

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: News Discourse Analysis of Indian Print Media

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Abstract

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has turned a new leaf in historically proven Sino-Pak relations. CPEC is expected to give easier and cheaper access to China to the Middle East and regional countries by connecting Pakistan's seaport, Gwadar with Western China. With this development comes the Chinese commitment to support Pakistan's crippling economy. Despite tremendous economic and strategic benefits attached to the region, CPEC is critically debated in Indian policy circles and Indian media. India worries over China's rise in the Middle East thereby, getting dominance in South East Asia. This paper examines the construction of CPEC issue in Indian media through news discourse analysis. It sheds light on how the Indian media shapes public opinion through dominant media frames by presenting an organized stereotyping projection of CPEC.

Keywords: CPEC, discourse analysis, public opinion

Introduction

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a mega development project signed between China and Pakistan is considered to be a "game changer" on economic and geo-strategic grounds. On one side, the project would help China in achieving its foreign policy goals to expand from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, it would ensure economic growth in Pakistan and subcontinent as a whole. While China is pursuing multilateral partnerships with other South Asian states, Pakistan is central to China in many respects to achieve its geo-strategic goals in the region. CPEC is one such flagship project which both countries are determined to implement and see the envisioned benefits. This fact has been rarely acknowledged in academic circles that Sino-Pak relationship as a legacy of relationship based on mutual trust and credibility, began with recognition of China by Pakistan and instrumental role in secret diplomacy by Pakistan that helped in bridging gap between the U.S. and China. Khan (2014) said, his development paved the way for China's position in world politics thus, led to United Nations Security Council's permanent membership (Pakistan Observer, p. A.18).

Pakistan-China relations further strengthened with the Karakorum Highway (KKH) in 1970's which established a unique trade route decades ago between

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the both countries. Its significance has been further realized in the wake of CPEC to utilize this resource in strategic terms. The Nation reported, Chinese Prime Minister Mr. Li Keqiang made a very significant public statement on his earlier visit to Pakistan on May 13, 2013 saying, "China will give you (Pakistan) every support and assistance and by helping you, we have to help ourselves." The recent agreement in form of CPEC is a manifestation of this commitment. It includes investments uptoUS\$46 billion. It is a flagship project of China's "Belt and Road" development framework (p.A4).

CPEC, a huge set up of roads, railways and pipelines is spread over 3000 km. It is to connect not only Chinese-operated Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea with Western China through Xinjiang province will stimulate economic activity in the region through opening markets within China linking its hi-tech developed cities with under developed provinces including Xianjiang. This will be reduce income gap by linking developed coastal cities and provinces in China. CPEC is also valuable for China's global aim to open its markets and industry for global trade and competition. For instance, China will be able to import oil from Africa and Middle East more cheaply which will multiply its industrial output through CPEC as from Gwadar to Xinjiang. The Silk Road project by China under which CPEC is a major part willalso firm up its connectivity through network of roads and ports to Europe, Asia and Africa (The Hindu, April 21, 2015).

On the other hand, Pakistan's current energy challenges compel for it meaningful measures which could get the country from foreign assistance while increase its indigenous energy-generation capacity. CPEC is one of those projects which not only include investments in projects including the construction of coal-based plants for generating power but also clean energy infrastructure. These projects also include plants in hydropower, solar and wind power. This strategy will not only enable Pakistan to boost its generation capacity in terms of power and electricity, making it self-reliant to overcome the current energy deficit catastrophe. It is aimed to bring a promising future for development and sustainability in Pakistan. So for both China and Pakistan, CPEC is a win-win situation for many reasons.

