

Flaws in Strategic Communication of Pakistan: A Contemporary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This exploration endeavors to look at deficiencies in Pakistan's strategic communication framework, both broadly and worldwide. It offers the impression of recent concerns and makes proposals on ways of improving. Through an examination of correspondence methodologies in different conditions, it pinpoints deficiencies and gives actionable recommendations to enhance Pakistan's narrative and achieve foreign policy goals.

Study Design/Methodology/Approach - The research methodology for this study is exploratory. For this purpose, data collection consisted of searching electronic databases and a literature review to determine the intrastate and interstate strategic communication system and its basic flaws in Pakistan.

Findings- Pakistan must strategically communicate its independent foreign policy with the state's concern only. Pakistan has the edge over its transit routes with three ports, Karachi, Qasim, and Gawader, over the Arabian Sea. Strategic communication and trade linkage among those regions passing through the country can transform the country into an economic hub, resulting in a boost in interregional economic activity and business. For this purpose, Pakistan needs good leadership and governance practices to achieve the goals of political and economic stability within the region.

Practical Implications- The findings of this analysis hold significant practical implications for policymakers, communication professionals, and stakeholders in Pakistan. By highlighting existing flaws and areas for improvement, this study offers actionable insights to enhance the effectiveness of strategic communication initiatives. Its implementation can strengthen national narratives, improve public perception, and bolster diplomatic relations, thereby advancing Pakistan's interests on both domestic and international fronts.

Originality/Novelty- The insight derived from this research can serve as a valuable reference for enhancing strategic communication practices in the Pakistani context, thereby adding to the body of knowledge on communication strategies in the region.

Keywords: Strategic, Communication, Flaws, Pakistan, Contemporary, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In today's current state of affairs, Pakistan's strategic communication is at the point of compliance with the changing regional geopolitical situation (Zaidi & Nirmal, 2022). As a significant member of South Asia, Pakistan is set to play a vital role in the militarization race of China, Russia, and the USA with an emerging regional economic corridor exceeding from South Asia to Europe, with new routes of emerging markets of Africa, and the Middle East. Under the threat of a strong neighboring country like India and conflicting Iran, while meeting the constant challenges of Afghanistan, Pakistan requires an incessant robust strategic communication system for the impending encounter and triggering all the fundamental flaws in its current arrangements.

This paper explains the basic flaws of Pakistan's Strategic Communication System (PSCS) in the present scenario. For contemporary analysis, basic flaws are discussed at intrastate and interstate levels. A strategic communication system is equally essential to be discussed at the national and international levels. At the national level, build a specific policy direction and publish that particular soft image internationally to a global audience.

The country's political process, which is a combination of two forms of the government process-parliamentarian and presidential as a core competency, is the basic format of the country, and the whole strategic communication system and its basic flaws revolve around it. Political parties are the central hub and drivers of the country, which smoothens and strengthens the administration of the country (Ostermann & Wagner, 2024). Political goals are the primary concern of political parties, and public policy is the ultimate delivery of the state. It is apparent that global and regional politics pursue their strategic objectives in that region, so these political handlers handle the significant concerns of developing countries (Liu et al., 2021). At the moment, the primary concerns of Pakistan are to control terrorism and to progress China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which have become a matter of apprehension for regional and international players (Surahio et al., 2022). So, the significance of a strategic communication system in the parlance of the context of the multifaceted linkage has become a complex phenomenon because it ties the state and non-state entities in economic and strategic dimensions. In detail, it is discussed here the regional connectivity with the impact of systematic, contemporary, and need-based interaction with the perspective of the future development of the country. As a management tool, strategic communication aids the Government in counter-rebellion operations by influencing perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior among all stakeholders, including non-state groups and neutrals, competitors, and adversaries (Mirza et al., 2021).

This paper identified the gap between the current state of strategic communication and what it should be. Basic flaws of strategy communication at interstate and intrastate levels to meet all the threats from non-state actors working within a state while considering the nature of the new world order and shift in security paradigm from traditional to non-traditional are discussed in detail. The media has become a powerful and vibrant performer of strategic communication, and in Pakistan, it is necessary to strengthen the Government through it.

