public satisfaction) 2) the role of post-colonial legacy and 3) the impact on foreign policy. To analyze public support for the project, the study looks at i) Social and Political support ii) Market Support iii) Community support iv) Quality of Life v) Employment Opportunities vi) Poverty Reduction vii) Development of Infrastructure viii) Environmental Degradation ix) Post-Colonial Legacy and x) Impact on Foreign Policy.

The second part explores the social class relations in Pakistan and the factors that moderate the respective relationship. The research will analyze the factors in the context of CPEC's development and how they can attribute to the project's performance. The study will explore i) CPEC and social meaning of infrastructure ii) Defining elite in Pakistan and their relevance in CPEC iii) The elitist development narrative iv) Working class, exploitation, and CPEC v) Class differences and negotiations vi) CPEC and cultural diffusion vii) Cultural imperialism viii) Ethnic isolation and (under) development.

The third part will operationalize the core concepts of 'Perception' 'Impact of Investment' 'Elite Class' and 'Working Class'. Additionally, it will mention the major themes identified after reviewing the literature review and contextualize them.

2.1 *Literature Review and Theoretical Framework*

The existing synthesis of the literature is centric on the questionability of balance between the burdens and benefits of CPEC. It focuses on the recent expansion of Chinese

investments in Pakistan. Most of the current literature warrants the various CPEC activities and how the local population has perceived them. The meta-narrative that is mostly followed is the 'good guy, bad guy' rhetoric dependent on whether the author is Pakistani or Chinese. Previous research has included stakeholder satisfaction with CPEC, especially concerning the affected local communities. Moreover, it incorporates the relationship between land acquisition and dissatisfaction with the CPEC project within Pakistan. Most of the literature congregates on the local community as one rather than identifying the various sections of the population that exist. Saad et al (2020) added a more human aspect and discussed the perception of women in rural areas. However, even their research failed to consider the perception of urban women.

The studies, although extensive, might not be representative of the entire population. The sample sizes ranged from 100 to 200 respondents. This might not be inclusive of the vast population that is present in Pakistan. Mahmood et al (2020) fashioned the spotlight on the population within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab and conducted random sampling to be as representative of the population as possible. Another study conducting a similar method to that of the current study showed a high level of optimism, expectations, and hope were attached to CPEC with the Balochis in Pakistan (Siddiqi and Sajid, 2015).

Some opinionated pieces like (Zaidi, 2016) talk about CPEC optimistically, terming it a potential 'game-changer' for Pakistan that could make it one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia in the next decade. While it does re-iterate that concerns like high debt accumulation have to be tackled, the overarching suggestion is that Pakistan should double down on its effort in CPEC and reap its benefits. Similarly, (Kousar et al, 2018) discuss the possible opportunities such a high influx of foreign direct investment could bring into Pakistan. It also highlights how cooperation in the energy sector could help Pakistan tackle its pending energy crisis and bring about a manner of sustainable development concerning CPEC. The promise of high job creation and infrastructure development, in particular, are major advantages. To ensure the success of this mega project in Pakistan, policymakers from the ruling class have promised China the provision of extensive security arrangements and close cooperation (Tiezzi, 2016).

Furthermore, policymakers need to re-evaluate the dynamics of the project critically to avoid two concerns identified in this paper, further re-iterated by synthesizing the concerns put forth by the authors cited; i) land grabbing and ii) debt trap. It is pointed out by (Younis, 2021)

citing IMF statistics, that Pakistan's total public external debt has risen from \$44.35 billion in 2013 to \$90.12 billion in 2021, owing 27.4 of its total percentage, the lion's share to China. If these factors are not effectively addressed by state officials, skepticism could grow among the general populace which could translate to dissent, resulting in stern opposition to the project and distrust in the state. (Mahmood; Sabir; Ali, 2020) (Shaikh; Chen, 2021) (Tiezzi, 2016).

This paper aims to thoroughly investigate the public perception, the impact of investments on various sectors of life, its impact on foreign policy, and the role Pakistan's post-colonial legacy has played in the perception. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of the largest projects Pakistan and China have collectively worked on and could potentially transform the geopolitics of the region. Hence, it is essential to consider the perception among the general public. Public perception can be defined in this study as consisting of two elements 1) the public acceptance or satisfaction and 2) the impact of the investment of the project on the public.

Public acceptance is often seen as a determinant factor in the successful completion of the project. Studies have shown that positive perceptions of projects like these boost their effectiveness. In the literature, three interlinked dimensions of public acceptance have been reported; socio-political, market, and community acceptance (Toseef et.al 72). Socio-political acceptance refers to a positive societal attitude towards the project, the market acceptance talks about the project being suitable for the right markets, and lastly, the community acceptance deals with the overall attitude of the local communities towards the project. As the main aim of the paper is to investigate the perceptions of the public on CPEC, it is important to explore the public acceptance of the project from all three dimensions. Several studies have been conducted to examine the public accessibility of the project, some of which will be discussed below.

2.2 Public Perception Literature Review

Social and Political Support

To begin with, our emphasis will be on the socio-political acceptance of the project. As Pakistan and China have been collaborating on projects for a long time and there exists an

amicable relationship between both the countries, getting the approval from society and using it for the political benefits was rather easy for the Government of Pakistan (Qingyan, 2021). Moreover, the increasing trust in the Chinese Government from the general citizens also helps in the acceptance of the project (Masood 2021). An empirical study conducted in the district of Dera Ismail Khan about the acceptance of the project in the local areas showed that the majority of the people wholeheartedly accepted the project primarily based on the employment and economic benefits (Toseef et.al).

Various party leaders have in the past emphasized the successful completion of the project showing the support it has from different political parties. No matter the differences they hold, there is a wide consensus on CPEC and its successful completion. Moreover, the military has shown great interest in the CPEC project since its beginning primarily due to the security threats. However, the Chinese civilian set-up was reluctant in sharing the control of the project, but the federal government's inability to develop a secure environment for CPEC made it possible for the military to play an important role (Hameed 7).

Market Support

Another critical factor that can boost the public acceptance of the project lies in how the market economy perceives the project. If the significant stakeholders find the project suitable for their purposes, then it is widely accepted and portrayed positively. In a study conducted by Kanwal et al., (2019) it was seen that the benefits for the host citizens can act as key elements for the success of this project. Moreover, the general perception of CPEC is that it will stabilize the economy on a large scale and will help revive Pakistan's economy. However, there are certain concerns revolving around the inability to protect our local economic interests, high guaranteed returns on equity to Chinese investors, and unaffordable national debt ("China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks"). These concerns, somewhat valid, interfere with the overall general acceptance of the project, which in turn can affect the progress of the project. Hence, the market acceptance is essential for the completion of the project which can only be possible if the Pakistani stakeholders and high-level officials take a leap of faith in the Chinese investments all the while protecting the local interests. Here, the role of the Pakistani government is immensely important in making the project's progress more transparent for the major stakeholders (Dawn, 2019).

Community Support

The role of community support in the successful completion of the project cannot be overlooked as the people are one of the major stakeholders of the project. In general, studies have shown that the local community has on large, positive attitude towards the project. A study conducted by Kanwal et., al (2019) uses the social exchange theory to understand community support. According to the social exchange theory, social exchange is defined as “the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two parties” (Cook,2013). It suggests that the perceived economic benefits for the general public can help boost the support. A large portion of the literature suggests the positive attitude of the local community. For instance, recently a bus service was launched from Lahore, Pakistan to Kashgar, China (Kanwal et., al, 2019). The mutual trust and the friendly relationship between the two countries also act as one of the critical factors in the progress of the project (Khalid, 2021).

At the same time, investing such a huge amount of money shows the amount of trust China has in its friendship with Pakistan. Mutual trust is one of the critical factors that play a significant role in deciding the progress and success of the CPEC. It is essential to note that the trust which China-Pakistan has enjoyed for more than 66 years acts as the foundation for the project (Weidong, 2017). Having said that, the Chinese government has its fair share of concerns as well. They have raised concerns regarding security and the red tape (Hussain,2019). The Chinese officials have been assured of the security services and the processes have been kept transparent. The role of media in establishing the perceptions of the general public is most of the time overlooked. However, in the Pakistani press, the Pakistan-China relationship has always been portrayed as a friendship stronger than the Himalayas, sweeter than the honey (Jinping,2015), and often referred to as in Urdu “Pak-Chin Dosti Zindabad” (Long live Pak-China Friendship). This kind of representation has helped develop further love and mutual trust between the two nations. The usage of terminologies like “strong friend” creates compassion among the citizens.

As we have already discussed above, the perception is based on the political parties, economists, local communities, and the mainstream media. However, one of the limitations in the current literature available on the impact of CPEC lies in the fact that this project is still under construction, hence very little research has been carried out to examine the impacts. In this paper, with the help of available literature CPEC’s impact on various aspects of life will be discussed:

Quality of life

CPEC has promised economic prosperity and stability which in turn will impact the overall quality of life in the region. In a research study conducted (Haq & Farooq,2016) it was observed that since the project touches significant cities of the country, the CPEC has a profound impact not only on economic growth but also on social welfare. In the province of Sindh, a significant 6.31% growth in the social welfare index was observed (Haq & Farooq,2016). Moreover, the provinces which were placed in the lower part of the welfare index were also observed to make significant progress with the help of CPEC projects. CPEC has not been completed yet, but its impacts have started to show off in terms of improving the quality of life in the local regions. Another study conducted indicated in the same direction; perceived economic benefit significantly moderates the relationship between perceived impact and life quality. It is evident from the current studies that the quality of life is improving with the increase in the CPEC projects and has a direct correlation with the successful completion of the project (Rashid et., al, 2021). CPEC projects focus mainly on the development of local regions that help improve the quality of life in that region.

Lastly, more literature found discussed the impact of CPEC on the development of rural women and how it impacts their quality of life. In an empirical study conducted, it was seen that rural women perceive many life-changing projects and quality of life enhancement through rural developments (Saad et., al, 2020). So far, CPEC projects have been able to deliver up to the expectations and perceptions of the local people. However, for CPEC to provide equal opportunities would be a task as domestic violence is a major hindrance in rural areas.

Employment Opportunities

CPEC is predicted to create more or less 700,000 direct jobs between 2015 and 2030 and is eventually going to add 2 to 2.5 percentage points to the country's annual economic growth (Haq & Farooq,2016). There are several CPEC projects under construction; mainly the ones that involve infrastructure development. These projects have created immense employment opportunities in the job market. It should be noted that despite being collaborative

partners, in most projects it was observed that more than 90% of the labor population was taken from Pakistan while the rest was from China (Zia & Waqar,2017). The study shows that only 7 percent (3,780) of the total jobs created are attributed to Chinese nationals while 93 percent (47,800) of the workers are from Pakistan, which discredits all the negative criticism of foreign jobs hijacking. Lastly, creating employment opportunities in Pakistan will also help significantly improve the economic stabilization of the country, and so far, the projects under CPEC are fulfilling the promises. However, a restriction that the labor force can face is the difficulty in operating the technical machinery required for the completion of CPEC projects; this can lead to the foreign hijacking of the job market (2019). To avoid this, the government of Pakistan has initiated a training program with the help of Allama Iqbal Open University and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (2021).

Poverty Reduction

Pakistan is a developing country and currently has a very high poverty rate. To eliminate poverty, the government of Pakistan has taken immense steps. It is expected that CPEC will help eradicate and reduce poverty in the local regions in both China and Pakistan. It was observed that the CPEC would contribute to poverty eradication and economic growth by providing the proper setup and quick access to many living services: education quality, wellness, access to urban markets, and affordable banking (Ullah et., al, 2021). It was observed that the benefits of the China Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC) have a positive impact on Poverty elimination. Lastly, it is interesting to note that China has played a very important role in eradicating poverty in its own country. According to the Chinese government's website, China was able to achieve the goals set by United Nations for 2030, a decade before. Hence, given China's history and major contributions to eradicating hunger, it can be expected that CPEC will help reduce poverty in Pakistan.

Development of Infrastructure

Infrastructure development is one of the major aims of the project, including the development of roads, seaports (Gwadar being the main seaport), highways, etc. Infrastructure development is of great significance as it helps with socio-economic development (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). Hence, CPEC intends to build infrastructural projects in the local regions of the country. These infrastructural projects will act as a binding force and a networking connection

between different countries, therefore eliminating the barriers to trade (Butt & Butt, 2015). CPEC will also have a huge impact on the development of the energy sector. According to the official website of the CPEC, currently, 10 projects under CPEC related to the energy sector have been completed, 6 are under construction and 5 projects are being considered.

A study conducted to look at the impact of CPEC on the infrastructural development observed that the CPEC project has played an essential role in developing the infrastructure of these related countries (Hao et., al, 2020). Moreover, CPEC also includes some special economic zones, which provide a higher prospect of development in any country. For instance, China developed 1750 Special Economic Zones which have accounted for 22% of the Nation's GDP and has also created 30,000 jobs (Zeng, 2011). The CPEC consists of 27 SEZs, which will help boost the economy and create more job opportunities (Khan &Anwar,2021). CPEC consists of multiple smaller projects that all add up to the positive impacts on Pakistan's economy and will help with the industrialization process as well.

Environmental Degradation

Various studies have shown that CPEC has both negative and positive impacts on the environment in the long run. While CPEC has numerous benefits, it is argued that this project will have a drastic impact on the environment. For instance, a study observes that some highways and railway lines will pass through the valleys of the Northern Areas and will have an immense impact on the ecology and the natural habitat of a vast number of species of wildlife as well as the flora and fauna (Durani & Khan, 2018). It is essential to realize that these environmental consequences will impact both countries in the long run.

