



**CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND GEOSTRATEGIC
DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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Abstract

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) intends to improve regional connectivity. The CPEC will have a positive impact on Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian Republic and beyond. Building an economic corridor that encourages increased trade, commerce, and cultural interchange between Pakistan and China will ultimately benefit the quality of life for people in both nations. The project also connects Pakistan with Iran, further enhancing the potential for economic cooperation between these countries. The BRI is a major move towards regionalizing the international economy. A foundation was laid for cooperation, development, and mutual gain. The economic corridor between China and Pakistan is an investment in the region's long-term prosperity, stability, and peace. We analyze the potential effects of CPEC on China's economic, and geopolitical ties to Middle Eastern countries, with a special focus on the Gulf Cooperation Council states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and Iran. All of these countries sell substantial amounts of oil and natural gas to China, and their economies rely largely on trade with China. The vast sums of money amassed from oil exports make these countries vital investment partners for China. However, the US and its allies expressed concern about the potential for increased Chinese influence in the region. Nevertheless, the CPEC remains a significant project that has the potential to transform the economic landscape of the region and enhance connectivity between China, Pakistan, and the Middle East.

Keywords: Regional Connectivity, CPEC, BRI, Economy, oil

Geographical location of Pakistan

Pakistan is a country in South Asia that shares borders with Afghanistan and Iran to the west, India to the east, and China to the far northeast. Pakistan's geography includes a broad range

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of ecosystems, from the southern Arabian Sea coast to the northern Karakoram, Hindukush, and Himalayan mountains. Geologically speaking, the provinces of Balochistan and the majority of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are situated inside the Eurasian plate, which is primarily comprised of the Iranian Plateau, while the provinces of Sindh and Punjab are situated on the northwest tip of the Indian plate (Zaidi 2009). To the south it has the Arabian Sea. Its 1,046 kilometres of shoreline run along the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman in the south.

a) CPEC Geographical, Economic and Political Position.

Three thousand kilometers of Chinese infrastructure are being built in Pakistan as part of the CPEC. For energy imports China heavily relies on the Middle Eastern countries, so this sea and land based corridor is designed to secure and reduce the passage for these imports. It does this by circumventing the existing route from the Straits of Malacca between Malaysia and Indonesia, which could be blocked in the event of a war, severely limiting the economic opportunities available to China. To expedite trade between Europe and China, a deep water port at Gwadar in the Arabian Sea and a well-built road and rail network from this port to Xinjiang Province in western China should be developed. The goal is to improve infrastructure and transportation in Pakistan and help the country meet its growing energy needs. In addition to making the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy (Hussain & Hussain, 2017). A country's participation in global affairs is influenced by its geographical location. On the globe, Pakistan is located in a strategically significant position. It is situated at the nexus of nations with abundant energy resources and those with little energy resources. In Pakistan the Gwadar Port is situated at the Arabian Sea. From Iran the Gwadar port is placed 72 Km. Likewise from Cape al-Hadd in Oman it is 320 km away. Also from the Strait of Hormuz it is situated 400 km away. (Hussain & Khan, 2017).

Since Gwadar offers a significantly shorter route than the existing 12,900 km route from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Malacca to the eastern seaboard of China, Gwadar is considered a key shipping point that may be able to play an essential part in ensuring China's energy security. China is enhancing its position as a regional and international leader in economic and political cooperation through the BRI. The entire Eurasian landmass will be connected by a vast network of highways, ports, pipelines, and fiber-optic cables that will link East Asia, Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe. Both nations place a high emphasis on connecting Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the

port of Gwadar in southwest Pakistan, Pakistan will serve as a bridge between the Middle East and beyond (Hussain & Hussain, 2017).

b) Pakistan and the Middle East:

