



## News Discourse on CPEC and Challenges for Civil-Military Relations

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- Vol. VII, No. I (Winter 2022)
- Pages: 20 – 28
- p- ISSN: 2521-2982
- e-ISSN: 2707-4587

**Key Words:** CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), Civil-Military Relations (CMR), Discourse Analysis, COAS (Chief of the Army Staff)

**Abstract:** The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multibillion-dollar infrastructure investment project, is heralded as a game-changer for sustainable development and democratic consolidation in Pakistan. However, the implementation of such a mega project came with a lot of challenges. Among all, the major challenges were balanced civil-military relations, peace, and revised policy with Afghanistan. The objective of the current paper is to examine the coverage of CPEC in the news stories of two English newspapers of Pakistan i.e., Dawn and The News, in the context of civil-military relations. The study incorporated a method of discourse analysis for examining style, slant, themes, and discourses. Results revealed that both the newspapers remained positive in their slants. Moreover, both newspapers appreciated the efforts of COAS not only for protecting mega project but also for bringing peace to the region. Both newspapers also appreciated that the civilian government and military were on the same page for overcoming security challenges effectively.

### Introduction

According to (Buzan, 1987), the term security is challengeable and significant, which involves not only politics of states protection, but its expansion in the modern radical world. The concept of national security states begin from war to fear of insurrection and change, from political and economic instability, and from artilleries to armed machinery (Barnet, 1980). Also, national security revolves around aspects of good governance, quality of democracy, and political and economic stability. Therefore, (Holmes, 2015) defines national security as political security, which refers to the protection of the democratic system, security of society from various internal/external threats or pressures, and most importantly, protection of the government's freedom. (Khokhar, 2015) was of the view that participatory

democracy can lead to long-term stability and largely political security in Pakistan.

As a result, national security leads toward the internal security of the state, which consists of civil-military relations. The term civil-military relations can be explained in the context of threats started from its own territory, which involve duties and functions of different state-owned agencies (Chambers 2010). Huntington, (1956a) defined CMR as the connection between states' military and society at large; also, the path they use for correspondence, the collaboration among each other, and importantly the limits between both are defined and synchronized.

From the time of independence to becoming a vital ally in the battle of terrorism, and afterward military itself became a sufferer of international political supremacy, Pakistan has been dealing with internal and external threats to its sovereignty and

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security. Actually, the neutral reason behind the so-called huge defense load in Pakistan arises from these issues. This situation has led to criticism from the group of Pakistani intellectuals who oppose this role of the Pakistani military. In the past few years, the armed forces of Pakistan have been engaged on various fronts, fighting external and internal threats ([Mirza, Jaspal & Malik, 2015](#)).

In 2013 when the civilian government PML-N took charge under the leadership of PM Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan faced challenges related to national security as well as economic instability. Pakistan military under the command of then COAS General Raheel Sharif, fully supported the elected civilian government and Baloch province to nudge reconciliation. For smooth execution of CPEC Pakistan military developed a high-level military brigade for its protection. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a huge bilateral plan between Pakistan and China to improve trade between the two countries. This plan is intended for huge infrastructure development so that better infrastructure will be a gate to the rest of the world. This bilateral project was initiated by PM Nawaz Sharif and President of China Xi Jinping on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015. This massive project included different memorandums of understanding worth \$46 billion, and further, both Pakistan's Prime Minister and President of China had Conesus on 51 agreements. CPEC aimed to modernize railways, roads, energy, and air transportation systems. Moreover, the significance of this massive project was to create the link of Pakistan's deep seaports of Gawadar and Karachi to the chain province Xinjiang and even the routes to the connecting countries of Xinjiang (Russia, Pakistan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and the oldest Silk Road). These routes will reduce the energy and cost of transferring energy and goods to China by avoiding the route of the South China Sea and Malacca. In the globalized world, CPEC is an initiative toward better economic growth, regional development, and peace (CPEC, 2019).

According to a Dawn news story, the project became a source of tension for the civilian government as they seemed unwilling to give control to the Pakistan military for the implementation of CPEC. The Chinese government being unhappy with the overall management of CPEC, suggested the civilian

government to give charge to military leadership. Then COAS said that since the mega project is crucial for economic stability, the Pakistan military is ready to play its role for its monitoring and security. As the tension continued, the Chinese government became apprehensive because the civilian government and military leadership failed to develop a consensus on any comprehensive policy. As a result, PM Nawaz Sharif analyzed the pros and cons of military intervention in the CPEC project and recommended Ahsin Iqbal, Minister of Planning and Development to talk to the Chinese government. ([Dawn, PML-N unwilling to share CPEC control? 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2016](#)).