Post-colonial legacy

While analyzing the perceptions of CPEC it is crucial to take into consideration the post-colonial legacy of Pakistan. The beginning of the colonization of the sub-continent started from the trading activities of the East India Company which later turned into the British's economic and political domination of the region. After years of struggle, Pakistan and India found independence in 1947 from British Rule. However, the colonial legacy has continued long after the independence. The postcolonial narrative has played a significant role in the growing instability in the region (Yusuf, 2019) and has played a crucial role in these growing concerns around the project. One of the most threatening issues surrounding the project is the land grabbing concern (Brobey, 2018) (Shaikh: Chen, 2021). While the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) promises economic stability and prosperity in the future, at the same time, there are growing concerns about land grabbing. CPEC has been referred to as the second East India Company many times (Shah, 2016). This mainly stems from the threat and fear of colonization happening again. Another cause of this growing concern is China's debt-trap diplomacy. While China's debt-trap policy has stayed at the heart of the BRI projects; China sells the benefits of infrastructure projects, and when the bill is due, the debtors aren't able to pay, then China demands control in the region to compensate (Dawn, 2018).

Impact on foreign policy

Now, the study will be analyzing the impact of CPEC on Pakistan's foreign policy in light of literature. CPEC can be considered as a geopolitical project more than an economic one and has impacted the foreign policy of Pakistan. One of the aims of the project is to strengthen the ties between all the countries involved. However, the impacts will not only be restricted to the countries involved but will spread out globally and on a larger level. Here, I will be focusing on the i) regional connection; India-China-Pakistan, and on the ii) international power relation; US-China hegemon.

This project plays a vital role in regional connectivity as it involves Iran, Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan. However, India, due to its conflicting relations with China and Pakistan (the main stakeholders of the project), is the only country in the region to show resentment toward CPEC. India has repeatedly criticized the project and has shown disinterest in participation. However, with the regional countries on board, India's alleged efforts in hampering the progress of the project are undermined (Iqbal, 2018). Pakistan's relation with India has always revolved around conflict on the Kashmir issue, and China's alliance with Pakistan also acts as a hindrance in China-India relations apart from the original conflict the countries share. This project is one of the largest economic investments from the Chinese state in Pakistan's economy and so far, has immensely positive perceptions and predictions of success. This will inevitably disturb the regional status quo, and will strengthen the ties between Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and Iran (Hassan, 2020). As the predictions suggest that Pakistan will become the center of trade, after the successful completion of the project, is a disturbing idea for India. A school of thought in the Indian foreign policy department thinks that CPEC will revitalize Pakistan's economy which is a potential threat to India's hegemony (Kamran & Mahsood, 2021). Another reason put forward by the Indian state is the disputed

regions; mainly Kashmir. Indian spokespersons have repeatedly emphasized and propagated that the CPEC will go through Kashmir, which India considers to be a part of its territory. However, the allegations have been rejected by the Chinese officials on numerous occasions referring to the project as a means of livelihood for the people.

The US-China relations have always been subjected to power transitional phases. China and the US, being the biggest world economies are constantly in the fight for power. This project will not only strengthen Pakistan's economy but will also play a role in stabilizing and empowering China's status in the region. This puts the United States' position in danger given that their ally, India is not a part of this project. The United States watched each step with caution and then, expressed its concerns about the project (Iqbal & Javaid,2019). One of the concerns put forward by the US is that China is trying to restructure the international system. It has been repeatedly stated by the United States that China aims at framing the world with its vision and ideas. The US has been able to come up with various reasons to oppose the project; some of which stated as; Pakistan's economy will not be able to pay back the loan, the possible militarization of the project, and the disputed regions being part of India (Iqbal & Javaid,2019). The majority of these arguments are primarily based on the strategic rivalry between the United States and China, rather than concern for Pakistan.

Lastly, this paper will be discussing the implications of US-China relationships on Pakistan. The initiation of CPEC has indeed impacted the US-Pakistan relation in various aspects. To begin with, it is essential to note that Pakistan has developed friendly relations with both China and US. Hence, it would be a greater cause of trouble to choose one side. However, this dilemma of being stuck between two rivals impacts US-Pakistan relations to a large extent. The beginning of CPEC marked a significant increase in the hostility between the two states, which lessened after former PM Imran Khan visited the US in 2019. While this project has improved Pakistan's position in the international order, at the same time, it also leaves a negative impact on its relationship with the US. In recent months, Pakistan's heartwarming relationship with Russia harmed the US-Pak relationship to a large extent. However, these ups and downs in international relations are an integral part of the policy-forming process.

2.2 Social Class Relations in Context of CPEC

The second part of the conceptual framework will discuss the social class relations in Pakistan between the elite and working class. It will analyze the factors that moderate the relationship and explore their presence in the context of the development of the CPEC project. This provides the study with different perspectives through exploring the following dimensions: i) CPEC and social meaning of infrastructure, ii) Defining elite in Pakistan and their relevance in CPEC iii) the elitist developmental narrative iv) Working class, exploitation, and CPEC v) Class differences and negotiations vi) CPEC and cultural diffusion vii) Cultural imperialism and viii) Ethnic isolation and (under) development.

CPEC and Social Meaning of Infrastructure

There exists a close connection between development in Pakistan and the idea of modernity. Mainly by the reasoning of infrastructure being located at the center of the economic reconstruction of post-colonial societies. Pakistan and China came together on an agreement on CPEC in two critical areas of development: the energy sector and infrastructure. By no means, the importance of the former can ever be discarded, given the pressing problem of energy downfall (Kazmi et al., 2019). Concurrently, the politics of infrastructure also shares a great deal of significance, due to its proximal linkage to a 'modern' Pakistan. Though infrastructural development tends to be defined in terms of physical buildup, academic studies have investigated the underlying ideology behind the flow of information and other constituents of social life. In Lefebvre's reasoning of spatial classification, the antagonism behind capitalism is in its capacity to appropriate spaces for social relations (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, 1991). All spaces inexorably become a social product defined by the practices, ideologies, and perceptions of those who use them.

With CPEC in its materialization phase, infrastructure has believably improved the financial requirement and advanced technical expertise, while bringing political incentives for the ruling class (Ahmad, 2018). This is because infrastructure embodies a symbolic meaning and allows the integration of state power through new subjective principles. An analogy is thereby drawn between CPEC and the colonial government in pre-partitioned India, where the latter engaged in bettering the physical outlook of the subcontinent to win the public and political appeal. Yet, little emphasis is laid on the innate intention of the colonizers to seek legitimacy for their power and channel the fundamental thought that the colonizing mission was seen as pivotal for the development of India (Kenny, 2015). Similarly, the CPEC has

allowed the fulfillment of “fetishistic desires of the planning authorities (and the state) to take part in the conceptual and visual patterns of modernity” (Ahmad, 2018, p.668) The public is swayed to accept the initiative as a modernizing endeavor, when in fact, the ruling class benefits the most out of their own financial and political benefits.

Defining Elite in Pakistan and their Relevance in CPEC

To speak of the ruling class is not to generalize the categorization as comprising those who are in the government. Indeed, the class structure of Pakistan has evolved to the extent of verifying the Marxist conception of classical structuralist society, dominated by the metropolitan bourgeoisie, industrialists, and landlords. Collectively, these respective groups have forged alliances with the military oligarchy, in such a manner that the interests of either of the entities blur out any differences that may exist between them. Even in instances, where there might exist any tension based on ethnicity, profession, and origin, these groups are intermeshed through consolidated friendships, acquaintances, and modes of socialization (Armytage, 2016). Insofar, the elite sustain their presence within the society, by incorporating their relevance within the powerful factions of the state. The social patterns tend to reflect the constituted power relations and influence policy decisions that meet the specifics of powerful individuals. The globalizing processes have presently been suited to be governed by the privileged, initiating from the very first stages of primary socialization such as in school, and subsequently translating to other spheres of life (Kenway and Fahey, 2014). In that essence, many of the executed decisions under the CPEC, are not entirely insulated from the elite influence. The interests of the stakeholders of a classed society, venture their agenda on the larger political level, which consequently leads to the implementation of policies that are free from being socially inclusive.

Mega infrastructural development such as CPEC is often equated to greater inclusiveness and networking, as has been verified by literary studies that have explored the dynamic implications of improved communication between different states. Contrary to this perception, the social isolation of population groups can worsen the geographical, spatial, and economic exclusion of those individuals who have not tied interests with the elite class. These exclusionary factors can further be compartmentalized based upon three components, ‘place-based’, ‘person based’, and ‘social category based’ (Zafar, 2021). The place-based seclusion occurs for those categories of people who are deprived of those opportunities that are created

within the spatiality of the infrastructure, yet somehow exclude specific individuals from accessing them. The person-based feature is a measure of how the ancillary sub-developments of mega-projects are in turn suited to be of some benefit to those who can pay to utilize them, such as motorways in Pakistan. The social category-based factors are practically the gist of the two compartments, to affirm that infrastructure is perpetuating a classed society (Lathom and Layton, 2019) and a “splintered landscape” (p.12444) through congealed elite interests. In hindsight, the politics around the CPEC project has qualified the investment to be of paramount importance in shaping the development position of Pakistan, without conceding the class-restricted advantages to a certain faction of the society. The number and types of benefits may be unceasing yet will tend to compromise the economic emancipation of a large working-class segment, that is increasingly withdrawn from a consolidated political power (Wright, 2000) The “class compromise” (ibid., p. 957) creates an inverse relationship between the political power of working-class and interest of the capitalist elite.

The Elitist Development Narrative

The rising tension between the federal and federating units due to CPEC is conceptualized as fueling “the centrifugal tendencies among the people of smaller provinces” (Mengal, 2016, p. 23). The decision to alter the original route of the corridor from the Western side to the Eastern side was proposed because doing so would facilitate the project, through the presence of existing infrastructure. The Eastern route passes through Panjgaur, Faisalabad to Lahore, comprising mostly of the relatively developed regions of the country. On the other hand, the Western route passes through the lesser developed areas of KPK and Balochistan, Insofar, the Eastern route is anticipated to save time, and investment, while concomitantly appearing to be ‘safe’ from any impending insurgency. However, the justifications are obscured by the willingness of the government to self-impose the decision in favor of the elite class. The opposing narrative has dubbed the choice of the route, as yet another political elite tactic that would instigate further backwardness of smaller provinces. The Western route would have been far less short and minimized external costs of land dislocation (ibid.). Altering the choice of route, thus poses unanswered questions about the innate beneficiaries of the CPEC, who are largely believed to be individuals from the upper social strata of the society. More importantly, the Eastern route is contentiously believed to further fuel regional inequality, by isolating the under-developed provinces from possibilities of economic advancement (Javed, 2016). The Eastern route is costlier, and cuts through populated regions, however, the

predominance of the elitist ideology guiding the CPEC narrative ensures that the inclusion narrative is hampered (ibid.).

Working Class, Exploitation and CPEC

The discussion then warrants a contextualization of the working class in Pakistan to examine their unavoidable fate, as a consequence of the CPEC development. The absence of literature on this respective theme makes it all the more difficult to correctly estimate the class implication. However, the agrarian transition precipitated through a largely feudal system, which ensured that the capitalist development generates surplus output for the agriculturalist and the landed elite (Khan, 1983). Feudalism has acquired a type of social composition that has strictly weakened the democratic institutions of the country, consequently causing extensive economic disintegration (Javed and Haq, 2021). More importantly, the feudal class has outlived the political domain, creating avenues for the military to intervene in decision-making. Social injustice becomes a norm, and any prospects for parliamentary reforms are limited owing to the masses' axiomatic dependence on the feudal land for their economic survival.

In some situations, individuals from the labor class can move into blue-collared jobs, yet, not without problems with poor working conditions, coupled with lower wages (Abbas, Athar, and Herani, 2010). Some existing scholarship has, nonetheless, highlighted the potency of exploitation through employment mechanisms such as subcontracting (Akhtar, 2011), which is an evident characterization of the Corridor. The lack of power is considered both a cause and a result of their despicable condition, consequently leading the working-class labor force to be webbed in “a hegemonic relationship with contractors due to oppressive structural conditions as well as a culture of dependency that contractors have nurtured” (p.160).

With capitalism shifting ahead of a Fordist society, the class structure is purportedly a mirror of a flexible accumulation system (Jones, 2007), where a patronage-based type of labor control has succeeded to create a hegemony of exploitation. Due to an undermined political will to mobilize, and the nature of the mode of employment, most of the blue-collared workers continue to abide by the patronage fundamentals (Fatmi and Avan, 2002). Consequently, in economic initiatives such as the CPEC, the elite find themselves in the position of dominance

not merely by their social connectedness, but at the same time, by their ability to guide the capitalist narrative of labor production to suit their interests.

Class Differences and Negotiations

The question of how inter-class differences are negotiated amidst the ongoing CPEC project necessitates a further investigation into the underlying mechanisms of class perpetuation. Earlier, it was verifiable that the elite class reproduces itself through a system of interconnectedness between different groups, whereas the working and the blue-collared class are subsumed into a predicament of moderated social mobility. Sociological literature on the manifestations of class differences has found that the distrust of those on the lower stratified hierarchical stream emerges out of a culture of serial nepotism (Yasin et al., 2019). In that respect, “political affiliation” (p.11) correlates with success in the labor market, to make those candidates successful who forge stronger ties with the ruling elite. The contextualization of this phenomenon in the Bourdieu (1977) conception of capitals, would describe the selective candidates as accumulating a greater amount of social capital. Subsequently, the nature of institutions evolves to such magnitude that the blue-collared and working-class is maneuvered to concede their position and fate as natural. A situation of ‘False Consciousness,’ emanates from the Marxist understanding of capitalism, misleading the proletariat to intrinsically accept these social relations through ideological and material processes. Collectively when nepotism is matched with the existence of a corrupt bureaucracy, as is evident in an independent report denoting the lack of transparency (Wani, 2020), there remains little hope for CPEC to deliver on the promise of being an all-inclusive economic development venture.