Pakistan has strong ties to the Gulf Countries (Eickelman, 1989). Pakistan's current trade volume with the Gulf States is significantly lower than what it could be. The petrodollar system, which governs the terms of energy commerce between Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, was established in 1973 as a direct result of the military relations between the USA and Saudi Arabia and other GCC oil producers (Siddiqa, 2021). Roughly 21 million tons of high-end petroleum products are consumed annually in Pakistan. Over eighty-five percent of this requirement was supplied by importing goods. One study found that domestic gas production satisfies roughly half of the country's energy needs, while local and imported oil met the remaining 29 percent, and hydroelectricity provided the remaining 11 percent. Pakistan's five refineries have an annual mandated capacity of 12.82 million tons. Currently, Pakistan gets its oil from the GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. It imports all of the gas it needs from Qatar. The significant number of Pakistanis working in the GCC is another important aspect of the relationship between Pakistan and the GCC. It's no secret that remittances make a significant contribution to Pakistan's GDP. There are 4.7 million Pakistanis who are legally able to work in the GCC countries, and they sent home a total of US\$1083.03 in 2019. The GCC nations have also provided aid as part of their economic partnership. The assistance and aid provided by the UAE, for instance, were crucial during the 2005 earthquake. Numerous members of Pakistan's upper class have put money into the booming real estate and service industries of the GCC's major cities. Both KSA and the UAE have announced investments totaling almost US\$30 billion in loans and investments in Pakistan in 2019, demonstrating their interest in the CPEC. (Stanzel, 2022). This will provide significant economic protection for Pakistan's and the GCC's bilateral relations. Considering the foregoing, it is clear that Pakistan's Gulf policy up to this point has been slanted toward bolstering strategic connections at the expense of the economic relationship.

➤ **Politics:**

Among the religions practiced in the Middle East, Islam has the largest number of adherents (Wright, 1996). Roughly eighty-five percent of the Middle Eastern population identifies as Muslim, and about twenty percent of the world's Muslims call the Middle East home.

Relationships between Israel and the Muslim states of Arabia are tense. Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have a common philosophy and faith, but no institutionalized international coordination mechanisms. Saudi Arabia plays a pivotal role in many international organizations, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and its various subsidiaries, as well as the Islamic Development Bank. Indeed, Pakistan's multifaceted ties with Saudi Arabia, the GCC's core state, are at the center of the country's interactions with the Persian-Arabian Gulf. Pakistan's diplomatic ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have never been strained. Despite a dip in 2015, relations have generally been positive. Throughout the year, there are many opportunities for two-way communication. Politics aside, Pakistan's ties to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) may be broken down into two distinct subsets: economic and strategic.

➤ **History:**

After establishing itself as the dominant power in the Gulf in 1820, Britain stayed there until its withdrawal in 1971, a span of more than 150 years. Like many other European countries, most notably the Portuguese, the French, and the Dutch, Britain's early interest in the Gulf region, which rose in the 17th century, was driven by the expansion of trade and commercial interests. However, once Britain strengthened and expanded its colonial possessions in India, the country's role began to take on a different character.

c) Improving Relations with Middle East and Other Asian Economies through CPEC.

i. CHINA:

China, as the second-largest economy in the world, enjoys favourable trade alignment with Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf States.. Both China's crude oil and natural gas needs are met primarily by suppliers in the Middle East (Kumar et al., 2011). Most of China's manufacturing takes place in the eastern part of the country, therefore shipping lanes are now the most efficient way to get these materials there. Once the CPEC pipelines and rail lines are built, it will be cost-effective to ship oil and natural gas through the Gwadar port to western China. The initiative is consistent with the China Development Strategy, which seeks to shift some energy-intensive industrial activity from the highly populated eastern regions to the western provinces (near Pakistan). The current maritime path through the Indian Ocean to China's east coast, followed by a ground transfer (by pipe and train) to the western regions, will be more expensive than transporting these energy products to China's western regions via CPEC. (Garlick, 2018).

As of November 2016, trucking cargo from Kashgar to Gwadar was made possible because to the completion of the KKH repair project in northern Pakistan, which was part of the first phase of CPEC (2015-2020) (Wolf, 2020). Given the difficult hilly landscape of northern Pakistan, this was no simple engineering feat. The second (2020-25) and third (2025-30) stages of the CPEC long-term plan involve the development and modernisation of this roadway, which is presently being utilised for bilateral trade. China-Middle East energy commerce is anticipated to benefit greatly from the CPEC railway and pipelines, the construction of which is now in the planning stages but is also scheduled for the second phase (Naz, 2018). The Middle East and China's economic and geopolitical interdependence will increase as a result of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which creates a new route for the flow of goods. Communication between the two countries will be made easier by CPEC, which will improve China's position in the Middle Eastern economy (Hussain, 2017).