The research methodology for this study is exploratory. For this purpose, data collection consisted of searching electronic databases and a literature review to determine the intrastate and interstate strategic communication system and its basic flaws in Pakistan. Official statements, speeches, and media declarations

from Pakistan's leaders, diplomats, and authorities, assessing the contemporary landscape of strategic communication practices were analyzed. The elementary objective of this policy paper is to discuss the basic flaws of the strategic communication system in Pakistan, and it is impossible without elaborating on the scenario of Pakistan's strategic communication. It will also consider the basic concept of strategic communication in the time of information warfare and perceive its relevance in Pakistan while concluding the difference between what is actual and what needs to be in the critics of the regional umbrella.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Theoretical Background & Hypothesis Development

The paradigms of inter and intrastate conflicts demand innovative approaches from concerned governments to deal with various instabilities within the state (Gul et al., 2021). As in the past, most conflicts are information-based, and artists of conflicts have contained modern communication technologies to impact people's minds more effectively than previously perceived. As a result, multidimensional and transnational threats regarding relational affairs and the state's security are more vulnerable than ever before. To meet these threats "strategic communication system" is the uniform concern for any developed and developing country (Glapiak, 2023). Generally, states carry out novel and assorted tasks, such as pre and post-conflict reconstruction, capacity building of affected populations and civilian institutions, and reforms regarding the security sector to supplement their interests in any particular way. Strategic communication must be comprehended enough to support all these issues at the national and international levels. So, the measurement of basic flaws of the strategic communication system may be addressed at each point in novelty. The concept of strategic communication has progressed in the West, and now it has become the concern of each state to deal with various instabilities (Zerfass et al., 2020). The main concern of strategic communication is "to comprehend and engage the subjective audience for the progression of national interests, policies, and objectives in conflict-prone areas along with the action of all tools of national power". In the case of Pakistan, strategic communication is more than disseminating information from the perspective of active stakeholders. In this concern, this paper seeks to provide a contemporary understanding of strategic communication and its basic flaws in the system in this critical age of information warfare and seeks its relevance in the country's context at inter and intrastate levels.

Media as a tool of strategic communication system is playing an influential and vibrant role in coming up with a direct bearing on national and international issues (Enke & Borchers, 2021). It is said that success in a big scenario is imposing one's will on the enemy, equivalent to striking bullets on a target- nevertheless, it is obligatory to drop one's will or capability to pull the sword once essential. In recent World scenarios, eventual accomplishments and disasters depend on shaping the behavior of others, whether they are friends or foes, and furthermost significantly, non-state actors.

A decay before the notion of strategic communication progressed in the West with the following prime objectives:

- To understand the key audience
- To engage the key audience
- To create the key audience

Furthermore, to strengthen and preserve favourable conditions for the progression of:

- National Interest
- General Policies
- Central Objectives

All these synchronized agendas, strategies, themes, dialogues, and functions are coordinated and prone to areas with the action of national power instruments. In South Asia, it is a new concept applied by defense and civil policymakers. In Pakistan, formulating strategic communication with the framework of national security will help the Government mobilize the people in support of post-armed operations. In conclusion, we can say that strategic communication deals with the challenges of convincing others to think or act in ways computable with the state objectives, and strategic communication systems pursue the process of compatibility.

A. The Framework of Strategic Communication System & Its Basic Flaws

2.1 | Interstate

Geographically Pakistan has a unique strategic position in the world. It is surrounded by India and China, the top two highly populated countries, then Afghanistan and Iran, which are Islamic parts of the Islamic chain towards the Islamic block, and all these neighboring countries hold an important place in the world geopolitics. Strategically Pakistan has precarious relations with its neighboring countries, especially with India, due to Kashmir, which is still a hanging issue (Lokman et al., 2022), and Pakistan is still unable to convince the World that Kashmir's people love to live as Pakistanis. India has a larger Muslim population than Pakistan with the same living characteristics, but both countries stand in opposite directions of the scale. Nankana Sahab Pakistan is the most sacred place for Sikhs, but due to strategic communication flaws, Pakistan can still not fully harvest the crop of their desires.

