



## Contextual Analysis of VoxPopuli Concerning China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

**Dr. Shahid Minhas**, Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, Gift University, Gujranwala, Pakistan  
([shahidihsas@gmail.com](mailto:shahidihsas@gmail.com))

**Dr. Tasaddaq Hussain**, Assistant Professor, School of Mass Communication Minahj University Lahore, Pakistan  
([drtasaddaq.mcomm@mul.edu.pk](mailto:drtasaddaq.mcomm@mul.edu.pk))

**Faisal Irfan**, School of Languages, Civilization and Philosophy, University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia  
([faisal.irfn@gmail.com](mailto:faisal.irfn@gmail.com))

**SyedInamur Rahman**, Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

**Abstract-** In light of the changing scenario of the regional collaborations in South Asia, an important development taken place in the region named China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which needs to be analyzed in the term of Public Perception. The purpose of this study is to examine the public perception in Pakistan regarding China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This study examines the nature of the manner in which the individual perceives the phenomenon of CPEC. A sample size of (500) Pakistani public inhabitant of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Islamabad were questioned using a structured survey questionnaire, in which 459 were responded. The methods used in this study to analyze the data include, Reliability analysis, testing for normality, Mann Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis H Test. Quantitative analysis indicates that, public of Pakistan has positive perception concerning to CPEC and were of the opinion that CPEC will strengthen the role of Pakistan in south Asia, nurture the economy, Infrastructure also likelihood of the people and it will also be helpful for exhibiting the soft image of the country in world.

**Key Words:** Pak-China relationship, Public Perception, CPEC, Statistical analysis, Pakistan economy

### I. INTRODUCTION

It was 1983, during the Afghan Jihad, the idea of Gawadar port was plotted by the United States, however, they backed the idea amid the USSR withdrawal from Afghanistan. Starr (2007) noted that at the Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program at SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, this idea was proposed the new Silk routes under the Greater Central Asia Partnership doctrine aimed at connecting Central and South Asia.

Regional cooperation has always remained the focus of nations to extend their strategic reach and benefit from trade and other engagements. Therefore, Pakistan regional importance has remained vital considering its geographical location. Utilizing this importance of Pakistan, China has signed the economic pact of US\$46 billion known as china Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC), that is a major pathway for China's Silk and Belt Road program. The project, as claimed by Musharraf in Dunya news stated that "Gwadar Port project, and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was also his idea".

Khan (2014) stated that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is a mega development project is a "game changer" on economic and geo-strategic grounds. The Dawn reported, Chinese Prime Minister Mr. Li Kegang, saying that China and Pakistan should make cooperation on power generation a priority, Li said, as Islamabad seeks to end an energy crisis that triggers power cuts of up to 20 hours a day, bringing the economy to a near standstill. The billion dollar agreement is aimed to extend Chinese trade to the central Asia with prospects for solving Pakistan energy crisis (Bhattacharjee, 2015). Moreover, this has a vast impact on shaping Pakistan's image at the international level by becoming a partner with the world emerging power china.

CPEC is a network of railways, roads and pipelines which is extended over 3000 km. It will connect Pakistan's Gwadar port with the Western China via province enabling economic activity in the region through accessing the Chinese hi-tech markets with that of the under developed provinces including Zhanjiang (The Hindu, April 21, 2015).

The central location of Pakistan and that of the Gwadar Port is key to this project. Pakistan being at the crossroad of South and West Asia and in close proximity of China is ideal for this project. Gwadar is located close to the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Interestingly, the two proposed west-east pipelines, the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipelines and the Turkmenistan- Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) has an intersecting point at different point located on CPEC (Irfan, Naqvi, Awan&Abbasi, 2021).

