

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI), CPEC, AND THE IRAN-US WAR: A GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), introduced by China in 2013, represents one of the most ambitious geoeconomic projects in contemporary global politics, aiming to enhance connectivity across Asia, Europe, and Africa. At the center of this initiative lies the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which serves as a critical link connecting western China to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. However, the emergence and escalation of tensions between Iran and the United States, culminating in a broader military confrontation in recent years, have introduced significant uncertainty into the regional and global order. This paper examines the geopolitical and economic implications of the Iran-US conflict for BRI and CPEC. Using a qualitative analytical framework grounded in geopolitical economy, the study argues that the Iran-US war disrupts China's westward expansion strategy, threatens regional stability, and exposes the structural vulnerabilities of transnational infrastructure initiatives. The findings suggest that while BRI and CPEC offer significant economic opportunities, their sustainability remains contingent upon geopolitical stability and strategic adaptability.

1. Introduction

The emergence of China as a key economic and strategic player in the global political economy has significantly influenced the transformation of the latter. At the center of this change is the Belt and Road Initiative, a broad-based strategy of improving the connectivity and economic integration of Asia, Europe, Africa, and other regions. Introduced in 2013, BRI is not merely an infrastructure development agenda, but a somewhat more comprehensive vision of global economic reordering where China is at the forefront. China aims to simplify the movement of trade and at the same time consolidate its geopolitical power in major areas through investments in transport networks, energy

corridors, and digital infrastructure (Rolland, 2017).

Under this larger project, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor has become a showcase project that can be seen as exemplifying the fusion of economic aspiration and strategic choice. CPEC links the western part of China (Xinjiang) with the Gwadar Port, which is located on the Arabian Sea in Pakistan, which would allow offering a shorter and possibly safer path to trade and energy transportation. The relevance of this corridor is more so given the long term worry of China over the susceptibility of its maritime supply chains, notably the one that transits through the Strait of Malacca. Developing an alternative route, CPEC improves the energy

security of China as well as it promotes the development of infrastructure and economic growth in Pakistan (Wolf, 2020).

The main thesis in this paper is that the Iran-US war is a structural break to the Chinese westward connectivity policy that creates the unspoken weaknesses of geoeconomic initiatives in a confrontation-prone setting. Although BRI and CPEC provide substantial potentials in economic growth and regional integration, their success depends on the stability of the geopolitical environment in which they are integrated after all. The continued existence of conflict in the Middle East does not only cripple these efforts, but also forces crucial players to reevaluate their strategic priorities and adjust to a world order that is growing more uncertain.

2. Literature Review

The increasing amount of literature on Belt and Road Initiative is an indicator of its importance as an economic and geopolitical phenomenon. There have been several analytical approaches to BRI by scholars based on development economics to strategic studies hence making it multidimensional. In its most basic form, BRI can be viewed as a geoeconomic tool that helps China to increase its global presence and solve the domestic economic issue of industrial overcapacity and inequality in the country. Rolland (2017) supports the view that BRI is a long term strategic vision that seeks to redefine the economic geography of Eurasia in such a way that China is at the centre of global trade networks.

Another, important, body of the literature highlights the geopolitical consequences of BRI, especially regarding great power rivalry. Summers (2016) argues that the initiative can be viewed as a continuation of a larger program of Chinese building alternative structures of international governance that would challenge Western dominated institutions. In this light, BRI is not just an economic project, but a strategic effort that aims at redefining the terms and conditions of international interactions. This understanding is also substantiated by the works suggesting that infrastructural investments contribute to the political leverage of China among the participating

countries. As a part of the larger project of BRI, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor has drawn significant academic interest because of its strategic significance. CPEC can be considered as the landmark project of BRI, which has become an important bridge between western China and the Arabian Sea. Wolf (2020) gives an in-depth discussion of CPEC and its potential to change the face of the Pakistani economy by investing in energy, transport, and industrialization. Simultaneously, the research also recognizes the issues related to the project, such as security issues, governance, and debt sustainability concerns.