Figure 1

Geographically Strategic Position of Pakistan



Source: Wikitravel.org

The same is the case with Afghanistan; both countries share the same religion, history, and culture, but the intensification of radicalization tumbled down the responsive atmosphere of bilateral collaboration. After the Cold War, another breakthrough to deteriorate the Pak-Afghan relationship happened. Pakistan was forced to participate by the United States in the Afghan war after 9/11 against the Taliban regime multiplied the danger of cutoff relations between both countries. The question is why the United States forced Pakistan. Pakistan has more concerns with its neighboring country than the United States. It was not a war of Pakistan, but Pakistan could not convey this message strategically to the United States. As a result, Federally Administrated Tribble Areas (FATA) became the land of terrorists. Pakistan suffered a lot, eighty thousand people died in this warfare, and the whole country suffered greatly due to Pakistan's feeble strategic communication.

Pakistan has good enough bilateral relations with China but is unhealthy with Iran. The relationship with Iran was agonized due to Saudi Arabia and the United States, and Pakistan is again missing a lot globally. So geographical location of Pakistan is a thoughtful obstacle to securing security and bilateral relations with its neighboring countries. Pakistan needs a solid strategic position in its relations with its neighboring countries and must contribute to its foreign policy and strategic communication (Khan & Shirazi, 2021).

2.2 | Regional Supremacy & Flaw of Independent Foreign Policy

Geographically Pakistan is an important hub in Central Asia and has all the enriching resources to be a supreme state in the future, but its foreign policy is under the influence of global political handlers. To be a robust and reliable country, Pakistan must strategically communicate its independent foreign policy with the state's concern only (Hussain, 2021). It is obligatory to be a sovereign state to achieve regional supremacy. Independent foreign policy is only a matter of strategic diplomatic communication.

Pakistan is located at the heart of Asia, a junction of the three most significantly protentional regions, Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia, which delivers the shortest access to the sea for all noncoastal countries of central Asia except Western China. So, it can emerge as a mutual corridor of cooperation between above mentioned three regions for trade, tourism, transportation, and energy (Shaikh, 2021).

Trade linkages between Central, South, and West Asia, and transportation through Pakistan are impossible without strategic communication. Removing basic strategic flaws can transform the country into an economic hub and boost inter-regional economic activities.

2.3 | Flaw of Unfortunate Diplomacy

Public diplomacy, on one side, is a tool for image building and, most importantly, strengthens the relationship with other states. Historically Pakistan is always an unfortunate state concerning its diplomacy and has remained in a miserable condition. Pakistan's diplomatic undertakings do not use media efficiently to engross and communicate with the foreign public to brand the country's image. How much needed is? To be more effective in the use of media and, more importantly, in digital media to strengthen diplomatic affairs with tied countries (Shaikh, 2021).

Throughout history, American interest in Pakistan varied in cycling, shifting the US perception of the balance of power. In South Asia, Pakistan suffered such a fate, as the United States gradually came to perceive the region as not falling within the parameters of its vital interests. Pakistan did not share this perception, but

as a small power, it naturally could wield little influence on US policies (Jahangir & Khan, 2020). This is the time to favour the policy of the US "free world" to move further and abandon its previous roots.

2.4 | Flaw of Strategic Leadership

Pakistan always has an absence of good leadership. A leader who portrays the real picture of the country or a leader who develops Pakistan's soft positive image to the world. Pakistan is a rich country with all the natural resources but has not had such a strategic leader who utilizes these resources to build a super country (Shaikh, 2021).

2.5 | Rich Culture with Poor Descriptions

Pakistan needs to portray its authentic historical culture and cultural alliances as part of strategic communication (Werder et al., 2020). It will open new doors for economic development and a positive country image. Pakistan and Central Asia are the epicenters of the world's earliest civilizations. It must be published as a cultural image in the world and be a part of a strategic communication system so other nations for their interests protect the country's interests.

In 1991 the states of Central Asia gained independence from the USSR, and Pakistan tried to develop political and economic linkages without considering the cultural relations. It was a weakened strategic policy of the country that must be relinquished in the future to develop new economic and cultural zones to enhance political and diplomatic ties further. In the presence of digital media, Pakistan can still not publish cultural information to develop new strategic alliances. In this age of globalization, concrete steps like transport infrastructure and pipelines are essential to integrate Central, South, and West Asia for regional development, and Pakistan can play an important role in productive regional amalgamation for peace and prosperity.