Yousaf (2012) said, Gwadar, geographically is located at the south-west of Balochistan province sharing border with Afghanistan and from Western border with Iran which is almost 100 kilometers away. It uniqueness is shown when Gwadar is just 400 Km away from Strait of Hormuz which is enriched with oil that accounts for 20% of world's proportion(p.16).A predominantly important trading port in Pakistan though considered being a smaller port is will commence fully towards the end of 2015. Once the roads are built, China's connect will be established from the Indus Highway. China has

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planned to invest 1.62 billion USD in Gwadar by getting rights to operate Gwadar for 40 years. The project also includes an international airport, metropolitan markets and expressways which will turn Gwadar a place of technological and infrastructural development.

The youth in Balochistan have been deprived from economic opportunities. This is one of the reasons that region despite tremendous natural and mineral resources has remained victim of separatist movement thus, exploited by foreigners. The stability and progress in Balochistan will curtail the role of outsiders creating mess in the region. Such movements are taking benefits of underdevelopment in this province and threatening sovereignty of Pakistan. CPEC has the ray of hope to curb these elements. Dawn quoted an article by Zofeen Ebrahim saying:

“Pakistan’s strong ties with China may mean the initiative succeeds where other regional energy projects have become mired in security problems and political disagreements, says VaqarZakaria, energy sector expert and managing director of environmental consultancy firm Hagler Bailley Pakistan. The Pak-Iran pipeline is on hold, the World Bank-backed Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project has to contend with security issues relating to the passageway through Afghanistan, and importing power from India has to wait for core issues between the two countries to resolve (p.A26).”

CPEC has become a great support for energy starved Pakistan, which has given hope to its crippling socio-economic state. With this project, Gwadar will give life to Balochistan which has no precedence of economic development. This will serve as a gateway for extensive transportation of oil and gas spread from Central Asia to countries which have demand to meet their industry needs. The development of Balochistan will itself make Pakistan stronger as it will benefit from much awaited Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline while at the same time modernizing rail networks which will become the trade routes between the Arabian Sea and China as well as Central Asia. While some analysts’ skeptic about this project argues that Gwadar port will become China’s naval base enabling Beijing to check naval operation between India and America. However the purpose of project is very contrary to this. CPEC is not against anyone. It is to create a comfortable political and economic environment for collaboration among other regional and international partners.

In the backdrop of a land mark planning for CPEC and its dividends for both Pakistan and China, India another significant stakeholder in the region and anarch rival of Pakistan has raised reservations about the project, particularly as CPEC is possibly pass through Pakistan-Controlled Kashmir (POK).

Kashmir has been in dispute since India and Pakistan were created in 1947. All three nations maintain de-facto administrations; India (Jammu and Kashmir), China (Aksai Chin), and Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas). India has persistently refused to acknowledge either Pakistani or Chinese sovereignty in Kashmir. While the Indian dilemma is that their stance is complex. On one hand, Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh comments that India stands by its vision to join any strategic and cooperative partnership that brings peace and prosperity to the region as a central value; maintain cordial and friendly relations with neighbours showing shared trust in general – at points where we are sensitive of our ambitions (The Economic Times, 2014). Contradictory to this, recent statement by India's High Commissioner to Pakistan, T.C.A. Raghavan said, "India has no worry over the construction of Pakistan-China Economic Corridor as an economically strong Pakistan would bring stability in the region." Moreover, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a major Indian political party presents a biased and extremist view in this regard. It states, "No power on earth can take away even an inch from India. China should give up its expansionist attitude and adopt a development mindset." In response to this clear warning Singh(2015) quoted Hua Chunying, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson's statement, "you mentioned expansionism by the Chinese side. I believe all of you can see that China has never waged a war of aggression to occupy an inch of land of other countries". Keeping aside Indian concerns, China further cemented its ties with Pakistan and upgraded bilateral ties to all-weather strategic partner, Pakistan(The Diplomat, 2014, February 25) *There are diverse talks about the nature of this project globally as well. In terms of Pak-China's partnership in strategic terms, Dawn (2015) refers Michael Kugelman, senior associate of Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington D.C. arguing, " China is not building the corridor as an act of charity for Pakistan; it will favorably fund and build any structure that works towards this goal – whether we're talking about roads or ports (p. A26).*"At the same time, the new silk roads are supposed to deepen an ongoing opposition between India and China—and to a lesser extent between China and the US – to invest in and cultivate influence in the broader Central Asian region.