Much of the prevailing evidence, has also premised the discussion around ‘false consciousness’ as unfolding due to the ubiquity of religious values and sentiments (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2002). In searching for the universal cause behind the economic exploitation of the working class, religion is categorized as guiding an obvious role, due to the mere fact that “hardly an aspect of a society’s life that is not affected by religion” (ibid., p.226). Marxist academics denote the illusory facet of religion, often theorizing religious dogma as being the opium of the people (Marx and Engels, 2011). It becomes “the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the spirit of a spiritless situation” (Yilmaz, 2018, no pagination). The paradoxical independence of Pakistan by a Muslim minority in Colonial India, however, led the country to contest state management and citizenship on religious

grounds (Binder, 1961). As a result, the influence of religion in the country is unprecedented, and nearly every social dimension of the society is contextualized around religious principles (ibid.)

CPEC and Cultural Diffusion

The narrative of communication and connectivity as promoting cultural exchange is restricted in its efficacy, as a consequence of the privilege available to a certain fraction. The phrase 'Geo-Ethnic dynamic' is instrumental employment in recognizing the social nature of the CPEC route and the manifestation of cultural linkages, which often is an inevitable reflection of the workings of global power. In that sense, the imperial powers have traditionally regarded connectivity through transport as a "higher end of accessibility to the far-flung areas not ready to accept the suzerainty of the imperial center" (Wani, 2020, p.232). The CPEC is an example of a possible connection between diverse ethnic groups who are located across variable regions of the country. These ethnic groups have for years fought for greater autonomy while struggling to keep up with limited opportunities for economic prosperity. Geo-Ethnic zones such as those located in Gilgit-Baltistan and Hazara have expressed an ethical claim, asserting a need for a larger share in the development of CPEC. The first proposition has identified the mechanism to mitigate the sentiments of marginalization by allowing the ethnic groups to have a say in the planning and execution strategies of the project. Second to this claim, is the call for parity between the underdeveloped and developed regions of Pakistan, to forge better cultural linkages, and disseminate the many economic benefits of CPEC. The pitfall of the corridor in failing to unionize all stakeholders is consequential and undoubtedly worsens the marginalization of a certain ethnicity. Particularly, the country is located at "cross-cutting cleavages" (Ahmed, p.631) where power conflicts within the society have taken an active shape of ethnic conflict. As a need of the hour, studies have emphasized a systematic address of the problem that actively prioritizes mutual consultation between different groups on the probable agenda of the project.

With the onset of globalization and the rapid pace of industrialization, academic scholarship has increasingly tried to understand the many dimensions of development, other than the predicted economic outcomes. However, there still exists a lacuna of literature that explains the socio-cultural implications of mega-projects schemes. The available studies have focused on the cross-cultural misfortunes, to argue that macro development can never be seen

in isolation from their cultural effects, which is a broader sense clouds our typical understanding of ‘mega-projects.’ As a result, the “assessment of importance and criticality depends in each instance on the set of stakeholders” (Pau, Langeland, and Nija, 2016, p.68), mandating that the organization structure should match the social landscape, and avoid the trickle-down of universal principles of megaprojects. Often because there are no comprehensive social assessments of foreign investment projects, there is an increased amount of distrust concerning the possibilities of FDI in the country. While the oppression resulting from colonial rule is a definite trigger of this distrust, the local stakeholders insistently fear natural environment risk, land grabbing, and political disputes (Zhang et al., 2018) as secondary, yet inevitable outcomes of the investment.

In further adjudging the underlying factors of success, the Social Exchange Theory, balances the financial advantages against cross-cultural exchanges, to advance the proposition that global development initiatives should fertilize the exchange of ideas and knowledge (Mukhtar et al., 2022). This can happen in cross-cultural environments that conduce the learning of the norms and values of a diverse pool of employees. The empirical data has shown that with the initiation of CPEC, the cultural dissimilarities have manifested in variable ways, causing performative concerns for the senior managerial staff. For instance, the work ethics contrasted between the Chinese and the Pakistani workers. The former approached their tasks with increased priority and diligence, whereas the latter often had delayed responses to any delegated responsibilities. At the same time, the cultural differences were also apparent when a Chinese senior would be entrusted to lead a team of Pakistanis, however, in situations of declining performances, the Chinese leadership was flexible to allow significant room for personal adjustment. Despite the “individual and organizational factors acting as the interactional facets for cross-cultural adjustment process” (ibid., p.10) it is crucial to investigate the intra-working relationship between the employees of diverse social backgrounds within the Pakistani nationals.

Cultural Imperialism

CPEC is often characterized as a solely economic venture, as is evident in its ‘economic corridor’ nomenclature. What is overlooked in this discussion is that CPEC accrues substantial cultural connectivity and embodiment, that can promote cooperation, and mutual respect for

differences between cultures and societies. Ever since its inception, the project has altered the social terrain of the country, prominently through the diffusion of Chinese cultural values that are now increasingly integrated into the dominant culture. This is not to assert that Pakistan is a homogenous cultural entity study have hinted at the country as being a “field of contestation,” (Toor, 2005, p.318) evolving due to the heterogeneity of social blocs. The struggle of various ethnic and classes continue to grow in the form of cultural nationalism movements that have attempted to reclaim their indigenous identity and values. Amidst such turbulence, the penetration of Chinese culture has amassed both opposition and support.

On one hand, the proponents have hailed the CPEC as a critical juncture in promoting cultural linkage and exchange (Asif et al., 2019), which could prove to be a turning point in the geopolitical relations between Pakistan and China. Pakistan is currently located at a volatile political nexus. It already has soared relations with India, and support from the US has also minimized owing to the abstinence of voting against Russia. In these circumstances, China hails itself as a close ally of Pakistan, and the incorporation of cultural standards is increasingly welcomed. In February 2022, Prime Minister Imran Khan visited the Republic of China to pledge years-long solidarity and embark on fruitful business ventures besides CPEC. Retrospectively, Pakistan and China relations resonate with both a remarkable and strategic stability (Khan, 2011) despite inconsistent vicissitudes, such as the terrorist attacks to delimit the impact of the Corridor.

However, the argument is refuted as another effort at cultural imperialism that would slowly allow China to lead dominance in the global realm. Although the partition of 1947, officially sanctioned the creation of an independent state, the implications of a ‘colonial hangover’ continue to linger on. The colonial legacy has fragmented the political spectrum and the ramifications are reflected in the impeded service structure, as well as the social institutions of the society (Islam, 1989). Particularly, “globalization is playing the role of a mercenary to create cultural crises” (Naz et al, 2012) and the decline of traditional social structure through the proliferation of west-centric mass media. Thus, when cultural identity is understood as an organic system, comprising languages, beliefs, and modes of life, that influence one’s belonging to a certain group (Horowitz, 2000), it is argued that CPEC is needlessly a threat to this very cultural identity.

Ethnic Isolation and (Under)Development

The telling relevance of 'culture' in the thematic contextualization of the CPEC, should also focus on the backlash of ethnic groups such as the rise of Baloch militant groups who have retaliated against the project for socio-political reasons. "The strategic importance of CPEC is tremendous and so are the threats posed to it" (Khan, 2019, p. 187), where the challenges are expressions of the regional security threats that the country has repeatedly experienced over the past decades. In that respect, Pakistan's geostrategic location in the region has potentially made it vulnerable to various forms of insurgencies. Ever since the commencement of the megaproject, there have been claims against China, for both social and physical annexation of the local regions, in gaining political advantage within the global realm. As of recently, the rise of Baloch militancy, in the shape of a Balochistan separatist movement, has signaled a sheer amount of resistance to the development of CPEC. While the grievances and isolation of the province have been deaf tones to the federal government, the separatist groups such as the BLA have deemed CPEC as an "occupying" (ibid., p. 186) and an exploitative force. Baloch insurgents have instilled damage to the project, on the allegations of China trying to exert control over the resources of a historically impoverished province. There are noticeable, yet serious efforts made to derail the developments, through suicide bombing and targeted shooting. Presently, the blast outside the Karachi University has momentarily ignited concerns over the sustainability and future security of the Chinese workers in Pakistan.

It should be apparent from the above discussion that "militant violence is the weightiest irritant in Sino-Pakistan relations and the risk of it has never been bigger" (Basit, 2018, p. 24). The attacks on the Chinese workers exemplify challenges towards disrupting CPEC, Although the province has historically been prone to insurgency, the threat has exacerbated owing to the scale of the project that has centered around the \$1.6 billion estimated worth of Gwadar deep-sea port. In countering this impending resistance, the Pakistan army has allegedly been involved in coercion and co-optation of the tribal elites, much similar to the actions of the British emperors in India. For example, two-years post the initiation of CPEC, the Radd-ul-Fasaad operation was described as mitigating the rise of militancy in Balochistan. Yet, the army coerced the tribal elite leaders to surrender through the strategic use of stick and carrot rule. The tribal leaders benefited from their agenda, by compromising the security situation of the province, which continued to grieve for greater autonomy of the natural resources. Thus, the groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), are representatives of the marginalized individuals, who have witnessed exploitation at the hands of the federal government, and now

the Chinese investors. There has been no attempt toward adequate inclusion of the region and issues such as land grabbing and forced displacement of the indigenous population have disturbed the social demography (Wolf, 2017) This then calls into the relevance of a more comprehensive counter-militancy approach. The narrative should seek to address the unresolved pitfalls of deteriorating relations with India which are believed to finance insurgent groups.

2.3 Definition and operationalization of core concepts

This paper seeks to use an interpretive approach to conducting this research. The main concepts within this study are ‘perception’, ‘impact of investments’, ‘Pakistani stakeholders’, ‘ruling class’, and ‘working class. They all are inter-connected and commonly used in practice when analyzing the views of the Pakistani populace as well as determining the impact of investments on stakeholders. The concept of Pakistani stakeholders, in this case, refers to all public and private actors within Pakistan that are directly or indirectly affected by the presence/progress of the CPEC project. Within the class, the focus is on two specific concepts of the ruling class and working class that seek to group the actors in focus into two sides. The working class is represented by individuals holding occupations within the range from blue-collared jobs to unskilled occupations such as electricians, construction workers, and manual labor (Ahmed, 1996).

This faction represents the majority of the population in Pakistan as the dominant sector consisting of over 65% of the total workforce is still in the agriculture and primary sector working unskilled jobs (Usman,2016). The ruling class, on the other hand, refers to all individuals that are considered to be members of elite groups within Pakistan that hold considerable influence on public policy formulation, these are bureaucrats, politicians, and members of the armed forces, due to their unorthodox role in state affairs (Armytage, 2016) (Jabeen, 2013).

These two factions are largely representative of the divided society in Pakistan where is almost a different country for members belonging to either class. The elite and powerful in Pakistan enjoy a high standard of life, matching that enjoyed by the rich in developed states around the world (Armytage,2016). There is an unofficial different set of laws that governs these two groups in stark contrast. (Ahmed, 1996). Owing to the historic feudal system of the

subcontinent and the presence of tribal systems in rural regions, the relationship moderating power dimension between the two classes has stagnated. The ruling class has historically felt entitled to rule with an iron fist as the working class has subconsciously become receptive to top-down power structures (MacPherson & Maddison, 1972) (Hafeez: Nayyar, 1985) (Zaidi, 1988)(Armytage, 2016). The presence of high inequality between social classes is a testament to the presence of two Pakistans within one and so the impact of such a critical investment should be measured differently for both classes. (Hafeez: Nayyar,1985)(Armytage,2016)(Ahmed, 1996).

A comparison can be drawn between Pakistan's current social classes against that put forth by Karl Marx in the forms of the proletariat (the working class) and the bourgeoisie (ruling class) (Zaidi,1988) (Jabeen, T., 2013)(Ahmed, 1996). Therefore the interaction of these classes and the difference in perception can be a key element of this study.

The concept of 'impact on investment' is operationalized by determining the impact within five distinct areas that act as indicators: i) Quality of life, ii) Employment opportunities iii) Poverty reduction iv) Development of infrastructure v) Environmental degradation. This paper uses the model presented by (Saad et al,2019) tweaking it slightly to better represent the scope of focus for this paper, as the indicators are well representative for investigating the measurable impact. The concept of quality of life, in this case, is inclusive of healthcare and quality of education. An operational definition of perception includes: "(1) an individual's or group's unique way of viewing a phenomenon and (2) incorporating memories and experiences in the process of understanding." (McDonald, 2012). The perception of stakeholders will be measured through a new set of indicators by analyzing the interview results. It will look at how often terms referring to a positive against negative connotation of CPEC in the discussion come up. These terms could be concepts like 'high economic growth' 'job creation' 'support' 'important' 'failure' 'corruption' and 'success'. The concepts of Pakistani stakeholder, working-class, and ruling class are quite concrete and observable, however, the impact of investments and perception as concepts are highly abstracted. The use of indicators helps provide a narrow focus for the impact of investments but discussion regarding perception will be more theoretical discussion.

Chapter 3: Research Design

The current study employs a thematic content analysis with the aid of semi-structured interviews to answer the main research question. According to a “Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data” (Anderson, 2007). The primary goal of undertaking semi-structured interviews is to conduct an in-depth analysis. Since, the study is looking at differences between two social classes, namely the elite and the working class as based on Hochschild (2009), this study will be utilizing the format of elite and intensive interviews respectively. The central purpose of an intensive interview is conceptual mapping whereas the purpose of an elite interview is to “acquire information and context that only that person can provide about some event or process” (Hochschild, 2009).

