

CPEC in the shadows of fifth generation warfare and the dynamics of propaganda model

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Abstract

Purpose – The clear patterns of bias and propaganda such as narrative framing and selective reporting are severely affecting the public opinion and policymakers. Overall, the study shows that media depiction of CPEC conditioned by the propagandistic model and 5GW strategies carries deep meanings for global politics. In addition, there is the necessity to increase media literacy and strategic communication so as to direct the complications of these projects. Transparency and international cooperation become important for regional stability as well as informed public discourse.

Design/methodology/approach – The qualitative analysis of media content is carried out for this research across the various geopolitical regions about the interpretation of CPEC. It is also supplemented with extensive literature review and expert opinions. Thereby, providing a comprehensive view of the media landscape and the underlying narratives about CPEC.

Findings – The findings analyzed the variations in CPEC's portrayal dominated by factors like media ownership, funding and geopolitical agendas.

Originality/value – This study uniquely integrates CPEC, 5GW and the Propaganda Model, highlighting media-driven narrative warfare's impact on public perception, policymaking and geopolitical stability, offering fresh insights into strategic communication and information operations.

Keywords CPEC, Fifth-generation warfare, The propaganda model, Media, Global dynamics

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The twenty-first-century geopolitics is rapidly changing in the face of complex, multifaceted conflicts that are beyond traditional boundaries and methodologies. CPEC is viewed as a hub of transport corridors, energy schemes and economic zones to redefine the network connections between China and Pakistan. This connectivity has far-reaching consequences both to regional and international geopolitics. Also, the advent of 5GW combines non-traditional war tactics such as cyber operations, information manipulation and psychological strategies. Therefore, this becomes a marked change from conventional war in that perception and information are all important.

Whereas the world of scholastic questions has considered various aspects of CPEC and 5GW individually at a large scale. Scholarly works emphasizing CPEC have mostly focused on its economic impact, infrastructural developments and the larger ramifications of regional linkage and geopolitics (Mahmood *et al.*, 2023). Indeed, scholars have looked at how CPEC may potentially reshape Pakistan's economy and alter the strategic balance in South Asia (Khan *et al.*, 2022a, b). 5GW has equally been discussed, and research studies describe its

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evolution from previous levels of war (Krishnan, 2022). This development has been noted by scholars, the shift toward strategies that leverage modern technology details and psychological components for achieving strategic objectives often outside conventional army involvements. Notably, there is a gap in scholarly studies on the merging of CPEC and 5GW. Nowhere has there been the interplay between infrastructural and financial developments of CPEC with nuanced strategies of 5GW, particularly vis-à-vis media narratives. This juncture is vital to understand the modern strategies and conflicts of geopolitics.

The rationale for this research arises from the increasing complexity of global conflicts and the crucial role of details and assumptions that fit geopolitical outcomes. In a period where traditional warfare is increasingly supplemented, and sometimes replaced, by methods of fixed details adjustment and psychological impact, recognizing these dynamics becomes vital. CPEC, in its role as a significant geopolitical development, is not just a topic of economic interest, however, a focal factor in the more comprehensive story of local power dynamics. The representation of CPEC in global media and the stories surrounding it uses a unique lens to examine the contemporary landscape of geopolitical techniques and conflicts. Moreover, the arising principle of 5GW, focusing on nonlinear, technology-driven and psychological techniques, presents new challenges and chances in understanding and browsing the existing worldwide safety and security atmosphere. The assimilation of 5GW methods with the financial and infrastructural advancements of CPEC offers a one-of-a-kind instance study. It exemplifies how contemporary problems and strategic interest rates are increasingly being played out in public perception and information control. This research intends to link the area in existing literary works by linking the evaluation of CPEC and 5GW within the framework of media and attention.

Additionally, using the Propaganda Model in this context is particularly substantial. Media stories and the representation of crucial geopolitical events like CPEC and scenarios of 5GW are not simply casual monitoring, however, are typically indicative of deeper political, financial and ideological environments. In an age where info is as effective a device as armed pressure hardware, identifying these ambiances is vital for a comprehensive understanding of global partnerships and safety strategies. This paper intends to provide this understanding by checking out the media stories bordering CPEC and 5GW through the lens of the Propaganda Model.

The method for this research study is qualitative and the research will undertake a detailed literary works review, including academic documents, records and publications on CPEC, 5GW and media studies. This review aims to contextualize the media narratives within the more comprehensive scholarly discourse, determining spaces and alignments in the representation of these topics. Even more specifically, there is a shortage of concrete research about how CPEC enables a vast opportunity to use the 5GW approach in terms of the information warfare and narrative management. To support the given research more effectively, this study will incorporate the various case studies that most vividly illustrate the changes related to the manipulation of the media discourse in CPEC and 5GW strategies.

The research question of this paper is: What implications does media coverage of the CPEC have on the public, policymakers and stability within the prism of global politics? Furthermore, the main is to show that the stories and perceptions surrounding CPEC and the tactics of 5GW are significantly formed by media representations, which are, consequently, affected by the filters identified in Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. This shaping of stories is essential in exactly how the international area views and acts on these geopolitical and calculated developments.

Literature review

In his research published in 2021, Hamid Khan explores the contemporary dynamics of warfare and shows how modern conflicts are increasingly less about traditional military confrontations and more a matter of utilizing information technology or media manipulation. He laments that the idea of a conventional war is becoming outdated, he talks about how in this new form of conflict they utilize supercomputers and media platforms to create and propagate

narratives regardless of whether it was true or not. The research attempts to make people more conscious of the risks associated not only with ill-edged media propaganda but also with educated individuals who can be victims. Khan underlines the necessity to be vigilant and develop a critical approach when engaging in media consumption, especially concerning national affairs or building narratives. He calls for new international laws and regulations akin to the Geneva Convention that would prevent false propaganda or hybrid warfare; he encourages world leaders and legislators to take positive action through the UN on these issues.

In 2018, Ullah Zafar penned an article that critically analyses the CPEC and its ramifications on socioeconomic development status within Pakistan, especially focusing on Baluchistan and Gwadar city. Pakistani state and mainstream media praise CPEC as a transformational project; however, this narrative is juxtaposed with the censorship of local resistance voices and concerns – especially from peripheral sites such as Gwadar. As the state painted dissenters as those who are “anti-state” and associated their opposition with so-called international conspiracies, this engaged in the securitization of the project. Such securitization led to considerable militarization in Gwadar at the cost of native people who had lost their homes and livelihoods. The article identifies an open issue in academic research, which largely studies the securitization of megaprojects but varies on how official discourses play into this process. Therefore, his research seeks to investigate the effect that Pakistani state-led discourse has on CPEC securitization and the resulting militarization of Gwadar. It utilizes the Securitization Theory of [Buzan *et al.* \(1998\)](#) and applies the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for reviewing official discourses on CPEC.