Daly (2014) says, China's should clear Indian's stance and expand its circle with regional countries such as Afghanistan, Central Asian States rather than relying only on Pakistan. It has to be realized in policy circles that India's cooperation is also in China's interest and securing natural resources for its economic agenda (p.5).The common perception on Indian media is that this road will drastically shorten the route for Chinese energy imports but also enlarge its strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean where it was never a power to contend with. India is already engaged in consolidating its presence in the western Indian Ocean to neutralize the imminent Chinese entry but lack of resources has slowed the expansion.

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CPEC made many news headlines in the region and at international level. It brought news of investment and geo-strategy interests. Despite all, China assured Pakistan of its consolidated support and friendship with Pakistan no matter how the international situation developed.” Similarly, Pakistan’s bond with China is known as a foundation of its foreign policy. In fast changing security and geo-strategic environment China and Pakistan are conscious of their needs and interest though they have to face many regional and global challenges. The need of the hour is that while adhering to basic principles of mutual interest and shared understanding on traditional terms, leadership should extend beyond and explore economic vision in form of CPEC that would bring socio-economic prosperity to the people of Pakistan and China.

In light of introduction, both Pakistani and Indian media have been highlighting CPEC with different perspectives reflecting their government’s policies and opinions. The thrust of this paper is to examine Indian media’s discourse which is shaping opinion of India public through news reports collected over the issue. The research therefore raises following questions for scientific investigation:

- 1) How Indian newspapers represent CPEC in news discourse & what frames are dominant in Indian media’s news discourse?
- 2) Is the coverage on CPEC entirely conflict-based and critical?
- 3) How many newspapers cover CPEC on same frames?

Literature Review

The method selected for this study is discourse analysis, a useful mechanism to understand the political interpretation of an issue. A wide range of research studies have been conducted in support of discourse analysis in the field of political communications. Schneider defines discourse that discourse covers all forms of communication which shapes the reality surrounding us. In analyzing the text, discourse analysis is like a forensic analysis which is taken in the communication process. The discourse analysis is to explore rhetorical tool that the text uses to make its arguments, statements shown and language used to tell what is being informed through a particular communication. Discourse analysis is also referred to the classical approaches such as “content analysis”. Schneider (2013) however, looks as a new research method in mass communications that can lead to an independent effort towards a valid media discourse theory. Dijk (1998) further states, news headlines give a clear meaning to readers having their beliefs, telling them what is important and worth knowing. The way of their presentation, help readers easily memorize the facts (p.23).News discourse is inherently

quantitative in nature, given the nominal definition of news which speaks facts, but Dijk takes it further deep that although news because of its scope provides news and narratives in form of quoted statements of sources, news discourse reflect angles and report clues in a report. Kress (cited in Kosicki and Pan)said, statements are an expression of views reflecting a specific belief of their authors; newspapers headlines, he states, are an indication to the detailed news reports. In this respect, discourse analysis is a useful method for analyzing frames used deliberately or inherently by the reporter. Close to discourse analysis is the media frame analysis which is also adopted to find out perceptions and policy positions based in beliefs of its speakers (p.53).

Entman(2004) has explicitly defined media framing by relating to either “choose some aspects of an issue presenting a relation between the both that offers a specific interpretation /understanding of an issue and offering remedy (p.120).From the perspective of news discourse, Modigliani &Gamson (1989) there is an element of causal reasoning which is naturally present in the news, indicating causal acknowledgment for the causes of problem, finding implications and framing of an issue. The news discourse reflected in news also present a variety of policy options in a news story (p.23).