With a mass coverage on media regarding CPEC in Pakistan and around the globe, both the optimistic and pessimistic sides of the project have been unlocked, thus framing a public perception over CPEC. Kingdon (1995) examined that it is believed by scholars that, in a democracy public opinion are a vital factor to determine a national policy agenda. Worcester (1993) conducted a study on public and elite attitudes to environmental issues to know opinion of different segment of society. In this study, the public perception on the project is the focus, to know how the public of Pakistan views CPEC as a project. Therefore, the various aspects of the project has been have been explored to estimate the public perception.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bhattacharjee (2015) Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his visit to Pakistan on May 2013, visualized the CPEC that is shaping swiftly moving toward its completion in the coming years. The corridor will connect the Pakistan port of Gwadar with the Chinese province of Xinjiang by a network of 3000 Kms roads. According to Gul, Farooq and Khan (2016) it is mega project framed under the "Belt and Road" initiative. It is situated where the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road meet. An amount of \$46 Billion will be invested in the project that us nearly 20% of Pakistan GDP. The project will generate 17,000 megawatts of electricity that will costs around \$34 billion while the remaining amount will be utilized for upgrading the railway line between the northwest city of Peshawar and the port of Karachi, including other infrastructure (Hussain, Pervez, & Rahman, 2019).

Aqeel (2016) stated that, the signing of the first special economic zone (SEZ) in the deep sea port of Gwadar will decrease the shipping cost for China along with transit time. The lease agreement that stands valid for 43-years has enabled china to rent 23, 00 acres of land. According to the (Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Communication, 2014), the main route of CPEC is from Kashgar-Hunza-Chilas-Manshera-Abotabad-Islamabad-Miyawali-Dera Ghazi Khan-Khuzdar-Hoshab-Gwadar. Being the part of the silk belt, Gwadar and Kashgar, has the potential to be a secure point to carryout storage and transshipment activities considering the middle east and central Asia oil and gas supplies. Abid and Ashfaq (2015) noted that this project will enable china to extend its strategic importance across the region with a reach to the Indian Ocean also.

According to Haq and Farooq (2016) this project will unfold significant benefits for both China and Pakistan in the areas of social, cultural, natural resources and culture. Gwadar will be benefited by the establishment of Gwadar Technical & Vocational College, Freshwater Supply and Gwadar Free Zone, Gwadar Eastbay Expressway II, Gwadar-Nawabshah LNG Terminal and Pipeline, Gwadar Power Plant, Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, Gwadar New International Airport, Gwadar Eastbay Expressway, Expansion of multipurpose terminal including Breakwater & Dredging Wastewater, Treatment Plants for Gwadar city, Gwadar Primary School and Gwadar Hospital Up-gradation (Irfan, Abbas, Talib, & Hussain, 2021).

There is a concern for the Chinese workers and technical staff to work on the project in a secure and nonviolent environment. Pakistan has to ensure it to the utmost for the successful completion of this project. Secondly, there is a concern on the part of Pakistan to complete the construction of roads, power stations and railways on the given deadlines, failure will result in repercussions for Pakistan and China has to seek other

options. Moreover, there is a risk from forces that are against the development of the project. They can make efforts to derail the development tasks by inciting terrorism and violence. Ali (2015) explored that most importantly, a political turmoil and disputes between the government and opposition can halt the development of the project. Finally, the inefficiency of the state machinery and the element of corruption are key challenges that revolve around this project.

The Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal, said that the CPEC is not a project of just one road but it's a network of multiple roads, which will go from Gwadar to Khunjerab, he denied any change in the route (Shahzad 2015).

Some countries are unhappy with the CPEC project; they include India, Israel and the US. They are planning to derail the progress of CPEC and even fail it. An office at Delhi has been established by RAW with a budget of \$300 million to disturb the progress on CPEC. Besides this, there are political parties within Pakistan like ANP, PKMAP, PTI and JUI (F) raised objections on CPEC that has created an environment of uncertainty for CPEC (Abid and Ashfaq, 2015).

