

THE UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN THINK TANKS ON THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Analyzing and assessing the reports from American think tanks can provide insight into the overall understanding and strategic direction of the United States regarding the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor over the past decade, which is crucial for better advancing its development. This paper uses 32 documents from 10 American think tanks as samples, employing bibliometric analysis, content analysis, and summarization methods to construct a three-dimensional analytical framework. The aim is to clarify the main perceptions of American think tanks regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, along with its characteristics, causes, and impacts. The research findings indicate that, driven by Cold War mentality and realpolitik interests, American think tanks generally have a predominantly negative perception of the construction of the CPEC, and various forms of propaganda. In response, it is essential to enhance the voice of Pakistani media, strengthen cooperation with international organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions, and proactively address and refute the misinterpretations and smear campaigns by American think tanks, thereby fostering a more accurate understanding and recognition of the CPEC within the international community.

Keywords: China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, American Think Tanks, Perception, China-Pakistan Relations, The Belt and Road Initiative.

Introduction

As a flagship project and model initiative of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was proposed in May 2013 and officially launched on April 20, 2015. The aim is to promote comprehensive and multi-faceted cooperation in transportation, energy, and maritime sectors between China and Pakistan, facilitating mutual development

and to further strengthen the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries (Liu, 2023). From a macro perspective, once the CPEC is fully operational, it will closely connect South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa, and Gulf countries through cooperation in economic and energy sectors, creating economic resonance. The construction of the CPEC is crucial for advancing the all-weather strategic partnership between China and Pakistan and fostering a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era. Moreover, it serves as a key example of collaborative efforts in advancing the Belt and Road Initiative and building a community with a shared future for humanity. (Liu, 2023).

Since the construction of the CPEC, it has attracted extensive attention from the international community, particularly from various sectors in the United States. Governments, media, and think tanks have engaged in discussions across multiple areas, such as influence competition, China-U.S. cooperation, and strategic balance, attempting to analyze the corridor's potential impact on the global landscape. In this context, accurately analyzing and assessing American think tanks' perceptions of the CPEC is essential for understanding U.S. public opinion and policy tendencies regarding the corridor. Furthermore, this analysis can provide important insights for promoting the sustainable development of the CPEC. To this end, the primary objective of this paper is to examine the perceptions of the top ten American think tanks regarding the construction of the CPEC, identify any misunderstandings that may exist, explore the reasons behind these misunderstandings, assess their potential impacts, and discuss the responses from both China and Pakistan in light of the current situation.

1. Selection of Think Tank Samples and Overview of Literature

1.1 Selection of Think Tank Samples

A think tank, also known as a "brain trust" or "policy institute," is a public research organization composed of multidisciplinary experts who provide policymakers with strategies and solutions for addressing issues related to society, economy, technology, military, and diplomacy. American think tanks have become a significant force in influencing government decision-making and promoting social development. This paper selects the top ten think tanks as sources of literature based on the "2024 Global Think Tank Index Report," which includes: the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Cato Institute, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the American Enterprise Institute, the RAND Corporation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Atlantic Council, and the Hoover Institution. These ten think tanks are internationally influential and well-known, representing a range of political affiliations, including centrist, liberal, and conservative perspectives.

1.2 Selection of Literature Samples

This paper uses "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" as the keyword and focuses on the time frame from January 1, 2013, to January 1, 2024. Literature searches were conducted on the websites of the aforementioned think tanks. Through text analysis, relevant documents were selected, resulting in a total of 32 documents (see Tables 1 and 2). To ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the analysis, in addition to representative reports, the information briefs, commentary articles, expert blogs, and seminar information related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from the ten think tanks were

also included in the analysis. This approach helps systematically capture the perspectives of American think tanks regarding the CPEC.

Table 1: Number of Representative Research Documents from
Ten Think Tanks

Think Tank Name	Established Date	Political Affiliation	Number of Selected Reports
Brookings Institution	1927	Liberal	9
The Heritage Foundation	1973	Conservative	2
Council on Foreign Relations	1921	Liberal	3
Cato Institute	1974	Libertarian	1
Center for Strategic and International Studies	1962	Centrist	1
American Enterprise Institute	1938	Neo-conservative	6
RAND Corporation	1948	Centrist	2
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	1910	Liberal	1
Atlantic Council	1961	Centrist	4
Hoover Institution	1919	Conservative	3