In light of media framing analysis that shows news analysis, it is seen as a critical factor in understanding common perceptions in public and how governments shift their decisions keeping in view presented in the news media. In international political context, mainstream media create significantly affect readers’ understanding of the outer world. Lippmann (1922) statement further endorses this effect, schema in readers’ minds about international issues are mostly positioned by media. Since there is now way that people may experience these changes physically their reliance gets higher on media which are present everywhere and bring news to their screens (p.102). In similar fashion the readers adopt presented frames in order to contour their understanding of facts. This reflects that media’s determining stance on events will get attention and make it a part of discourse in public.

The above literature justifies seeing how media construct issue and makes impression of any political issue. The CPEC has attracted same importance in international media due to its regional impact and involvement of regional countries i.e. India, Afghanistan and Iran in trade, economics and geo-strategic perspectives. The CPEC project will lead towards economic development and political stability of Pakistan particularly, Baluchistan as its link through Gwadar port would bring tremendous economic opportunities for the people of Baluchistan province who have been misused in the name of nationalism by external forces. In one of recent spells of insurgency where people of Mastung (North-West District of Baluchistan) were killed, Fazl-e-

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Haider published in Express Tribune, "Is India fuelling unrest in Balochistan?" on May 5, 2015 notes that insurgency in Balochistan is more due to geopolitics of energy resources and strategic importance of Balochistan where stakes are higher for the regional players who see Balochistan becoming strategic hub after the establishment of Gwadar as metropolitan. This is one reason why separatist groups like the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) with support of regional players would play a key role in creating disturbance in Balochistan in the cover of nationalism. Chief Minister Balochistan, Dr. Malik Baloch said these separate groups have been supported by International actors and agencies which has made lives of Baloch difficult¹. He further writes, India's aim is not only confined to separatism but real target is to scare China from CPEC project because of its perceived position of India of seeing China as rival in its strategic location. Based on literature review, following hypothesis are to be addressed:

Hypothesis

- 1) Indian media dominantly covered the CPEC issue from political aspect rather than commercial grounds.
- 2) Indian newspapers have portrayed CPEC in negative manner.
- 3) Indian media frames are mostly similar in all newspapers.

Rationale of Newspapers Selection

Telegraph India

The Telegraph is India's news daily published mainly in the North East India and in a relatively short publication time has achieved vast circulation in the said area. As noted in Telegraph's official website, Telegraph became operational on 7 July 1982 and is now a 33-year old news organization with critics agreeing that the news organization extensively covers matters pertaining to Indian foreign policy and reports frequently regarding the troubled North-eastern region of India². With 472,250 copies published daily it has a readership of 1,275,000 according to the India Readership Survey, 2010. In the region it is tying up in readership race with India's most read newspaper. This research paper incorporates 08 news stories published on

¹. Malik Baloch, interviewed by Syed Talat Hussain, 16 August 2015, Nia Pakistan, Geo TV, Islamabad, Pakistan.

². About Us. (2015, July 14). *Telegraph India*. Retrieved from <http://telegraphindia.com>

the website of *The Telegraph* in connection with the development of CPEC to see how this development raises concerns Indian media.

Deccan Herald

Deccan Herald was born almost one year after the partition of India and its first newspaper copy got hot off the printer on 16 June 1948. Figures presented by the India's Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) 2010 shows that the newspaper has a daily paid circulation of 214,797 newspaper copies and Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2013 places Deccan Herald amongst top ten mostly read newspapers of India with a readership of 4,58,000 people. Having region restricted newspaper publications previously, Deccan Herald now also publishes from the capital city of India, Delhi³. For the purpose of this research paper, 10 news stories have been taken from its website, covering news on CPEC to study how issues pertaining to the development of an economic corridor between Pakistan and India have been reported to the Indian readers and policy makers.

The Tribune India

The Tribune India is amongst the elderly newspapers available in the Indian Print Media Market today. According to its official sources, it began its publication before the partition on 2nd February, 1881 in Lahore (now part of Pakistan). The Punjabi Tribune (Punjabi) and The Dainik Tribune (Hindi) are both its publications. The Tribune India is in the list of top ten most-read news dailies of India.

