



RESEARCH PAPER

Pakistan–China Relations During Xi Jinping Era (2013–2025): A Critical Analysis

¹Muhammad Javed, ²Dr. Ghulam Mustafa and ³Dr. Bilal Bin Liaquat

1. PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor (OPS), Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: ghulammustafa@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The analysis of Pakistan-China relationships under the Xi Jinping regime (2013-2025) and how bilateral relationships are being transformed to be a complete strategic partnership under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been discussed. The study examines the political, economic, and security aspects of the relationship, especially the construction and formation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a BRI flagship project. It states that the relations between Pakistan and China at this time have evolved from a defence alliance to an economic alliance, characterised by institutionalised coordination and diplomatic alignment at both regional and international levels. This descriptive research also assesses the consequences of this alliance on South Asian regional security and the US-China competition.

KEYWORDS BRI, CPEC, Xi Jinping, Pakistan, China

Introduction

The rise of Xi Jinping as the new president of the People's Republic of China in 2013 coincided with the merging of a new direction in Chinese foreign policy, which brought forth strong consequences to Sino-Pakistani foreign policy. The recent decade, following the previous one, which was characterized by Xi as a leader, added a new dimension to the relationship, which was summarized in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Despite the fact that since the 1960s, there were close military, political and economic ties that were nurtured. Islamabad appeared quickly as a shining star, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) solidified as the key point of bilateral interaction. Based on this, the Xi Jinping era becomes a continuation of the all-weather partnership, but reforms the relationship as a whole strategic axis, the consequences of which will be spread throughout the connectivity of the region, counterterrorism collaboration, and the re-establishment of security orientations (Khalid & Fatima, 2023)

The correct way to understand the Pakistan-China relationship as it has changed under the Xi Jinping regime is to understand it in the broader context of geopolitics as it exists and is perceived through the South Asian subcontinent and the Indo-Pacific region. The rise as a global hub of economic and military dominance of Beijing has coincided with the United States-mediated dismantling of its Afghanistan presence, the opposition of New Delhi's security policy in favor of Washington, and an unremitting increase of instability caused by transnational terrorism and mosaic of intrastate crises in the region (Javed, 2025; Rahim, et. al., 2018). The ascension of Xi provided Pakistan with two advantages: firstly, the hedonic gratification of immediate economic inflows and, secondly, strategic appearance of external confirmation that can be used to strengthen its long-term argument with the Indian state. Islamabad has, furthermore, situated the Belt and Road Nexus which, as a signature of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor of 2015, has codified a freshly thermoses axiom: Belt

and Road, a multibillion-dollar agenda that cuts across physical transmission systems, integrated energy modalities as well as a newly flowering information infrastructure that poetry-with-a-capital-M interconnects the Pakistani economy with not only the western corridor of Beijing, but also its own transcontinental and transcontinental Eurasian (Hameed & Shah, 2024).

The tenure of Xi Jinping has been marked with a steady Chinese approach to engagement in the entire hierarchy of the Pakistani elites who rule the country. First came into being in the final term of the Pakistan people party (PPP) whereby soft legal and procedural scaffolding was put in place to facilitate the augmented bilateral trade and investment. The then successor Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) administration went ahead to harness the political wave to facilitate the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project making it possible to unveil a series of energy and transport hubs meant to supply the nation with infrastructure-driven development. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) administration saw an additional accumulation of strategic depth, although the balance of bilateral funding was generating concern with the increasing sovereign debt alongside the similar cautionary discourse spread by western players. As a result, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition that was formed after the 2022 elections has focused on reinforcing the locus of CPEC in the state planning, but in a skillful manner toning down the connection of Islamabad to the United States and some Gulf coastal states. Through the endowment of such outcomes, the Xi period has not only re-opened the relations between Pakistan and China but also provided a nodal pole in the domestic political economy that is transforming in the country (Sial, 2023).