Therefore, the problem statement for the present study deals with exploring the role of print media in Pakistan during the coverage of CPEC inaugurated by PM Nawaz Sharif and President of China Xi Jinping on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The study employed discourse analysis to examine the discourses, themes, styles, and slant in the news stories of two English newspapers of Pakistan, i.e., Dawn and The News. This comprehensive analysis of media discourses and employment of styles by print media of Pakistan would be very fruitful for examining the role of Pakistan's English newspapers. It will also help in interpreting the relationship between the elected government PML N and military leadership under the command of then COAS General Raheel Sharif. Further, this examination of media discourses would be scholastically productive in outspreading the current literature on Pakistan's CMR

## **Research Questions**

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- RQ1:** Does the coverage of slant shows the difference in the news stories during the coverage of CPEC?
- RQ2:** Does Dawn construct different themes as compared to The News during the coverage of CPEC?
- RQ3:** How Dawn and The News use different styles in the news stories during the coverage of CPEC?
- RQ4:** How Dawn and The News construct discourses during the coverage of CPEC?

## **Objectives of the Study**

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The current study is intended to serve the following objectives:

1. To examine the news stories of two English newspapers in terms of CMR by analyzing the news stories on CPEC
2. To identify slant in the news stories of Dawn and The News during the coverage of CPEC.
3. To compare the styles used in the news stories of both the newspapers during the coverage of CPEC
4. To find out diverse themes in the news stories of both the newspapers during the coverage of CPEC.
5. To examine discourses in the news stories of both the newspapers during the coverage of CPEC.

## Literature Review

Armed forces play an important role in a state's economy, for example, Egypt, as it might increase the loyalty of armed forces in comparison with the regime, especially in that case where protests become successful there, it may lead to the latest regimes which move towards an approach that will be market-friendly ([Anderson,2011](#)). The alternative, in this case, can too be related to the recognition by the military administration (those getting more benefits who have a direct association with those who are in power) of the regime's steadiness as a work of its loyalty and potency ([Barany, 2011](#); [Nepstad, 2013](#)).

The United States has narrowly defined the problem that it's about the national interest and military reprisal of the United States ([Yang, 2003](#); [Dickson, 1994](#)). Also, [Nye \(1999\)](#) described national interest as a set of common preferences relating to the connections with other parts of the world. It includes a financial interface and human spirits and standards for instance, civil rights and social equality. [Bennett \(1990\)](#) have contended that traditional media have a preference to endorse the foreign policy of the government during the reporting of international clashes. [Yang \(2003\)](#) found that reports select and show more inclination, particularly to those universal happenings which are more significant, particularly from the perspective of the state, ultimately framing such happenings on the basis of their nation is truly nations' vital national interest.

([Feaver, 1996](#), pp. 150–153, 160) said that the civilian power would always respect the concept of

the independent army, particularly in their own spheres of action. A group of people from the professional army have to deal with their juniors which are their requirement and priority for the goodwill of society by presenting them with their individualism to stick to communalistic culture. This means that there is no participation in overall politics also the incompetence from this profession which exist outside the territory of the states military.

[Yang \(2003\)](#) used the comparative analysis of framing and compared the ways in which the Chinese and US media reported NATO 1999 air raid on Yugoslavia. He used content analysis and stated that both the Chinese and the United States use different frames when using a high range of air raids. On one side the newspapers of the US mounted military actions in complete support to Albanians in order to overcome racial purification by Serbians, and on the other hand, the Chinese daily papers took a diverse narrative for military actions i.e., an attack on their nation as well as it has affected the dominion of Yugoslavia. Framing analysis concluded with the frame of national interest, the most significant frame of media content especially during the coverage of international news.

## Research Methodology

The present study is intended to examine CMR by analyzing the style, slant, themes and discourses in the context of CPEC. The purpose of selecting CPEC is to develop an understanding of how the armed forces deal effectively with the security challenges related to economic stability. Thus, the military, besides the economical, political, and administrative obstacles, survived to guarantee a secure and safe environment for the development of CPEC. Furthermore, the method of discourse analysis is used for analyzing the content of print media, particularly the news stories from two English newspapers of Pakistan i.e., Dawn and The News. The newspapers are selected on the basis of the following reasons.