Tribune India has its dominance in Punjab, Hariyana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh with circulation of 333,727 newspapers and a readership of 643,000 as quoted by IRS⁴. The importance of this newspaper for the effectiveness of this research paper can be realized from the fact that Mr. N.N. Vohra, a member of the Board of Trustees, governing The Tribune India is serving as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. This shows that issues effecting India-Pakistan relations are majorly covered in the newspaper particularly on Kashmir dispute. 17 news stories have been taken from the website of The Tribune India. The newspaper has extensively covered the issue.

³. About Us. (2015, July 14). *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://deccanherald.com>

⁴. About Us. (2015, July 14). *The Tribune India*. Retrieved from <https://tribuneindia.com>

Hindustan Times

Hindustan Times is India's second most read English Daily, having an impressive readership of 36.67 lac readers and a circulation of 13.2 lac copies as reported by IRS (2012) and ABC (2011), respectively. The newspaper is owned by HT Media Ltd. that belongs to the Birla Group. Currently the news organization is being run by a Member of India Parliament, ShobhanaBhartia, and an affiliate of the Indian Congress. Hindustan Times covers the Indian map on a wide spectrum including New Dehli, Mumbai, Lucknow, Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi, Bhopal and Chandigarh⁵. This research paper has identified three news reports published on the website of The Hindustan Times.

The Hindu

The Hindu is a leading newspaper of India having circulation of 1.39 million copies as reported by ABC (2013). According to IRS, 2012 found that The Hindu's daily readership's 2.2 million which makes it India's third widely read newspaper after Times of India. The largest readership is in the region of Southern India and it gets published from 17 different locations across eight states justifying its wide coverage and importance as regards to the formation of public opinion. As an organization, the newspaper is present in India's press since 1878 and was founded by six people including four law students and two teachers⁶. For discourse analysis six news stories on CPEC have been analyzed for the purpose of this research paper.

The Times of India

The Times of India is ranked by IRS (2012) as India's widely read English Daily having an astonishing readership of 7.643 million readers. ABC found Times of India as India's third most circulated newspaper. Its daily circulation is more than 3.3 million. Its history dates back to 3rd November, 1838 when it was published under a different name getting off the presses only for Wednesdays and Saturdays, led by a Marhrashtrian reformist, Raobahadur Narayan Dinanath Velkar. After several change of hands in the ownership of the organization, today, The Times of India is owned by Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd which works under The Times Group. The Times Group umbrellas several other newspapers such as Ahmadabad Mirror, Bangalore Mirror, Bangalore Times, Mumbai Mirror, Delhi Times, The Economic Times, EiSamay, The Maharashtra Times, The Navbharat Times and the Pune

⁵. About Us. (2015, July 14). *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <http://hindustantimes.com>

⁶. About Us. (2015, July 17). *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://thehindu.com>

Mirror. Seven news stories found on the website of The Times of India that have been included in the research spectrum of this paper.

Keeping these references in view, the study focuses on the qualitative analysis to understand how CPEC issue is constructed in the news media and their discourse. The study period covers the reports from April–June, 2015 which is the peak time where media picked the issue with great interest. The rationale of choosing English news media is because they cater a wider Indian public which is educated and read these newspapers to know about Indian foreign policy.

Method

This work has focused on qualitative analysis of Indian print media news discourses in order to explore how CPEC is constructed in the news reports, entailing coverage pattern from April 20, 2015-June 30 2015. This time period is selected because the CPEC was signed on April 20, 2015 which generated an intensive media coverage both in Pakistan and India. Particularly, issues that concerned Indian Government are identified covered in Indian media with high intensity. Of all the reports covering CPEC, 44 news reports are selected from six leading Indian newspapers that show how CPEC has been widely reported in Indian media. These news reports are available on respective websites of newspapers in the “World Section” which are also accessible online to Indian public and international readers.