China has many reasons for wanting to be a big player in the port of Gwadar. Its strategic location means it will play a pivotal role in commercial exchanges between China and the Middle East and North Africa. The port will lay the groundwork for four major benefits to the growing trade between China and the Middle East. A more economical alternative to the present flow of trade to Eastern China, this port will serve as a significant transit and transshipment hub for shipments from the MENA region (Fadda et al., 2020). And because Gwadar would keep products now shipped to Dubai, it may replace Dubai as the MENA region's primary distribution centre.

Former Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, speaking at an event commemorating the 50th National Day of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), declared that Pakistan is prepared to link the Middle East with Afghanistan and then Central Asia via the port of Gwadar (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). He stressed how this will improve communication throughout the area and open up opportunities for increased investment from the United Arab Emirates. He also noted the strong brotherly ties between Pakistan and the UAE, which he attributed to a shared history and a willingness to work together on a wide range of fronts. (Blah, 2018).

China's plan can be seen as an effort to broaden its economic horizons worldwide, with a particular emphasis on its immediate neighbors in the Middle East and North Africa. This multi-decade plan will last through 2030 and feature multiple staggered construction phases to revitalize and update infrastructure, telecommunications, transportation, and more. Projects under CPEC allow us to learn about and evaluate the possible effects on China-Middle East

economic ties. Since its formal start in 2015, the Chinese government has devoted its full attention to the implementation of the economic corridor, which includes a variety of transportation and energy infrastructure projects with an estimated cost of \$60 billion (Rimmer, 2018). For good reason, CPEC has been the focus of more international attention and scrutiny than any other BRI project in recent years; if realized as planned, the project could have far-reaching effects on China's geopolitical and economic interests.

Construction of roads, railways, and pipelines will link western China's Kashgar city with Pakistan's Gwadar port (on the Arabian Sea) making CPEC significant not just for its transformative influence on Pakistan but also for the world at large. China-Middle East commerce and investment will be given a significant boost thanks to this transportation corridor. The latter is now China's primary supplier of oil and natural gas. If China ever decides to use military force in the Indian Ocean or the Persian Gulf, CPEC can help the country do so more effectively.

CPEC is a multi-year plan that will advance Chinese commercial interests in the MENA region. The primary objective of the CPEC is to build reliable pathways, connections, and links to the Gwadar port. In addition to reshaping China's position in MENA, CPEC will help the region better distribute oil to China. At present, China receives the most crude oil and natural gas imports from the Middle East region; nevertheless, these commodities are shipped to Eastern China, where the majority of China's manufacturing takes place, via maritime channels. Through CPEC, supply lines to Western China will be established. With the new pipelines and trains delivering goods via a more cost-effective path and the Gwadar port being utilized, industrial activity within China would rise.

➤ **The Strait of Malacca is a long and risky journey.**

The term "Malacca Dilemma" was first used in 2003 by then-Chinese President Hu Jintao. It's a metaphor for everything that could stifle China's economic growth by squeezing its oil imports (Hu, 2003). China purchases the majority of its oil supplies (about 80%) from the United States, making it the world's largest oil importer. as Singapore is located to the east of the Strait of Malacca, a key passageway between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Since about 80% of China's exports travel through this strait, its closure would have a major impact on the country's economy.

Since Singapore is a friend and potential influence of the United States and India, it must play a significant role (Pant & Mann, 2023). China has worried about this happening sometime soon because of how unpredictable politics can be. In the midst of the "China Dream," China is not prepared to accept anything that might slow down the country's massive economic machine.

Sunda Strait, Lombok Strait, and Makassar Strait are just some of the alternative routes that have been explored but found wanting due to their shallow depths and potentially prohibitively high shipping costs of around \$220 billion annually.

China has begun looking into potential land route alternatives. After all, China has devised a number of strategies to lessen its reliance on the Malacca Strait. As part of its billion dollars investment for the CPEC in Pakistan, the Chinese government is working on a variety of infrastructure projects, including the GWADAR-XINJIANG port, which will facilitate oil imports via the Gwadar port and improve trade ties to West Asian nations (Kalim, 2017).