1. Both the newspapers depict dominance in the Pakistan press, also they are major print media giants in comparison with others
2. Both the newspapers have the largest dissemination network and have a massive audience. So to achieve the objectives of the current study, discourses will be identified

and accordingly, it will be termed as the unit of analysis.

The current study is qualitative. Moreover, the techniques and methods employed in the current study are defined by [West and Turner \(2007\)](#) which explains the style used by the writers as an

approach, also narrates societal settings or might be occurrence of any forthcoming happening. Further, they define metaphor as actual information or an expression that plays an important role in transforming an ambiguous concept more understandable (p.346).

**Results**

**RQ1:** Does the coverage of slant shows the difference in the news stories during the coverage of CPEC?

**Table 1.** Slant of the News Stories

Newspapers	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Dawn	16	3	1	20
The News	08	04	0	12

Table1 shows that Dawn has published a total of (20) news stories. Sixteen (16) were Positive, one (01) negative, and three (03) remained neutral with reference to CPEC. The news has published a total of (12) news stories, out of which eight (08) were Positive, zero (0) Negative, and four (04) remained neutral. Dawn covered CPEC positively in their stories and appreciated the Pakistan army for their efforts to make CPEC a success. Dawn not only quoted the Pakistan army positively, but Dawn also added the statements given by General Changlong, who said that China appreciates the enthusiasm of military forces against terrorism and for exercising terrorist operations, especially for making CPEC successful. He also said that China appreciates the efforts of the army in order to safeguard the security of CPEC. He also added that China shall be looking forward towards Pakistan and shall have better cooperation in terms of security issues and better management. (Dawn, Top Chinese General’s Lauds Pakistan’s Role, Nov 12, 2015).

The news in one of the story mention that the COAS said the improvement in the security situation, as well as the smooth implementation of development projects, is actually the result of sacrifices by the tribal people of Baluchistan, armed forces, and common people. (The News,

Army’s, Nations Outcome, Dec 24, 2015).The news condemns external forces for their funding to the terrorist organizations in Pakistan. Then COAS said the global community should appreciate the efforts and sacrifices of the people of Pakistan and the military. He further said that the international community should respond by coming forward and putting a ban on those who were indirectly helping the terrorist, their helpers, and sympathizers. (The News, Raw Blatantly Involved, April 12, 2016).

**RQ2:** Does Dawn constructed different themes as compared to The News during the coverage of CPEC?

During the coverage of CPEC, both the newspapers covered diverse themes, which shows commendable efforts of the army towards the safeguard of mega-project CPEC. To examine the themes particularly related to coordination between army and civilian government, Dawn and The News published 32 news stories. The total of 32 news stories show that themes used by both the newspapers majorly covered positive actions of the Pakistan army and appreciation of government towards Pakistan army. The findings of the table constructed below shows the coverage of themes covered by Dawn and The News.

**Table 2.** Themes of the News Stories

Themes	No of the news stories in Dawn	No of news stories in The News
Army’s commitment to protecting CPEC	4	2
Bilateral defence partnership	2	2
Threats from India	2	2
Ratification of reservation by all parties	2	1

Themes	No of the news stories in Dawn	No of news stories in The News
Civil-military decisions on the bond between Afghanistan and CPEC	2	2
Itemization of criminals, terrorist, and corruption	2	1
China’s concerns on CPEC	2	1
Commendable effort by COAS to neutralize threats against CPEC	4	1
Total Number of news stories	20	12

Dawn covered the theme of “Indian interference” which states then COAS as the Indian intelligence agency RAW is spying to destabilize and have a negative campaign against Pakistan just to make CPEC a failure. (Dawn, India out to Sabotage CPEC, April 13, 2016). Dawn further used themes related to the challenges CPEC may face in the future. In this regard, Dawn stated about a meeting called at military headquarters where the government together with army talked about the challenges CPEC may face because of Afghanistan, so they decided to review their policy against Afghanistan. (Dawn, Extra-Ordinary Huddle, June 8, 2016).

The news published (12) news stories and Table2 shows the coverage of positive themes by highlighting the positive attitude of COAS towards the well-being of people. The news covered the theme of determination in the context of the

statement released by ISPR i.e., then COAS said to all the commanders that we are fully aware of our enemy and we know their hostility towards CPEC, but we have promised that we will transform the lives of the people by this mega project. (The News, Ready to Pay any Price, June 2, 2016).