In 2022, an article by Asma Faiz addresses the repercussions of CPEC on relations between China and Pakistan. The focus of this article is on the way in which CPEC has changed this relationship, most importantly facilitating people-to-people contacts and creating new opportunities for cooperation. Faiz adopts a broad perspective to comprehend the dynamics and structures of potential knowledge transfer and policy transmission from China to Pakistan, with special emphasis on education-related matters. Pakistani universities have registered an increased number of institutions teaching the Chinese language and culture, thus showing the growing influence of China’s soft power. Her research also discusses wider problems, including power imbalance and the impact of domestic order in Pakistan. These factors are critical in understanding the diffusion of Chinese influence and knowledge that can be seen as a complex international relation embedded with internal dynamics occurring within CPEC context.

In 2019, Wolf wrote critically on the CPEC concerning difficulties that may cause its stalling of implementation and functioning. This article recognizes the increased optimism associated with CPEC but also points out that Pakistan can still be threatened with conventional activities in its political wave which may lead to disastrous effects on implementation of this corridor. Wolf states that problems related to CPEC are multidimensional because they have internal and external aspects. These issues are political, geostrategic, social, economic, environmental and legal constitutional. The article recommends that a thorough evaluation of CPEC must consider not only the immediate challenges faced by this major development project but also those potential difficulties likely to occur in the future. The analyses highlight the complexity of implementing large-scale initiatives such as CPEC, where different aspects that are interrelated at various levels across regions and sectors can potentially enhance each other contributing to multiplied intricacies.

[Iqbal \(2019\)](#) penned a paper that investigates the Pakistanis’ views of the CPEC and China in both real-world and virtual worlds. This study is a result of an October 2017 survey with random sample data from 385 participants. 72% of the Pakistani public believes that CPEC will improve Pakistan’s situation. The survey notes as well that most Pakistanis believe China is a more reliable partner than the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. 55% of the respondents categorized Pak–China relations as an “interest-based” relationship, implying that pragmatism rather than sentiment primarily influences the pro-Chinese among educated Pakistanis. This revelation suggests that the states’ narrative of their China–Pakistan friendship being “higher than mountains, deeper than ocean” has been received with caution.

In 2022, a paper by Pascal Abb discusses the CPEC and its impact on Pakistan. While much of the existing literature sees CPEC in terms that are largely geopolitical – thus stressing China’s attempts to extend its influence and assert its position on international matters, Abb suggests this is not the full picture. The paper suggests a center-periphery approach to shed further light on the development of CPEC and its associated controversies. This framework encompasses the international relationship between China and Pakistan, the internal dynamics of Islamabad toward peripheral regions as well as segments within Pakistan. Abb contends that such an approach is a better indication of the considerable impact of national governments on local adoption and implementation of BRI projects.

Akhter (2021) research offers a deep dive into hybrid warfare as an intricate military strategy that combines conventional wartime strategies with irregular and cybernetic tactics. As for the main purpose of the study, researchers aim to provide a definition and description of hybrid warfare as well as investigate how India applied this approach in its conflict with Pakistan while pointing at possible countermeasures. The authors utilize qualitative research strategies such as content analysis and interpretative methodology to conduct a data study based on which they develop appropriate ideas or approaches. Through this framework, the study seeks to offer insights into how hybrid warfare dynamics unfold within the geopolitics of India and Pakistan. Significant research of the contemporary scene of warfare, especially in the backdrop of South Asian geopolitics evolving nature of conflict where traditional and modern methods converge.

In 2023 article by Sial *et al.* investigates the convoluted debt crisis that Pakistan has been facing from 1958 to 2023 with 23 different loan packages obtained from International Monetary Fund (IMF). The article highlights how constant indebtedness has slowed Pakistan’s structural transformation. Pakistan’s debt situation has been escalated by recent global crises like the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic which increasing the prices of commodities. This debt has geopolitical significance, especially in the backdrop of US–China rivalry. Unlike other political analyses that concentrate mostly on internal governance problems and financial mismanagement, this article shifts the perspective toward external causes for Pakistan’s debt. It sheds light on the effect of a hostile international legal framework, influence from standard-setting mechanisms and rating agencies as well as random price tags that severely economic burden. The article further elaborates on how global investment and financial structures restrict Pakistan’s policy space, emphasizing the obstacles that prevent national fiscal stability and autonomy in policies.

Despite all the work that has been done in international relations and media studies, there is a huge gap especially when discussing this connection through the prism where the Propaganda Model meets with CPEC and 5GW. More particularly, there is no in-depth dissection on how CPEC plays a giant stage for 5GW strategies such as information manipulations and control over narratives. All in all, it is crucial to take a closer look at how media-oriented processes in CPEC work as a stage for 5GW for the states and non-state actors interfering with the media narratives and regulating the media information environment and using digital technologies in political and public opinion shaping. Closing this gap in research would offer useful knowledge about the future of war, geopolitics and media in the twenty-first century.

The propaganda model: a brief review

The Propaganda Model, a critical concept in the research study of media concept, was first introduced by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their 1988 publication, “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economic Climate of the Electronic Media” (Shemelis, 2017). This model was developed to recognize how propaganda and systemic predispositions function in information media. Herman and Chomsky’s work was groundbreaking, offering a critical point of view on the role of media in forming popular opinion and discussion, particularly in democratic societies. The beginnings of the Propaganda

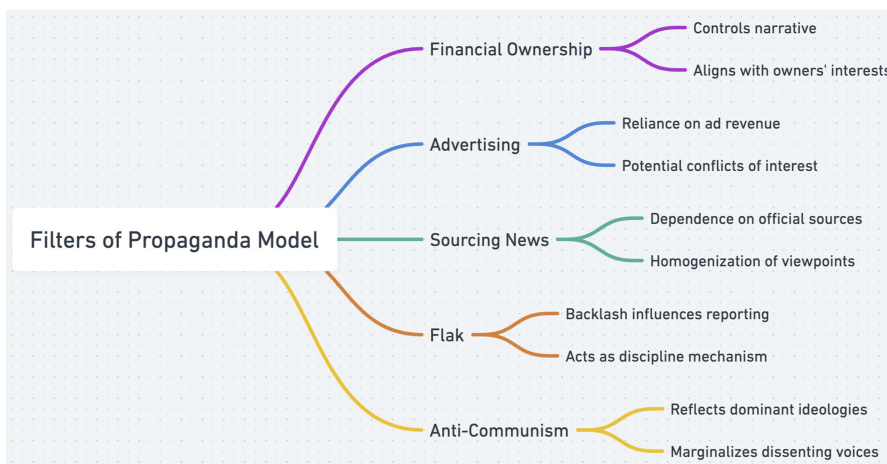
Model in the duo's assessment regarding capitalist structure in information media, where significant ownership of electrical outlets is concentrated in a few large corporations and conglomerates (Klaehn, 2018). Herman and Chomsky also proposed that since these media companies are architecturally financially linked or arguably dependent, their prejudice is natural. They suggested that the media functions much less as an information creator and more like a vehicle to distribute perspectives of interests of elite classes and the federal government.