The following hypothesis will then be tested:

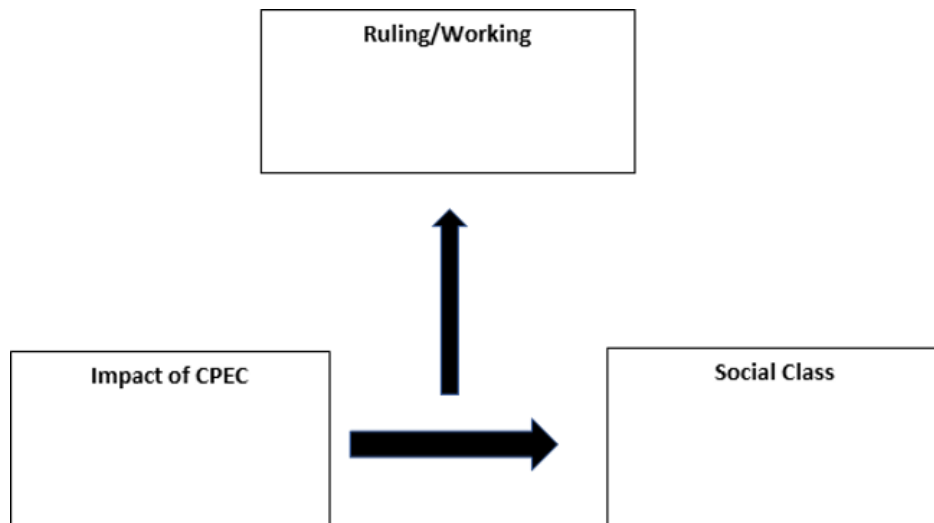
- H1:** *There is a divergence in views between the ruling class and the working class*
- H2:** *The working class will have a negative perception of CPEC*
- H3:** *The ruling class will have a positive perception of CPEC*

The concept models below illustrate the interaction of variables within RQ1 and RQ2. I created these models manually to better represent the interactions between the dependent and independent variables.

Figure 1 : Concept Model RQ1



Figure 2 : Concept Model RQ2



An interview guide was developed based on this. The questions were mostly open-ended and had further probing questions to gather more information. For example, the guide included questions such as this:

1. *What do you already know regarding CPEC? (Open-ended)*

Probes:

- *Did you find this via news on TV or a newspaper?*
- *Did you find this via word of mouth?*

In order to maintain the ethical standards of the current study, an informed consent form was distributed before the start of the interview to gain permission to record the interview and use the interviewee's opinions for the study. For all the interviews between both groups, all of the questions were the same so the level of perception could be measured fairly. The use of elite and intensive interviews combined provide a systematic framework for conducting qualitative research that nicely ties together vital elements with special regard to engaging with international human behavior (Hochschild, 2009). Other interview questions are demonstrated in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3

Interview Guide

1. How has the CPEC project performed thus far?
2. What impact could you see CPEC leaving on Pakistan 20 years into the future?
3. Do you believe that CPEC will truly be beneficial for the prosperity of Pakistan?
If yes, how so? If no, why not?
4. Would you consider Pakistan China to be close allies? Why?
5. Are you aware of any land-grabbing concerns raised in CPEC? Kindly elaborate.
6. Are you aware of any debt concerns surrounding CPEC? Kindly elaborate.
7. Is the increased Chinese presence in Pakistan any cause for concern? How so?
8. How will different social classes in Pakistan be affected in your opinion, from CPEC?
9. How might increasing Chinese presence in Pakistan affect society? What factors, if any, would play a part?
10. Has the security situation in Baluchistan changed since the inception of CPEC?
If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Is there anything you want to add on the topic?

The interviews were conducted in both Urdu and English and eventually were translated and transcribed in English for thematic analysis. The translation was done based on the researcher's ability to speak and write in Urdu. Interviews were held over phone or video calls as participants for the study were all in Pakistan and the researcher of this study in the Netherlands.

For the purpose of interviewing members of the elite class, the study used the elite interview method, this was ideal for targeted purposive sampling. Individuals were chosen based on their social position or if they deemed fit as an elite within Pakistan. In addition to belonging to a high political or social class, prior knowledge on CPEC was a criterion so that they were significant for the case within the context of the research. The addition of this criteria ensured more relevant insights into the research and bridge the gap in knowledge (Hochschild, 2009).

For the purpose of addressing the working class, the study used an intense interview method that seeks to explore how individuals feel about a set of ideas. Intensive interviews are more supplementary in an effort to extract any public opinion from the target sample and have certain guiding attributes such as "The need for a systematic and replicable way of making sense of the data after the interviews are collected" and "the need to avoid questions that are biased, leading, or otherwise likely to distort the respondents reported views" (Hochschild, 2009).

The case in observation is Punjab, Pakistan and the units of analysis are the residents in Punjab, Pakistan. Using purposive sampling for both the elites and working class, a sample was drawn. The study population therefore consists of individuals from the ruling and working-class within the Punjab region of Pakistan. This includes politicians (MPAs, MNAs) bureaucrats and members of the armed forces. Moreover, 10 respondents for each group will be interviewed and purposefully sampled using the researcher's personal network based on i) literacy ii) exposure to CPEC and iii) willingness to participate in the respondents. The elite class will be either bureaucrats, politicians or part of the armed forces whereas the working class will be blue collared or unskilled workers.

The participants were selected on the basis of two different sets of criterias for the two different groups. Using purposive sampling, the 10 participants from the working class were

chosen to represent various occupations across the working class. The participants were all below the median salary of PKR 360,000 or \$ 1800 per annum and belong to the blue-collared sector. The elite class consisted of 10 individuals from three elite groups in public service namely 1) Politicians 2) Bureaucrats 3) Members of the armed forces. The criteria will be a minimum of post-graduate education as well as current or former service in the following groups. The criteria for both groups were i) literacy ii) exposure to CPEC and iii) willingness to participate.

The list of all the participants is provided below in figures 4 and 5 along with their respective classes, occupation, and name. Participants are assigned codes such as E1 for elite class #1 and W7 for working-class #7 so that they may be easily referred to in the results and discussion part of the research.

<i>Figure 4</i>		<i>Working Class Participants</i>	
W1	Zafar	Cook/Chief	
W2	Shah Jee	Chief protocol officer	
W3	Saalim	Security guard	
W4	Khurram	Domestic help	
W5	Munir	Personal assistant	
W6	Nauman	Barber	
W7	Waqas	Gym instructor	
W8	Abbas	Driver	
W9	Zaahir	Manual laborer	
W10	Aasiya	Domestic maid	

<i>Figure 5</i>		<i>Elite Class Participants</i>	
E1	Shahid	Army (Major)	
E2	Masood	Navy (Commander)	
E3	Fayyaz	Navy (Commodore)	

E4	Yawwar	Politicians (MNA)
E5	Taimoor	Politicians (MPA)
E6	Rashid	Politicians (MPA)
E7	Waheed	Police (DIG)
E8	Rahat	CCP (Chairperson)
E9	Fizza	PAS (Grade 19)
E10	Zara	Foreign Services (Grade 18)

The selection of Punjab as the case in observation is on the basis of it being the most populous, literate, and well representative of Pakistan's population. The interviewees were from the cities of Rawalpindi, Lahore, and the federal territory of Islamabad. This includes the capital city where the majority of the members of the elite group reside and operate. The city is also representative of all the major ethnicities in Pakistan (Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi, Sindhi, Kashmiri). Rawalpindi-Islamabad is a twin city with high literacy rates for residents while Lahore is the cultural capital of Pakistan and well representative of the residential integration of different social classes (elite, working)(Zafar,2021)(Khan,1983).

Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of this research, special attention was paid to the selection of the sample for the collection of information to ensure that biased or propagated answers were avoided. Being a Pakistani native and speaking the language in which the information collection was conducted was of particular use to extract authentic answers and stimulate discussion on the matter. My personal experiences in Pakistan such as engagement in discussion with intellectuals over the last few years assisted in providing a reflection of what I seek to research as I have a slight idea of how either class perceives this topic. However, I will attempt to separate my inherent bias toward both classes in an effort to provide a fair portrayal of the data collected. To ensure the validity of the data collected through secondary research, I will try to triangulate the data extracted from journals, articles, reports, news reporting, publications, and other relevant sources. For instance, government publications (reports, briefings) by the Pakistan-China government, published journals and research papers by scholars and NGOs, and polls and surveys by governments and media outlets. This study would be utilizing a cross-sectional study design. It is a type of observational

study in which the outcome and the exposures of the study participants are measured at the same time (Setia, 2016).

Once the interviews were done, a thematic analysis was conducted based on the data available using the steps described by Damayanthi (2019). A deductive approach was taken towards this. The first step was to familiarize myself with the data, then translate with my own knowledge and transcribe the interviews using either the website AmberScript or TranscribeWreally. Secondly, the data was then coded. Coding refers to “identifying all relevant pieces of data within the entire dataset to answer the research questions” (Damayanthi, 2019). The software Atlas.ti was used to derive codes and develop latent and semantic codes. Latent codes were derived from the predetermined themes, whereas the semantic codes indicated the unexpected data. Once this is done, themes will be reviewed again to add, change or remove themes based on the codes.

Derived Themes

The following themes were derived from the conceptual framework based on the previous studies and research conducted in the literature review:

1. *Economic Prosperity*
2. *Security Concerns*
3. *Debt Concerns*
4. *Identity Concerns*
5. *Foreign Influence*
6. *Corruption*

These were the additional themes found with semantic coding after all the interviews were conducted.

1. *Parallels with Sri Lanka*
2. *Faith in previous government of PTI (Khan) not in current (instability)*
3. *Role of Religion*
4. *Lack of Factual Information and/or Transparency*
5. *Media Framing and Bias*

The researcher was expecting these themes to be recurring in the data that was collected through conducting the 20 semi-structured interviews as they are the most relevant in the discussion on the impact of Chinese investments in Pakistani (CPEC) and the class perception.

The term '**Economic Prosperity**' refers to a change in the following indicators: GDP (Gross Domestic, inflation, employment levels, Import/Export balance, infrastructure development, and financial indicators like public debt (Markou, 2015). Within the given context, this theme will relate to the economic impact of Chinese investments in Pakistan (CPEC) exemplified by positive or negative changes in the aforementioned indicators. It discusses how CPEC created opportunities, on the micro and macro levels to boost the country's economic growth while improving the standard of living of individuals. The term '**Security concerns**' in the context of CPEC refers to a 'relational phenomenon synonymous with the accumulation of soft and hard power. (Fayyaz et al, p, 17, 2019). It simply represents the physical threats faced by components of the CPEC projects such as risk to infrastructure or foreign individuals in the capacity of workers and public sector representatives. These concerns are largely caused by terrorist organizations and separatists militants (Baluchistan Liberation Army) in the region of Gwadar, Baluchistan where anti-state and anti-foreign sentiments are high due to constrained relations between the centre and provincial governments as well as the clash between the feudal and tribal system (Fayyaz et al, 2019).

The term '**Debt Concerns**' refers to the skepticism expressed against China's financing structure for infrastructure development in foreign countries. It is argued that in the event of a developing country defaulting on Chinese loans, the policy response of debt for equity swap could prompt interference in domestic politics leading to conflict (Brobbe, 2018). This is linked with 'land grabbing' concerns where defaulting on long-term loans and provision of 99-year leases could result in loss of control over sovereign land. Pakistan's bad track record in dealing with debt becomes of paramount importance in this theme (Brobbe, 2018) (Shaikh: Chen, 2021).

The term '**Identity Concerns**' refers to two different aspects of identity, internal and external. Internally, there is a divide along with provincial bases between the Punjabis, and Balochis as the former has direct control over the latter in terms of public policy formulation. This is consistent with the social class divide where the ruling class is poised to reap more benefits from the development of CPEC in comparison to the working class. (Ahmed, 2019). The external aspect relates to the skepticism present in the domestic populace against the replacing of traditional cultural Pakistani values with Chinese values, especially in the region of Gwadar. The adoption of Chinese as a language in primary school is one of the many

changes in Pakistan aimed at deeper integration with the Chinese state and people. While this change has been somewhat welcomed by the elite in urban regions, the working class populace from the rural regions has expressed skepticism. It is discussed that the varying impact of CPEC on different stakeholders should be neutralized in an effort for better nation-building within Pakistan (Zahid, 2019).

The term **‘Corruption’** refers to the committing dishonest acts by the actors in power to serve self-interest such as taking bribes to give a construction tender to a Chinese or Pakistani company operating in Gwadar (Shah, 2021). In this context, the act of nepotism and lack of transparency is also included under the umbrella of corruption. It is alleged that corruption has been rampant in CPEC projects according to different reports, both from the Pakistani government and international observers. (Shah, 2021) Some analysts have even claimed that the corridor serves as a gift from the elite in Pakistan to Chinese state-owned companies that reap numerous benefits such as tax relaxations and little accountability (Sultana,2018). Refusal to release CPEC reports, allegations of corruption of companies linked to the Pakistani elite, and positive state media framing are supporting factors suggesting the existence of rampant corruption in CPEC (Wani, 2020). Moreover, corruption is a major factor in the dictation of perception of Pakistan's social classes of the other. This is evident in the fact that not a single one of Pakistan’s elected Prime Ministers has finished his/her respective 5-year tenure without being ousted from the office, essentially on corruption charges (Sultana, 2018). The only exception is Imran Khan of PTI who was ousted from office based on inefficiency.