The strategic importance of CPEC has been directly associated with how China attempts to solve its so called Malacca dilemma, which is its reliance on maritime routes that transit through the Strait of Malacca. Through the overland geographical routes like CPEC, China will have an opportunity to diversify its trade routes and limit its susceptibility to any disruption. Such a view is prevalent in the literature, and researchers believe that CPEC helps China improve its own energy security but also boosts its South Asian geopolitical power (Garlick, 2020). Another significant aspect of the literature is the relationship that China has with Iran, which is of key importance in the westward expansion of BRI. Strategic position Iran is a strategic transit point in Central Asia, Middle East and European trade and energy flows. Garlick (2020) emphasizes the importance of the cooperation between China and Iran within the framework of BRI, where Iran is not only a source of energy but also an important bridge connecting continents through transport innovation. Long term cooperation agreements that are meant to promote economic and infrastructural integration have also contributed to this relationship.

Nevertheless, the literature also highlights the restrictions that international sanctions on Iran place on the country, restricting the extent of its involvement in BRI. Sanctions do not only limit foreign investment but also pose uncertainties, which scares away potential partners. This means that the incorporation of Iran into BRI is not finished, which underscores the difficulties associated with the establishment of large scale

connectivity projects in sensitive political settings. This is a tension of opportunity and constraint that can be found throughout the discussion of the relations between China and Iran. Other effects of the Iran-US conflict that are well represented in the literature are the economic effects of the conflict especially in the context of the global energy markets. The Persian Gulf is a strategic oil production and transit center and any disturbance in this area has the potential to cause important impacts to supply and prices worldwide. Cordesman (2019) has identified the susceptibility of energy infrastructure in the Gulf, where military conflict or even the threat thereof may result in volatility of the market and economic uncertainty. Although the literature on BRI, CPEC, and the Iran-US conflict is quite broad, a gap still exists in the manner these themes can be integrated into one analytical framework. Majority of the studies are likely to take such issues separately, either the economic components of BRI or the security dynamics of the Iran-US conflict. This paper aims to fill this gap by giving a detailed analysis that focuses on the interaction between geo-economic initiatives and geopolitical conflict.

3. Theoretical Framework

The efforts to analyze the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the Iran-US conflict need to be framed using a multidimensional theoretical approach that would combine the findings of geopolitics and geoeconomics. The following structures offer complementary prisms with the help of which the process of economic connectivity and strategic rivalry could be interpreted. Whereas geopolitics is concerned with power, territoriality and security, geoeconomics is concerned with using economic tools to meet strategic goals. The cross-section of these strategies is especially applicable to the study of the operation of large scale infrastructure projects in an international system prone to conflicts. Geopolitically, the classical realism provides a background on which to explain the actions of the states in the Iran-US conflict. The realist theory assumes that the international system is anarchic, i.e. there is no central authority to impose rules or provide security. Consequently,

states become survival oriented and strive to increase their power as compared to others (Mearsheimer, 2001). In the example of the Iran and the United States this is reflected in a long-term security dilemma where each party views the other as threatening and thus result in escalation cycles. This competition is further aggravated by the existence of strategic chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz where control of strategic regions has important economic and military consequences.

Neoclassical geopolitics, in addition to being more realistic, can offer a more detailed explanation of the interaction of domestic and international factors in the decision of foreign policy. Flint and Taylor (2018) add that structural constraints are not the only factors that are used to lay down geopolitical strategies but also internal political elements such as leadership perceptions and economic priorities. This point of view is especially helpful in the context of the consideration of the Chinese approach to BRI, which is both an external orientation and internal needs like the development of the region and the restructuring of the economy. As a conceptual framework, geoeconomics augments geopolitical analysis by focusing on economic instruments that can be used in a strategic manner. According to Blackwill and Harris (2016), geoeconomics is the use of economic tools, such as trade, investment, and financial policies, to accomplish geopolitical objectives. In this context, one can interpret BRI as a kind of geoeconomic statecraft in the frame of which China aims to increase its influence and promote the economic interdependence. Developmental in nature of infrastructure investments under BRI is also aimed at the formation of networks of dependency that increase the strategic leverage of China (Luttwak, 1990).

Economic interdependence which is based on liberal institutionalism, is a different approach to the relationship between conflict and economic integration. Researchers like Keohane and Nye (2012) claim that greater economic interdependence can lead to a lessening of the possibility of conflict, as they increase the cost of confrontation and present incentives to cooperate.