Crucially, the Xi Jinping period marks a transition from ad-hoc transactional diplomacy to a sustained strategic framework. The iteration of “all-weather friendship” has ceased to be rhetorical, becoming codified in formal legal arrangements, permanent inter-governmental architectures, and engineered people-to-people programmes. Chinese capital directed towards Pakistan’s port, transport, and energy grids conveys simultaneously a calculative economic logic and a strategic end, simultaneously securing sustained and secure ingress to the Arabian Sea and extending influence across the Indian Ocean axis. For Pakistan, the relationship has permitted the hedging of foreign-policy dependency, expanded the matrix of development financing, and provided a bulwark of strategic reassurance amidst recalibrating regional power dynamics. The inverse, nevertheless, has materialised in a heightened fiscal lean on Chinese lending, creeping assumptions of sovereignty in fiscal and economic matters, and the infusion of vulnerabilities tied to competing great power contests (Rizvi & Ahmad, 2024).

Analyzing the Xi Jinping epoch vis-à-vis each domestic political epoch of the Pakistan People’s Party, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the Pakistan Democratic Movement before eliding to an embedded exposition of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as the axial mechanism (Akram & Iqbal, 2020). AED situates the orbit of Sino-Pak engagement within the wider vectors of regional security and the political economy of contemporary international relations, thereby demonstrating how the Xi Jinping epoch has fortified the Osidian doctrinal elements and, simultaneously, transmogrified the dyad into a multidimensional construct of renewed trans-global standing.

The PPP’s final year (2013) overlapped with Xi Jinping’s consolidation of authority in Beijing, a coincidence that subsequently facilitated an accelerated trajectory in Sino-Pakistani cooperation. The PPP administration (2008-2013), frequently eclipsed in historiography by the accelerated activity of the PML-N subsequently, nevertheless established an early conceptual and institutional scaffolding that would, in altered form, materialise as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in later years. The external environment of the government was more cumulative than both isolationist and non-aligned: an insurgency that had not been resolved, frequent electricity outages, growing

fiscal arithmetic, and the development of a diplomatic frost between the United States and the government. All these complementary issues gradually redefined the diplomatic calculus in Islamabad, as Beijing emerged as a practical final resort ally, with strategic, economic, and infrastructural aspects (Khan & Gul, 2022).

Security was the key axis on which the PPP-administrative calculus was constructed with the People's Republic of China. The confidence of Islamabad in the U.S relationship faded significantly following the 2011 operation in Abbottabad by the U.S which killed Osama bin Laden. This event triggered a sharp re-orientation in the Pakistani foreign policy, which raised the threshold of dependence on the Chinese diplomatic and military resources to contain crises, anti-terrorist collaboration, and modernisation of the military forces. Even though the Chinese leadership took a cautiously balanced approach towards Washington, there were more substantial Islamabad-Beijing exchanges. The strategy discussions solidified into the modernisation packages, combined practices and mutual intelligence sharing practices. In official rhetoric, the PPP government needed the role of Chinese support as necessary to the territorial integrity of Pakistan, a calculus reinvigorated by concurrent challenges of transnational militants and the formalised U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership (Shah, et. al., 2020; Javed & Akhtar, 2023).

The assistance of Beijing was developed in parallel in the institution of multilateral diplomacy. Pakistan believed in the case of the United Nations by submitting to the Chinese protection interventions through the incessant consultations, thereby mitigating the intensity of the scrutiny directed at the alleged terrorist funding and weaknesses in nuclear security by Islamabad. This doubling of the institutional level was joined by the real synergies of military-industrial collaboration, which would culminate in the joint development of the JF-17 Thunder series, among others. In this game of incremental reinforcement, China had the idea of Pakistan acting as a peripheral seat of comparative advantage against the Indian conventional and asymmetric military capabilities, and Islamabad, in turn, under the PPP regime, once again found the vision of China as an irreplaceable anchor in its grand strategy (Javaid & Mushtaq, 2025).

Literature Review

The book chapter "*Security and Strategic Issues in China-Pakistan Relations: From Conflict to Co-operation Model*," Written by Zafar Mahfooz Nomani and Saddam Husain (2025), presents a fascinating account of the shift that Pakistan and China have gone through in their relationship since it has ceased to be a mere tactical partnership model and has adopted more of a strategic one.