They noticed a pattern to events where state passions often became popularized in media coverage whilst dissenting voices were usually marginalized. This led them to theorize that media acts as a method of ideological control, subtly affecting and molding public understanding in ways that sustain the status. According to Herman and Chomsky, the Propaganda Model is developed around five filters (Figure 1) that determine the kind of news that reaches the public (Lukmantoro *et al.*, 2019). These filters interact to "make approval," ensuring that media outcome aligns with the passions of leading exclusive teams.

Ownership: The model highlights that the ownership of media outlets plays a critical role in fitting media web content (Mir, 2020). Since big firms or conglomerates own most significant media electrical outlets, their coverage is typically lined up with business interests. This filter suggests that owners' financial interests and political associations influence the sort of tales that are prioritized and how they are reported.

Advertising: The second filter concentrates on the resources of funding for media organizations, primarily advertising. Dependency on advertising and marketing income develops an inherent conflict of interest; media outlets are obliged to deal with the rate of interests of advertisers, often at the expenditure of impartial coverage. This reliance on advertising income can constrict the information agenda to fit the preferences of marketers and, by expansion, the financial elite.

Sourcing: Herman and Chomsky recognized that the media's reliance on official sources for information dramatically affects the material (Hyzen, 2023). Media organizations often rely on federal government, corporate and skilled sources for information, which brings about a propensity to report from the viewpoint of those in power. This reliance creates a cooperative partnership between the media and effective sources, often leading to an uncritical and biased depiction of events.



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 1. Propaganda model filters

Flak: Flak describes adverse feedback to a media statement or program. This can consist of grievances, claims and legislative activities vs media organizations or any other forms of backlash that can be used to self-control the media (Fuchs, 2018). Herman and Chomsky suggest that the worry of flak is a deterrent vs wandering off from certain narratives. Media electrical outlets, doubting encountering flak, commonly prevent controversial or dissenting points of view that may prompt reactions from effective entities.

Anti-ideologies: The last filter is the frequency of anti-ideologies, like anti-communism during the Cold Battle, which works as a nationwide faith and control device. This element reflects the powerful ideological undertones that influence media web content. Such ideological backgrounds offer a framework within which news is reported and typically offer to demonize specific groups or concepts that oppose the dominant class structure. In the modern context, this might manifest as anti-terrorism or various other prevailing beliefs that shape media narratives in a certain direction.

The selfish interests of corporate media house or politically aligned media are a major determinant of what is being reported about CPEC because such media falls in line with geopolitical masters of the Western world who want to contain China's growing influence. Complementing this bias is advertising reliance, given that critical trade routes and market stakeholders in multinational corporations are likely to slant coverage to portray CPEC as a threat or an economic liability.

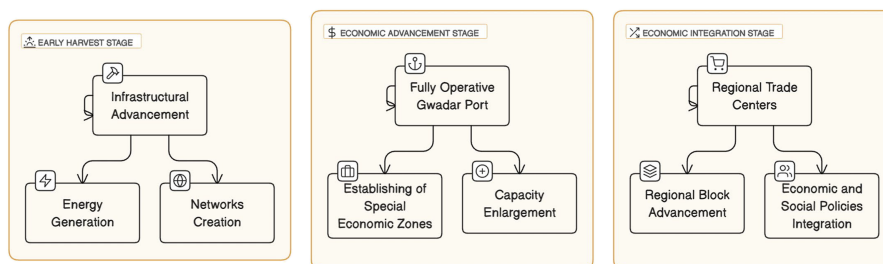
From various sources of news, western media, specifically, hire the services of think tanks and experts with preset negative outlooks on CPEC as debt diplomacy or as environmental breakdown, mirroring the interests of belligerents against the Sino-Pak cooperation. These narratives are complemented by flak—negative reactions or advocacy campaigns against supporters of CPEC by local and regional media proponents, especially those fundamental to the Pakistani region. Last, “authoritarianism” is yet another anti-ideology used in propaganda. Opponents of CPEC often position it in terms of “imposing” Chinese ‘authoritarianism over Pakistani’ democracy” and refer to democratic values to create doubt about the utility of this project.

In the given structural dynamics of 5GW where information and psychological operations dominate, the Propaganda Model identifies the use of media to sabotage the progress of CPEC. Semi and non-state enemies exploit fake news, cyber trolls and fake news to aggravate distrust among Pakistanis and question China's motives. Such strategies are designed to sow doubt as to the project's viability, benefits or need for execution based on perceived injustice, corruption or insecure neighborhood.

Through the analysis of the Propaganda Model of CPEC, this paper shows how perception is managed through strategic narratives to align it with larger power politics. It emphasizes critical media consumption and the necessity for active and objective presentations of information by stakeholders to avoid delusional analysis dissemination and ensure accurate analyses of relevant information.

CPEC: geopolitical and economic context

The CPEC, a linchpin of China's ambitious BRI, means a watershed minute behind the scenes of China–Pakistan relations as the stages of CPEC mentioned in Figure 2. Its beginnings can be mapped back to the very early twenty-first century when China started to discover methods to boost its finances and vital effects in Asia. The main statement of CPEC was available in 2013 by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Pakistan (Bhowmick, 2023). This noted the beginning of an ingrained partnership between the two countries (Table 1). CPEC was pictured as a complex development task, including a network of roadways, railways, pipelines and energy projects. It stretches over 3,000 kilometers from Gwadar in Pakistan's Baluchistan province to China's Xinjiang area (Masood, 2023). CPEC intends to provide China with direct accessibility to the Arabian Sea, lowering its dependence on the Strait of Malacca and boosting its calculated depth in the region. The growth of CPEC proceeded quickly, with significant



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 2. The stages of CPEC

financial investments put in by China (Fazl-e-Haider, 2023). These financial investments were guided toward framework advancement, energy projects and the development of industrial areas. The corridor was viewed as a game-changer for Pakistan's economic situation (Khan, 2023), ensuring not only the improvement of its facilities but also the promotion of financial development and addressing chronic energy scarcities.

Geopolitically, the corridor functions as a sign of the strengthening ties between China and Pakistan (Abb, 2023). For China, CPEC is not simply a financial venture but a tactical device to counterbalance the enhancing existence of the USA and its allies in the Asia-Pacific area. By acquiring direct access to the Arabian Sea, China can make a much safer and more efficient route for its energy imports, crucial for its sustained economic development. For Pakistan, CPEC represents a chance to strengthen its calculated value in the region. Located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Center East, Pakistan's geographic location is much more significant with CPEC (Mamchii, 2023). The project boosts Pakistan's worth as a vital local gamer and gives it the advantage of its intricate relationships with bordering countries, including India and Afghanistan.

Additionally, CPEC has ramifications for the more comprehensive local power dynamics. It is seen as a tactical counter to India's influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (Rahman et al., 2021). India has seen CPEC with suspicion and worry, mainly because the passage passes with the Gilgit-Baltistan location of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a location asserted by India (Sangkar and Huda, 2023). This has really caused enhanced tension between the two nuclear-armed next-door neighbors, including a layer of complexity to local safety and security.