It is estimated that with the completion of CPEC the geo strategic basis of Pakistan will benefit. This will help increase Pakistan trade and transit thus increasing revenue. The other benefit is that it people to people contact will improve giving opportunities to people to experience the versatile cultures. There is a hope that CPEC will help cherish the living conditions of the people in Pakistan and contain the radicalization, militancy and extremism factor (Kiani, 2015). The credibility of Pakistan government will improve and it can ensure a strengthen rule. Regional stature of Pakistan will also flourish along with a confidence of being a stable economic state. This project will also attract the neighboring countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Russia and Central Asian states to participate in its operations and be part of it (Jawad, 2015).

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study was explored by Survey method using structured questionnaire and was distributed among 500 respondent's residents of Baluchistan, KP, Punjab and Islamabad to understand the Public Perception regarding the project named CPEC.

The universe or population of present research consisted of the general public of Pakistan residents of Baluchistan, KP, Punjab and Islamabad identified by convenient sampling. For this survey face to face and online survey method was used as a tool of data collection in order to improve the quality of data collection. The sampling technique enables us to obtain information from a relatively few respondents to describe the characteristics of the entire population and it gives efficiency and precision to the result in short time. In this research convenient sampling as a sampling technique has been applied to pinpoint the public of said three locations which are directly linked to this project.

The data collected via Survey of 459 respondents was analyzed using Statistical methods Reliability analysis, Testing for normality, Mann Whitney U Test, Pearson's Chi Square and Kruskal-Wallis H Test to investigate the significance of the CPEC and also relationship of Public perception regarding CPEC, furthermore the significance of relationship of variables identified for this study was also examined by these statistical tests.

### IV. RESULTS / ANALYSIS

The collected data was extracted in the table 1, which showed that 50.8% of public were agreed that CPEC will be a game changer for Pakistan even in the initial stage of the project, 50.5% of the respondents showed their agreement that CPEC will increase employment opportunities in Pakistan while 58 % of the respondents were agreed that CPEC will benefit in the development of infrastructure in Pakistan and 58.02% of the respondents noted that CPEC will enhance the Geo-Political Importance of Pakistan in the region. If we look into the table 1 it is more than clear that public perception concerning to CPEC was positive as 57.5% of the respondents said that there is a political consensus among political parties on CPEC in Pakistan. However, it is also noted that, 35.5 percent of the respondents which were belong to different localities in the selected regions showed their concerns and said that CPEC will be a risk for Pakistan's national sovereignty.

Table 1

S.No	Questions	Scale (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	CPEC is a joint Project of China-Pakistan.	4.6%	2.2%	4.6%	53.4%	35.3%
2.	Will CPEC benefit both the countries i.e. China and Pakistan?	.9%	7.0%	9.6%	47.1%	35.5%
3.	CPEC will be a game changer for Pakistan.	.2%	9.6%	20.3%	50.8%	19.2%
4.	CPEC will increase employment opportunities in Pakistan.	.4%	6.5%	19.4%	50.5%	23.1%
5.	CPEC will benefit in the development of infrastructure in Pakistan.	.4%	5.7%	15.0%	58.0%	20.9%
6.	CPEC will enhance the Geo-Political Importance of Pakistan in the region.	0%	5.0%	13.1%	58.2%	23.7%
7.	CPEC will attract global investors to Pakistan.	0%	3.5%	15.9%	56.9%	23.7%
8.	CPEC will improve the living standards of the People of Pakistan.	1.7%	16.3%	20.3%	42.5%	19.2%
9.	CPEC will be helpful in exhibiting the soft image of Pakistan internationally.	0%	6.5%	13.1%	65.6%	14.8%
10.	CPEC can guarantee a regional prosperity in South Asia.	0%	5.9%	21.4%	53.6%	19.2%
11.	India is against the development of CPEC.	.2%	3.1%	4.1%	52.3%	40.3%
12.	There is a threat to CPEC from India.	2.6%	3.5%	10.9%	49.2%	33.8%
13.	CPEC will Increase GDP of Pakistan.	0%	11.8%	15.7%	56.6%	15.9%
14.	Chinese language will be influential in Pakistani society.	2.0%	8.7%	25.1%	45.3%	19.0%
15.	CPEC will bring political stability in Pakistan.	4.1%	24.6%	24.4%	31.6%	15.3%
16.	Due to CPEC the real income will be higher.	0%	15.9%	18.7%	53.2%	12.2%
17.	CPEC is only about spreading network of roads all over Pakistan.	4.4%	25.1%	9.2%	44.4%	17.0%
18.	It will negatively affect	3.3%	15.3%	19.4%	40.7%	21.4%