"*China-Pakistan Relations in the First Century*" by Siddique (2022) describes the expansion of the bilateral relations beyond a limited security partnership to a massive multi-layered strategic and developmental nexus. Siddique records the strengthening economic architecture of CPEC, AIIB involvement, and infrastructure and energy investments, and places them in the context not merely as the vehicles of growth in Pakistan but as the supports of the Chinese strategic supply-chain and access goals.

Yousaf Khan (2024), and Farman Ullah that gives readings on how bilateral relations between China and Pakistan have improved under the rule of Xi Jinping. The paper underscores that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has been initiated as a component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is now the foundation block of this partnership, and it has connected economic, infrastructural, and strategic agendas (Ain, et. al., 2024). The authors point out that, to Pakistan, CPEC will satisfy the pressing energy demands, the state's industrialization, and the region's development. In contrast to China, it will provide a way to reach the Arabian Sea, reduce its dependence on the Malacca Strait, and gain more power in South Asia.

Material and Methods

This paper takes a qualitative research method to examine how relations between Pakistan and China have evolved over the Xi Jinping regime (2013-2025). A descriptive and analytical research design is used in the study. The descriptive research explains how the relations between Pakistan and China developed in the chosen period. Analytical studies are highly critical of the political, economical, and strategic aspects of the bilateral association and especially the influence of CPEC and geopolitical factors of the region. The study is carried out by the method of a case study, and a particular area is the relations between Pakistan and China under the Xi Jinping regime (2013-2025). This approach enables taking a detailed look into the diplomatic, economic, and strategic collaboration between the two countries. Data collection on this study has been done using Primary and Secondary sources.

Results and Discussion

The Economic involvement and early CPEC seeds

The macroeconomic constraints during the years of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led government in Pakistan had been forcefully chained to the acute demands of the mobilisation of external capital as well as the perpetual energy supply. The lack of power at the rave levels, which to a great extent crippled the output on various levels, was worsened by the government's inability to interface with the traditional Western interlocutors to secure external financing at the same time. Later on, access and low-cost Chinese financing would become a factual option, and it allowed the expedited expression of electricity generation plans, the ordering of transport infrastructure expenditure and eventual development of scrupulous feasibility analysis as associated with the proposed transport corridors. The first draft of what is now being termed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) realistically cropped up in the middle of 2013, when certain cabinet-level MoUs were annexed amidst Islamabad and Beijing, faithfully focusing on the broad roadway intersections, developmental contributions to the Gwadar Port terminal, and various electricity projects (Rizvi & Ahmad, 2024).

The Gwadar Port, which was ceremonially launched in early 2007, was transformed into a key cog of the PPP's calculated outreach to the Chinese leadership. In early 2013, the administration of PPP passed the control over the terminal to an administrative body, the China Overseas Port Holding Company in a decisive decision, an administrative change that, in a strategic perspective, reduced the sphere of influence of Singapore and gave Beijing a larger geographic range and scope of operations. Through this unanimous determination, Gwadar quickly moved through an inanimate terminal into the preliminary operating platform that was then subsequently devoid of strategic latitude by Islamabad. The re-release was the first actionable move on the way to the currently mentioned CPEC and, consequently, the transmuted account of the larger Belt and Road Initiative, some of which can now be interpreted through the prism of the development efforts of Pakistan (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Sial, 2023).