The news covered almost the same themes, i.e., the concern of China towards the security of CPEC. According to the statement released by ISPR, the COAS said that CPEC is such a big project that it will not only benefit Pakistan but the Central Asian belt. Moreover, it will change the life of thousands and millions of people not only in Pakistan but to the entire region. (The News, COAS Resolve to Break Nexus, Jul 29, 2016).

**RQ3:** How Dawn and The News used different styles in the news stories during the coverage of CPEC?

**Table 3.** Styles of News Stories

Units under Analysis	Total no of news Stories in Dawn (20)	Total no of news stories in The News (12)
1. Epistemology	4	4
2. Style		
3. Condemning/ Critical	5	1
4. Suggestive	1	-
5. Questioning	1	-
6. Appreciative	4	4
7. Adjectives	-	-
8. Metaphor	5	3

Table 3 shows that reporters have used different styles to narrate the story. Though both newspapers covered the same event but they have used different styles, which has changed the context of news stories. During the coverage of CPEC both newspapers have used appreciative style of writing and at the time they have used the

critical style of writing. Table 3 shows the ratio of styles to which both the newspapers have used in their news stories. Most of the stories were published in favor of Pakistan army and then COAS. The overall style of the stories depicted that CPEC was inaugurated by PM, but the rest of the issues of peace and national security were



handled by COAS also the directions were given by COAS regarding the protection of CPEC. In one of the news stories published in Dawn, it was discussed that Minister of security Dong Haizhou showed his deep concerns towards the security of CPEC. He added that for the success of CPEC peace has to be sustained in the entire region (Dawn, COAS Allays China's Fears, June 11, 2015).

At the same time, The News used an appreciative style of writing in their stories and mention that COAS was appreciated by the Chinese delegation and Attaché Major General Qi Huajun applauded COAS for understanding the economic interests of both towards the success of this mega project and at the same time appreciated the efforts of Pakistan for expanding the horizon of military operations to sustain peace in the region (The News, China's Enemy is Our Enemy, Aug 1, 2015). Another appreciative style was used by The News and they published the news story highlighting that COAS said that CPEC shall be a success no matter what happens. He also paid high tribute to the personnel of FWO, the tribal people, general public for their kind support, as they all have sacrificed their lives for the national project (The News, Gwadar Port will be built at all Costs, July 25, 2015).

**RQ4:** How Dawn and The News constructed discourses during the coverage of CPEC?

During the coverage of CPEC Dawn has utilized discourses as *a violation of UN Charters, Reassured the Chinese Leadership, Expressed his Resolve, Source of Concern, A Game-Changer, and UN-paralleled Relations*. The discourses constructed by The News are *Resolve to Eliminate, Cherished Dream into Reality, Defeat Rivals Jointly, and Regional Stability*

## **Discussion**

During the regime of COAS General Raheel Sharif CPEC was inaugurated and he took the responsibility of its safeguard. From the perspective of Pakistan it would be the game-changer that's why CPEC was massively covered by both the newspapers. Both the newspapers covered CPEC positively by appreciating efforts of Pakistan military, as COAS General Raheel Sharif guarantee China for protecting the CPEC agreement and also the future success of CPEC. Both the newspapers indicate positive coverage of

CPEC by stating that "it is a lifetime opportunity for Pakistan and is poised to bring a true economic transformation to the province of Baluchistan. "We look forward to the emergence of modern infrastructure, special economic zones, health facilities, and universities will bring enduring benefits for our people." (Dawn, Ready to Pay any Price, Feb 19, 2016) and The News on the same line stated that "China and Pakistan are the best iron brothers, good friends and strategic partners. We share the tradition of mutual understanding, mutual trust and mutual support" (Chinese Military Delegation, Nov 12, 2015. The News). These findings are in accordance with previous literature as [Dickson, 1992](#), 1996; [Bennett, 1990](#) said that generally, the traditional media endorse the foreign policy of the government, particularly during the time of international differences.

The current research has examined some of the most appealing themes and primarily these themes indicate the national security of the state by highlighting that military and civilian institutions were on the same page. Both covered the themes in this particular context. "Threats from India" explains that someone is trying to keep an eye on the big project (India out to Sabotage CPEC, April 13, 2016. Dawn). And The News in the same context constructed the theme as "Commendable effort by COAS" to neutralize threats against CPEC" (The News, COAS Resolve to Break Nexus, Jul 29, 2016). These themes indicate exactly the same as [Yang, 2003](#) said that the selection, inclination and prominence is with reference to the issues which remained significant particularly with respect to state and largely state's national interest.