In this perspective, the BRI and CPEC initiatives can enhance stability by creating a win-win economic relationship between the involved states. Nonetheless, the opponents argue that interdependence may also be associated with imbalances that may bring tensions, especially when one state becomes excessively reliant on the other. The weaknesses of the liberal views can be observed when the Iran-US conflict is taken into consideration, in which the interdependence in economic terms has not been able to stop the intensification. Rather, economic instruments like sanctions have served as instruments of coercion, and the two-sided fabric of economic interdependence. According to Drezner (2015), economic statecraft is both cooperative and conflictual when it is guided by strategic objectives of states. In the example of Iran, the US sanctions have greatly limited its economic potential, thus, influencing its involvement in projects such as BRI.

These theoretical approaches may be combined to provide an in-depth examination of how BRI, CPEC, and the Iran-US conflict interact with each other. Geopolitics is used in explaining why conflict and competition persist and geoeconomics is used to understand how economic instruments are used strategically. Interdependence Liberal theories offer an understanding of how cooperation is possible, and critical approaches emphasize structural processes of power and inequality.

4. Methodology

This paper is a qualitative research design that explores the geopolitical and economic nexus between the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Iran-United States conflict. The qualitative approach is suitable since the topic of research deals with intricate political, strategic and economic relationship that cannot be exhaustively measured just by quantitative measures. Rather, the study is based on interpretive and analytical approaches in order to cognize patterns, relationships and structural dynamics of the global political economy. The study is founded on secondary data only. Some of them are peer reviewed journal articles, academic

books, policy papers, institutional reports published by institutions like the World Bank, International Energy Agency, Council on Foreign Relations, and Brookings Institution. This enables a thorough synthesis of available knowledge and at the same time makes sure that the analysis is based on the credible and generally accepted scholarship (World Bank, 2020).

Besides academic sources, the study uses policy reports and strategic evaluations that give an overview of the current geopolitical events. To illustrate, the reports by the International Crisis Group (2023) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies provide a detailed analysis of the conflict dynamics in the Middle East and the consequences of such developments on the global security. Such sources can be especially useful in regards to the changing nature of the Iran-US conflict and its effects on the region as a whole. The thematic content analysis is the analytical framework adopted in the study. This is part of determining common themes in various sources and deriving them into logical analytical groups. The important issues analyzed are geoeconomic integration, infrastructure diplomacy, energy security, strategic rivalry, and regional instability. The analysis of the interaction between BRI and CPEC with the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East is structured using these themes.

5. Strategic Significance of BRI and CPEC

The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the largest infrastructures and connectivity policies in the contemporary global political economy. It is important in terms of its strategic value, not only in terms of its size but also in terms of its dual purpose as an economic development program and a geopolitical tool. Investing in the transport corridors, energy pipelines, ports, and digital infrastructure, China aims to transform the spatial structure of world trade and to strengthen its integration with markets of Eurasia and Africa. According to scholars like Ferdinand (2016), BRI is better viewed as a loose and dynamic model instead of a rigid guideline, which enables China to modify its approach in response to the situation in the region and its strategic interests. The central element of the strategic architecture of BRI is the

ChinaPakistan Economic Corridor, which is commonly recognized as its flagship. CPEC links western China to the Arabian Sea via a system of highways, railways and energy infrastructure that ends at the Gwadar Port, Pakistan. This has been a key strategic route to China since it offers the country an alternative route to import energy and also to trade without using the Strait of Malacca, a maritime chokepoint that is commonly referred to as a strategic weakness to the Chinese economy. This diversification of trade routes is at the center of the long term energy security strategy of China, according to Hillman (2020).

As such, Gwadar Port itself is in a pivotal location in the geopolitics of the region. It is also adjacent to the mouth of the Persian Gulf, which would potentially provide China with access to energy-rich areas of the Middle East, as well as make Pakistan a stronger transit state. The literature often talks about the port as the intersection of economic development goals and military and security concerns. Other analysts believe that Gwadar may have a dual-commercial and strategic role in the future, yet China formally claims that its overseas infrastructure development efforts are strictly economic (Small, 2015). The CPEC also has a great implication on the domestic economy of Pakistan. It consists of investments in energy production, transport infrastructure and industrial estates which are all aimed at solving long standing structural bottlenecks in the development path of Pakistan. One of the areas that have received particular Chinese investment focus has been the energy sector, with a number of coal, hydro-electric, and renewable energy projects undertaken to curb long term power shortages. According to Malik (2018), such investments can increase the industrial capacity of Pakistan, yet the issue of debt sustainability and imbalanced regional development is still of concern.