The term **‘Foreign Influence’** essentially refers to the exerting of influence by Chinese individuals or organizations to reach a more favorable outcome for themselves in the organization of CPEC. This includes the themes discussed above such as debt as a tool to gain influence and security concerns as the basis for negotiating favorable terms and demanding more resources. This also consists of political influence in international relations as Pakistan has often echoed China’s sentiments at international organizations and forums. As a whole, this influence refers to China’s ability to exert influence across different dominions (political, economic, military, and social) owing to its mega investments in the CPEC (Younus, 2021) (Brobbeey, 2018).

Chapter 4: Research results

After conducting the thematic analysis, the following hypothesis was tested :

H1: *There is a divergence in views between the ruling class and the working class :*

H2: *The working class will have a negative perception of CPEC*

H3: *The ruling class will have a positive perception of CPEC*

Hypothesis 1 was answered as there was a divergence in the views between the two classes with regards to their views on i) foreign intervention ii) identity iii) land grabbing iv) debt trap v) security vi) social class. However, there was a convergence of views on some matters such as i) economic prosperity ii) weak governance iii) corruption iv) Pak-China relations v) lack of transparency. While there was an agreement on the need for changing the management process for CPEC, the views diverged about the measured or forecasted impact on all stakeholders.

Hypothesis 2 was answered as this hypothesis was rejected. While there were elements of skepticism expressed with regard to the management of the project, the overwhelming majority still expressed optimism and positive sentiments. Overall, the general perception of the working class was positive regarding CPEC. The element of negative perception was slightly evident in the discussion of a possible identity clash between the Pakistanis and Chinese.

Hypothesis 3 was answered as the sheer majority had a positive perception of CPEC. Skepticism was expressed regarding the management of the project and the lack of transparency but the sentiments about the project itself were quite positive. Interestingly, the ruling class had negative comments about the performance and interference of other members of the elite group (Politicians, beurocrats, armed forces). There is ongoing friction between the civil and military leadership about involvement in the project.

The sample consisted of 20 individuals hailing front the region of Punjab in Pakistan, who were divided into two groups of 10 on the basis of social class i) Elite class ii) Working-class. The sample for the working class consisted of 9 males and 1 female between the ages of 25-60 whereas the elite class consisted of 7 males and 3 females between the ages of 30-70. Although this is not representative of the gender ratio in Pakistan, women's representation across all

occupations in Pakistan remains quite low, unfortunately, especially in the working class, so an effort was made to include as many willing participants as possible. The times for the interview varied between 30 and 60 minutes with the exception of participant E2 who took nearly 90 minutes. The 10 semi-structured questions asked are provided in the interview guide under research design. Out of the 10 questions, 6 (Q1,Q3,Q4,Q5,Q6,Q7) had to be answered with yes or no, before elaborating further. The results for these 6 are demonstrated below.

In response to Q1, 100 % answered with yes with regards to familiarity with CPEC. Of those, 60% elaborated that they were well informed on the subject while 40% expressed limited exposure.

In response to Q3, 90% answered with yes with regards to CPEC bringing economic prosperity to Pakistan. The 2 participants (10%) who answered no, elaborate that in the long run, the cost will outweigh the benefits.

In response to Q4, 100% answered with yes with regards to China-Pakistan being close allies, which seemed to be entirely uncontested.

In response to Q5, 15 % answered yes with regards to knowledge of land-grabbing in CPEC while 85 % answered no. All respondents were aware of Pakistan's land-grabbing issues but not in the context of CPEC.

In response to Q6, 60% answered with yes with regards to knowledge of debt concerns in CPEC while 40 % answered with no. 90% of Respondents expressed that there was a lack of information available regarding the matter, while 100% expressed concerns with Pakistan's rising debt problem.

In response to Q7, 25 % answered yes with regards to being concerned about increased Chinese presence while 75% answered no.

Once the coding process in Atlas. ti was finished, the latent and semantic codes were differentiated based on the themes the researcher was expecting and the newly emerged ones respectfully. A report of the most prominent codes was generated, which included which interviewee was coded with what code. The report is attached in APPENDIX 1. The most

prominent codes are displayed in Figure 6 below. Furthermore, a concept map was made using the code list for both social classes and is demonstrated in figureFigures 7a and 7b below. The core similarities and differences between the perception of the two classes, regarding the major themes, are illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 6

Code	Count
Importance of CPEC	61
Economic Prosperity	47
Security issues	46
Anti-Elite	45
Skeptical of China's control	44
Foreign intervention	41
Role of Identity	40
Weak governance	34
Pak-China Friendship	25
Debt concerns	25
Anti-Corruption	22
Unequal benefit distribution	21
Job creation	21
Concerns expressed for Pakistan	20
Pro Armed forces	18
Balochistan as future	17
Role of Media	16
Anti PML-N	15
Pro PTI (Imran Khan)	15
Role of government	14
Knowledge gap	14
Land grabbing	7

Figure 8: Generalized Perception

Theme(s)	Working class	Elite class
Economic prosperity	Positive	Positive
Foreign intervention	Positive	Negative
Identity & Integration	Positive	Positive
Pak-China nexus	Positive	Positive
Security situation	Positive	Negative
Corruption	Negative	Negative
Information & transparency	Negative	Negative
Debt & Land grabbing	Negative	Positive
Governance	Negative	Negative
Imran Khan (PTI)	Positive	Positive
Social class structure	Negative	Positive
Knowledge gap	Negative	Positive
<i>CPEC</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Positive</i>

Now, the study seeks to answer the research question: *How are China’s investments reflected in perceptions of different segments of Pakistan’s society?* Additionally, the following will refer to SQ1 and SQ2 while SQ3 will be answered in chapter 6: policy implication.

The impact of Chinese investments has so far largely been seen on paper regarding economic growth and has not yet been experienced by many of the stakeholders considered. The first phase regarding the development of infrastructure and boosting regional connectivity is near completion yet apart from academic debate, the public is poorly informed of the specifics and deliverables. However, the overwhelming majority has a positive perception regarding the project itself for the future while expressing many reservations about the way it is being administered. The biggest constraints causing stagnation in CPEC’s performance have been identified as 1) bad governance 2) political instability 3) economic instability 4) shocks from COVID-19 5) lack of transparency and accountability. While the sectors targeted for

development and growth upon completion of CPEC are 1)Infrastructure 2)energy 3)industrialization 4) agricultural cooperation 5) socio-economic cooperation 6) special economic zones.

The perceptions of both classes can be seen above in figure 8 divided by the core themes, where both classes had mutual perceptions of economic prosperity, identity and integration, Pak-China nexus, corruption, information and transparency, governance, and Imran Khan. The divergence in perceptions was witnessed in views regarding foreign intervention, security situation, debt and land grabbing, gap in knowledge, and social class structure.

The working class generally seemed to be optimistic about CPEC's progress despite its underwhelming performance so far and were less informed regarding the subject. The class views leaned towards skepticism of the government's progress as well as the role played by the elites so far. Moreover, they are expecting unequal gains between the two classes as per usual and do not really expect a change in this inherently discriminatory system unless a major regime change is in place. The expression of positive sentiments expressed seems to be based on optimism and the belief in that divine powers would make Pakistan succeed despite the identification of numerous problems and lack of credible information.

The elite class generally seemed more informed regarding the matter, expressing numerous points of criticism, all the while remaining positive towards CPEC's future. The perception was that CPEC had incredible economic and socio-political gains to offer and Pakistan need only take it with both hands to reap its benefits. Success was emphasized in human capital development, which translates to inclusive economic growth for all stakeholders. The views of the elite class regarding each other (politicians, beorucrats, armed forces) were pessimistic in the sense that each branch believed inefficient performances of the other branches were to blame for bad governance, however, all groups were in agreeance that the project had suffered heavily from bad governance so far. There was military-civil friction that was most notable. The expression of positive sentiments seemed to be based on informed projections based on China's successful rise to power and the possibility of tapping into the country's true potential. The perception regarding social class was that this would effectively strengthen the middle class which will become the country's backbone and all stakeholders will prosper, as long as the issues identified are addressed.

Chapter 5: Research discussion

After conducting the complete research and providing the results in the preceding section, this study will now proceed to the discussion of this research. It seems that the themes that were dominant in the literature review were prevalent during the interviewing process as well. The themes of economic prosperity, rule of law, foreign intervention, Imran Khan, corruption, debt concerns, and identity concerns were the most prominent throughout the results of the interview.

Alongside this, more new observations were derived from the interviews which formed the semantic codes in the study. Overall, all these themes represent the topics that interviewees brought up the most while answering the questions related to the impact of CPEC as well as their perception regarding it.

FOREIGN INTERVENTION

Foreign intervention and foreign entities or countries exerting influence in Pakistan have been quite the dominant theme in the interviews conducted. Foreign intervention came up in four different ways during the discussion. It was overarching with the themes of security and post-colonial legacy. The study had assumed that foreign intervention was used in the context of Chinese individuals or entities. However, completion of the coding process revealed that it also included other foreign actors such as the U.S.A, India, Russia, and U.A.E among others.

The first mention of foreign intervention relates to Chinese individuals, state officials or representatives of big corporations who have come to an undisclosed agreement, the details of which largely remain unclear and debated upon. It was the perception of many individuals from within the working class that the agreement must favor the Chinese despite there being no clear information that is publicly available or accessible. This includes the structuring of the financing of projects within the framework of CPEC. Moreover, since much of the information remains undisclosed to the public, it leaves it entirely upon interpretation which leans towards an unequal working relationship between the state of Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. Two primary concerns discussed in the interviews are regarding the success of CPEC. These include integral factors such as land grabbing concerns and the debt trap. Terms and

conditions regarding these two concerns are also concealed. Leaving many to suggest or fear the failure to repay Chinese loans which may result in the seizure of Gwadar port or of critical infrastructure due to the swap from debt to equity. Moreover, a differentiating factor between the historic U.S influence against China's influence in Pakistan, is that China has not yet called for military or defense cooperation in contrast to the U.S prioritizing defense and security. This has also resulted in a more trusting and less skeptical perception of Chinese influence so far, with regards to foreign intervention. Moreover, the relationship with China is built strongly on mutually shared benefits and it is the perception of the majority of the respondents, that this relationship will be engaged on relatively equal standings.

The second mention of foreign intervention or interference relates to the dependence on financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank from which Pakistan has acquired a higher volume of loans over the period of the last few decades. In the perception of many individuals especially from the working class these financial institutions are a representation of American interests and powers. The ability of the IMF or World Bank to influence Pakistan's economic reforms has been credited to the exertion of American hegemony in South Asia. One of the responders from the elite class who is a high-level bureaucrat testified the interaction he witnessed in the meeting between IMF representatives and the previous Finance Minister of Pakistan, Asad Umar, under the government of Imran Khan and PTI. In this interaction the first questions that the representatives of the IMF allegedly asked was regarding the percentage of Chinese loans acquired from the State of Pakistan. This became a point of deadlock as the Finance Minister refused to reveal any information as that was probably the agreement made between the state of China and Pakistan. The Chinese often rely on secrecy to maintain strong control over their investments. Thus, IMF officials demonstrated American skepticism, and rejection of Pakistan leaning towards Chinese influence. The rapid devaluation of the Pakistani Rupee in international markets and rising current account deficit was also blamed to be on the policies proposed by IMF and World Bank that the Pakistani leaders accepted under American influence. Moreover, Imran Khan accused the U.S of orchestrating the recent regime change in Pakistan by colluding with the opposition. Khan had developed close ties with Putin striking a low cost oil supply deal, that was reversed upon the arrival of the new government (PML-N), which wants a better working relationship with the West over the East. It was the opinion on numerous respondents (E2,E4,E6-E9) that the state should not pick sides and act in a diplomatic manner.

The third mention of foreign intervention is related to the security aspect within Baluchistan, the area of development for the CPEC project. This relates to the presence of non-state actors and foreign-funded agencies that are secretly operating in Pakistan against the state's best interests. The lion's share of the blame is often attributed to India while the presence of American and Afghani elements is always discussed. Balochistan still remains somewhat disintegrated by the central government of Pakistan due to ineffective administrative policies, negligence of the province, and the failure to provide adequate security for developing infrastructure or providing livelihoods. The presence of Indian intelligence agents is widely believed to be true, through the framing of media and statements made by public officials. The allegations were also leveled in the International Court of Justice in the last two years when one Indian spy by the name of Kalbushav Yadav was captured in Balochistan with an Indian passport. He was accused of sabotaging the stability and prosperity of the province. These foreign agencies have been accused of funding, arming, and supporting the Balochistan Separatist Movement which aims to completely separate Balochistan from the territorial sovereignty of the State of Pakistan. This along with dissident feudal tribes has resulted in high-security concerns and instability in the province of Baluchistan.

The fourth mention is related to Pakistan's colonial legacy owing to its independence from British rule as recently as 1947. Pakistan, as part of India, was subjected to the rule of the British from 1857 for the next 100 years. It has, therefore, left a strong impact on the perception of foreign powers. Respondents from the elite class (E1, E2, E5, E7, E8, E10) also discussed how the East India Company initially came to the subcontinent under the pretext of increasing trade and economic integration. Parallels were then drawn against Chinese investments as Pakistani policymakers need to ensure that sovereignty is not lost; those who forget history, are doomed to repeat it. British rule and American imperialism are quite fresh in most Pakistanis' memory as they were often mentioned in the discussion of what all needs to be done differently. This included what's been learned from past actions, and how this can and cannot be a different story this time. Many members of the working class also expressed this sentiment differently, stating that we couldn't trust 'westerners' due to historic top-down relations with U.K and U.S.A. So, Pakistan has a critical role to play in China's contesting and countering 'western hegemony', and bringing the rise of the East. It's also worth mentioning here what a big role the post-colonial legacy played in the further distancing of social classes in Pakistan. The most commonly discussed is the use of the English language to distinguish

between social classes in Pakistan and how the ‘ruler’ ‘subject’ relationship was instilled across the subcontinent’s population. This was also demonstrated in a study by Toor, S. (2014) which discussed religion, gender, and class in a postcolonial context. In the coding process, ‘Foreign Intervention’ came up 41 times while ‘Skeptical of China's Control’ 44 times.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Economic prosperity was the most dominating theme that was evident after coding the transcripts. There were multiple aspects referred to during the interviews which related to economic prosperity. These included 1) job creation 2) improving the balance of trade 3) strengthening of Pakistani currency 4) curbing inflation 5) repaying loans and debts 6) gaining leverage to be utilized in international relations (soft power) 7) foreign direct investment improving Pakistan’s production capacity 8) sector transformation 9) human capital development 10) technological advancement 11) increasing foreign reserves 12) development of infrastructure 13) improvement in the standard of living and 14) rise in GDP, GNP, PPP, and real income.