Table 2: 32 representative research papers

	Title	First author	Date of publication	Type	Think Tank
1	“At all costs”: How Pakistan and China control the narrative on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	Madiha Afzal	Jun 2020	Research	A
2	As China’s Pakistan ties deepen, India needs a strategy to mitigate the fallout	Shivshankar Menon	Jul 12, 2016	Commentary	A
3	The China-Pakistan axis and Lashkar-e-Taiba	Bruce Riedel	Jun 26, 2015	Commentary	A
4	Economic Corridors	/	Oct 9, 2013	Research	A
5	What India thinks about China’s One Belt, One Road initiative (but doesn’t explicitly	Tanvi Madan	Mar 14, 2016	Commentary	A

	say)				
6	Under Biden, Pakistan and the US face a dilemma about the breadth of their relationship	Madiha Afzal	Apr 12, 2021	Comme ntary	A
7	China-Pakistan relations: A new chapter?	Jose P. Rizal Marg	Jul 22, 2016	Event Report	A
8	India 2024: A global India	Dhruva Jaishankar	May 17, 2019	Comme ntary	A
9	Hardening Alliances: India- America and Pakistan-China	Bruce Riedel	May 11, 2015	Comme ntary	A
10	Is Pakistan About to Be Caught in China's "Debt- Trap Diplomacy"?	Anthony B. Kim	Aug 8, 2018	Comme ntary	B
11	China and Pakistan's All- Weather Friendship	Huma Sattar	Mar 16, 2015	Comme ntary	B
12	The Future of the IMEC Hinges on a	Manjari Chatterjee	Nov 20, 2023	Article	C

	Stable West Asia	Miller			
13	Recipient Countries Hold the Key to China's BRI Success	Manjari Chatterjee Miller	Jun 27, 2022	Article	C
14	How China and Pakistan Forged Close Ties	Manjari Chatterjee Miller	Oct 3, 2022	Article	C
15	the U.S. concerns associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	Sahar Khan	Sep 13, 2018	Media Highlights Radio	D
16	The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at Five	Jonathan E. Hillman	Apr 2, 2020	CSIS Briefs	E
17	Iran Considers Rapprochement With Pakistan	Michael Rubin	May 1, 2023	Research	F
18	Pakistan's Coming Collapse Should Worry the World	Michael Rubin	Jul 14, 2022	Research	F
19	The Gateway to	Michael	Feb 27,	Research	F

	the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor Is Closing	Rubin	2021	h	
20	Donald Trump's Afghanistan Withdrawal Is a Major Windfall for China	Michael Rubin	Sep 27, 2020	Researc h	F
21	Is Pakistan Nothing More Than a Colony of China?	Michael Rubin	May 5, 2020	Researc h	F
22	North Korea Is a Problem, but China and Pakistan Are Just as Harmful	Michael Mazza	Apr 25, 2017	Researc h	F
23	China's Field of Dreams in Pakistan	Rafiq Dossani	Oct 16, 2017	Comme ntary	G
24	China and Pakistan See Eye to Eye on the Taliban—Almost	Derek Grossman	Sep 21, 2021	Comme ntary	G

25	The Benefits and Risks of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	Shi Zhiqin	Dec 21, 2016	Research	H
26	What Pakistan can learn from Chinese growth	Ali Hasanain	Nov 7, 2022	Research	I
27	A conversation with Ishrat Husain, former Advisor to Prime Minister Imran Khan	Ishrat Husain	Jan 7, 2022	Event Report	I
28	Chinese infrastructure project drives Pakistan further into debt	Aafreen Afzal	Nov 16, 2018	Research	I
29	Rakisits: A Path to the Sea: China's Pakistan Plan	Claude Rakisits	Oct 13, 2015	Report	I
30	What the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Tells Us About the Belt and Road	Zenel Garcia	Apr 28, 2022	Research	G

Initiative					
What					
31	Happened to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor?	Muhamm ad Akbar Notezai	Feb 16, 2021	Researc h	G
32	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Power Projects: Insights into Environmental and Debt Sustainability	Erica Downs	Oct 3, 2019	Report	G

(Note: A Brookings Institution; B The Heritage Foundation; C Council on Foreign Relations; D Cato Institute; E Center for Strategic and International Studies; F American Enterprise Institute; G RAND Corporation; H Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; I Atlantic Council; G Hoover Institution)