The vital effects of CPEC likewise lengthen its obligation to affect the stability of power in Asia. It works as a crucial component in China's more detailed "String of Pearls" strategy, which includes establishing a network of Chinese military and malls along its sea lines of interaction broadening from the Chinese landmass to Sudan (Ghosh, 2020). The growth of Gwadar port under CPEC is particularly substantial in this context, as it provides China with a tactical grasp in the Arabian Sea, near the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial chokepoint for international oil deliveries. In addition, CPEC will probably play a vital role in the monetary advancement of the broader area. Improving the connections between Central Asia, South Asia and the Center East opens brand-new avenues for financial partnerships. This can lead to higher regional combinations, lowering historical tensions and promoting financial connection among nations in these areas.

For Pakistan, the economic advantages of CPEC are diverse. One of the most immediate impacts is anticipated to be on Pakistan's energy market and infrastructure (Figure 3) (Khan et al., 2022a, b). Developing expressways, railways and pipelines under CPEC will significantly improve Pakistan's transportation and logistics capacities, reducing transport costs and time and enhancing overall efficiency.

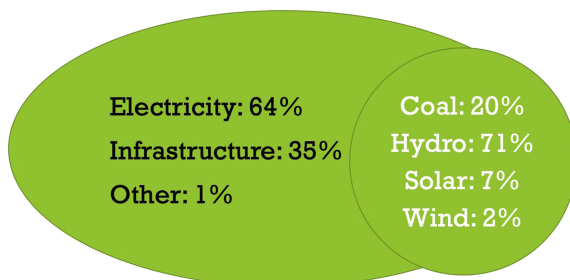
Table 1. CPEC projects description

					
INFRASTRUCTURE ROUTES: The Eastern, Central, and Western corridors are envisioned for road, railway, and special economic zone infrastructure development. The Eastern Corridor will link Lahore and Karachi via roads/motorways. KPK and Baluchistan will be connected via the Central Corridor. A crucial section of CPEC, the Western Corridor connects Gwadar Port to KPK, Baluchistan, and Xinjiang via the Khunjerab Pass	RAILWAY NETWORK : Upgrading the Karachi-Peshawar railway line and connecting it to Kashgar, Xinjiang, China. The railway line upgrade would boost train speed to 143 km/h	ROAD NETWORK: CPEC will build about 4,000 km of roadways. Many routes connect Eastern, Central, and Western Pakistan. Roads to Xinjiang and Gwadar Port will be built to reach the Middle East	ENERGY PROJECTS: Before CPEC, Pakistan had a massive energy crisis. CPEC has 22 energy projects, several of which have been built quickly to ease the power crisis. With an anticipated US\$ 27 billion investment, CPEC energy projects would improve the national grid by adding over 1,400 MW of power. The primary power sources will be coal, solar, wind, hydro, and fuel	SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES: CPEC will promote infrastructure development by establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to enhance Pakistan's economy and maintain trade balance with regional players linked by BRI. SEZs will be built in Gilgit, Mirpur, Islamabad, and Karachi. These SEZs will boost industrial activity, technological transfer, and ICT	OIL AND GAS PIPELINES: China exploits the CPEC route to transfer oil and gas from the Middle East via a pipeline network. From 12,537 to 2,295 miles, these oil and gas pipes will lower consignment delivery time from 16 days to 3 days, making it cheaper and more efficient. China plans to use CPEC as an energy corridor

Source(s): Table by Dr. Usman

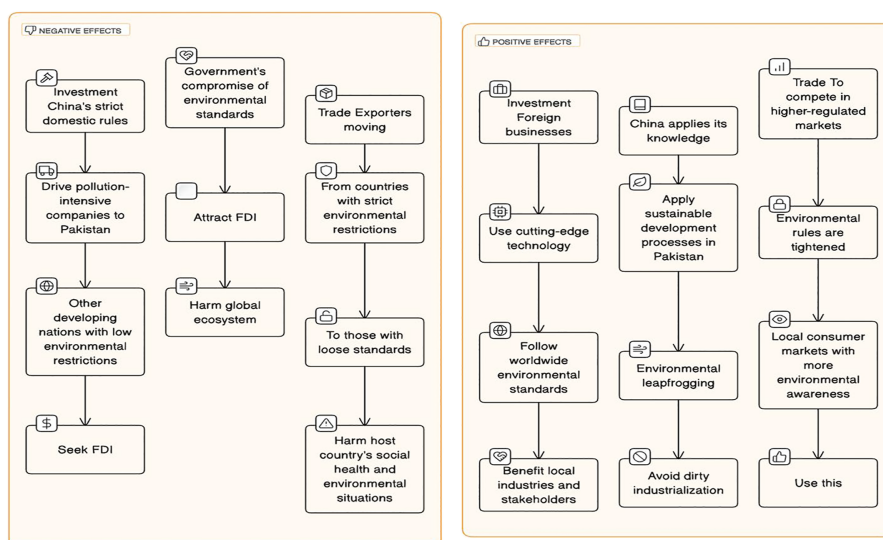
Problems regarding Chinese financial investments and loans have been elevated, with movie critics warning of a prospective “debt-trap” circumstance (Shaikh and Chen, 2021). The fear is that the heavy concern of paying back Chinese loans might stress Pakistan’s economic climate, compromising its financial sovereignty. Furthermore, there are apprehensions concerning the ecological impact (Figure 4) of these large-scale tasks and the variation of regional neighborhoods (Khalid et al., 2022).

For China, the economic ramifications of CPEC are similarly significant. CPEC offers China a direct, safe and secure course to the Arabian Sea, bypassing the longer and more precarious sea path through the Strait of Malacca. This is vital for China’s energy safety, as many oil imports originate from the Middle East (Alam et al., 2023). By minimizing transport



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 3. CPEC (infrastructure and electric power)



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 4. Environmental impact and CPEC

time and prices, CPEC boosts the effectiveness of China's trade paths. Furthermore, CPEC is seen as a driver for the economic growth of China's western areas, particularly Xinjiang.

5GW: definition and evolution

5GW stands for a standard change in the nature and conduct of armed forces conflict, noting a considerable separation from conventional war techniques and strategies. The development of 5GW can be mapped with the succeeding generations of warfare, each identified by distinctive features and techniques (Krishnan, 2022). The very first four generations of war were primarily defined by their technical innovations and tactical advancements. The initial generation concentrated on massed manpower, the second on firepower, the third on maneuver and the fourth introduced insurgency and uneven war, blending conventional and guerrilla techniques. These generations were identified by straight, often state-centric, fights where the distinction between combatants and non-combatants was relatively clear. 5GW, on the other

hand, moves beyond these conventional frameworks, emphasizing indirect, nonlinear approaches to war. It eschews the straight army fight of previous generations for a subtler, usually covert approach. 5GW is noted by its emphasis on leveraging innovation, info and emotional methods to accomplish calculated objectives, usually obscuring the lines between armed forces and noncombatant rounds and between battle and peace.