Analysis

Discourse analysis method has been adopted to examine six newspapers from the perspective of understanding Indian media's stance about CPEC. The discourse analysis helps critically analyze the narrative which is not dominant in news reports but reflects how construction about an issue is done through phrases that give meaning to an issue. The following frames have been selected from the news discourse. The news discourse has identified few major themes shedding light on Indian government's stance through dominant media frames.

Geo-Strategic Perspective

“The corridor scheme is part of Beijing's “Belt and Road” plan to expand its trade and transport footprint across Central and South Asia, while countering US and Indian influence. Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao had played down India's concerns of it being laid through the PoK, saying that it

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is a commercial project. (Xi launches \$46-bn investment plan in Pakistan, 2015).”

“China today struck 51 agreements with all-weather ally Pakistan, including the multibillion dollar economic corridor through the PoK that will expand the communist giant’s influence in India’s neighborhood of the two peoples, he said. (China, Pak ink pact on economic corridor project through Pok, 2015).”

“We need to enhance strategic coordination, deepen practical cooperation and work together for common development. We will build the China-Pakistan community of common destiny and set a fine example for such efforts by China and its neighbouring countries,” Xi said. (Pak trip like visiting home of ‘own brother’: Xi Jinping (2015).”

“A planned visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Islamabad next week has sparked concerns within India’s diplomatic establishment weeks before Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels to Beijing amid suggestions that India’s two largest neighbours may cement pacts deepening China’s presence in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir Xi trip to Pak bothers Delhi. (2015).”

The Chinese-built Gwadar port has itself been a concern for India, because of its proximity to Indian waters. But the economic corridor sent alarm bells ringing because it runs through PoK and almost edges Indian-controlled territory (Xi trip to Pak bothers Delhi, 2015).

“The plan, which would eclipse US spending in Pakistan over the last decade or so, is part of China’s aim to forge “Silk Road” land and sea ties to markets in West Asia and Europe. Xi, whose visit to Pakistan winds up tomorrow, said it cemented an “all-weather strategic cooperative partnership” between the neighbours. (Sharif launches project plan worth \$46bn, 2015).”

“The Narendra Modi government’s dismissal so far of ambitious new connectivity projects announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping risks backfiring on India, a growing section within the

country's strategic establishment has warned ahead of the Prime Minister's visit(Call to embrace China projects: - Don't veto connectivity plans, 2015)."

"India is deeply concerned over a China-Pakistan pact to build a railway line through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir that Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is reported to have agreed to during his visit to Islamabad (China-Pak rail link should be through Islamabad-Karachi, 2015)."

"The corridor, which could eclipse US spending in Pakistan over the past decade, has worried India mostly because of the route passing through PoK. There are also concerns about the strategic implications of the infrastructure created for the project in the Kashmir region being used for military purposes by China and Pakistan (Pakistan PM says China rejected India's objections over Pok Corridor, 2015)."

Under this theme, Indian newspapers have picked up India's stance on its position on strategic and economic grounds in South Asia. The media discourse has highlighted that CPEC proposed by China would endanger sovereignty of India where there is a dispute with China particularly, over Aksai Chin region and Arunachal Pradesh. Another prominent discourse is focusing upon India on side projects e.g "Cotton Route" project for North-South Corridor and Project Mausam which is an Indian initiative reviving maritime routes and developing cultural exchange in South Asia specifically, with Iran – serving same purpose to India as Pakistan is to China. These frames stress the Indian government to counter the strategic influence of China exerting through CPEC project; mitigate China's power in the region and prevent it from deprivation of resources and strategic positioning (Pant, 2012, p.84).These frames are a reflection of what is being endorsed in Indian policy circles. The two largest countries; China and India, are pursuing to becoming economic powerhouses and are shedding their reticence in asserting their global profiles (p.767). Of 44 news reports, majority of the newspapers have highlighted this fact which shows that framing on Indian concern over China's strategic influence is similar in all the newspapers.