2. Main Perceptions of American Think Tanks Regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

By employing bibliometric analysis, content analysis, and summarization methods on the 32 selected documents, it can be observed that American think tanks primarily analyze and comment on the relationship between China and Pakistan following the construction of the CPEC, as well as the intentions, current status, and prospects of the corridor. Based on these insights, they provide recommendations to the U.S. government in response to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

2.1 Assessing China-Pakistan Relations Based on the Current Status of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Construction

One perspective suggests that the relationship between the two countries is gradually becoming closer, with an expansion of cooperation in various fields and strengthening mutual support. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has pointed out that, Historically, China and Pakistan have maintained strong strategic and political ties. Today, they are also focusing on enhancing their economic collaboration. The CPEC construction marks a significant milestone in this transition (Shi and Lu, 2016). Bruce Riedel believes that Beijing provides Pakistan with diplomatic support, economic investment, and weapons and technology. At present, the foundation of China-Pakistan relations lies in China's pledge to invest \$46 billion in developing the CPEC. This initiative, which includes power projects, fiber optic networks, roads, and energy infrastructure, has the potential to significantly boost Pakistan's economy if completed within the next 15 years. More crucially, the economic corridor will strengthen the ties between Islamabad and Beijing, positioning Pakistan within China's sphere of influence and security (Riedel, 2015). The Brookings Institution's activity report on China-Pakistan relations from July 22, 2016, states that "China's relationship with Pakistan has been the closest thing that Beijing has had to an alliance." Over time, the relationship has encompassed military sales, collaboration in multilateral organizations like the U.N. Security Council, joint efforts on countering terrorism related to Xinjiang, and the exchange of nuclear and missile technologies. However, in recent years, the focus has shifted, with economic and commercial ties becoming more prominent, and mutual support between China and Pakistan growing stronger. Bruce Riedel argues that the alliance structure in South Asia has become more rigid, and the relationship between China and Pakistan has also become closer (Riedel, 2015). Andrew Small from the German Marshall

Fund believes that China has consistently stood by Pakistan in terms of military and economic assistance, and that the China-Pakistan relationship has more potential given Pakistan's unstable relationship with the United States (Andrew, 2015).

Another perspective suggests that there are certain challenges and uncertainties in the cooperation between the two countries, which may gradually slow the pace of their relationship development. American think tanks point out that China has consistently provided Pakistan with "predatory lending," stating that "the terms of the corridor's construction benefit Chinese companies and workers, and are unsustainable for Pakistan, leading to its rising debt burden" (Afzal, 2020). There is also a viewpoint suggesting that the CPEC could spark political rivalry within Pakistan regarding the management and execution of its various projects. This competition for control over Chinese-funded initiatives may also strain civil-military relations in the country. A recent IMF study identified the CPEC as a contributing factor to Pakistan's growing current-account deficit and increasing external debt-service burdens (Kim, 2018).

2.2 Overall Assessment of the Current Status and Prospects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Projects

Firstly, it is believed that the corridor projects lack transparency. Madiha Afzal points out that many aspects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, including the terms of investments and loans, the scope of the projects, and the total financial impact on Pakistan, remain unclear. Due to this lack of transparency, the project cannot be held accountable, and the reason for this opacity is that the corridor's construction is beneficial only to China. Pakistan would gain from introducing greater transparency in the CPEC, as this could encourage both parties to reach agreements that are more balanced and advantageous for Pakistan (Afzal, 2020).

Secondly, it is believed that the construction of the CPEC project is only partially completed, with some elements not finished and several large projects being put on hold. Jonathan E. Hillman and Maesea McCalpin believe that, according to official targets, the CPEC has underperformed (Hillman and McCalpin, 2020). More specifically, of the 122 projects announced, only 32 (about a quarter) have been finished, amounting to approximately \$20 billion of the estimated \$87 billion in total funding. Fewer than half (54 out of 122) are either completed or currently under construction. Excluding large shelved projects like the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline, and Muzaffargarh Coal Power Project, the total funding for announced projects drops to \$67 billion. The distribution of project funding (excluding national and cross-border initiatives) is fairly balanced across Pakistan's provinces, with notable exceptions being the more developed Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the least developed provinces, Balochistan and FATA. This trend is reflected in project completion rates, where AJK and FATA have no completed projects, while Punjab and Sindh, the more moderately developed provinces, have nearly reached a 50 percent completion rate. Energy projects make up 14 of the 20 largest CPEC initiatives, though several have been postponed. While shelving some of these projects may reduce risks where the benefits were uncertain, it has led to significant funding losses in certain provinces, with only 34 percent of energy projects being completed overall. Michael Rubin believes that over the past four years, Pakistan has been the largest global recipient of Chinese grants and aid (Rubin, 2022).