The bulk of the respondents from the working class sought economic gains from the project without divulging specifics of which gains would directly benefit them. The most common phrases related to prosperity were the creation of employment opportunities, the curbing of inflation, and the rise in real income as a result of the development of CPEC. Respondents from the elite class, on the other hand, provided more details on which types of economic gains should be focused on to optimize gains. Respondents (E1-10) had a heavy emphasis on human capital development, improving the balance of trade, increase in foreign reserves, paying back debts, and bringing about a rise in median real income levels. The need for structural transformation was stressed to boost Pakistan's industrialization capacity. Moreover, the development of 1) human capital 2) special economic zones, and 3) renewable energy sector were identified as the areas with high potential to boost economic gains.

It was the collective view of all who responded that CPEC possesses the potential to bring strong economic growth in Pakistan if administered effectively and honestly. Corruption and bad governance were among the most integral factors identified causing hindrance to CPEC’s progress from translating into economic gains. Multiple respondents (E1, E2, E5, E7,

E9), from the elite group, elaborated that these economic gains had so far been only experienced on paper and not in the country's economy on the ground. The need for transparency and spreading awareness regarding CPEC progress was heavily stressed. Whereas the bulk of the respondents from the working class (W2, W3, W4, W5, W7, W9, W10) was primarily concerned with the creation of employment opportunities, rise in real income, and curbing of inflation, preferring growth in the micro-level rather than macro. In the coding process, 'Economic Prosperity' came up 47 times, 'Job Creation' 21 times, and 'Importance of CPEC' 61 times.

IDENTITY & INTEGRATION

With regards to identity, there were some concerns expressed by the respondents that were largely absent from the available academic literature. There was a mixed response with regards to the question of how increased Chinese presence in Pakistan may affect society. While many respondents (W2, W4, W5, W7, W8, E2, E6, E7) expressed skepticism about the increasing influx of Chinese citizens into Pakistan, the majority had a positive view on the matter. They discussed that Chinese entities could bring about many benefits to Pakistan's economy and society if integrated well. The perception of individuals from the working class (W1, W3, W4, W5, W8, W10) as well as elites (E1, E3, E5, E8, E9) was that Chinese individuals are highly productive and efficient workers that can assist in the human development of Pakistan's labor. Moreover, it was also proclaimed that the transfer of technology and transfer of skills would only be applicable if Chinese individuals were integrated into Pakistan society. The most recurring theme that came in a discussion of Chinese presence was that they possess good working ethics and efficiency in operations. Numerous individuals cited China's own economic success and mass poverty reduction, which they achieved over the last decade, as the reason for this positive outlook.

However, there were concerns expressed by individuals (E2, E6, E7, E8) from the elite class that the currently employed and highly skilled Chinese workers were fulfilling the skilled labor quota themselves and simply employing Pakistani individuals for the unskilled jobs. This would result in the stagnation of human development as well as breeding resentment for the common Pakistani citizen who may feel wronged. Reasons for expressing skepticism related to clashes in the traditional cultural and religious values. For example, one of the biggest differences identified in discussion of the results was that Pakistan has a deeply religious and

sensitive population that seeks to defend and promote its traditional values. The Chinese population on the other hand traditionally opposes deep attachment to religious values while preserving its ancient Chinese identity. An example demonstrating this is the alleged treatment of Uighur Muslims in China who are allegedly kept in detention centers with the purpose of 'reeducating' them and realigning their values with the uniformed Chinese identity.

Additionally, it was also the views of many respondents from both social classes that this is not a cause for concern as Chinese individuals are goal oriented and their presence is only linked to their business operations and economic activity. So, the expectation is that these individuals only migrate on a temporary basis and have no intentions of settling down in the longer run. Many respondents from both classes also expressed positive sentiments that heading towards a globalized society in Pakistan would breed tolerance and bring exposure to the majority of the domestic population. Not only would this improve ties between the state of China and Pakistan but also provide a more welcoming environment to attract other foreign investors and megaprojects from coming into Pakistan. A point of discussion that reserves the difference between the social classes is that the working class believe the Chinese individuals should be isolated from the rest of society due to a huge divergence in values for example with the construction of different Chinatowns to accommodate them. Examples given to back the statement were that Chinese individuals will consume alcohol and pork among other dietary items that are considered prohibited for the Muslim population in Pakistan, so to avoid a clash of values, separation would be necessary. Whereas on the other hand respondents from the elite class suggested that they should be completely integrated with society as they can bring in more good than harm as well as breeding some much needed tolerance in society.

Another aspect within identity that was derived from the academic literature was also briefly discussed by some respondents from the elite class. It was mentioned that the ethnic Baluchi's and members of the Hazaara community face discrimination with regards to attending high skilled jobs among other opportunities. These communities are marginalized as they are not well represented politically, and their views are not represented in the public policy formulation process. These ethnicities are the minorities living in the regions where CPEC is being developed and so the state discrimination in treatment has been called out by some respondents as major flaw.

In the coding process, 'Role of Identity' came up 40 times. The theory on nation building (Ahmed, 2019) is echoed in the results of the interviews as the elite class expects

greater political and economic benefits from CPEC, an indication of elite capture. The working class is hopeful of gains in any form that may be derived from CPEC as long as they are beneficial for all citizens.

PAKISTAN-CHINA NEXUS

In the discussion of how close the respondent considered Pakistan and China to be as allies, Every single participant expressed positive sentiments and believed the bilateral ties to be a very good working relationship. However, the dominant theme remains that this relationship will remain strong as long as it's mutually beneficial for both states. Since CPEC could be considered integral to China's Belt Road Initiative, it can be assumed that China and Pakistan's interests will be tied together for the foreseeable future. Having invested \$62 billion into this project China has suggested that this investment is planned for the long run. Moreover, this passage connecting China to Eurasia and providing quick access to a seaport will be a critical component of the BRI In increasing connectivity and ensuring efficient utilization of the trade route.

One respondent (E2) with high exposure to the subject provided a metaphor of the human body as the global world trade route. Further elaborated that the world is one body, China is the head and Pakistan is the neck connecting China to the rest of the world. Therefore this strategic alliance between China and Pakistan will only strengthen with time as both need the other to prosper. It was also the general thought that Pakistan needed China much more as an ally than China needed Pakistan. An important factor affecting the bilateral relationship is which political party forms the next government after the elections in 2023 as the previous government under Imran Khan's regime was pro-East, boosting close ties with China and Russia. On the other hand, the interim government of PML-N and PPP is openly pro-west and prefers a closer working relationship with the U.S and E.U. It was expressed that the reason for China expressing discontent with the current progress was due to the ongoing political instability, one that hovers around U.S influence.

Moreover, the rise of COVID-19 had stemmed from China and due to the lockdown and tight control on mobility, the progress of CPEC stagnated. China through vaccine diplomacy maintained close relations with Pakistan through initially gifting and later selling Sinovac at a discounted rate to Pakistan, among many nations. Numerous respondents

(W1,W6,W8,E1,E2,E4,E5, E7,E8, E19) pointed out that this recent display of vaccine diplomacy by China solidified the two's friendship and the pandemic was largely responsible for the lack of progress in the development of CPEC. In the coding process, 'Pak-China Friendship' came up 25 times, while the 'Importance of CPEC' was 61 times.

SECURITY SITUATION

The security situation in Balochistan has also been one of the most dominant themes present in this study. General answers suggested that the security situation in Balochistan had historically been dire and little improvement, if any, has been witnessed over the past seven decades. However many individuals were also of the opinion that since the inception of CPEC the state of Pakistan has prioritized Balochistan's security. Numerous military operations have been conducted over the last decade against terrorism. The effort to suppress radical groups as well as separatist movements in the army has cracked down in many regions in Balochistan, leading to a feeling of resentment in the domestic provincial populace. The ethnically Baloch residents are accustomed to a tribal feudal system that they have sought to protect by demanding more autonomy from the central government.

There have been numerous attacks targeted at Chinese assets and individuals surrounding the region of CPEC's development. The two most common reasons for these attacks were identified in discussion with the respondents as 1) the presence of foreign non-state actors and 2) operations by the Baloch liberation army.

According to members of the armed forces (E1, E2, E3), the Pakistani army responded by dedicating a separate unit to the protection of Chinese assets and individuals without publicly divulging too much information regarding the unit's functionality and logistics. It was alleged by six high-ranking officials (E2, E4, E5, E7, E9, E10) that the current Chinese administration has expressed to Pakistanis officials that they are not happy with the current pace of the project as well as the security threats it faces. This has led to slower progress of the project, especially since the former Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted in the vote of no confidence earlier in 2022 causing political instability and uncertainty. In the coding process, 'Security Issues' came up 46 times, 'Pro-armed Forces' 18 times, and 'Balochistan as Future' 17 times.

DEBT CONCERNS

When asked if the respondent had any knowledge regarding concerns with CPEC, the majority of them responded with little knowledge of the financial structure and whether the loans Pakistan had taken from the Chinese were soft or hard, smart or any other form. All the respondents were aware of Pakistan's ongoing debt crisis as the foreign reserves stand depleted. The current account deficit rises and the administration only seeks short-term solutions by taking more loans to repay old ones. Fears were about whether the Pakistani state would default on Chinese loans and what the collateral could be. A lot of parallels were drawn with the port in Sri Lanka that was recently seized by Chinese authorities as a result of the nonpayment of long-term loans. The Chinese had built the port for Sri Lanka. However, as public information regarding this matter remains undisclosed few had any credible statistics or facts on which to base their arguments. Rather the perspective was that ineffective governance along with the corruption of Pakistan's elite are the reason for Pakistan's long-term structural issues and can only be resolved by addressing them from the root up.

The debt concerns further extend to translate to influence in the policy formulation process in Pakistan. For example, many respondents talked about how IMF's structural financing terms were too rigid and called for austerity measures to be implemented in an economy still recovering from the shocks of COVID-19. The government's decision to heavily subsidize the price of fuel due to the recent surge in global crisis was criticized by the IMF who proclaimed that this subsidy had to be diminished to further proceed with the negotiations. It is things like these that change the perception of an average Pakistani who is more mistrusting and skeptical of foreign influence being exerted using financial watchdogs. These decisions come at a time of peak political instability in Pakistan as the ousted PM Imran Khan is marching to the capital, demanding re-elections and facing armed resistance. In the coding process, debt concerns came up 25 times.

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LAND GRABBING

Two of the most critical factors identified in the literature review about the development of CPEC are debt concerns and land grabbing concerns. When the participants were asked if they are aware of these concerns the majority of them had concerns with both of these factors but not necessarily related to the development of CPEC. Most of the respondents express that land grabbing is one of the biggest structural challenges faced by the average citizen in the working class. Most of these concerns were attributed to the presence of the traditional feudal system in the rural regions of Pakistan. Here members of the local elite benefit from legal immunity in the pre-text of being landlords and heads of the local tribute system (in practice, not in theory). These land grabbing concerns are a direct threat to the right to private property and reduce investor confidence from putting high amounts at stake in Pakistan. The majority of respondents from the working class did not present an understanding of this concept beyond this. Members of the elite social class responded with a more structured answer that question why information regarding the sale or lease off-line to Chinese companies has to remain undisclosed.

One member of the Armed Forces (E2) who was stationed in Gwadar, Baluchistan was involved in the commission of development of CPEC, as well as being the naval commander of the area. With the reference to his personal experience, he expressed grave concerns regarding the land grabbing or the possibility of land grabbing being done in Baluchistan.

He expressed that he was witness to many Chinese corporations and individuals purchasing blocks of land in the region instead of leasing. However, after expressing concerns, members of the commission committee in coordination with members of the Armed forces including the naval commander of the region presented a report to the provincial and center government which then translated into the legislature dictating that the area meant for the development of CPEC project cannot be sold rather only leased or rented to foreign companies for development purposes. This safeguards the right to private property as well as any future potential threat to the sovereignty of Pakistan. However, concerns were still expressed regarding the pieces of land that were already sold as the information remains undisclosed regarding this matter. In the coding process, land grabbing concerns came up 7 times.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is a deep structural problem within all sectors of the economy and public sector, rotting the very fabric of Pakistani society. The people of Pakistan are well aware of the historic issue of electing leaders that are power-hungry, corrupt, and often ineffective policymakers. It was the overwhelming response of all participating respondents that identified corruption as the major issue faced in Pakistan's development and prosperity. When asked about CPEC progress and what factors would determine its success or failure, effective governance was the most common answer which included the separation of the elites from control over the development of this project. The reason behind this was the sheer presence of corruption and nepotism displayed by these leaders who have been in power multiple times over the last two decades. The 1990s saw power switch hands three times between the two political parties PPP and PMLN, as each Prime Minister was disqualified by the Supreme Court on the allegations of rampant corruption and dishonesty to the state. This is not forgotten by the average citizen as most respondents recalled the political mess, we found ourselves in and the everlasting effects it has on our economy.