Security Perspective

"The Chinese President approved the project, said to be worth USD 46 billion, despite serious security concerns in China's restive Muslim—dominated Xinjiang province as well as the

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Taliban threat in Pakistan (Xi launches \$46-bn investment plan in Pakistan, 2015).”

“The CPEC is considered as a "game-changer" that is expected to change the economic outlook of Pakistan. China has decided to go ahead with the ambitious project despite serious security concern in its restive Muslim- dominated Xinjiang as well as the Taliban threat in Pakistan. The submarines would help enhance Pakistan’s naval power, a move that could raise India’s concern (Xi set to sign \$46-bn CPEC deal on Pak visit, 2015).”

“Notwithstanding India’s objection, Pakistan today held legislative assembly elections in the strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region amid tight security. The region has seen a rise in militant activities by groups such as the Taliban. Militants have also targeted Shia minority and military. The area was in the news recently when on May 8 a Pakistan helicopter crashed killing four foreigners, including envoys of Philippines and Norway amid reports of it being targeted by militant (Govt slams Pak move to hold elections in Gilgit, Baltistan, 2015).”

“Pakistani officials and the army have recently blamed RAW several times for allegedly supporting groups creating instability in the country. They have alleged that it was part of efforts to derail the Chinese investment in Pakistan (25 militants kill 21 abducted bus passengers in Balochistan, 2015).”

“The CPEC was launched despite serious security concerns in China’s restive Muslim-dominated Xinjiang province as well as the Taliban threat in Pakistan. Muslim separatists from Xinjiang, some of whom have been trained in terror-training camps in Pakistan, have been waging a low-intensity insurgency against Chinese rule in resource- rich northwest region (Xi lauds Pakistan for backing China’s anti-terror crackdown, 2015).”

This theme has highlighted few dominant themes in Indian news reports. For instance, international terrorism due to Islamic extremism from Afghanistan and Taliban into the troubled area of Xinjiang. Indian media have criticized China for remaining committed with Pakistan and overlooking India’s concern

rather has resulted in privileged relationship with Pakistan nullifying US aid as minimal. The media frames also review China's aims to counter India's growing economic power and military might by supporting Pakistan. The frames also relate it to Indian government's embarrassment that despite repeated evidences, China has continued enhancing Pakistan's defence capacity. It is found through these frames as CPEC is a clear move by China that will continue using Pakistan as a balancer in South Asia and build its military power against India.

The analysis further highlights Pakistan's persistence to hold elections in Gilgit Baltistan is again another step to take advantage of China's military aid to Pakistan. The flow of arms from China and cross border terrorism from Pakistan remains a concern for India though it has also worried for Chinese to show compete trust in Pakistan. The news discourse has pointed towards CPEC passing through Gilgit Baltistan which will bear influence of China and Pakistan over India.

India–China Dispute

“China is opposed to India's oil exploration in the South China Sea because it is a disputed area, but regards its ambitious \$46 billion economic corridor through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir a "livelihood project" with issues left over from history China defends projects in Pok, justifies its objections in SCS, 2015”).

“Notwithstanding India's concerns, China on Monday struck a whopping \$46-billion deal with all-weather ally Pakistan to construct an economic corridor through the PoK as part of 51 agreements signed that are set to expand the communist giant's influence in the region (China, Pak ink \$46-billion deals on Xi's historic visit, 2015”).

“China has played down India's concerns on the 3,000-km corridor that passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), saying that it is a commercial project(Xi set to sign \$46-bn CPEC deal on Pak visit,2015).”

“China is not keen on the clarification of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) proposed by Modi last year during the Chinese President's visit (China visit will set a new milestone: Modi, 2015).”