Geopolitically, CPEC enhances the Chinese strategic presence in South Asia, which has traditionally been a competition field of all major powers. The corridor improves the relations between China and Pakistan and at the same time creates strategic fears among the neighboring India, which considers the project as a continuation of the larger change in the power

balance in the region. The main issues that India has regarding CPEC are its geographical alignment of the project based on contested territory, and its effects on the regional power. This underlines the way in which the development of infrastructure can be entrenched in the context of larger geopolitical tensions. In addition to South Asia, BRI is also instrumental in linking China with Central Asia, Middle East and Europe. These connections are aimed at providing a net of economic corridors through which trade flows and enhancing regional interdependence. The Chinese concept of infrastructure diplomacy can be characterized as connectivity driven development in which physical infrastructure can serve as a platform to promote economic integration. Nevertheless, this connectivity also brings about asymmetric dependencies, which when converted to geopolitical influence, can be argued by Lee (2018) as well.

One of the most crucial dimensions of BRI and CPEC is energy security. China is the largest importer of oil in the world a large portion of which is in the Middle East. China seeks to lessen its susceptibility to maritime interruptions by diversifying supply avenues and investing in overland pipelines and ports. Strait of Malacca is the most crucial issue because any blockade or instability in this area will have a drastic effect on Chinese trade and energy imports. CPEC is thus a strategic hedge against such vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, it is not only China that has a strategic value of BRI. The countries involved also consider the initiative as a chance of developing infrastructure and growing economically. When it comes to Pakistan, CPEC is frequently described as the so-called game changer which might change the economic situation in the country. Nevertheless, empirical research indicates that the results are more multifaceted, as the benefits are not evenly spread in the sector and region (Rana, 2019).

6. Iran's Role in BRI

The geography of Iran, its energy resources, and its past as a connector between Central Asia, Middle East, and Europe make it a structurally important country in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Goeconomically, Iran is one of the most important transit routes that can connect China to the Western markets by overland and sea routes. It also has the advantage of being able to access the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, which makes it even more strategic to the global energy and trade networks. According to Funaiole and Hillman (2020), Iran is well-positioned and can be a focal point in westward connectivity strategy by China under BRI. The relations between China and Iran have been evolving slowly over the last 20 years due to the existence of complementary economic interests and similarity in concern with the Western sanctions and unilateralism. Iran has enormous oil and gas reserves rendering it a key energy partner of China, especially as Beijing pursues to diversify its energy imports and earn a stable supply of energy in the long term. In its turn, China offers Iran investment, development of infrastructure and access to the global markets, particularly at the time of the increased Western sanctions. It is a symbiotic relationship that has resulted in what some scholars refer to as pragmatic yet asymmetric partnership (Garver, 2016).

A significant milestone in bilateral relations was the signing of the 25 year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement between China and Iran which indicated that there would be further cooperation in the areas of energy, infrastructure, telecommunications and transportation. The agreement has not been implemented uniformly as it is usually talked about in strategic terms; however, it is affected by external conditions, especially the US led sanctions and financial limitations. Such sanctions greatly restrict the integration of Iran in the global financial systems and thus restrict its involvement in the major BRI projects. The possibility of Iran joining BRI can be closely associated with the creation of transport corridors between China via Central Asia and Middle East to Europe. The extension of the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor is one of the proposed connections, with Iran being a major transit point. The transit would enable the flow of goods and energy through Iran to Turkey and to the European markets, which would save transportation cost and enhance

efficiency. Jones and Zeng (2019) argue that these corridors indicate the fact that China is more ambitious to develop a multipolar trade system that will not be heavily dependent on the traditional Western dominated routes.

The participation of Iran in BRI is however greatly limited by the geopolitical tension especially its antagonistic relationship with the United States. The US sanctions on the Iranian energy exports, banking industry, and shipping sector have put significant obstacles to investments and trade. Such sanctions not only curtail economic growth of Iran, but also raise the risk profile on foreign investors including Chinese corporations operating through BRI frameworks. Iran has been forced by its economic isolation to be more careful and selective in its external relations as Esfandiary and Tabatabai (2018) would argue. There is also the Iran-US conflict that brings about a strategic uncertainty that has a direct influence on the development of infrastructure. Periodic heightening in the Persian Gulf area prompts the issue of security over shipping lanes, specifically the Strait of Hormuz, through which a big part of the world oil exports flow. Any disturbance in this area would have an instant impact on China, as it highly depends on imported energy resources. This interdependence underscores the precariousness of connecting goeconomic initiatives with geopolitically insecure contexts.