	our relations with neighboring country India.					
19.	Other Islamic countries should also join CPEC.	0%	2.0%	14.6%	59.0%	24.4%
20.	Overall, it will strengthen the role of Pakistan in regional matters in South Asia.	1.3%	.4%	11.3%	61.7%	25.3%
21.	CPEC will be a risk for Pakistan's national sovereignty.	5.4%	24.2%	22.9%	35.5%	12.0%
22.	There is a political consensus among political parties on CPEC in Pakistan.	3.3%	9.8%	17.6%	57.5%	11.8%

Most of the respondents showed positive agreement (views) on the input provided to gauge their perception of CPEC. 65.6% were of the view that CPEC will be helpful in exhibiting the soft image of Pakistan internationally while 59.0% responded (Agreed) that Other Islamic countries should also join CPEC, 58.2% responded (Agreed) that CPEC will enhance the Geo-Political Importance of Pakistan in the region and 58.0% responded (Agreed) that CPEC will benefit in the development of infrastructure in Pakistan. Regarding the political consensus among political parties on CPEC in Pakistan 57.5% of the respondents were agreed. 24.6% disagreed that CPEC will bring political stability in Pakistan while 24.2% disagreed that CPEC will be a risk for Pakistan's national sovereignty. 61.7% (Agreed) of the respondents agreed that Overall, CPEC will strengthen the role of Pakistan in regional matters in South Asia. The results were examined by testing the relationship of variables to pinpoint its significance.

### Reliability Analysis

#### Factor 1:

Will CPEC benefit both the countries i.e. China and Pakistan?

CPEC will be a game changer for Pakistan.

CPEC will increase employment opportunities in Pakistan.

CPEC will benefit in the development of infrastructure in Pakistan.

CPEC will enhance the Geo-Political Importance of Pakistan in the region.

CPEC will attract global investors to Pakistan.

CPEC will Increase GDP of Pakistan.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.916	7

We can see that Cronbach's alpha is .916, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among the variables for our scale with this specific sample.

**Factor 2:**

CPEC will improve the living standards of the People of Pakistan.

CPEC will be helpful in exhibiting the soft image of Pakistan internationally.

CPEC can guarantee a regional prosperity in South Asia.

CPEC will bring political stability in Pakistan.

Due to CPEC the real income will be higher.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.854	5

We can see that Cronbach's alpha is .854, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among the variables for our scale with this specific sample.

**Factor 3:**

CPEC is a joint Project of China-Pakistan.

Other Islamic countries should also join CPEC.

Overall, it will strengthen the role of Pakistan in regional matters in South Asia.

There is a political consensus among political parties on CPEC in Pakistan.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.867	4

Here we can see that value of Cronbach's Alpha is .867 which is  $>.80$  so this factor is reliable.

**Factor 4:**

Chinese language will be influential in Pakistani society.

CPEC will be a risk for Pakistan's national sovereignty.

CPEC is only about spreading network of roads all over Pakistan.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.851	3

As the value of Cronbach's Alpha is .851, so we can say that factor four is also reliable.