2.6 | Global Economic Flaws

Most Asian governments acknowledge Pakistan as an important hub with a southern transit route providing an outlet for their landlocked economy (Akbar & Khan, 2022). Pakistan has the edge over its transit routes with three ports, Karachi, Qasim, and Gawader, over the Arabian Sea. Strategic communication and trade linkage among those regions passing through the country can transform the country into an economic hub, resulting in a boost in interregional economic activity and business.

Pakistan can still not cultivate the natural resources of Baluchistan province, particularly hydrocarbons, to enrich its economy. Pakistan and Central Asia are major cotton producers, and both regions would benefit by initiating joint cotton and textile projects, which are only possible through strategic communications. Facilitating transportation inside the country and Afghanistan may ultimately encourage all independent USSR's Islamic states to create a world cotton cartel, either bilaterally or under the umbrella of ECO.

New transit routes by way of Pakistan and future economic developments will also help to stabilize the political process throughout Central & South Asia. Foreign Direct Investment can also be encouraged by improving the current transportation infrastructure and by reopening the southern communication routes of Central Asia. All these are only possible through strategic communication to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and throughout the region for peace and prosperity.

2.7 | Political Ties

Greater Central Asia's idea is only possible through the Pak-Afghan trading partnership in the region (Khan & Shirazi, 2021). With the presence of geographical infrastructure, political ties are essential for

developing more incredible ideas. The present world economic situation also encourages new political alliances to develop new economic zones for the world's survival. With the development of this partnership, Pakistan's exports must be increased for the long-term benefit of the country.

Bilateral solid relations strengthen bilateral trade, which affects the regional political situation and relationship with Afghanistan, to stabilize the economy at the macro level.

A new economic corridor by China and the Far East to re-engage with Europe and beyond is ready to move, which will change the economic regime of the region and, ultimately, the power direction or balance of power.

2.8 | War Against Terrorism: Great Suffering with Little Admittance

Since its origin, Pakistan has continuously faced the issue of security in the region, focusing much more on resolving it. In the war against terrorism, we suffered a lot, but unfortunately, nothing has been communicated to the stakeholders because of the flaws in the strategic communication system. Pakistan's strong army did a lot, but our leadership can still not convey it to the world.

2.9 | Emerging Russia-Pakistan Strategic Proximity:

Pak-Russian strategic proximity is necessary to resolve most of the country's strategic issues and have long-lasting effects on the health and wealth of the country as well (Khan & Syed, 2021). The first signs of their strategic approach were noticed in 2000 when the Russian Security Council gave the green signal for military and technical collaboration with Pakistan for the "dual-purpose items". Notably, this was grounded on the conditions of not bargaining on the delicate Indo-Russian relationship. It was the beginning of a new strategic position in the world. In 2002 against the strategic will of India, Russia supplied MI-17 helicopters to Pakistan. This happened to Islamabad's nonattendance at the vote on the EU-sponsored resolution against the Russian Human Rights violations in Chechnya at the UN Human Rights Commission. Russia invigorated diplomatic exertions for a consistent dialogue between India and Pakistan through other platforms such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. The great idea of 2009, a quadrilateral between Russia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan, was proposed to tackle multiple challenges, including terrorism, and increasing cooperation in trade and communication is also considered a milestone of strategic communication (Farzana & Tanweer, 2021). Despite all these novelties of the quad and many other high-level exchanges between these two countries, further, improvement will be needed in strategic communication. In the current Scenario, Pakistan's foreign policy is facing the daunting challenge of balancing relations with the US and Russia and securing the Western border from the Afghan Taliban (Hussain, Yousafzai & Naseem, 2023).