In spite of these limitations, Iran remains a major player in Eurasian connectivity projects. This is demonstrated by its membership in organisations like Shanghai Cooperation Organisation that have demonstrated its increased orientation towards non Western multilateralism. Such avenues offer alternative mediums of economic interaction and diplomatic assistance to Iran, albeit to some extent achieving neutrality to the effects of the Western sanctions. But these arrangements have not been very effective when compared to totally integrated global economic systems. The involvement of Iran in BRI is also relevant to the situation with power in the region. The fact that it is being integrated into China changes the balance of strategic power in the Middle East by introducing a major non Western player into historically US dominated areas. This change is part of the reconfiguring

regional balance, especially with the growth of Chinese diplomatic and economic presence. However, it is not a linear and uncontested process as regional competition and security dilemmas are still influencing the results.

7. Iran-US War: Causes and Dynamics

One of the most long-standing and systemic confrontations of the modern world of international politics is the Iranian-American conflict. Although it has gone through phases of low participation and diplomatic bargaining, its dynamics have not changed much, as it is fuelled by intense ideological differences, rival regional interests, and a sense of threat between them. The recent years of the progressive development of a more open military confrontation can be considered the aggregate impact of decades of mistrust, sanctions, proxy conflicts, and the nuclear tensions. Tracing back the history of the breakage of the Iran-US relations, it is possible to mention the 1979 Iranian Revolution that dethroned the pro-Western monarchy and founded the Islamic Republic. This change has fundamentally altered the foreign policy orientation of Iran and posed ideological challenge to the influence of US in the Middle East. The following hostage crisis raised hostility between the two states even more and preconditioned decades of the antagonistic relations. Takeyh (2010) opined that since then, geopolitics in the region have been characterized by this event, which started a longstanding strategic standoff.

The Iranian nuclear program is one of the main sources of conflict between the Iran and the US relationship. The United States and some of its Western allies have always felt as though Iran is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons capability in the guise of civilian energy development. This issue resulted in comprehensive economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation that tried to limit the development of nuclear capabilities of Iran. A temporary solution in this confrontation was the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, but its further degradation with the withdrawal of the US restored tensions and increased uncertainty

(Davenport, 2019). In addition to nuclear matters, geopolitics in the region is an important factor in the conflict. The United States and its regional partners see Iranian support of non-state actors and allied groups in other countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen as an effort by Iran to increase its influence in the Middle East. In the eyes of Iran, though, such alliances are of a defensive kind, aimed at combating external threats and ensuring a strategic depth. This is a classic security dilemma, in which one side undertakes measures to enhance its security, which are seen as acts of aggression by the other (Waltz, 1979).

The economic aspect of the conflict is also important. Sanctions have been one of the major weapons of coercive diplomacy employed by the United States on Iran. These penalties have been imposed on major sectors of the Iranian economy like oil exports, banking, shipping, and technology transfer, which are major limiting factors of its economic capability. As Nephew (2017) explains, sanctions have been employed to not only pressurize Iran into abiding by nuclear agreements, but also to curtail its wider influence in the region. There is, however, some debate as to the efficacy of sanctions, which may bring about economic distress but not long term political commitments. The dynamics of escalation between Iran and the US conflict have been characterized by more military aspects especially in the Persian Gulf region. Strait of Hormuz, which carries a large fraction of the world oil exports, has turned out to be a strategic flash point. Naval clashes, drone attacks, and energy infrastructure assaults have increased worries over the prospect of increased military escalation. Cordesman (2021) emphasizes that any small-scale conflict in this area can affect the energy markets of the world, as well as the maritime safety disproportionately.