Table 2

#	Q/s	Chi-Square (Education)	Chi-Square (Gender)	Asymp. Sig.(Education)	Asymp. Sig.(Gender)
1	Do you know about CPEC?	61.743	1.265	.000*	.261
2	CPEC is a joint Project of China-Pakistan.	7.942	7.078	.094	.008*
3	Do you know when CPEC was launched?	27.567	.058	.000*	.809
4	Do you know about the amount invested in CPEC?	16.661	3.898	.002*	.048*
5	Will CPEC benefit both the countries i.e. China and Pakistan?	18.788	.117	.001*	.733
6	CPEC will be a game changer for Pakistan.	23.017	.820	.000*	.365
7	CPEC will increase employment opportunities in Pakistan.	40.438	3.055	.000*	.080
8	CPEC will benefit in the development of infrastructure in Pakistan.	17.256	1.958	.002*	.162
9	CPEC will enhance the Geo-Political Importance of Pakistan in the region.	15.409	11.600	.004*	.001*
10	CPEC will attract global investors to Pakistan.	38.756	1.836	.000*	.175
11	CPEC will improve the living standards of the People of Pakistan.	22.713	2.031	.000*	.154
12	CPEC will be helpful in exhibiting the soft image of Pakistan internationally.	16.177	5.901	.003*	.015*
13	CPEC can guarantee a regional prosperity in South Asia.	17.623	13.089	.001*	.000*
14	India is against the development of CPEC.	4.090	1.321	.394	.250
15	There is a threat to CPEC from India.	9.149	4.178	.057	.041*

16	CPEC will Increase GDP of Pakistan.	37.187 1.057	1.057	.000*	.304
17	Chinese language will be influential in Pakistani society.	34.512	4.147	.000*	.042*
18	CPEC will bring political stability in Pakistan.	52.322	3.244	.000*	.072
19	Due to CPEC the real income will be higher.	25.679	1.013	.000**	.314
20	CPEC is only about spreading network of roads all over Pakistan.	67.623	1.828	.000*	.176
21	It will negatively affect our relations with neighboring country India.	38.134	1.740	.000*	.187
22	Other Islamic countries should also join CPEC.	63.096	11.652	.000*	.001*
23	Overall, it will strengthen the role of Pakistan in regional matters in South Asia.	23.925	8.185	.000*	.004*
24	CPEC will be a risk for Pakistan's national sovereignty.	34.351	.094	.000*	.759
25	There is a political consensus among political parties on CPEC in Pakistan.	41.903	1.552	.000*	.213

\*sig at 5% level of significance

#### Factor 5:

It will negatively affect our relations with neighboring country India.

India is against the development of CPEC.

There is a threat to CPEC from India.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.898	3

Here we can see that value of Cronbach's Alpha is .898 which is >.80 so this factor is reliable. Reliability analysis clarify that the variables have strong relationship and reliable. The statistical analysis explored that public perception about the CPEC are in positive.



The above table presents the result of the Kruskal-Wallis H test i.e. the chi-squared statistic. We test the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is gender wise significance difference in opinions

Ho: There is education wise significance difference in opinions

It is concluded that there is gender wise significance difference in opinion for many questions but there exists very few significance differences for education.

### Factor Analysis

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.828
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	df
	Sig.
	6557.919
	231
	.000

a. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy - This measure varies between 0 and 1, and values closer to 1 are better. A value of .6 is a suggested minimum.

b. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity - This tests the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. An identity matrix is matrix in which all of the diagonal elements are 1 and all off diagonal elements are 0. You want to reject this null hypothesis.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.055	36.613	36.613	5.212	23.692	23.692
2	2.978	13.536	50.149	3.391	15.412	39.105
3	1.510	6.862	57.011	2.832	12.875	51.979
4	1.479	6.724	63.736	1.885	8.567	60.546
5	1.168	5.309	69.045	1.870	8.499	69.045

a. Factor - The initial number of factors is the same as the number of variables used in the factor analysis. However, not all 13 factors will be retained. In this example, only the first four factors will be retained (as we requested).