B. Intrastate

Strategic communication is an instrument of national power along with other elements:

- Information Diplomatic
- Military strategy
- Economics

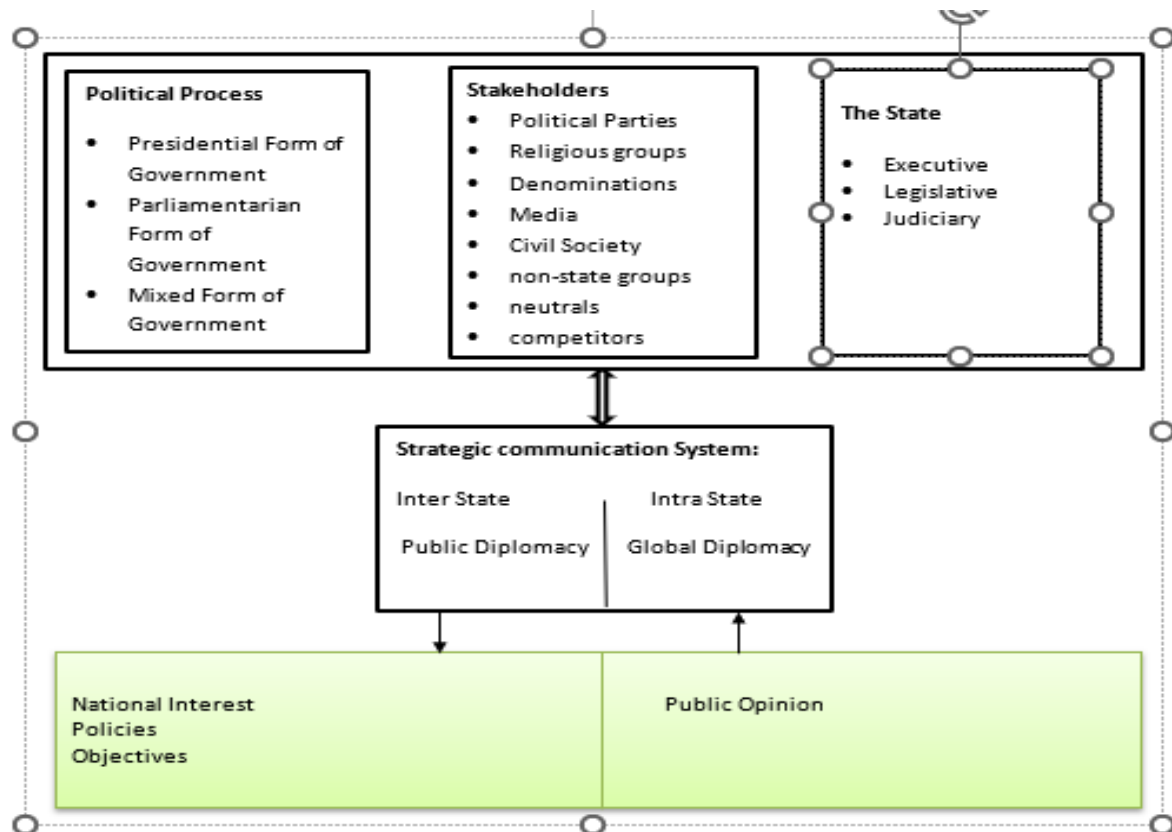
To accomplish the national objective in a post-conflict/insurrection situation. Within the state, the internal infrastructure develops a mechanism that further builds the soft and hard image of the country. Every state has

some political process to develop this infrastructure. Most states follow the presentational form of the Government, and others are parliamentarians, but Pakistan has both.

Pakistan is still unable to define its political mechanism to build the infrastructure for the country. This is a fundamental reason for lagging.

Figure 2

Intra-state Communication Flow Chart of Pakistan



3.1 | Flaw of Political Instability

To follow any political process, continuous and steady political efforts are required, but unfortunately, they never developed and stabilized the country. This non-stabilization process has become roots for many other giants, and one of them is terrorism.

Political instability and poor governance are Pakistan's leading causes of security threats and terrorism (Malik et al., 2020). Political disorders and unnecessary military reliance also lead the huge radicalism in the country. Various troops and their allies are still active in the country, which serves as a founding cause of uncertainty which further reasons for further terrorism. The recent suicide attack on Chinese teachers is a new example of this situation, and as a result, Pak China's relationship is losing its confidence.

3.2 | Non-Democratic Political Parties

The political parties of the country are not democratic. Pakistan needs a democratic way out of all its processes. Under the crush of continuous security threats, the thinking of the Pakistani people never developed

as democratic (Shah, 2020). They have learned to live in suppression. So political parties become the landlords of the public and resources of the country.