Among the specified components of 5GW is an online battle, which involves making use of electronic modern-day technology to assault, safeguard and adjust details systems. Cyber warfare represents a substantial adjustment from the physical battlegrounds of previous generations to the online realms of cyberspace (Martin, 2022). It is composed of tasks like hacking right into networks, swiping delicate information, disrupting important frameworks and spreading false information. Another crucial component of 5GW includes the control of info to get an affordable advantage (Browne, 2023). It includes using publicity, disinformation and mental procedures to affect public points of view, form understandings and modify the training course of disputes. In the age of social media and digital connection, the war has tackled brand-new measurements, with the quick circulation of details and the capability to reach large audiences promptly. Propaganda, a device as old as war itself, has been redefined in the context of 5GW. Modern Propaganda is not almost distributing a specific perspective; it is regarding controlling the narrative, forming the info landscape, and usually creating a post-truth environment. The usage of Propaganda in 5GW is advanced, leveraging media, social platforms and various other interaction methods to sway popular opinion, undermine enemies and mobilize support (Kowalczyk and Pounders, 2016).

Examining the detailed study is informative to understand the influence and techniques of 5GW fully. These examples highlight how cyber and information war methods are used in modern disputes and geopolitical maneuvers.

- (1) Russian Interference in the 2016 United States Elections (Hosenball, 2020): Possibly among the most mentioned instances of 5GW is the claimed Russian interference in the 2016 United States governmental election. Records suggest a coordinated effort by Russian state actors to impact the public point of view and disrupt the picking procedure with cyber-attacks and an arranged campaign of disinformation and propaganda, mostly circulated through social media systems. This circumstance emphasizes the strength of cyber and info war in affecting the political landscape of a country.
- (2) The Stuxnet Cyberattack: The Stuxnet infection, assumed to be a joint American Israeli cyberweapon, targeted Iran's nuclear facilities and efficiently damaged its uranium enrichment centers. This procedure, which was carried out discreetly, showed just how cyber war may be utilized to achieve important objectives without conventional armed forces interaction, keeping in mind a significant moment in the background of 5GW.
- (3) The Syrian Civil Battle and Details Warfare: The Syrian Civil War provides a complex tapestry of 5GW techniques, with many celebrities leveraging social media sites and cyber capabilities to progress their programs. Attention campaigns, false information and electronic security have really been extensively used by both the Syrian government and resistance pressures, along with outdoor stars related to the issue.
- (4) China's South China Sea Technique: China's South China Sea technique shows a tactical mix of army, financial and info battle methods (Misalucha-Willoughby, 2023). While progressively militarizing islands in the location, China has also gotten involved in a collective effort to regulate the story around its activities through different channels. Lastly, 5GW stands for a significant development in the technique of problem and calculated procedures. It transcends typical limits and methods, employing a mix of cyber war, details adjustment and emotional tactics.

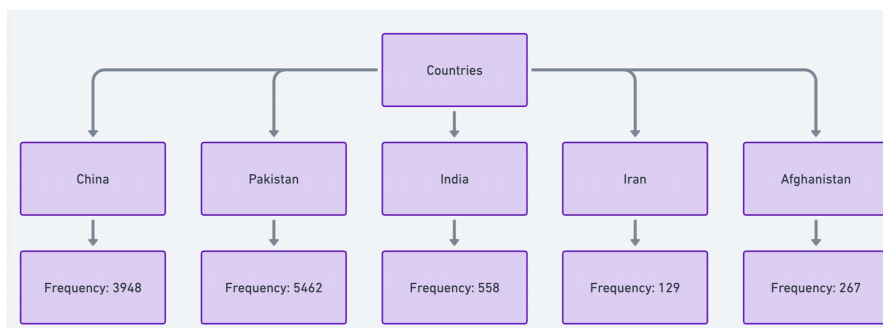
CPEC in the crosshairs of 5GW

The CPEC has not only been a topic of economic rate of interest but also a centerpiece in the calculated computations of different regional and international powers. This interest rate has materialized in various detailed projects intended to affect public perception and planning decisions about the task. Further, it represents 5GW techniques, where information, as opposed to brute army force, is used as a key device of impact and control. Several of these info campaigns have intended to cast questions on the expediency, objectives and potential impacts of CPEC. Some have highlighted the economic risks connected with the project, including the financial obligation worries on Pakistan and China's capacity for economic domination (Khaliq, 2023). Others have concentrated on the geopolitical ramifications, portraying CPEC as a tactical action by China to gain a footing in South Asia and the Indian Sea, potentially upsetting the regional equilibrium of power (Ladwig *et al.*, 2023).

In enhancement to economic and geopolitical angles, some detailed projects have targeted regional and environmental issues (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023). These have highlighted the environmental degradation due to massive infrastructure projects and the absence of openness in project transactions. The resources of these detailed projects are diverse, consisting of worldwide media outlets and even social media platforms. The stories circulated with these channels often show the broader geopolitical rate of interests of the countries or groups they stand for.

The role of media in forming the narrative around CPEC has been considerable (Figure 5). Both national and worldwide media electrical outlets have played an essential function in how the project is viewed by the public, both within Pakistan and worldwide. National media in Pakistan has usually represented CPEC in a positive light (Afzaal *et al.*, 2019), stressing its potential to enhance the economic situation and connections with China. This representation aligns with the Pakistani government's view of CPEC as a transformative project for the nation's future. Nonetheless, there have been instances where national media has also reported on the challenges and objections of CPEC, reflecting a degree of variety in coverage (Qusien and Robbins, 2022).

International media protection of CPEC has been even more diverse, often showing the geopolitical passions of countries. Western media outlets have often concentrated on the debt ramifications of CPEC for Pakistan, framing it within the bigger story of China's "debt-trap diplomacy" (Himmer and Rod, 2022). Chinese state media, on the other hand, has regularly depicted CPEC as a win-win effort for both China and Pakistan (Shaukat, 2022), stressing the common economic advantages and downplaying any unfavorable elements. The function of media in this context is a timeless example of exactly how details can be utilized as a weapon in



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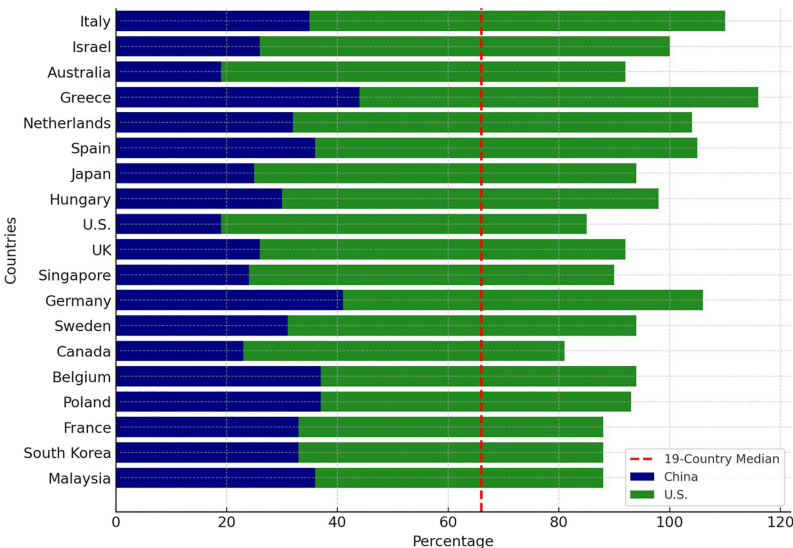
Figure 5. Number of news related to CPEC (2019)

5GW. By forming the story around CPEC, media outlets can affect the public point of view, affect plan choices and modify the course of geopolitical methods.