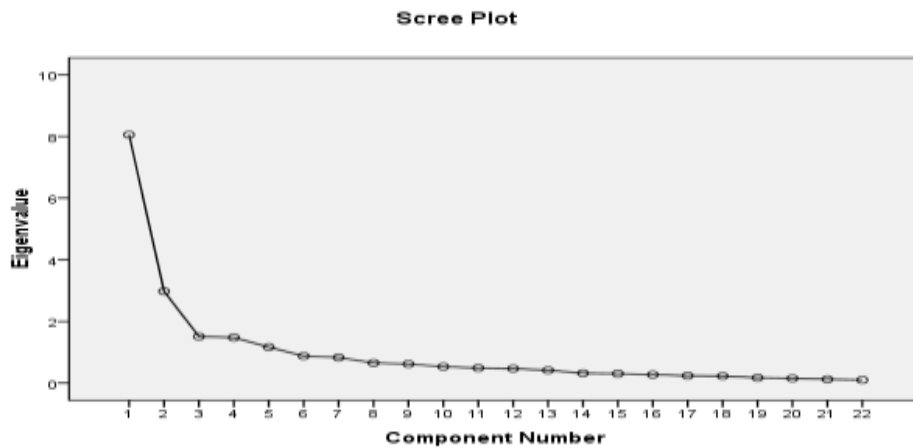
b. Initial **Eigenvalues** - Eigenvalues are the variances of the factors. Because we conducted our factor analysis on the correlation matrix, the variables are standardized, which means that each variable has a variance of 1, and the total variance is equal to the number of variables used in the analysis, in this case, 13.

c. Total - This column contains the eigenvalues. The first factor will always account for the most variance (and hence have the highest eigenvalue), and the next factor will account for as much of the left over variance as it can, and so on. Hence, each successive factor will account for less and less variance.

d. **% of Variance** - This column contains the percent of total variance accounted for by each factor.

e. Cumulative % - This column contains the cumulative percentage of variance accounted for by the current and all preceding factors. For example, the third row shows a value of 57.076. This means that the first three factors together account for 57.076% of the total variance.

f. Rotation **Sums of Squared Loadings** - The values in this panel of the table represent the distribution of the variance after the varimax rotation. Varimax rotation tries to maximize the variance of each of the factors, so the total amount of variance accounted for is redistributed over the three extracted factors.



The scree plot graphs the eigenvalue against the factor number. It can be seen these values in the first two columns of the table immediately above. From the four factor on, you can see that the line is almost flat, meaning the each successive factor is accounting for smaller and smaller amounts of the total variance.

## V. CONCLUSION

By analyzing Public Perception concerning CPEC, the study reached the conclusion that after full implementation of the project CPEC, most of the Public Perception is positive toward the project and noted that for both the countries i.e. China and Pakistan, the economic Corridor is a win-win strategy. The construction of infrastructure and other related projects under the umbrella of CPEC will boost the cultural, economic, social, political, resources and other aspect of china and Pakistan. The importance of the project has been highlighted by the public opinion considering this study. There have been positive indicators which gives an impression that the project is highly beneficial for Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan should strive to assure security for the project with establishing political consensus over CPEC.

The study also noted that residents of Baluchistan showed some concerns about the project and its royalty for the province also, there is a perception in the Baluchistan citizens are the project may be a risk for Pakistan sovereignty and a little negative perception about the disagreement among the political parties about the project.

This study has also put forward recommendations mainly focusing on involve other neighboring countries like Iran, India and Afghanistan in the project to make it really beneficial for the while region.

The opportunity should be taken in true sense and it should be free of corruption. Govt. of Pakistan have to publish the facts regarding the CPEC to negate the misperception, that no province in neglected in this plan. This project should be extended to FATA region of Pakistan and Pakistan should gain more from this project by increasing its profit share from 10% to 50%. Finally, this project should avoid any delay and be completed on its given time frame.

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