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## **VISUALIZING BEIJING- ISLAMABAD RELATIONS CROSSROAD IN THE CONTEXT OF “GEO-STRATEGIC TO GEO-ECONOMIC”**

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**Abstract:** This study assesses the drivers of shifting policies between China-Pakistan from a primarily Geo-strategic to Geo-economic, especially in the context of the China-Pakistan economic corridor and its impact on bilateral ties and regional dynamics. The study applies qualitative method relying mainly on secondary data and listening to experts, and official’s interviews. There are various elements that influence Pakistan’s shifting policies towards Geo-economics including domestic economic factors, financial threats and regional economic integration through CPEC. This study provides the results that Beijing-Islamabad have been pursuing their Geo strategic national interests under the umbrella of Geo-economic. Pakistan should consider the role of China as economic partner to address the domestic developmental challenges and strategic partner to balance South Asian regional security structure

**Keywords:** Geo-strategic, Geo-Economic, China, Pakistan, National Interest, CPEC, South Asia

## Introduction

Nations are resorting to geo-economics as an effective instrument of statecraft to pursue their geo-strategic interests. Trade, investment and economic cooperation are becoming first choice tools for conducting foreign policy. China and Pakistan, traditionally strategic partners, are also expanding their relationship in the economic sphere.(Faisal, 2018) The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is its one manifestation. China and Pakistan relations are viewed from different angles by various South Asian observers. In recent years the relationship has witnessed a significant pivot towards economic cooperation propelled by the CPEC initiative a flagship project under the umbrella of China's BRI, which aims to develop connectivity networks linking Pakistan with China's western region to the Arabian Sea. The study explores the multifaceted dimensions of the Pakistan-China friendship and analyzes the factors driving the transition from strategic to economic cooperation. Beijing and Islamabad's ties have figured as a key factor in reinforcing the regional geopolitics of the region, where key are strategic cooperation, economic links, and mutual interests. (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023) Geo-economics is the key component of the states to achieve geo-strategic goals.

Geo-strategic changes always affect countries' foreign policies. When any country frames its foreign policy the country will remember in mind it's personal and other countries geostrategic position and considerations. A geostrategic region can be defined as a space that encompasses a state's perceived political, economic, and military interests. These interests are important enough for a state to use all possible means available to it to protect its national interests. This dilemma has shaped the approaches of China and Pakistan to be close to each other. In this scenario, Pakistan and Pakistan's geo-strategic location has become significant for both countries, especially its economic and strategic purposes. Pakistan's viewpoint, China is the individual state that offers it armed, financial, and political assistance in the time of requirement (Khan, 2024).

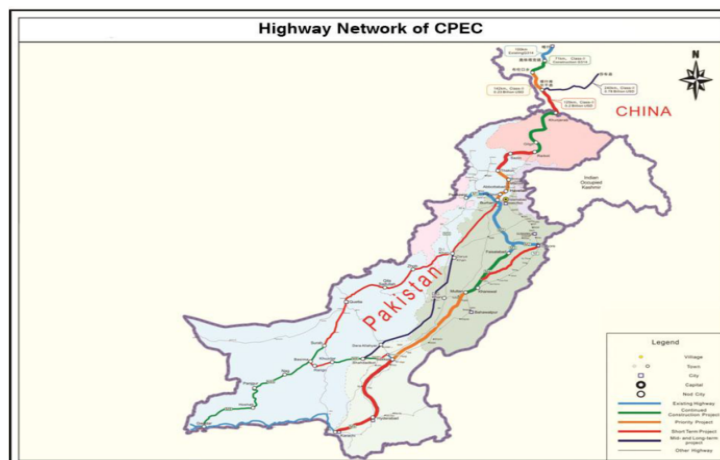
## Implications of Geo-Economics on China-Pakistan Strategic Partnership and Assessing Continuity Amidst Change

States are pursuing Geo-economics as an instrument to cooperate and integrate with other communities in the world. Economic cooperation, economic investments, and business deals are effective tools for conducting and shaping the foreign policy of the country. Pakistan and China as all-weather allies, and partners are turning their relations into more economic and trade cooperation. For this purpose, the China-Pakistan economic corridor is evident and considered as the most effective and heavy economic investment relations between the two neighboring countries. Simultaneously, both countries are achieving their interests by cooperating in different economic and development sectors (McLaughlin, 2024). It is also challenging for both countries to sustain stable economic activities under the shadow of a regional security atmosphere. The relations between China and Pakistan are based on mutual interests, mutual trust, and geo-strategic and now turned into geo-economics (Gul et al., 2021). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is an opportunity for both countries to connect with other regional countries and engage in sustainable economic activity with a win-win approach. It is the foundation of

strategic allies to pursue their interests through economic cooperation and regional integration. The economic corridor between China and Pakistan is pronounced when China is economically rising and interested in taking a greater part in the regional and global political structure and environment. It seems that Chinese foreign policy has become more economic and trade cooperation with other nations. The long-existing strategic relations of China and Pakistan are gradually moving towards economic oriented and also be seen as foreign policy priorities of both countries and the economic engagement is taking a concrete shape slowly. CPEC is expected to enlarge and expand to provide inter-connectivity with Iran, Afghanistan, and also the Central Asian Republics.