Muhammad Akbar Notezai believes that in recent years, the progress of Pakistan's CPEC project has been slow. "The lack of progress has led to numerous reports about CPEC being at a near standstill in the country " (Notezai, 2021).

Thirdly, it is believed that the CPEC is a failure. The CPEC is the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. A report from the Brookings Institution on March 14, 2016, states that the Indian Foreign Minister views the Belt and

Road Initiative as a national initiative of China, which is devised with national interest in mind, and that other countries are under no obligation to accept such a unilateral initiative (Madan, 2016). Manjari Chatterjee Miller and Clare Harris believe that the CPEC largely struggled because of Pakistan's political and social instability, which not only created security risks but also led to a leadership vacuum in the project (Miller and Harris, 2023). Michael Rubin believes that the CPEC is a "fairytale spun by China" and that it not only fails to save Pakistan's economy but is also used by Beijing as a means to enslave Pakistan. Rather than fostering economic growth, the CPEC has turned into a burden for Islamabad (Rubin, 2022).

It is worth noting that there are also views suggesting that the CPEC will succeed. For instance, a comment from the RAND Corporation on October 16, 2017, states: Despite these challenges, it would be incorrect to believe that the CPEC has come to a halt, let alone that it is doomed to fail, as some critics claim. In fact, the progress made so far indicates that the CPEC has the potential to succeed, and political backing in Pakistan is likely to remain robust (Dossani and Erich, 2017).

2.3 Understanding the Intentions Behind the Construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

On one hand, it is believed that the construction of the CPEC is a response to India's rise. This perspective emphasizes that China's policies have been largely influenced by geopolitical considerations, with economic factors playing a minimal role. Shivshankar Menon believes that India serves as the strategic glue that maintains the China-Pakistan relationship, and the strengthening of this relationship is largely a response to India's rise. He points out that Pakistan lies at the core of the Belt and Road network, which he describes as China's strategic Marshall Plan. This illustrates that the

construction of the CPEC aims to help China achieve its national security objectives (Menon, 2016).

On the other hand, it is believed that the construction of the CPEC is driven by China's desire to expand its influence based on strategic interests. "China's policy sees a strong, capable Pakistan as an asset to China in its own right" (Menon, 2016). Anthony B. Kim believes that China exaggerates the construction of the CPEC and attempts to turn these countries into satellite states purely for geopolitical reasons. "The attempt to turn these countries into satellite states via the strategic construction of infrastructure is pure geopolitics. China has eyed a westward turn for years, and its desire to advance in Southeast Asia is no secret " (Kim, 2018). Michael Rubin believes that the project has caused significant damage to Pakistan's sovereignty, as China increasingly views Pakistan as a vassal state. The CPEC has burdened Pakistan with debt, forcing it to further mortgage its sovereignty to China or international financial institutions (Rubin, 2021). In another report, he points out that Afghanistan has consistently refused to formally join the Belt and Road Initiative, while China has repeatedly expressed its desire to extend the CPEC into Afghanistan. The geographical position of Afghanistan makes it a key link between the CPEC and Central Asian countries, and consolidating economic control over Afghanistan would also support China's broader objectives in Iran (Rubin, 2020). There are also views suggesting that Beijing recognizes that Pakistan plays a crucial role in China's ambition to position itself as a global strategic power. An economic corridor through Pakistan would not only link China to South and East Asia but also provide an alternative route for transporting energy to the Western world. Rafiq Dossani and Niels Erich believe that the success of the CPEC will serve as an early indicator for the progress of China's broader and more ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. (Dossani and Erich, 2017).

In addition, there is a viewpoint that links the CPEC to issues of human rights and religion. The China-Pakistan relationship also raises significant human

rights concerns. The CPEC, a series of infrastructure projects launched in 2014, could potentially drive economic growth along its route, which runs from Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province, through parts of Kashmir claimed by India, to Gwadar in Pakistan. However, as highlighted by the World Uyghur Congress, the project may result in an increased influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang, and without easing the apartheid-like conditions faced by Muslims in the region, it could exacerbate ethnic tensions (Mazza, 2017).

3. Overall Assessment of American Think Tanks' Perceptions

Based on American think tanks' perceptions of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, we can analyze and extract its characteristic features, and further explore the causes and impacts of these perceptions.