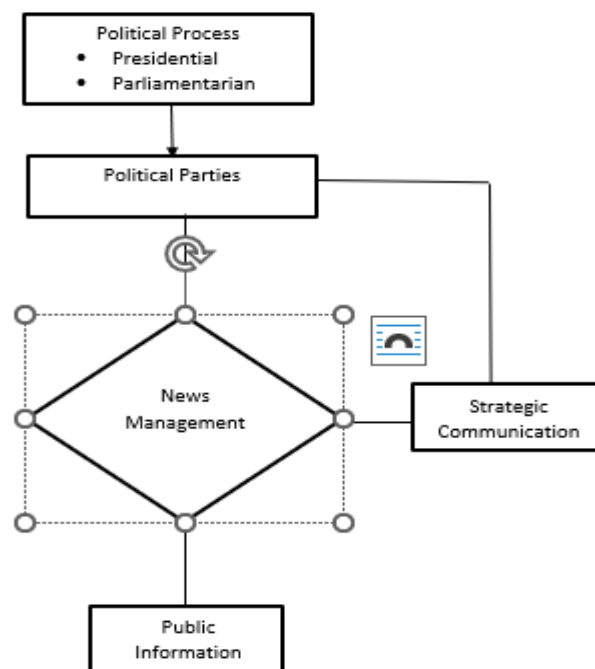
3.3 | Adverse Role of Media

Media provides a platform of observation for the country and presently in the information age, media is playing a vital role because it is used to convey information to the people about the problems and government policy in the country (Azad, 2020). Pakistan is an unfortunate country in respect of international media. Even it cannot manage its affairs through media.

In the context of Pakistan, it is much more monopolized by the institutions and political parties, as described in the figure below, not independent. The media of any country must be responsible enough and use responsible reporting in the area of national and global interests to secure their respective business interests. Well-organized media can easily eradicate the role of the public to produce their desired results. It is recognized that Pakistani media moderately portrayed an undesirable image of the country at the international level. In today's time of information and digitalization, independent solid media and media personnel are still needed.

Figure 3

Role of Pakistan Media in Communication



3.4 | Adverse Situation of Law & Orders

The situation of law and order in Pakistan is deplorable, which depicts the country's negative image at the national and international levels. Presently legal reforms have become the demand of time. An enriching

country of natural resources with beautiful landscapes and gorgeous weather has become less appealing to industrial tourists due to the law-and-order situation of the country.

The main concern of the investors for investing in any country is land laws, and because of it, Pakistan is not a country of trust for national and international investors.

3.5 | Institutional Dependency / Governances

The image of institutional dependency is also a matter of strategic communication. Important is not what is going on, important is what is portrayed and conveyed (Shaikh, 2021). A positive image of the institution must be developed and delivered through strong media roles. Internal development can be achieved through good governance, which sets a base for further social and economic prosperity and, ultimately, stability in the country.