China appears to have lofty goals for the undertaking. It's important to think about the terrain and landscape along the proposed route, but questions always arise. Earthquakes, landslides, and especially high temperatures are common in the Karakoram Range. It's easy to say that the terrain prevents oil from freezing as it's transported through high altitudes. Is it possible to transport oil in large quantities via train without any problems? The estimated cost to transport a barrel of oil via sea route is only \$2, while the cost to transport the same amount via this pipeline is more like \$12 to \$15. Many times over the course of several years, India had voiced its concern. Putting aside the pipeline's theoretical potential, the extent to which this route could materialise is up to future dynamics.

ii. CENTRAL ASIA:

Central Asia is composed of the Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. (*World Bank in Central Asia*, n.d.). While Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan lead the region in gas production, Kazakhstan is the region's primary oil producer. Exhibit 1 displays a 2.7% annual increase in oil output and a 0.2% annual increase in gas production over the past five years in the region. Gas is produced in Kazakhstan, however the majority of it is re-injected to improve oil recovery. On the other hand, the bulk of the gas that Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan export goes to China, Russia, and Azerbaijan. Both European countries Turkey and Georgia as well as Asian neighbours like India and Pakistan are potential

destinations for the produced gas exports. (*Regional Spotlight: Oil & Gas in Central Asia*, 2021).

iii. AFGHANISTAN:

Afghanistan, one of the less developed inland economies in Asia, also enjoys favourable trade ties with Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf States. According to Reuters' interview with Pakistan's envoy to Kabul, Mansoor Ahmad Khan, "regional connectivity is a key element of our engagement with Afghan leadership and our way forward for our economic interaction with Afghanistan." According to the report, "this key project — China Pakistan Economic Corridor — presents good chances, good potential for providing infrastructure and energy connectivity between Afghanistan and Pakistan... (and) also connecting South Asia to the Central Asian region." They claim Pakistan is also attempting to have restrictions on Afghanistan's banking sector eased. Along with this Under the CPEC, officials have stated exclusively that road and rail projects will be expanded to Afghanistan (Mehmood Hussain & Ahmed Bux Jamali, 2019).

d) Influence on the Ports along the Gulf and Other Planned Trade Routes

Gwadar would build large infrastructure to facilitate and attract FDIs, particularly from the Middle East (Roshan Tanoli, 2016). China and Pakistan will help to make Gwadar a sizable energy and petrochemical investment zone. Among the facilities in Gwadar Oil Terminal City are large terminal and storage facilities for crude oil and related petrochemical companies and produce-refined oil products.

Gwadar port in Pakistan will develop into a free trade zone. Investment from abroad, particularly from the Arab world, will be crucial to the success of the re-export zones. Many countries in the Middle East are showing interest in the Gwadar port. Because to the UAE's economic blockade, Qatar cannot use the port in Dubai. However, the country has expressed an interest in expanding food storage facilities in the Gwadar harbour. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also shown direct interest in the port, touting investment potential, particularly for CPEC's second and third stages. The UAE Deputy Head of Mission in Islamabad, Abdul Aziz Al Neyadi, has stated that the UAE and China share mutual interests. Saudi Arabia reportedly invested \$10 billion in petrochemical facilities at the seaport, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) completed a \$5 billion joint venture agreement with Pakistan. Gwadar's convenient position can improve Iran's commercial ties to Eurasia. Current economic sanctions against Iran are making it harder for the country to export oil to India, Afghanistan, and central Asia. However, Gwadar port has sparked talks to connect the Iranian port of

Chabahar to Gwadar by roadway and natural gas pipeline. “We believe that Chabahar — one of Iran’s developing seaports on the Oman Sea — and Gwadar — a port city on the southwestern coast of Baluchistan, Pakistan, also on the Oman sea — can complement each other.” said Mohammed Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister. (Habibi & Yue Zhu, 2020).

This new agreement will improve commercial relations among the three countries and will enable Iran to supply natural gas to Pakistan and China. Iran intends to construct a natural gas pipeline to Pakistan's frontier with the help of CPEC. (Ahsan Jamil, 2016).

e) CPEC and other Trade Routes:

China and India's traditional trade routes to the Middle East and Europe all passed either north of, south of, or across the Caspian Sea. Since the year 1500, ships have been the primary means of transit for goods travelling between Europe and East Asia. Because of its strategic location, Central Asia has developed into an important economic little region that was absorbed by the Russian Empire in 1791 and then by the Soviet Union between 1917 until 1991. Nearly all of the trade routes led north, into Russian territory. Several countries have built oil and gas pipelines in the 21st century in response to Central Asia's growing importance as an energy producer. However, new transport channels opened more slowly for trade in other goods until the 2010s, when the PRC-EU train links started running through Kazakhstan.