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“While New Delhi is taking part in the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor, it is silent on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road over its likely impact in its backyard of the Indian Ocean (China defends projects in Pok, South China sea stand, 2015).”

“Ahead of the Modi’s visit, however, Xi made high-profile visit to Pakistan unveiling of the USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). There is unease among officials from both sides about its likely impact on the outcome of Modi’s visit (Xi to create home town bonhomie with Modi in ancient Xian, 2015).”

Pak-India Relations

“The entire world endorses our security concerns. Ceasefire violation, blood-letting in Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Karachi manifest enemy’s hostile intent,” he said, without naming India (Pakistan Army makes veiled attack on India, 2015).”

“Unfortunately in recent times the people of the region have also become victims of sectarian conflict, terrorism and extreme economic hardship due to Pakistan’s occupationary policies (Gilgit-Baltistan polls to camouflage Pak’s forcible occupation, India says, 2015).”

China and Pakistan’s joint ventures in defence field has been a major concern in Indian policy and intellectual scales which totally deny Pakistan’s inherent capacity to build up its defence strength. Pant (2006) argues that China’s support to Pakistan’s as its largest defense supporter has further strengthened military ties and termed CPEC as another flagship project which would go the same way. He argues China supplied Pakistan the M-11 missiles and developed technology transfer in Shaheen-I ballistic missile technology in JF-17 fighter aircraft in delivering nuclear weapons (p.761). Similarly the news frames have mentioned same transfer of technology of 19J-F thunder air jets given to Pakistan through CPEC which has raised concern in Indian media reports.

Validity of Hypothesis

Indian media's image construction over CPEC has shown in form of labels and statements which has used to describe the issue in historical context. This is evident through negative portray and frequency of this agreement. The first hypothesis states, Indian media dominantly covered the CPEC issue from political aspect rather than commercial grounds. The media frames of Indian reports show that image of CPEC has been covered in the context of national interest. Four major issues are dominantly reported. These include strategic influence and its impact on India, Indian-China border dispute showing China's dual policy in South China Sea, security threat as a concern for India and counterproductive move for China. The reports have expressed concerns on political concern which shows that hypothesis is correct as far as Indian media's inclination towards political perspective on CPEC for focus. Indian media's focus has remained on securing national interest in its news discourse. Pakistan in particular, is shown as a major threat to the security and instability of region due to growing militancy and Talibanization. In several instances, Indian media criticized China and portrayed stereotypical negative projection in news discourse.

The reports covered extensively about Chinese border infiltration and violation of human rights with no coverage of Chinese perspective which is critical for news objectivity. Chinese support to Pakistan's defence capability linking CPEC as another extension of the same. This perspective covers the hypothesis that Indian newspapers have portrayed CPEC in negative manner. The third hypothesis that Indian media discourse is similar in all newspapers of India is also correct as same issues appeared on surface in these leading newspapers. However, the frequency of news reports varies as some newspapers give extensive coverage to CPEC such as Times of India and Tribune India which have frequently covered CPEC developments while other such as Hindustan Times, Hindu and Deccan Herald covered with less frequency. Similarly, negative media framing is more diverted towards China than India as shown through number of frames appeared in Geo Strategic theme than rest of themes. The discourse analysis proves that India considers China as a balancer in South Asia than Pakistan. These findings suggest that altogether media frames are similar in the overall context and construction of image of CPEC.

Conclusion

The analysis of news discourse and verification of hypothesis prove that this method helps build up an image of what media highlights and projects an issue to the world. This perspective has implications on news reports besides

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editorials and opinions which are subjective in nature. Indian media cover the issue taking full cognizance of Indian policy on CPEC. This shows through extensive use of negative framing of China and Pakistan and maintaining a convergent stance in all selected newspapers. This unified stance is found in all newspapers which indicates that Indian news media is sensitized towards the national interest and follow Indian Government's policy towards CPEC. Reinforcement of this stance through statements of sources and reporters shapes public opinion in a particular direction.

End Notes

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