3.1 Overall Characteristics of American Think Tanks'

Perceptions

American think tanks view the construction of the CPEC primarily from a geopolitical perspective, exhibiting predominantly negative perceptions that contain clear biases and misunderstandings. The CPEC aims to promote regional economic development and enhance connectivity, focusing on infrastructure construction in areas such as transportation and energy, with the goal of boosting Pakistan's economic strength and improving the quality of life for local communities. This project founded on the principles of fairness, mutual benefit, and collaborative success, rather than the so-called "self-serving" motives as distorted by American think tanks.

For example, in Manjari Chatterjee Miller's research report, "How China and Pakistan Forged Close Ties," the analysis incorporates the India-China conflict and the shift in U.S.-India relations into the evaluation of the CPEC, suggesting that the corridor aims to serve as a strategic and economic link

between southwestern China and Pakistan. The report further claims that the corridor construction is creating a "debt trap," making it increasingly difficult for Pakistan to repay its debts and gradually undermining its sovereignty.

Such views are not uncommon. Assertions that the CPEC aims to constrain India's development, convert Gwadar Port from civilian to military use, export the Chinese model, and exacerbate political, religious, and ethnic tensions have become mainstream perspectives among American think tanks critiquing the CPEC. Their intention is to frame the CPEC negatively and label it, which adversely affects China's overseas investments and diplomatic image.

The dissemination of perceptions regarding the CPEC is diverse. American think tanks' awareness and promotion of the CPEC are not limited to publishing research reports; they also include academic exchanges and interactions with officials (Wang, 2010). For example, the Brookings Institution organized an academic seminar in New Delhi titled "China-Pakistan Relations: A New Chapter?" and published a research report. The Cato Institute, through Sahar Khan, analyzed U.S. concerns associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on VOA Urdu's program "Where There Is Color." The Center for Strategic and International Studies released a CSIS brief titled "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at Five." The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published a news report titled "Rakisits: A Path to the Sea: China's Pakistan Plan." They also invited Dr. Ishrat Hussain to discuss the CPEC and its impact on Pakistan's economy, as well as the challenges facing the country's domestic governance. The Heritage Foundation published a commentary, "Is Pakistan About to Be Caught in China's 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy'?"

3.2 Causes of Misconceptions in American Think Tanks'

Perceptions

First, there is a struggle for ideological hegemony. Some foreign scholars unconsciously interpret the construction of the CPEC within the framework of ideological competition. The U.S. has long adhered to a Western capitalist ideology, emphasizing so-called values of "democracy" and "freedom," viewing them as universal standards and attempting to promote and maintain the dominance of this ideology globally. In contrast, China's development path and philosophy are rooted in its own history, culture, and social realities, emphasizing national sovereignty, people's interests, and common development. This fundamental difference makes it difficult for American think tanks to objectively assess China's development model and philosophy, perceiving China's progress as a challenge to their ideological hegemony.

Second, there is a struggle for regional influence. American think tanks, heavily influenced by geopolitical theories, view the world as a stage for power struggles, where countries and regions compete for geopolitical advantages. Within this framework, the CPEC is seen as a significant move by China to expand its influence in South Asia, which is perceived as a threat to U.S. interests and influence in the region. From a geopolitical perspective, the U.S. is concerned that China's strengthening cooperation with Pakistan through the CPEC will lead to increased support and influence for China in South Asia, challenging U.S. military deployments, political influence, and economic interests in the region. Additionally, the U.S. has its own strategic layout globally, and the construction of the CPEC may impact U.S. strategic deployments in the area. For example, in countries like Afghanistan, the U.S. has sought to maintain its influence, while the CPEC could promote economic development and stability in Afghanistan, which may not fully align with U.S. strategic goals. Consequently, American think tanks interpret the CPEC negatively from a strategic standpoint in order to safeguard U.S. strategic interests.

3.3 Potential Impacts of the Spread of Misconceptions

The misunderstandings and biases of American think tanks regarding the construction of the CPEC may have the following impacts:

First, project advancement may be hindered. This includes two aspects: on one hand, concerns about funding. The negative perspectives from American think tanks could mislead some international investors, creating doubts about the risks associated with participating in CPEC projects, leading to a reduction or delay in funding. For example, if some investors are influenced by the views of American think tanks and believe that Pakistan may fall into a debt trap due to the project, they may adopt a cautious stance toward investment in related projects, resulting in increased financing difficulties and slower construction progress.