The findings also examined different styles followed by both the newspapers during the coverage of CPEC. Results indicate that Dawn during the coverage remained critical and stated that "it was highly regrettable that Indian politicians not only indulged in actions that were a violation of United Nations charter but also took pride in claiming interference in the internal affairs of other states. A resolve to defeat Indian designs and defend Pakistan's territorial integrity at any cost, with a befitting response to any misadventure against Pakistan" (Dawn, Army Aware of Hostility, June 2, 2016). Whereas The News being appreciative quoted that "We are ready to pay any price to protect our nationhood and safeguard our interests, be it Kashmir, development of new ports

or exploitation of natural resources. (The News, Gwadar Port, CPEC will be Built at all Costs). The results show an agreement with the previous study of (Anderson, 2011), who narrated very categorically that if military forces play a vital role in the state's economy like the case of Egypt, then it may increase the loyalty of the armed forces in comparison with the party-based regimes.

With reference to CPEC, the study has examined the discourses constructed by the two newspapers. The choice of words used by both the newspapers appears to be aggressive for example Dawn covered some aggressive discourses as “UN-paralleled Relations” Top Chinese General Lauds Pakistan’s Role”, Nov 12, 2015. Dawn) and “Source of Concern” (Dawn. All Efforts Will Be Made for CPEC”, Oct 2, 2015) similarly The News covered the discourses as Cherished Dream into Reality (The News, Gwadar Port, CPEC will be Built at all Costs”, July 25, 2015) and Defeat Rivals Jointly (The News, China’s Enemy is Our Enemy”, Aug1, 2015). The discourses are in harmony with (Feaver, 1996, pp. 150–153, 160) as he mention that when army stays independent in their own spheres and they guarantee the protection of the nation then civilian power preserve their independence as well as professionalism.

## **Conclusion**

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The present study used discourse analysis to examine slant, discourses, style and themes in the news stories of two English newspapers of Pakistan, i.e., Dawn and The News during the coverage of CPEC. Results reveal that there exists an absolute benchmark in civil-military relations and has always been a serious issue under discussion. Therefore, the role of press in this context is the key, because military in Pakistan has always concerns towards their positive image not only with reference to national security but also towards economic development. So, the findings of the event under study specified fluctuations in civilian-military leadership. According to results, news stories used an appreciative style of writing and mostly constructed positive discourses, thus depicting that civilian-military leadership was on the same page on the issues of national security and economic stability. Positive slants depicted the efforts of then COAS General Raheel Sharif (and team) for restoring peace in the region, whereas negative slants remained critical towards the effort

of civilian government under the leadership of PM Nawaz Sharif. A key consideration was the incapability of civilian government in addressing the issues of social cohesion and economic stability, as a result, military intervention remained a dominant factor. It is concluded that print media of Pakistan dominantly narrated that armed forces only intervene in the issues of national security, peace, economic stability, and most importantly, the well-being of society. Media as watchdog has to serve citizens, civilian leaders and the military, so media should act as a public transparency forum for problem solving and trust.

## **Implications**

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It is also a point of focus that in order to improve the media narrative reporters/writers should get the training for entrenched knowledge and expertise. Media center research said that the reporters’ training lies at four main levels. The first level is the basic level training which includes the constructed knowledge which the reporter has and the skills he uses when constructing the media narrative. The Second level training includes the role of media outlets in motivating the reporter to work with diligence, and he should ensure editorial policy of that outlet in mind when making information public. Third level requires the encouragement from media outlets for improving their analysis, interest and also their level of discussion. The fourth level is the arrangement of seminars, trainings, conferences, and summer camps where reporters can learn about news and techniques of reading and writing.

This study has further implications on the role of print media as it is also evident from the results that media has all the powers to construct the narrative in such a way that it might become a source of aggression against political actors, their activities, CMR and also the issues regarding terrorism. Media has the power of magnifying and maximizing the information as well as they might remain neutral depending upon the subject of the story.

## **Future Directions**

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The present study could be a value addition to the existing literature on CMR because it has analyzed news stories whose sample was more in number as compared to editorials and columns. Based on

results, the civil-military agreement on economic stability identify the future stability of CMR in Pakistan. These results could help future researchers to understand that balanced civil-military relations are the key to overcoming the challenges related to the economy of Pakistan.

This study is distinctive as it has not only explained the nature of the event but also covered the role of English newspapers in covering the event by employing the method of discourse analysis. Also, the analysis of discourses, styles, slant and themes could be helpful for media institutions which will further elaborate the role of press related to civil-military relations.



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