**Figure 1**

**HIGHWAYS NETWORK UNDER CPEC**

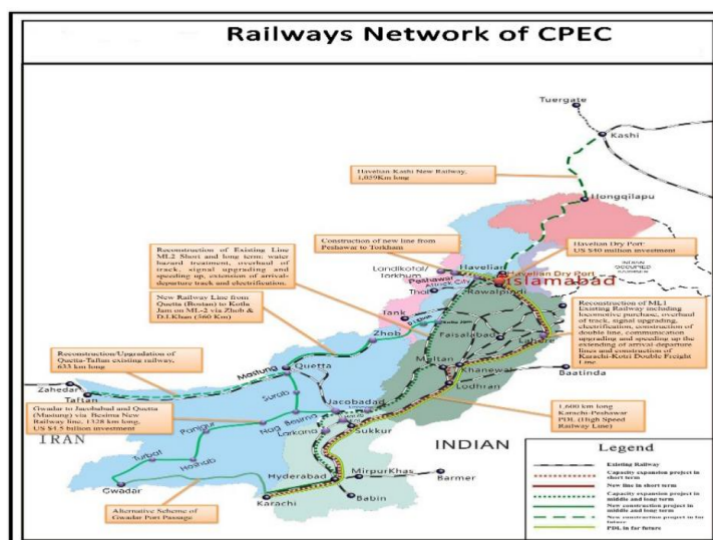


Source: CPEC Authority

<http://cpec.gov.pk/map-single/2>

**Figure 2**

**RAILWAYS NETWORK UNDER CPEC**



Source: CPEC Authority

<http://cpec.gov.pk/map-single/2>

## Research Results

The relationship between Pakistan and China stands as a cornerstone of both nations' foreign policy priorities that are often perceived through various lenses from strategic depth to economic dependency. However, beneath the surface of this alliance lie numerous misconceptions and oversimplified narratives that demand scrutiny and analysis. One prevalent misconception surrounding the China-Pakistan relationship is the notion of economic dependency, with Pakistan often portrayed as overly reliant on Chinese investment and aid. While it's undeniable that China has made significant investments in Pakistan's infrastructure projects, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), framing this as a one-sided dependency overlooks the mutual benefits and strategic considerations at play. Chinese investment undoubtedly facilitates Pakistan's infrastructure development, it also opens up opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and regional connectivity. Moreover, Pakistan remains an active participant in shaping the terms of engagement, negotiating projects that align with its development priorities, and seeking to maximize the benefits of Chinese investment while mitigating potential risks. Pakistan also needs China's support also to improve its security and political independence (vis-à-vis India) as well as to help its own problems with economy and infrastructure gridlocks. CPEC, which is the cornerstone of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China, shows the realist rationalization approach, as this project at once strengthens security and economic relations between China and Pakistan.

## Conclusions

In the 21st century, new dynamics in the form of greater economic engagement and mutual interests enhanced China and Pakistan relations from defense to further areas. Both country's business and trade have equestrian brusquely in recent years and the two sides have entered into several contracts to improvement of their economic relations. Most of the economic relations are established in the investment and infrastructure development sector. China's trade and investment in Pakistan has grown significantly since 2000. China has deeply invested in Pakistan's infrastructure like power projects, mining, Gwadar, CPEC, and Karakoram highway. China investing in Pakistan for economic and strategic purposes. Pakistan is a gateway for China to the energy Gulf States and its passport to the Muslim West and central Asia. China has deeply invested in Pakistan's infrastructure exclusively in the strategically important Gwadar port; its opening into the Arabian Sea provides easy and economical access for China to the Middle East, as sea trade is much cheaper than trade via land. Apart from Gwadar, China is also building a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from Kashgar to Gwadar. Without CPEC, Gwadar can't play a significant role in both country's strategic interests. The entire infrastructure which is built by Chinese assistance in Pakistan used for both the country's economic and energy interests. China and Pakistan have mutual strategic interests and increasingly are discovering mutual ground in terms of energy security as well as trade and investment. China has always chosen diplomatic methods that offer miscellaneous chances which were obviously by the last frequent agreements signed during the visits of the Chinese President to Pakistan. After studying different aspects of China and Pakistan's relationship in the post-Cold War era, it is very simple to make concluding remarks on this nexus. Different aspects

include defense, economic and trade, infrastructural investments, and challenges in the China and Pakistan relationship. China and Pakistan relations have long flourished in military and strategic cooperation from the initial years. However, with the turn of this century, both countries especially Pakistan have started stressing the economic side of the relationship. In a shifting scenario, since the Cold War lot of changes have come in China and Pakistan's relationship which are touching China and Pakistan's relationship like trade, infrastructure investment, energy, terrorism, and India and US relationship. China-Pakistan strategic relationship occupies a significant place in the subcontinent in terms of regional security. This is because, no matter whether political, economic, or strategic, the relationship has always looked towards India as a competitor in the South Asian region(Hussain & Jamali, 2019) Pakistan with nuclear capability can only match a nuclear-armed India in the region. In other words, the China-Pakistan strategic relationship represents a somewhat complex environment. Pakistan constantly seeks equality with India, while at the same time, Pakistan also maintains the balance of power in the region.

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