Now no matter which group of the elite, the politicians, the bureaucrats, or the members of the army forces, members of the judiciary, or any higher-ranking official, the people have lost faith in their elected officials about them being completely dishonest and avoiding accountability. The structural issue of corruption has persisted due to the lack of accountability present in the history of Pakistan. When one political party would be exposed for its wrongdoing's dishonesty and bad policies, they would simply be pardoned by the other political party which rose to power on the terms that they would now rule peacefully without interference from the opposition. This lack of accountability is embedded in our government system where different services or sectors work together to save face rather than providing a counterbalance check on each other as they were designated to be. Respondents from the elite group (E3, E4, E7, E9) expressed that the provision of the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) is the biggest culprit in inducing this toxic culture within the government. NROs were also granted by the military regime of Musharraf in the early 2000s as both political parties accused of rampant

corruption were pardoned for their previous actions displaying an arrogant example of lack of accountability from the state's leaders

This discussion was in alignment with the numerous papers on CPEC's progress that claimed that there was a display of rampant corruption (Wani,2020) (Shah, 2021) (Jabeen,2013) from many involved public officials in the planning commission. In the coding process, weak governance came up 34 times, role of government 14 times and anti-corruption came up 22 times.

LACK OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Many members of the working class (W3, W6,W7, W9,W10) seem to be very less informed on the specifics and inside information regarding the development of CPEC. The respondents expressed that there is a lack of credible information regarding the project in circulation in the country. Any coverage that they have seen in the news has been brief, vague, and just an optimistic expression of a foreign investment that will benefit Pakistan in the future.

The government needs to manage this more effectively where they provide accurate incredible information to all of its stakeholders so that they have an informed opinion regarding the subject. The most common answers given by the elite group (E2, E3,E5, E8,E9) reflected that there is a distrust between the government services of one. Politician does not trust members of the arm forces or even some bureaucrats to carry out their jobs effectively and members of the army forces have no trust in the civil administration. This results in a lack of coordination in efforts to formulate a policy that proves to be effective for Pakistan. This lack of harmony is experienced in the turbulence faced by Pakistan's ruling regime no less than 12 times since its inception in 1947.

The lack of transparency of the ongoing operations has also been one of the most common problems identified by respondents. In specific, respondents from the elite group proclaimed that there has been a lack of transparency since the inception of the project in 2014 especially with regards to the structure of the financing terms agreed between Pakistan and China. Moreover, from the three stages identified for the development of the project information,

regarding the first was given initially while the second was lightly discussed and the third largely remains absent from discussion. The first stage was to do with the development of infrastructure the second with coordination the energy sector and the third with the development of the special economic zones. The development of special economic zones seemed to be the stage that most respondents believed to be the most important for the prosperity of all stakeholders in Pakistan. It was believed by the respondents that this stage would provide the most benefit to the working class in Pakistan through job generation industry transformation and urbanization of the region. However due to lack of information and transparency of the operations the respondents urged the need for the government to address this issue.

There is a website that shows the progress of all the projects within CPEC however it is it hasn't really been updated and presents the information in a very vague manner where it only provides information whether the project has started is being worked upon or is finished. Public reports on the progress of CPEC remain only available to relevant actors and government officials whereas they are simply not available to the general public. Therefore, two of the biggest criticisms found in the respondents answer as well as the literature review conducted was that there is a lack of transparency of what's going on as well as no credible information regarding the development.

The discussion was in alignment with a detailed report (Rafiq, 2019) that points out that the lure of easy financing and poor planning are among the biggest concerns in the long run for the state of Pakistan. The following studies and reports reflect on the content discussed in this respective theme. (Younus, 2021) (Chen,2021). In the coding process, the knowledge gap was referred to 14 times.

SOCIAL CLASS

Discussion regarding the social class seem to be in total consensus similar to that of Pakistan and China's friendship. In the sense that respondents from the working class and the elite class both believed that society structure is heavily divided among the lines of class which has resulted in heavy inequalities of opportunities and outcomes. Moreover respondents from the working class were off the opinion that the benefits from this project would disproportionately favor the elites as they have the most resources to invest and networking capabilities to benefit from. Whereas the working class could only hope to get better employment opportunities and wish for an improvement in the standard of living only after having their basic needs met.

Members from the elite class addressed this structural inequality and provided numerous reasons for the prevalence of this structure such as the traditional feudal system, class discrimination, effects of colonialism and the high presence of corruption and nepotism in state officials. Interestingly when addressing social inequalities respondings from the elite class talked about what other state officials from different elite groups (politicians, beurocrats, judiciary, armed forces, industrialists) can do to tackle this issue. However the consensus remained that it was a tragic reality that may take a lifetime and the sacrifice of an entire generation to fix. There were a number of respondents from the working class as well as from the elite (W1-8) (E1-E4, E6-E9) that believed that the system was rotten from the core and in order to replace it with the new system the previous one had to be challenged and fight upon. These sentiments were among the lines of those put forth by Karl Marx as he suggested that there would eventually be a rebellion by the working class against the elites. As the working class out numbers the elite by a lot in a country with the population of 225 million, It could have dire consequences.

While the perception on social inequality was unified, the solution suggested for addressing this issue ranged from logical, hopeful, desperate to extreme. Discussion with the elite class suggested that in the long run the success of this project would benefit the working class the most as it would bring about a structural transformation to Pakistan's economy, primarily strengthening the middle class, the real backbone of pakistan's economy. Furthermore there

was an emphasis human capital development and provision of resources (smart small loans) to the working class in order for them to reap the maximum amount of benefits from CPEC.

It was the view of majority of the respondents from the working class, that CPEC could become the backbone of the Pakistani economy and further, it would strengthen Pakistan's position in the international arena, as Pakistan could be one of the great powers in the world. Members of the elite class agreed on CPEC possibly becoming the state's backbone, however did not expect any significant changes yet to Pakistan's standing, rather the sentiment was that the project is long-run oriented and while it may strengthen Pakistan's position, it does not guarantee anything.

In the coding process, anti-elite came up 45 times, unequal benefit distribution 21 times.

IMRAN KHAN (EX-PM)

Over the last five years the new government of Imran Khan came into power on the pledge that education health and debt repayment would be the first priority of this regime as well as the reactionary anticorruption agenda on which he rose to power from. This populist rhetoric was responsible for the prevailing family dynasty politics in Pakistan to be challenged. In the entire political history of Pakistan, the country has only ever been run by two separate political parties which are the strongholds of two influential and powerful wealthy families belonging to the elites (PML-N) (PPP). Apart from military interventions, no other party has managed to get majority in parliament. Despite Pakistan's tax collection being increased nearly double fold during his regime he was blamed for an ineffective strategy to deal with debt and curbing inflation. It was alleged that he only took more loans from the Saudi and the Chinese to repay previous loans it had taken from IMF or the western states. Of the 20 individuals interviewed, 16 were of the opinion that Khan, despite his flaws in statesmanship is the best option for the future of Pakistan. Of the remaining respondents, 3 preferred PMLN/PPP while 1 reserved that there are no credible options. The working class has overwhelmingly supported Khan while the elites have been more critical.

In the coding process, pro PTI sentiments came up 15 times while anti-PMLN came up 15.

ADDITIONAL THEMES FOUND

There were a number of additional things derived having conducted the semantic coding process. These things were incorporated into the discussion merged with the primary themes.

The role of **media** and the framing it used utilizes in reporting of CPEC was one of the most dominant codes. Numerous respondents (W1-7,9) (E1-5, E7-10) expressed that the media did not present enough information regarding this project whereas any information that was provided was surface level and largely regarding bilateral ties between the two states rather than providing insights into the projects progress.

The role of **religion** came up quite prominently in discussion of identity as well as the additional comments made by respondents. It is noteworthy that almost all of the working class respondents (W1-7,W10) identified religious difference as the biggest hindrance to integration and threat do Pakistani traditional religious and cultural values.

In discussion with the elites the **geostrategic** importance of Pakistan's location came up as the most dominant theme within the discussion of Pakistan-China alliance, foreign intervention and economic prosperity. Connecting China to Eurasia as well as sharing borders with Russia India Iran and Afghanistan makes this region incredibly strategic for powers such as the American and Chinese, wanting to benefit from uninterrupted direct access.

Under the theme of governance another prominent theme observed was that majority of the respondents had **faith in the previous government** run by Khan as opposed to those in power now. It was alleged that the structural issues of corruption, dishonesty and weak governance could only be resolved through a regime change which could bring about effective reforms to tackle these issues in the long run. It is noteworthy that 4 individuals opposed this sentiment, preferring other political parties to Khan's PTI.

Moreover in discussion of the debt trap and land grabbing concerns a lot of **parallels were drawn with Sri Lanka**. The recent ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka was attributed to their debt problem as Sri Lankan authorities failed to repay Chinese loans resulting in the

seizure of the port of Hambantota in 2016, that was built by the Chinese (Abi-habib,2018). Those were drawn in two ways, 1) Skepticism that Pakistan would turn out in a similar situation due to its bad track record with paying debt 2) Expression of optimism that the relationship between Pakistan china share is a much greater one and that they would not treat Pakistan as they did the state of Sri Lanka with regards to seizure of assets.

In the coding process, the role of media came up 16 times, religion 14 times, geo-strategic importance 9 times and parallels with Sri Lanka 7 times.

Chapter 6: Policy Implications

Today Pakistan stands at a crossroad with two possible paths ahead for the future of its country and satisfaction for all its concerned stakeholders. Down one path, lie numerous risks and dangers to Pakistans's sovereignty, economic stability and nation building process. If the project is not managed effectively, it could potentially deepen the friction between the provincial and the federal centre, create new sources of conflict and spiral the state down a debt trap difficult to recover from. It would result in the widening of the social divide as well as building a dependency on china for survival.

Down the other road, lie incredible opportunities to strengthen the economy, improve the livelihoods of all citizens and transform the economy towards a more developed state. The decisions taken now can truly be critical in determining what path the country goes down, if not straight down the middle. CPEC has been dubbed by some as a possible 'game changer' 'lifeline' and 'back-bone' to the future Pakistani economy.

The following 20 policy recommendations provided below have been derived from the academic literature cited in the bibliography, combined with an analysis of the results of this research study. Moreover, the suggestions of numerous individuals from the interviews are incorporated as well, in addition to the researcher's own views and findings. It is the opinion of the researcher that a reform change in the areas identified could be beneficial for CPEC's progress and Pakistan's prosperity considering economic and socio-political factors.

1. Increase availability of and access to credible information regarding CPEC's development to the general public to address prevailing knowledge gap
2. Strengthen the role of media to provide unbiased and accurate reporting.
3. Provide transparency into the financing structure of CPEC (loans, debt conditioning)
4. Address concerns regard debt to equity swap and publish information publicly
5. Policy reform regarding leasing conditions to ensure protection of sovereignty
6. Place safeguards in place to protect rights, promote cooperation and raise awareness
7. Focus on integration of society for harmonious co-living between Chinese-Pakistanis
8. Ensure regional connectivity and integrate Balochistan with the rest of Pakistan
9. Include concerned stakeholders from Balochistan within policy formulation process

10. Prioritize security concerns in Balochistan, provide protection to critical assets
11. Advance cooperation towards renewable energy sector and agricultural sector
12. Ensure transfer of technology and skill transitions smoothly from the Chinese
13. Emphasize on human capital development preparing labour for high skill adoption
14. Prioritize industrialization and sector transformation for inclusive sustainable growth
15. Ensure control and involvement of domestic actors in SEZ's, limit external delegation
16. Build trust between Pakistan - China by committing to confidence building measures
17. Address weak governance issues, place checks and counter-balance in public sector
18. Involve private sector in CPEC to boost productive efficiency in operations
19. Form a uniformed state policy on CPEC that is unaffected by future regime change
20. Maintain a working relationship with the West (U.S-EU) & the East (China-Russia)

Chapter 7: Limitations and ethical considerations

Although the study tried to comprehensively cover all aspects that could qualitatively assess the perception of CPEC on Pakistan's society, it is important to note that analyzing perception on its own is limited. This analysis requires us to be cautious in our optimism and consider what limitations are at play. Firstly, in the future, the sample size can be larger and should include Balochi residents who are directly affected by CPEC's progress. Secondly, the researcher should utilize more data by gaining access to legislation and official agreements that are not available to the public. At present, this creates a large gap in knowledge as these documents are undisclosed and classified, especially clauses retaining to the structure of financing the projects. This makes it harder to analyze the financing structure and debt-trap in detail.

Moreover, more women can be included in the study. As Pakistan is a conservative society, less women were willing to participate and very few are part of the labour force. Future studies can expand their inclusion criteria to include female university students. My own bias, although kept on the side, could have possibly intervened as I am a Pakistani. However, I did my utmost best to not let it step in.

Lastly, to measure perception and analyze its effect, a researcher should utilize both qualitative and quantitative data (McDonald, 2012). For future studies, one can build on this study by using a quantitative analysis to measure the perception and then go in depth using a thematic content analysis or other qualitative means.