International Affiliation and Foreign Policy Change

With a shift in the foreign policy orientation under the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) towards being closer to Beijing, the bilateral relations between Islamabad and the United States deteriorated due to the 2011 Salala checkpoint incident, combined with drone attacks carried out by the United States in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The leadership of the PPP saw these occurrences as a lack of American tolerance of the sovereign prerogative of Pakistan, hence making the doctrine of non-interference used by China inherently appealing. When Washington insisted on conditionality in post 9/11 security and economic aid, which was most famously expressed through counter-terrorism and

democratic conditionality regimes, it intensified the campaign of Islamabad to seek breathing space. The official discourse of Pakistan in the Zardari presidency supported the frequent official visits to Beijing as a repetition of China as the most reliable partner that Pakistan had ever had. The policy deliberations that came with it generated long-term institutional arrangements, the most prominent of them being bilateral energy investment councils and periodic economic project planning committees, endowed with coordinating infrastructure initiatives and financing (Hameed & Shah, 2024)

Limitations and Structural Challenges

The Pakistan People Party (PPP) government's ability to institutionalise such wide-ranging arrangements of cooperation with China was very weak, which was hampered by systematic institutional incompetence and constant political vacillation. Bouts of systemic corruption, interpretative government failures and bureaucratic indifference all served to postpone the implementation timelines of several Chinese-funded projects. In parallel with these barriers to governance, an energy crisis and extreme fiscal constraint forced Pakistan's ability to absorb and put capital effectively to work narrowly. The political support that China has received despite this, Beijing intelligently re-planned its funding schedules, contingent on the transfer of key capital to be accelerated by clearer, more evidently stable macroeconomic and political standard (Khalid & Fatima, 2023).

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Era (2013-2018)

A political shift within Pakistan in the foreign economic orientation took a specific turn during the period of the PML-N led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif between June 2013 and mid-2017, after which the premiership shifted to Shahid Khaqan Abbasi (2017-2018), teeming the remainder of the year. The ultimate point of inflexion was with the official launching and gradual implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. Although the previous Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government had established the nexus of extended Chinese relations, PML-N government evolved an expansive and proactive political and bureaucratic structure to transform the potential alliance into visible investments and developmental achievements, rebranding them to the centre of the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agenda (Ali G. , 2018).

The visit of President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in 2015 played a significant role in relations between both countries. During the visit, the two governments signed more than fifty accords totaling about 46 billion dollars hence officially launching the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) program. The memorandum package touched upon a wide range of projects, which included energy development, transport corridors, Gwadar port improvement, and creation of industrial zones. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) administration characterised the occasion as a transformational turning point, declaring CPEC to be the "future of Pakistan's economy" and a conduit to national prosperity. The party's political discourse made CPEC the centrepiece of its domestic legitimacy, presenting the initiative as the clearest proof of Nawaz Sharif's capacity to materialise large-scale infrastructure and inflows of foreign capital (Ali G. , 2018).

In Pakistan, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) faced strong headwinds in the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The domestic opposition in the political field, concomitant with unbalanced distribution of the projects among the provinces and continued questions of transparency, brought about an incessant debate in Pakistan. In particular, the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan complained of an unequal distribution of benefits that they saw being concentrated in Punjab (Wolf, 2017). Nevertheless, Nawaz Sharif attempted to repackage CPEC as an exercise of national consensus rather than a partisan project, but opponents argued that the PML-N intelligently utilized the project as a campaign tool that was concentrated in Punjab.

The years of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz tenure, which made Pakistan-China relations solid on a scale never seen in previous decades, took place in the course of the two combined tenures. Nawaz Sharif skillfully positioned the nation as a necessary ally in the wider Belt and Road project of Xi Jinping in effect enabling Islamabad to also be relieved of decades-long liquidity crises. But the twin strains of imminent debt sustainability, increasing political divide, and strong regional cynicism were all feeding the circumstances that would later bear uncomfortable discussion on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, discussions that would be perpetuated during the coalition governments to come.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Era 2018-2020

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) administration redefined the agenda of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to move beyond the focus on energy and transport projects that had defined the initial period of implementation (2013-2018) under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The focus on the PTI administration was meant to give greater strategic importance to the corridor to coincide with industrial cooperation, agricultural modernisation, and bilateral transfer of technological capacities, which aligned with the overall purpose of using the corridor as a model demonstration as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the same time, the PTI government was trying to revise previous investments in the Gwadar project and reassert the government's desire for an expeditionary enhancement of the port's commercial infrastructure and urban routes (Shafqat & Shahid, 2018). The official declaration of the Gwadar International Airport and the gradual development of the neighbouring Free Zone, both of which were primarily dominated by Chinese stakeholders, were the epitome of the plan to transform Gwadar into an efficient and smooth international trade and logistics hub. However, external commentaries and native criticisms warn of excessive optimism, and that actual execution has systematically trailed behind estimated schedules and that the marginal-community is grappling with systemic shortage in essential services and workplaces, hence highlighting the formidable socioeconomic equilibrium that mega-absorptive designs often meet.