The different narratives in media insurance coverage of CPEC additionally highlight the underlying predispositions and calculated passions of various nations. Media in different nations doubts China’s growing global influence, such as the United States (Figure 6), often tends to cast CPEC within the more comprehensive story of China’s broadening economic and army reach (Silver *et al.*, 2022). This coverage usually consists of apprehension concerning China’s long-lasting tactical intentions and issues over local security.

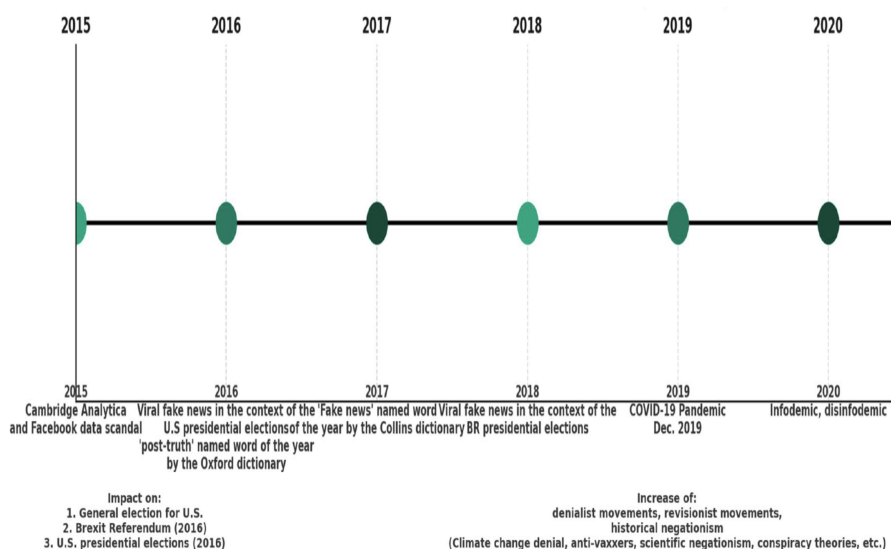
The information projects vs CPEC show several classic propaganda strategies adjusted for the contemporary era of electronic media and global connection. A vital evaluation of these techniques provides an understanding of how information is being used as a critical tool in the context of 5GW.

- (1) Narrative Framework: One of the most prominent methods observed is the framing of narratives to fit geopolitical agendas (Rodrigues and Barcelos, 2020). This entails selectively providing facts, leaving out inconvenient information and highlighting specific facets over others to form a public understanding of a wanted instruction.
- (2) Appeal to Fear and Nationalism: Some campaigns play on concerning national sovereignty and economic freedom (Mylonas and Tudor, 2021). By depicting CPEC as a threat to Pakistan’s autonomy or as a means of Chinese neocolonialism, these campaigns look to stimulate nationalist sentiments and resistance to the project.
- (3) Disinformation and Misinformation (Santos-D’Amorim and Miranda, 2021): The spreading of false or misleading information is a key tactic used to create confusion and mistrust. It is also the use of fake news stories, doctored images and out-of-context statements disseminated through social media and other online platforms (Figure 7).
- (4) Echo Chambers and Confirmation Bias (Modgil *et al.*, 2021): The algorithms in social media platforms create echo chambers by reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and biases.



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 6. China Influence vs US influence (2022)



Source(s): Figure by Dr. Usman

Figure 7. Timeline of misinformation events (2015–2020)

In such a way, the targeted content is designed to resonate in propaganda campaigns with specific audiences. In this manner, the propaganda projected targets the audience by reinforcing their existing views as well as deepening their divisions.

- (5) Use of Influencers and Opinion Leaders (Fakhreddin and Foroudi, 2021): Certain narratives are given credibility by virtue of Influencers and opinion leaders. They include journalists, academics and social media influencers. The power of such personnel can sway public opinion more efficiently and effectively than anonymous content.

Finally, the interplay of CPEC with Fifth-Generation warfare tactics vis-a-vis the theater of information and propaganda poses a complex nature of contemporary geopolitical conflicts. The function of media, both traditional and electronic, healthy tales and influencing popular viewpoints is a testament to the power of information in modern calculated maneuvers. By assessing the promotion methods utilized in the information war CPEC, one can acquire a much deeper understanding of the subtleties and complexities involved in the geopolitical contestations of the twenty-first century.

Application of the propaganda model to CPEC and 5GW

As per Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, the Propaganda Model offers a structure for understanding how media material is affected by various ideological and financial forces (Alkhateeb, 2023). In the context of the CPEC and 5GW, this model can be used to explore just how narratives are formed and distributed. The ownership of media outlets plays a critical role in fitting the representation of CPEC. Media owned by entities with direct or indirect risks in CPEC, whether in Pakistan, China or elsewhere, are more likely to provide the project in a beneficial light. This appears in the favorable coverage of CPEC in Pakistani and Chinese state-owned or associated media, where the corridor is typically depicted as a precursor of economic success and regional connection. On the other hand, media electrical outlets in nations that watch China's surge with uneasiness, like India or the USA, tend to represent CPEC a lot more doubtful, concentrating on its strategic effects and prospective risks.

The funding source for media electrical outlets considerably affects their coverage of CPEC. Media dependent on advertising revenue may prevent publishing web content that estranges possible marketers, including those with vested passions in CPEC or its rival projects. Furthermore, the financing from the federal government or exclusive entities with details political or financial agendas can influence media narratives, resulting in either overtly supportive or vital portrayals of CPEC. The dependence on resources for information also forms media stories. Media electrical outlets often depend upon “main” sources, such as government declarations and news releases, for details on CPEC. This dependence can lead to a biased representation that lines up with the government’s point of view, specifically in nations where media liberty is restricted. On the other hand, media in nations with adversarial links to China or Pakistan could depend a lot more on resources vital to CPEC, installing it as a geopolitical maneuver or an economic obligation trap for Pakistan.

Flak, or unfavorable feedback to media affirmations or programs, features to strategy the media and enhance specific stories. In the context of CPEC, flak can materialize in various kinds, from official rebukes to online trolling. Media outlets that release content vital to CPEC might face flak from federal government authorities or nationalist groups, especially in China and Pakistan, where the task is considered a symbol of across-the-country contentment and mutual synergy. This stress can lead to self-censorship or an alteration in the tone of insurance coverage to stay clear of effects. Likewise, global media that scrutinize China’s intentions or highlight the adverse facets of CPEC could encounter backlash in the kind of protests, online negative campaigns and even cyber-attacks.