- **China-Kazakhstan (Akta) - Iran (Anzali) transport corridor for trade.**

As in December of 2018, Kazakhstan and India reached an agreement on how to use the corridor to boost \$1 billion in bilateral trade to \$5 billion. At the same time, a transport and forwarding agreement was inked between KTZ Express and Tuberose Logistics of India. Nonetheless, the two sides' capacity to fully utilise the corridor has been hampered by US sanctions on Iran.

- **Railway Project between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran**

In addition, the railway line constructed by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran successfully links Central Asia to the Persian Gulf, allowing for the first time in history that such a connection has been made possible. According to the Turkmen government's press service, the three presidents, Nursultan Nazarbayev, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, and Hassan Rouhani, gathered in the Turkmen frontier village of Ak-Yayla for an official opening before riding in VIP carriages to the Iranian capital of Tehran for the continuation of the ceremony. The Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Agreement was signed in 2007, and building

began in 2009. It then links up with Iran's national rail system, allowing passengers to travel to Gulf port cities. In 2012, Kazakhstan finished building its 120-kilometer segment. The nearly 700 km portion of the railway that runs through Turkmenistan was completed that same year. Commercial shipping between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf is anticipated to be greatly aided by the 928 kilometre (577 mile) route. (Gurt, 2014)

- **The Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Transport Corridor Project**

The Ashgabat Pact, a multimodal transport pact, was signed by the governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Oman to ease the flow of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. In April of 2016, the deal officially went into effect. The agreement's depository is the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat. On April 25, 2011, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan all signed the pact. In the following year, 2013, Qatar pulled out of the agreement, and in the following year, 2015, Kazakhstan applied to join and was accepted. Since November of 2016, Pakistan has also been a party to the Agreement. In February of 2018, India became a full member. (*Ashgabat Agreement - India's Membership in Ashgabat Agreement, Facts for UPSC GS-II*, n.d.)

- **Central Asian Railway will enjoy 40% and 50% discounts on freight to Pakistan and Turkey through Iran, respectively.**

The governments of Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran have seized a historic opportunity to revive a transnational, transcontinental railway service strategically connecting Istanbul, Tehran, and Islamabad as developing countries attempt to recover from alarming inflation, devalued currencies, and spectral, crippling waves of the coronavirus pandemic. Turkey's first ever freight train, the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI), left the Islamabad railway station in sector I-9 on December 21, 2021, enroute to its first stop in Zahedan, Iran. From there, the train will pick up products and continue on to Istanbul. Several prominent Pakistani government officials, including Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Commercial Advisor Razak Dawood, and Railway Minister Azam Khan Swati, were present for the ITI rail opening. The flag-off ceremony for the cargo train was opened by the embassies of Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

When it comes to facilitating trade between countries in Eurasia, the ITI represents a major breakthrough. For Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran, the new railway represents a once-in-a-generation "geo-economic" opportunity for increased trade and diplomatic clout in terms of transportation infrastructure. (Agency, 2022).

The best way to take advantage of this business opportunity, which materialises at a time when strategic "geo-economics" is having a major impact, is for importers and exporters from Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran.

- **The transport corridor of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijani, Georgia and Turkey**

At a ceremony in Herat, Afghanistan's president Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said that the Lapis Lazuli project would make his country "not just the gateway to the Indian subcontinent, but once again the door to the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Europe." He continued, "Today Afghanistan is reaching out. It has been cut off for decades. Afghans value community over isolation. The leaders of Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were all congratulated for their contributions to the success of the project. Turkey's ambassador to Afghanistan, Oguzhan Ertugrul, spoke at the event and emphasised the importance of the corridor in fostering regional trade and peace in Afghanistan. The corridor is mostly comprised of rail and highways. He also said that Ankara is committed to strengthening ties with Kabul and has offered Afghanistan assistance in a number of areas. The corridor begins in the northern Faryab province of Afghanistan and Turqundi in Herat, continues to Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, and connects Baku in Azerbaijan to Tbilisi and the Georgian Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti across the Caspian Sea. It begins in Kars, in eastern Turkey, and travels through Istanbul before arriving in Europe. The corridor links up with the Turkish Middle Corridor Project (the East-West Trans-Caspian Trade and Transport Corridor) and supplements other regional transport corridors including the Five Nations Railway Corridor. As of today, the first shipment on the rail line across Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans left for its destination. The shipment included cotton, raisins, sesame seeds, and dried fruit. The Lapis Lazuli Route treaty was signed in Turkmenistan a year ago, taking its name from Afghanistan's national jewel. (Omar, 2018)