On the other hand, the attitude of cooperating partners may waver. Other countries or international organizations might develop concerns about the prospects of CPEC construction due to the rhetoric of American think tanks, causing hesitation or withdrawal when engaging in relevant cooperation with Pakistan or China. For instance, countries initially interested in collaborating in specific areas of the corridor may reassess the feasibility and necessity of their participation because of the negative evaluations from American think tanks, potentially leading them to abandon cooperation altogether, which would impact the diversification of the project and the expansion of international collaboration.

Second, there is the influence of public opinion. On one hand, there is international public opinion pressure. If the views of American think tanks are amplified and disseminated by certain media in the international arena, it can create an unfavorable public opinion atmosphere regarding the construction of the CPEC. Some uninformed countries and people may be influenced by this narrative, leading to misunderstandings and biases against the project, thereby

exerting international public opinion pressure on both China and Pakistan and affecting their international image and reputation.

On the other hand, there is the internal division of public opinion in Pakistan. Within Pakistan, the statements from American think tanks may also be exploited by some ulterior motives, inciting skepticism and opposition among certain segments of the population towards the project, which could lead to a division in domestic public opinion. Although the Pakistani government and the majority of the populace firmly support the construction of CPEC, this division in public opinion may interfere with the smooth advancement of the project to some extent, affecting the confidence and level of support among the domestic population.

Moreover, the misconceptions of American think tanks regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor may influence U.S. government decision-making. The U.S. might take measures to interfere with or exert pressure on the project, complicating and intensifying the regional geopolitical landscape. For instance, the U.S. could increase political and economic pressure on Pakistan in an attempt to hinder the corridor's development; or it might engage in actions within regional affairs that are detrimental to CPEC, leading to conflicts and competition among regional countries, thereby undermining stability and cooperation in the region.

Conclusion

This study analyzes the main reports, articles and policy comments on the CPEC by American think tanks and summarizes the following findings: First, American think tanks generally pay attention to the role of CPEC in geopolitics and believe that it may weaken the influence of the United States in the global South; second, although some American scholars recognize the potential of CPEC in promoting Pakistan's economic growth and regional stability, they tend to interpret it as a tool for China to seek regional

dominance; finally, the analysis of American think tanks often attempts to shape the negative international image of CPEC through ideological narratives such as "debt trap". These findings show that the views of American think tanks on CPEC are highly politicized and ideologically biased.

Based on the above analysis, this article offers the following suggestions for the future development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor :

First, enhance the voice of Pakistani media. Given the current complexities in China-U.S. relations, certain American factions often hold negative views on issues related to China, which, to some extent, affects international perceptions of CPEC. Pakistan should strengthen its international communication efforts, actively utilizing international media to showcase the true nature, positive significance, and construction achievements of the CPEC, thereby improving the international community's accurate and comprehensive understanding of the corridor. As a directly involved party, Pakistani media can present a more persuasive narrative, helping to dispel misunderstandings, enhance the project's transparency and credibility, and create a favorable international public opinion environment for the development of CPEC.

Second, strengthen communication and cooperation with international organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions. The construction of CPEC should not be limited to bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan; rather, collaboration with international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank should be actively pursued. On one hand, leveraging the expertise and resources of these organizations can provide technical support and funding guarantees for the project's sustainable development; on the other hand, such cooperation can demonstrate the project's compliance and transparency to the world, countering negative perceptions from American think tanks. The involvement and endorsement of international organizations will help enhance CPEC's

reputation and influence globally, attracting more countries and regions to participate in the project.

Third, refute the distortions and smear campaigns from American think tanks. While U.S. think tanks are known for their independence, they are often affiliated with government bodies, universities, and research institutions, and influenced by public and private foundations, interest groups, and political factions, which undermines their independence and reveals clear ideological biases. By introducing concepts like "freedom" and "debt traps," American think tanks distort CPEC in order to gain an advantage in international discourse and tarnish the Belt and Road Initiative. This narrative trap has become a common tactic for attacking China's overseas initiatives. In response to such smears, domestic think tanks and media should proactively establish their own narrative platforms. Through research reports, think tank dialogues, academic forums, and new media releases overseas, they can dismantle the cognitive advantages constructed by American think tanks. Centered around the concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind," research and reporting on CPEC should highlight its positive impacts on Pakistan's social governance, infrastructure, and livelihoods, while refuting false accusations.

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