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Chapter 9: Appendix (interview coding)

ATLAS.ti Report

Coding Working Class

Documents grouped by Document Groups

Report created by Sher shah Sultan on 26 May 2022

Elite class

10 Documents:

12 E1.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- completion imp
- CPECCPEC better security
- cultural integration
- Economic Prosperities
- elite will invest
- Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs
- global village
- Growing Friendship
- improve security
- job creation
- life-changing for working-class
- Locals can Benefit more
- major progress
- Pakistan emerging
- political instability
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Positive Perception of China
- potential investments
- pro-army
- Pro-army
- Progress Needed
- propaganda regarding debt
- religious values
- Security Concern
- security concern for locals
- Self Serving
- skeptical of foreign actors
- Sri Lanka Example ,not a repat
- strategic alliance
- support against India

Groups:

Elite

13 E2.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- anti-corruption anti-corruption
- anti-elite
- Anti PMLN
- bad leadership
- bad projects
- Balochistan as Future
- benefit to chins
- blue-collar jobs for peak
- BRI
- china cheap labor
- china Control
- china corruption
- Corruption
- CPEC security force
- debt concerns
- Debt trap global
- Dependent on Gov
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Economic Propsperities
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- EXAMPLE
- FATF
- Foreign Intervention
- Growing Friendship
- Importance of CPEC
- improve security
- increased Chinese presence
- India Funding
- life-changing for working-class
- no accountability
- pak missing out on gains
- pakistani identity maintaine
- political instability
- political will
- Positive for Long Term
- rec
- Security
- Security Concern
- Self Serving
- skeptical of china
- skeptical of china in long run
- skeptical of foreign actors
- slow progress
- white-collar jobs Chinese Chinese

Groups:

Elite

14 E3.docx

Text Document

CoantiConti-corruptionruptionanti-corruption ○ anti-elite ○ Anti PMLN ○ benefit to chins ○ Change in Leadership ○ china Control ○ china corruption ○ Chinese gaining more ○ competition against Chinese workers ○ Concern for Pak ○ debt concerns ○ Dependent on Gov ○ Distrust ○ Economic Prosperities ○ Elite Benefit More ○ environmental cost ○ Importance of CPEC ○ improve security ○ learn from Chinese ○ Media Role ○ Negative Perception ○ Negative Perception for Culture ○ not transparent ○ pakistani identity ○ pakistani identity maintaine ○ rec○ pro-Ptpro-PTI recent values ○ Security ○ Security Concern ○ security concern for locals ○ skeptical of china ○ skeptical of china in long run ○ skeptical of foreign actors ○ slow progress ○ social difference ○ Stronger government ○ Threat to Religion ○ under-deliveredunder-delivered ○ working class not benefit

Groups:

Elite

15 E4.docx

Text Document

Codes:

○ anti-corruption ○ Anti PMLN ○ Balochistan as Future ○ better integration ○ chineseChinese Temporary grounds not permanent ○ completion imp ○ CPEC better security ○ debt will be repaid ○ Economic Propsperities ○ Importance of CPEC ○ Imran Khan will Improve ○ Infrastructure Development ○ job creation ○ Marriage Alliance ○ mutual gains ○ no land grabbing concern ○ Positive for Long Term ○ Positive perception ○ pro-army ○ pro-PTI ○ rec ○ skeptical of foreign actors ○ slow progress ○ Stronger government

Groups:

Elite

16 E5.docx

Text Document

Codes:

○ anti-elite ○ debt concerns ○ Duty of Elite to Share Benefits ○ Economic Prosperities ○ Elite Benefit More ○ elite will invest ○ Foreign Intervention ○ job creation ○ Land grabbing ○ life-changing for working-class ○ not transparent ○ pakistani identity ○ pakistani identity maintaine ○ political instability ○ Positive for Long Term ○ Positive perception ○ pro-PTI ○ Pro-army ○ religious values ○ Security ○ Security Concern ○ skeptical of foreign actors ○ slow progress

Groups:

Elite

17 E7.docx

Text Document

Codes:

○ anti-corruption ○ anti-elite ○ Foreignanti-IK for debt policy ○ debt burden on poor ○ debt concerns ○ Debt trap ○ Debt trap global ○ Dependent on Gov ○ Economic Prosperities ○ Foreign Intervention ○ Growing Friendship ○ Immigration to Pakistan ○ improve security ○ Media Bias ○ next superpower china ○ pakistani identity maintaine ○ political instability ○ Positive for Long Term ○ Positive Perception of China ○ pro-army ○ recorruptionrec ○ Security Concern ○ skeptical of foreign actors ○ slow progress ○ Sri Lanka Example ○ tribal influence

Groups:

Elite

18 E8.docx

Text Document
anti-corruptionneconanti-corruption ◦ Anti PMLN ◦ army not needed ◦ Balochistan safety not related to CPEC ◦ Debt trap global ◦ Dependent on Gov ◦ Duty of Elite to Share Benefits ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Elite Benefit More ◦ Growing Friendship ◦ Immigration to Pakistan ◦ internal development ◦ Media Role ◦ no accountability ◦ not transparent ◦ pakistani identity maintenance ◦ political instability ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ propaganda da regarding debt recapaganda◦ Security Concern ◦ should be transparent ◦ skeptical of china ◦ skeptical of china in long run ◦ skeptical of foreign actors ◦ slow progress ◦ Stand together Internationally ◦ tourism

Groups:

Elite

19 E9.docx

Text Document

Codes:

◦ blue-collar jobs for peak ◦ CPEC security force ◦ debt concerns ◦ Debt trap global ◦ Dependent on Gov ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Foreign Foreign Intervention ◦ Importance of CPEC ◦ improve security ◦ Infrastructure Development ◦ minimal influence on society ◦ mutual gains ◦ no land grabbing concern ◦ not transparent ◦ poor economic conditions ◦ Positive perception ◦ Security ◦ security concern for locals ◦ Sri Lanka Example, not a repeat ◦ Stand together Internationally

Groups:

EliteCPEC

20 E10.docx

Text Document

Codes:

◦ Close allies ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Elite Benefit More ◦ Foreign Intervention ◦ Immigration to Pakistan ◦ Knowledge Gap ◦ mutual gains ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ Positive perception ◦ security concern for locals ◦ strategic alliance

Groups:

Elite

21 E6.docx

Text Document

Codes:

◦ anti-IK for debt policy ◦ anti-PTI ◦ Balochistan not safe ◦ Balochistan safety not related to CPEC ◦ chineseChinese gaining more ◦ CPEC better security ◦ increased Chinese presence ◦ Infrastructure Development ◦ Negative Perception ◦ Negative Perception of Pak ◦ next superpower china ◦ political instability ◦ strategic alliance ◦ support against India ◦ white-collar jobs Chinese

Groups:

Elite

Working Class

10 Documents:

2 W1.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- Balochistan as Future
- Benefit to Working Class
- BLA
- Change in Leadership
- china Control
- Confusion and Rumours
- Corruption
- Debt trap
- Delay in CPEC
- Dependent on Gov
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Economic Prosperities
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs
- Foreign Intervention
- Good Management in Pakistan
- Importance of CPEC
- Imran Khan will Improve
- India Funding
- job creation
- Land grabbing
- Marriage Alliance
- Marriage Negative
- Mass Migration
- Media Bias
- Media Role
- Negative Perception
- nuclear power
- Other Intervenes
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Pro-army
- Progress Needed
- Rising Debt
- Security
- Security Concern
- Self Serving
- Sri Lanka Example
- Stronger government
- Threat to Religion
- tribal influence

Groups:

Working Class

3 W2.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- anti-corruption
- bad leadership
- Balochistan as Future
- Concern for Pak
- Corruption
- anti-corruptionCPEC better security
- debt burden on poor
- debt concerns
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Elite Benefit More
- Elite to blame
- Foreign Intervention
- Good Management in Pakistan
- Growing Friendship
- internal development
- land grabbing by PakistaniskistaniskistaniskistaniskPakistanisPakistanisPakistanisPakistanisPakistanisPakistanisPakistanis
- Marriage Negative
- Pakistan should stand up
- pakistani identity
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Security Improved
- skeptical of foreign actors
- Stand together Internationally
- Threat to Religion

Groups:

Working Class

4 W3.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- anti-corruption
- anti-elite
- Anti PMLN
- bad leadership
- Balochistan as Future
- Benefit to Working Working Class
- china Control
- Chinese are Better
- Chinese Culture
- Chinese Temporary grounds not permanent
- Corruption
- CPEC better security
- Debt trap
- Dependent on Gov
- Distrust
- Distrust in china
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Economic Prosperities
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Elite to blame
- Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs
- CPEC Foreign Intervention
- Good Management in Pakistan
- Growing Friendship
- Importance of CPEC
- Imran Khan will Improve
- Infrastructure Development
- land grabbing within pak
- Marriage Negative
- Mass Migration
- Negative Perception
- Negative Perception for Culture
- pakistani identity
- pakistani identity maintaine
- poor economic conditions
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Positive Perception of China
- Pro-army
- Return in Long Run
- Security Concern
- skeptical of foreign actors
- Stand together Internationally
- threat to culture
- Threat to Religion

Groups:

Working Class

5 W4.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- anti-corruption
- Anti PMLN
- Balochistan as Future
- Balochistan not safe
- Benefit to Working Class
- Chinese are Better
- Chinese Temporary grounds not permanent
- Concern for Pak
- Confusion and Rumours
- Corruption
- Debt trap
- Delay from Pak Gov
- Dependent on Gov
- Distrust
- Distrust in china
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Elite to blame
- Foreign Intervention
- future bleak
- Gain Together
- Growing Friendship
- Immigration to Pakistan
- Importance of CPEC
- Infrastructure Development
- less corruption
- life-changing for working-class
- Locals can Benefit more
- Marriage Negative
- more beneficial to poor
- Need to deal with inflation
- Negative Perception
- Negative Perception of Pak
- pakistani identity
- pakistani identity maintain
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Positive Perception of China
- Pro-army
- Return in Long Run
- Security Concern
- Security Improved
- skeptical of foreign actors
- Stand together Internationally
- threat to culture
- Threat to Religion

Groups:

Working Class

6 W5.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- Anti PMLN
- china Control
- Chinese are Better
- Chinese Culture
- Confusion and Rumours
- Distrust
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Elite to blame
- Growing Friendship
- Immigration to Pakistan
- Imran Khan will Improve
- Knowledge Gap
- Knowledge Gap
- Media Bias
- Media Role
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Security
- Self Serving
- Threat to Religion
- Time

Groups: Chinese

Working Class

7 W6.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- anti-corruption
- anti-elite
- Anti PMLN
- bad leadership
- Balochistan as Future
- both should prosper
- Chinese are Better
- Choice to learn
- Close allies
- Concern for Pak
- Corruption
- CPEC better security
- Distrust in china
- Duty of Elite to Share Benefits
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Elite to blame
- Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs
- Faster Progress
- Foreign Foreign Intervention
- Gov Dependency
- Growing Friendship
- Importance of CPEC
- Knowledge Gap
- learn Chinese Foreign
- Marriage Alliance
- pakistani identity maintain
- Positive for Long Term
- Positive perception
- Positive Perception of China
- pro-PTI
- Pro-army
- Security Concern
- Security Improved
- skeptical of foreign actors
- Sri Lanka Example
- Stand together Internationally
- Threat to Religion

Groups:

Working Class

8 W7.docx

Text Document

Codes:

- bad leadership
- Balochistan as Future
- Corruption
- debt concerns
- Dependent on Gov
- Economic Prosperities
- Elite Benefit More
- Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs
- Forced marriages
- Foreign Intervention
- Importance of CPEC
- investment increase

job creation ◦ Knowledge Gap ◦ Marriage Negative ◦ Media Role ◦ mutual gains ◦ pakistani identity ◦ pakistani identity maintaine ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ Positive perception ◦ Pro-army ◦ Security Concern ◦ security concern for locals ◦ Security Improved ◦ separatist movement ◦ skeptical of china in long run ◦ Stronger government ◦ Threat to Religion

Groups:

Working Class

9 W8.docx

Text Document

Codes:

◦ anti-elite ◦ Choice to learn ◦ CPEC better security ◦ debt concerns ◦ Economic Prosperities ◦ Elite Benefit More ◦ Emigration to Balochistan for Jobs ◦ Foreignneigneigneigneign Intervention ◦ job creation ◦ learn from Chinese Chinese ◦ Marriage Alliance ◦ Mass Migration ◦ Media Bias ◦ Media Role ◦ pakistani identity maintaine ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ Positive perception ◦ Positive Perception of China ◦ Pro-army ◦ Return in Long Run ◦ Security Concern ◦ Security Improved ◦ trade

Groups:

Working Class

10 W9.docx

Text Document

Content-corruptionruption ◦ anti-elite ◦ Anti PMLN ◦ Confusion and Rumours ◦ debt burden on poor ◦ debt concerns ◦ Dependent on Gov ◦ Duty of Elite to Share Benefits ◦ Elite Benefit More ◦ Elite to blame ◦ Good Management in Pakistan ◦ hopeful ◦ Imran Khan will Improve ◦ job creation ◦ Knowledge Gap ◦ land grabbing by Pakistanis ◦ land grabbing within pak ◦ learn from Chinese ◦ Marriage Negative ◦ Media Bias ◦ Media Role ◦ more digitized ◦ mutual gains ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ Positive perception ◦ Positive Perception of China ◦ pro-PTI ◦ Pro-army ◦ religious values ◦ Security Concern ◦ Security Improved ◦ Self Serving ◦ slow progress ◦ Time

Groups:

Working Class

11 W10.docx

Text Document

Codes:

◦ anti-corruption ◦ Anti PMLN ◦ Corruption ◦ Elite Benefit More ◦ job creation ◦ Knowledge Gap ◦ land grabbing within pak ◦ Marriage Negative ◦ Media Bias ◦ Media Role ◦ pakistani identity maintaine ◦ Positive for Long Term ◦ Positive perception ◦ Positive Perception of China ◦ poverty reduction ◦ pro-PTI ◦ religious values ◦ Security ◦ skeptical of china ◦ skeptical of china in long run ◦ skeptical of foreign actors ◦ Threat to Religion ◦ Time ◦ USA involvement

Groups:

Working Class