- **Baku-Jayhan Oil Pipeline.**

The Azerbaijani-Chirag-Gunavashli oil field in the Caspian Sea is the starting point for the 1,768-kilometer-long (or 1,099-mile-long) Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline that carries crude oil to the Mediterranean. It links the capitals of Azerbaijan and Turkey, Baku and Tbilisi, and Georgia and Turkey's Ceyhan port on the southeast Mediterranean coast. After the Druzhba

pipeline, it is the second-longest oil pipeline in the URSS. On May 28, 2006, Ceyhan received the first shipment of oil from the pipeline's Baku terminal.

- **Myanmar's planned transport and trade cooperation with China. And China-Myanmar Economic Corridor's agreement signed in 2018.**

Investments in Chinese infrastructure in Myanmar under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have had a shaky track record over the past decade, mirroring the ebb and flow of similar projects elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The "China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)" proposes, despite hurdles, to link the Indian Ocean oil commerce to China's Yunnan Province and reap benefits for China by addressing internal development priorities, the strategic vulnerabilities of China's oil supply, and competition with India. (Liu) For this reason, the success of the CMEC will greatly enhance China's geopolitical position in the region and further draw Southeast Asia into China's orbit. China has strong domestic and international policy interests in Myanmar, as well as a long history of participation in the country, therefore it is likely that China's increased efforts to kick start the project will contribute to CMEC's success in the medium to long term. To a greater extent, CMEC is a symbol of how BRI in Southeast Asia often functions in support of core Chinese objectives, and how these interests will persist and drive Chinese policy commitment despite widespread resistance and condemnation of the project around the world. China has a lot riding on its involvement in Myanmar, so it has recently started a number of steps to reassure the locals and, more significantly, the ruling elites. (Ibid.)

On the other hand China hopes to promote peace efforts on the subject of Myanmar's domestic insurgencies. Some articles in Chinese state media extol the economic benefits of CMEC, while others highlight how CMEC could resolve Myanmar's ongoing internal conflicts, making it clear that China's preferred narratives about CMEC and their most prominent concerns about relations with Myanmar emerge most clearly in Chinese state media.

Conclusion

We live in a period of unprecedented global connectivity, where every nation is actively working to forge ties with its neighbors and beyond in the name of fostering economic growth. The CPEC is an excellent endeavor. CPEC's effect on relations between China and Pakistan is insufficient to justify the huge financial commitment made by China to the project. More important to China than any immediate benefits from improved relations with Pakistan may be the connectivity and transport capacity that CPEC would create between western China and the

Arabian Sea. China's ability to deepen economic and geopolitical ties with the Middle Eastern countries that produce much of the world's energy would be greatly bolstered by CPEC. Through CPEC, China will be able to link the Arab world to its Belt and Road initiative in Asia and Europe. Many of these countries were hesitant to use Iran's transit routes because of their rivalries with Iran.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an ambitious project that seeks to link the Middle East with South and Central Asia by creating a network of roads, railways, and pipelines. It is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to expand trade routes between China and Europe through infrastructure projects in more than 70 countries. The CPEC will connect the Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan Province to Kashgar in western China, providing access for Chinese goods to be shipped directly from Gwadar port. This will reduce travel time as well as transport costs while also enhancing security along the route. In addition, it could provide energy supplies from Central Asia to both Pakistan and China, allowing them access to resources they need for development that may otherwise have been unavailable or difficult to ship due to political tensions in the region. Ultimately, this corridor could prove beneficial for economic integration within South and Central Asia as well as better connecting them with markets in other parts of the world including those in the Middle East.

China is expected to keep its policy of neutrality and avoid direct military engagement in the Middle East, but the development of CPEC will improve its ability to project military and naval might in the region if and when it decides to do so. Countries in the Middle East and other entities outside the region that are currently displaying strength will take this increased potential into account. Pakistan and China appear committed to CPEC, despite many risks and challenges that have not been addressed in this article, and most Middle Eastern countries are likely to participate and take advantage of its transportation network as the second and third phases of this initiative become operational in the next 10 years. Overall, while the CPEC has the potential to bring significant benefits to Pakistan and China, these concerns and potential drawbacks need to be addressed and mitigated to ensure that the project is sustainable and equitable.

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