The conflict is further complicated by the role of proxy warfare. Iran and the United States together with their respective allies have been involved in proxy wars in various fronts in the Middle East. These proxy wars enable the two parties to achieve strategic goals without a full scale war but they also bring instability and escalation due to

miscalculation. These dynamics are further aggravated by the fragmentation of power in war-torn countries like Syria and Yemen. International actors also play an important role in shaping the trajectory of the Iran-US conflict. The European states have mostly supported the diplomatic approach and maintenance of the JCPOA framework, whereas Russia and China have established themselves as key allies of Iran, especially against the US unilateral sanctions. This multi-polar aspect complicates the conflict and makes it not just a bilateral conflict but a geopolitical one.

Theoretically, the Iran-US conflict provides an example of how liberal institutionalism is weak in war prevention when there is profound mistrust and strategic competition. In spite of various diplomatic accords and international organizations, structural tensions have remained, indicating that power politics still prevails in regional security politics. Institutions can alleviate but not eradicate the outcomes of anarchy in international system as Mearsheimer (2001) contends. Over the past few years, the patterns of escalation have become more pronounced with a mix of domestic political developments, uncertainty in the region, and changes in the global balance of power. An unstable environment has been caused by economic pressures in Iran, political changes in the United States, and changing alliances in the Middle East. The outcome is a war that is still in a phase of controlled aggression, whereby there is some periodic increase but the war is not over.

8. Policy implications, Strategy choices and Future Directions

The overlap of the Belt and Road Initiative, China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Iran United States tensions creates a complicated policy space where infrastructure, energy and security interests are closely intertwined. To China, the Belt and Road Initiative strategic logic goes beyond connectivity and trade enabling practices, it also represents a long term projection of establishing overland and maritime pathways that will enable it avoid the overreliance on suspect chokepoints like the Strait of Malacca. According to scholars,

this diversification policy is at the heart of the wider geopolitical hedging practices of China in a disaggregated international system, especially as great power competition between it and the United States escalates. In this context, CPEC along with Iran are key nodes in the Eurasian vision of Beijing.

To Pakistan, CPEC is both an economic and a strategic limitation. On the one hand, it provides the development of infrastructure, investment in energy, and possible industrial growth. Conversely, it exposes Pakistan to risk of debt sustainability issues and geopolitical balancing between China, United States, and partners in the Gulf. Policy analysts highlight that the problem with Pakistan is its need to turn connectivity to productive domestic development, but not structural reliance on foreign capital inflows. The Iran factor also adds to this equation, especially with restrictions of trilateral cooperation potential between China, Pakistan and Iran by sanctions regimes and regional instability. The pressure of sanctions and strategic isolation by Western financial systems has placed Iran in this triadic relationship. As a result, Iran has been shifting more towards eastern economic activities especially with China. But the volatility of sanctions and the dynamics of regional security in the Persian Gulf and Levant will be key to the sustainability of Iran being integrated into BRI linked projects. This renders Iran as a high potential but high risk partner in the overall connectivity architecture.

In the US view both CPEC and Sino Iranian cooperation are perceived in terms of strategic competition. The economic issues of Washington are not confined to the economic sphere, but the military and geopolitical ones are quite concerned with the port access, dual use infrastructure, and the maritime influence within the Indian Ocean region. According to reports by policy institutions, the US approach is becoming more and more centered on restricting China to access to strategic corridors and enhancing other partnerships in South Asia and the Middle East. The three factors are interrelated and will probably define future trends, which include the developing US China rivalry, stability of the domestic political economy

of Pakistan and the sustainability of the Iranian sanctions environment. In case the geopolitical situation worsens, the infrastructure connectivity initiatives can be securitized, reducing the rate of economic integration as the competition in terms of strategies intensifies throughout Eurasia.

9. Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the Iran United States tensions are all examples of a changing world order where infrastructure has become a tool at the center of geopolitical power. These projects are not just economic development plans but part of a larger strategic game of trade routes, energy corridors, and regional alignment. The discussion shows that CPEC is an economic life-support and a geopolitical balancing act to Pakistan, whereas Iran is an imperative yet limited ally in the Chinese westward connectivity policy. Meanwhile, the United States policy speaks of the increasing anxieties over the strategic implications of Chinese infrastructure developments, especially in areas that link the Middle East, South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Finally, the overlap of these dynamics implies that projects of connectivity will continue to be heavily entrenched in great power politics. The economic cooperation will be maintained, but it will be more and more conditioned by the competition in security and by the mistrust in geopolitics. The future of BRI and CPEC will thus be limited not merely to economic feasibility but also to the development of the global strategic stability and also the political orientation of the regions.

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