The foreign policy of the Imran Khan government was based on the preservation of a delicate balance between the United States and the People's Republic of China, which is becoming a more urgent necessity because of the newly developed great-power conflict that some scholars have described as a second Cold War. After the worsening of Islamabad-Trump relations, Beijing was declared the most important strategic interlocutor of Pakistan. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government publicly envisions the bilateral relationship as an all-weather strategic cooperative alliance, a discourse that has been used to justify an increasingly high dependence on Chinese diplomatic and financial assistance in the circumstances of severe national economic distress. In 2019, the Chinese government reacted to the balance-of-payments crisis in Pakistan by providing a coordinated set of emergency-relief aid, including contingent financial aid and various bilateral currency-swap arrangements, thus once again confirming the manner in which Beijing has long been intervening patron to the Islamabad (Jamshad, Jahangir, & Munshi, 2023).

The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic served as a crucible for the bilateral alignment. Between 2020 and 2022, China emerged as the predominant source of vaccines, medical equipment, and adjunct financial support, facilitating Islamabad's efforts to contain the public-health emergency. Publicly praised by the Khan administration as an expression of the so-called Iron Brothers, this aid has already acquired the tropistic character of the term that has come to indicate ideological similarity as well as practical reciprocity. In both national and international circles, the Prime Minister has on numerous occasions admitted that Beijing has served the purpose of bridging the gap left by limited multilateral and bilateral avenues and that the assistance was a testament to long-term affiliation at a very crucial point in the state.

By the time the PTI government ended in April 2022, Islamabad and Beijing continued to enjoy a close diplomatic and economic relationship, yet the pace of CPEC had slowed in comparison to the burst during the PML-N. The PTI government was able to expand the scope of the partnership to include digital technology, agriculture and social projects, but it was unable to actualise its promises concerning infrastructural growth and the promised industrial turnaround. In a more conventional sense, what this PTI interregnum reasserted is the strategic consensus amongst the political and military elite in Pakistan, that the country has continued to remain aligned to China as one of the sheer necessity prerequisites of the country surviving the geoeconomic upheaval which is radical and increasingly happening at a pace.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Era (2022–2023)

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition, which was established after the removal of Prime Minister Imran Khan in April 2022, came to power under the conditions of a complex crisis that predetermined the organization of relations between Pakistan and China. Led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and complemented by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and a group of co-allied formations, the coalition aimed at achieving three interdependent goals; revitalising the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), relieving security concerns of Beijing, and securing stabilising financial assistance to rescue the ailing Pakistan economy.

Concurrently, the geopolitical space of the PDM rule is characterised by an increase in Sino-American rivalry, an imbalance that is the catalyst of the systemic drift of Islamabad toward Beijing. Nevertheless, despite recurring diplomatic advances to maintain a contained attitude in the U.S. affair, particularly to reach an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program, the PDM government is methodically biased towards Chinese favours as a long-term strategy and economic insurance. The official visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Beijing in November 2022 was a clear re-enactment of the all-weather friendship and incorporated the commitments to fast-track the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase II (Office, 2022). President Xi Jinping returned this expression by repeating the position of Pakistan in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is globally scoped and promotes a sound promise to the development goals of Islamabad.