Flak can also take the type of economic effects, such as the withdrawal of advertising and marketing or sponsorship, which can be specifically efficient in influencing media electrical outlets in market-driven media landscapes. The hazard of shedding financial backing can discreetly, yet considerably, influence editorial decisions, making media outlets a lot more mindful in their coverage of CPEC, especially if it opposes the rate of interests of their financial stakeholders. In addition, in the digital age, flak can be amplified through social network platforms, where managed campaigns can promptly create a large quantity of negative reactions. This type of digital backlash can be especially effective in shaping media tales, as it targets the media business and influences public viewpoints.

The representation of CPEC within the structure of anti-communist and anti-Islamic beliefs makes use of an essential viewpoint on just how worldwide tales are formed (Hevia, 2021). In some Western media electrical outlets, coverage of CPEC and China’s more comprehensive BRI frequently intersects with a story of treatment vs the spread of Chinese influence, showing a surprise anti-communist idea (Feng, 2023). This portrayal benefits from historic anxiety concerning communist expansionism, placing China’s economic ventures as a form of geopolitical preeminence. On the other hand, in the context of anti-Islamic ideologies, the depiction of CPEC can be influenced by the extra thorough tale of Islamic radicalism and terrorism, particularly in Western media. Despite CPEC being mostly a financial project, its location in Pakistan, a Muslim-majority country typically linked in Western media with Islamic extremism, can color its representation. The striking fact is that this propaganda and 5GW are projecting the war of narratives by overshadowing the CPEC as an economic and developmental project and raising concerns about security, terrorism and regional stability. This ideology can significantly tilt the image of CPEC on the global stage. Moreover, it can lead to a political and binary view of the project by negating its economic and geopolitical value. Therefore, this portrayal making of CPEC in the media space becomes a battlefield of contrasting ideological and geopolitical interests.

Hence, the lens of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model to CPEC visualizes the multiple ways in which information on the corridor is filtered and disseminated. This model filters: ownership, funding, sourcing, flak and ideological biases – and provides a framework for grasping the intricate narratives about CPEC. By investigating these narratives through the lens of the Propaganda Model, it is clarified that media content is not reality but a construct of several ideological, political and economic forces. However, considering this essence is

crucial for dissecting the complex propaganda web and information warfare focusing on key geopolitical projects like CPEC in the current era.

Case studies: media portrayal of CPEC

To understand the diverse media portrayals of CPEC, it is instructive to conduct a comparative analysis of different media outlets across various geopolitical regions. This analysis reveals how the portrayal of CPEC is influenced by national interests, geopolitical alignments and economic considerations.

- (1) **Pakistani Media:** In Pakistan, nationwide media generally provides CPEC in a favorable light (Yuan *et al.*, 2023). It is represented as a transformative initiative that promises financial revival, infrastructural growth and enhanced connection. This coverage lines up with the Pakistani federal government's story, highlighting the benefits of strengthened connections with China. Nevertheless, some independent media outlets and reporters in Pakistan have raised concerns about openness, the effects of financial debt and the unequal development of CPEC (Li and Liu, 2020).
- (2) **Chinese Media:** Chinese state-affiliated media portrays CPEC as a trademark of China's BRI, highlighting the usual advantages for China and Pakistan (Yang and Van, 2021). The security emphasizes designs of worldwide participation, economic advancement and regional connection. Objections or challenges of CPEC are seldom reviewed, mirroring China's tactical interests in giving the project.
- (3) **Indian Media:** Provided India's determined worries over CPEC, specifically its course via contested region in Kashmir, Indian media normally takes on an essential position (The Indian Express, 2022). Indian media regularly focuses on the geopolitical facets of CPEC, representing it as a tactical encirclement by China and a danger to India's defense (Akhter, 2021). This propaganda also highlights Pakistan as a pity debt burden country and another East India Company dominating the region.
- (4) **Western Media:** The Western media specifically United States and Europe provide a different image of CPEC. They focus more on the broader implications of China's growing influence as a geopolitical player rather than the economic aspect of CPEC as a project. They illustrate the themes of "debt-trap diplomacy" and environmental concerns and transparency issues more than economic prosperity.

However, the comparative analysis of media imaging CPEC examines the various patterns of bias and propaganda motivated by the national interests of state actors. Meanwhile, Pakistan and China frame CPEC as an economic prosperity project majorly whereas India and Western countries warn of its strategic repercussions. Another fact is that Media outlets use selective reporting about CPEC as per their preferred agendas. Pakistani and Chinese media act as a counter-narrative handle of CPEC.

The selection of language and imagery in coverage can subtly influence public perception. Favorable representations of CPEC often use language that suggests development and cooperation, while opponent representations make use of language that suggests risk and problem. Often, the stories in the media about CPEC are consistent with the corresponding national policies. For circumstances, Pakistani and Chinese media, mirroring their federal governments' positions, focus on the project's favorable impacts. On the other hand, Indian media, aligning with India's main placement on CPEC, often tends to highlight the project's debates, especially its path through disputed areas.

Different media outlets precisely utilize resources that support their point of view. Pakistani and Chinese media quote federal government officials and regional beneficiaries to emphasize CPEC's success (Majeed *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, Indian and Western media could provide more room to experts or professionals crucial to the project. The non-inclusion of crucial

contextual information is an additional pattern of prejudice. This can be seen in exactly how some Western media outlets might not totally contextualize the reasons behind Pakistan's energy crisis and framework demands, which are important chauffeurs for the nation's engagement in CPEC.

The varying representations of CPEC in media throughout different regions have a significant influence on public assumption and, consequently, on policy formulation (Yuanyuan *et al.*, 2023). Media stories play an important duty in shaping popular opinion concerning CPEC. In Pakistan, the positive portrayal adds to a generally desirable view of the project among the public. On the other hand, in India and some Western nations, the vital defense can lead to a more doubtful or adverse assumption of CPEC (Lu, 2021). Media coverage of CPEC also influences policy formulation at both national and global degrees. In nations where the media portrays CPEC positively, policymakers might be more inclined to support or be involved with the project. In countries with media negatively portrayed, policymakers could embrace an extra mindful or adversarial strategy to CPEC. The media's representation of CPEC can influence global connections, specifically between the countries involved – China, Pakistan and India (Shah *et al.*, 2020). The stories can either worsen stress or foster understanding, depending upon exactly how the info exists and is analyzed. With the development of electronic media and social platforms, the dissemination of details concerning CPEC has become quicker and more extensive. This can amplify the effect of media narratives on public perception and policy; however, it additionally enhances the threat of false information and propaganda spreading promptly.

Discussion

(1) Implications for international relations and regional security

The CPEC and the characteristics of 5GW have significant effects on global connections and regional security. CPEC, as a major advancement and framework project, not only has economic effects but also holds profound geopolitical value. CPEC has the possibility to develop economic interdependence between China and Pakistan, which might add to local stability. Nevertheless, this connection is compared against the background of geopolitical rivalry, particularly with India, which sees CPEC as a critical challenge. The corridor goes through contested regions, intensifying tensions and possibly destabilizing the currently vulnerable safety circumstances in South Asia.