By this time, the bilateral relations plan was still oriented towards security of the Chinese people in Pakistan. The empirical state of affairs typified by the frequency, high-profile attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkh is what forced the Chinese state to re-examine the risk-calculus behind its Belt and Road Investment. In reply, the administration of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has vowed to strengthen the Special Security Division (SSD) which is the main working unit that will be in charge of protecting the interests of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Nawab, Shahid, Liaqa, & Mustafa, 2025). At the same time, the Pakistani Executive assured the Chinese interlocutors of the introduction of effective counter-terrorist preparations, the introductions of which increased the activity of the Chinese diplomatic and business communities. Intelligence and military bilateral discussion was significantly intensified, open-minded in documentary talks and collaborative table-top exercises, hence emphasizing the multidimensionality and underestimated security nexus that goes with the so-defined economic programme of the corridor.

The advances observed in the actualized provision of CPEC, though, were in line with a very differentiated slower curve. Analysts observed that despite negotiating the emergency financial aid and the proffer of a diplomatic discourse of assistance, by the PDM, the lack of the necessary systemic and sectoral changes dissipated the sustainability of the pipeline guarantees. Funds still remained under pressure primarily to incident-respond as opposed to the wholesome infrastructural and regulatory reorganization to maintain sustainability in large-scale Chinese financing. Although a mitigating confidence-restoration

story was effectively propagated to the Chinese domestic audience, with the mention of the PDM administration as a stabilising substratum following the PTI epoch, material progress was vectored (Ali M. , 2022). Therefore, CPEC was maintained as an agenda, albeit under the limited risk and financial parameters the Pakistani state could achieve, maintaining the general discourse of Pakistan retaining Chinese confidence and keeping watch over the Belt and Road in the South Asian precinct.

Conclusion

Since Xi Jinping assumed office in 2013 through to 2025, the Pakistan-China relations have been phenomenally characterized by solidification of an already existing strategic alliance. Under the international perspective of Xi and in particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the bilateral relations were pursued in the one-step change, that is, the transformation of the traditional diplomatic relations and military relations into the widespread integration of the economy and the institutional harmony. CPEC turned out to be the support of this transformation and a strategic interdependence and a chance. On the one hand, CPEC changed the Pakistani business climate by investing in infrastructure, energy, and connection developments, and strengthening the access of China to the Arabian Sea and regional markets, in general. Mutual trust and the presence of high degree of exchange and unrelenting diplomatic backing in the international arenas have solidified the partnership at the political front. The convergence of the strategic interests was marked by the fact that Pakistan aligned itself with China on matters that the country centralized on, and the Chinese support on the matters concerned security and development of Pakistan. Simultaneously, the shift of regional policies, including US rivalry with China, unrest in Afghanistan and the evolving strategic relationship were also encouraging the two to bring policies nearer to each other. However, the period was also defined by the structural problems, including the problems with the sustainability of the debt, the security risks facing the Chinese nationals and domestic problems within Pakistan. These constraints notwithstanding, the association was malleable and sustainable. Overall, the Xi Jinping era could be termed as a qualitative enrichment of the relations between Pakistan and China, which may be put in a more general geopolitical and geo-economic context and is most likely to have an impact on the future of international relations in the region in 2025 and beyond.

Recommendations

The Pakistani government needs to enhance transparency, financial management and institutional control of CPEC projects. The open administration will alleviate the worries regarding the sustainability of the debt and will boost the confidence of people in the project. Security threats are one important issue to the Pakistan-China cooperation. To boost the stability and sustainability of bilateral cooperation, Pakistan ought to enhance security service on the Chinese workers and strategic infrastructure projects. Pakistan urgently needs to expedite the establishment of Special Economic Zones as part of CPEC in order to accelerate the pace of industrialization, enhance exports, and provide jobs. Pakistan will find it easier to lessen trade imbalance with China through industrial collaboration and enhance economic interdependence. Pakistan would be advised to have a balanced relationship with other world powers as it strengthens its relationship with China. Such an alternative foreign policy will assist Pakistan not to rely on one partner extensively and increase its strategic autonomy. Internal political instability, economic mismanagement and governance issues are other factors that Pakistan needs to overcome as it directly impacts the development of Pakistan-China cooperation and mega-projects such as CPEC. Pakistan and China must extend the partnership in the area of infrastructure development to other sectors like technology, agriculture, industry, and digital economy.

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