CPEC stands for a vital partnership between China and Pakistan, indicating a change in local power dynamics. This collaboration can transform the equilibrium of power in South Asia, testing the typical prominence of India and perhaps causing an adjustment of neighborhood partnerships. The project is additionally a crucial part of China's BRI, which aims to increase China's economic and important influence globally. The expansion is perceived with doubt by Western powers discreetly the USA, which considers it as a challenge to their dominance.

(2) The duty of media literacy in recognizing propaganda

In the wave of the 5GW where disinformation and misinformation overshadow, media literacy becomes essential for analyzing the biases and motives. It includes the ability to critically analyze media content, distinguishing the biases, propaganda techniques and the influence of ownership and funding on narrative building. This skill in the form of awareness is vital to apprehending the several images of CPEC and the 5GW tactics. Subsequently, getting hands-on on how media platforms create echo chambers and confirmation biases is crucial. Ultimately, this media literacy helps individuals navigate and recognize this warfare by ensuring balanced information and understanding of issues of 5GW in projects like CPEC.

Advertising media literacy with academic initiatives and public understanding projects can equip people to seriously check out info, reducing the influence of publicity and false

information. Media literacy additionally includes understanding the historical and social contexts in which news is generated and shared. This understanding is specifically relevant in the situation of CPEC, where historical stress, local ambitions and international aspirations intersect. An informed public, equipped with essential media literacy abilities, is less susceptible to publicity and much better prepared to participate in notified discussions about such complex geopolitical tasks.

(3) Future difficulties in combating 5GW.

The advancing nature of 5GW provides numerous obstacles for nations, establishments and people. These obstacles require ingenious approaches and work with efforts at different levels. As modern technology continues to advance, so do the techniques utilized in 5GW. Cyberwar capabilities, expert systems and advanced disinformation projects are likely to become much more common. Adapting to these technological modifications and establishing countermeasures will certainly be an essential difficulty. Dealing with the effects of 5GW, particularly in the domains of cyber war and information control, needs worldwide participation. Developing global requirements and policies for state routines in the Internet world, information sharing and collaborations in tackling false information are crucial actions in these directions.

Among the critical problems in dealing with 5GW tactics is supporting the demand for safety and security and the protection of constitutional freedoms and rights. Actions to respond to propaganda and false details should not lead to censorship or the suppression of respectable dissent. Public organizations, including the media, academic systems and policy-making bodies, require to be enhanced to withstand the manipulative techniques of 5GW. This includes making openness, responsibility and strength regardless of outdoor impacts. Informing the public about the nature of 5GW and its manifestations in everyday life is vital. Recognition campaigns that notify residents pertaining to the approaches of cyber warfare, details control and propaganda can create a much more immune and enlightened culture.

CPEC, 5GW and the use of the Propaganda Model in this conversation shed light on how complicated the service economics link with national politics along with how information shapes modern-day geopolitical scenarios. Such characteristics have far-reaching implications for global relations and regional security, requiring a broad perspective and necessary actions. As Media effectiveness emerges as an essential tool for learning and reacting to publicity, the future challenges in counteracting 5GW require collaborative efforts toward technological alterations, global cooperation and citizen involvement.

Conclusion

The review of CPEC within the frameworks of 5GW and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model has opened a range of potential looking. CPEC is not just a financial venture; it's strategic in nature and bears significant impacts on regional as well as international geopolitics. It means a significant financial involvement in infrastructure and development projects not only in Pakistan but also makes up an essential element of China's BRI.

The methods of 5GW, containing cyber war, and information adjustment, have in fact been proactively used in forming international presumptions of CPEC. These techniques are used by a range of geopolitical actors to further their agendas and narratives about CPEC. Media insurance coverage of CPEC significantly throughout various locations and is influenced by different variables such as possession, financing, sourcing and ideological prejudices. This affects public assumptions and policymaking relating to CPEC. The analysis found patterns of bias and favoritism in media portrayals of CPEC, with nationwide interest as well as geopolitical placements playing a role. These encompass storytelling frames, critical reporting and the use of language and graphics to influence the audience's perspective. CPEC itself can bring stability to the region with financial development and decrease regional stress due to its important implications.

As we envision the future, however, both CPEC and the emerging scenario of 5GW contain a complicated picture of challenges and opportunities. The CPEC being at the crossroads of financial development and geopolitical strategy would continue to be a strong determining force shaping South Asia Regional dynamics. Its completion and operationalization are anticipated to bring substantial financial advantages to Pakistan, possibly transforming its facilities and power landscape. However, the success of CPEC is not simply subject to the end of its infrastructure tasks, but likewise, to navigating the geopolitical stress and economic challenges, it has stirred. The future of CPEC will likely be affected by the advancing worldwide connections, especially the nature of China's relationships with major world powers and neighboring nations. The project's capability to adapt to these changing dynamics, address worries relating to economic obligation sustainability and ecological effect and see to its fair advantages will absolutely be crucial in determining its long-term success.

Furthermore, the digitalization of the international landscape, developments in synthetic knowledge and cyber abilities, and the expanding value of information as a strategic home will improve the intricacy and strength of 5GW a lot more. In this advancing scenario, countries and global organizations will absolutely require developing a great deal of more ingenious methods to deal with the difficulties positioned by 5GW. This consists of increasing cybersecurity facilities, developing global criteria for state behavior on the Internet and promoting worldwide team efforts to combat incorrect details and attention.

In wrap-up, the trip of CPEC and the unraveling tale of 5GW are a microcosm of the troubles and information of modern geopolitics. This research study highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of these sensations, informed by important media effectiveness and computed understanding. As the worldwide area browses these complex landscapes, the lessons from evaluating CPEC and 5GW will certainly be important in forming a more stable and flourishing future.

Recommendations

Scholars

- (1) Investigate several important factors that are associated with the functionality of 5GW and its impact raised toward several vital global events like CPEC.
- (2) Strengthen interdisciplinary linkages in subjects like political science, media and international relations to provide a balanced outlook to projects like CPEC.

Media companies

- (1) Make fair and moderate approaches and provide multiple perspectives regarding the CPEC.
- (2) It is necessary to go beyond the top-down government's discourse by including the outsider assessment and the inhabitants' accounts in the coverage.
- (3) Promote effective mechanisms to fight and neutralize fake news in connection with CPEC and related 5GW operations to cover the events appropriately.
- (4) Educate the audience to develop the skills necessary to decode the meaning of content and embark on the interpretation of a story.

Policymakers

- (1) Make decisions considering holistic and balanced data about CPEC that facilitates for both sides, considering both the pros and the cons.

- (2) It is important to come up with countermeasures to 5GW tactics such as strengthening the cybersecurity systems and possibly coming up with a global front to fight information warfare.
- (3) Encourage advocacy for political and economic discussion on regional issues related to CPEC and seek to develop regional stability and economic development solutions.

These recommendations are designed to improve comprehensibility, collaboration and IDS approaches to the complex issues surrounding CPEC and 5GW.

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