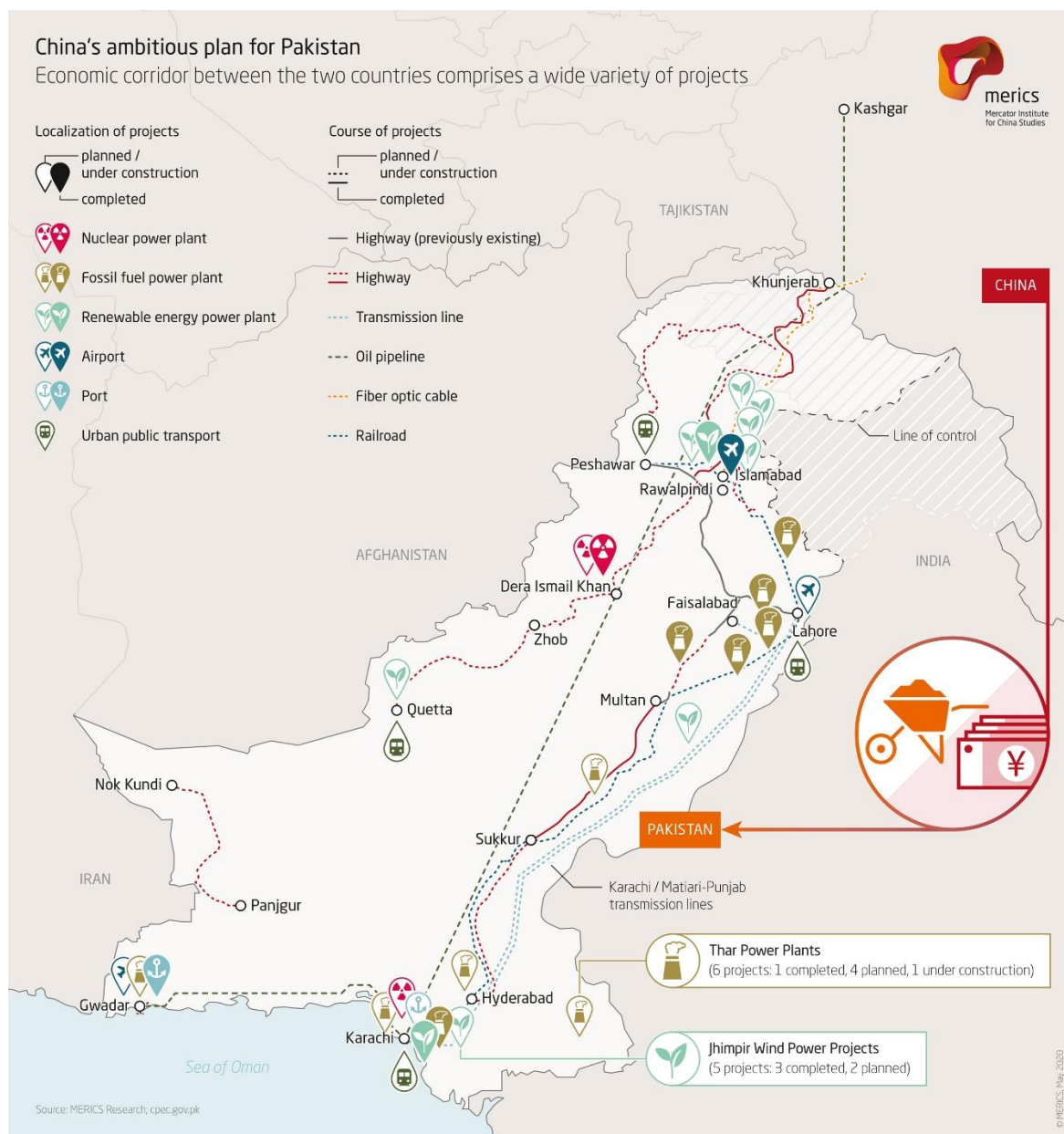
With the help of the judiciary, military, and bureaucracy, the Government must play a leading role in achieving stabilization in the country.

3.6 | Response to Natural Disasters

How does a country respond to natural disasters? Pakistan's Government policies are not aligned with the international requirement. Every year Pakistan faces the threat of floods in various parts of the country (Shah et al., 2022). People are suffering but have no issues with institutions and Government. There is a severe deficiency in strategic planning to respond the natural disasters. A comprehensive national strategy is required to ensure the fulfillment of goals regarding disaster management, climate change, and tourism development, and it should be conveyed to international media by way of strategic planning (Hussain, et al., 2023).

3 | FINDINGS

Pakistan is located at the heart of Asia, a junction of the three most significantly protentional regions, Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia, which delivers the shortest access to the sea for all noncoastal countries of central Asia except Western China. So it can emerge as a mutual corridor of cooperation between above mentioned three regions for trade, tourism, transportation, and energy. Geographically Pakistan is an important hub in Central Asia and has all the enriching resources to be a supreme state in the future. To be a robust and reliable country, Pakistan must strategically communicate its independent foreign policy with the state's concern only. Moreover, Pakistan has the edge over its transit routes with three ports, Karachi, Qasim, and Gawader, over the Arabian Sea. Strategic communication and trade linkage among those regions passing through the country can transform the country into an economic hub, resulting in a boost in interregional economic activity and business. A comprehensive strategy is required to control terrorist activities from India and Afghanistan for the fulfillment of goals regarding CPEC and trade with central Asia. Currently, Pakistan needs to tackle the challenges of political instability, financial and governance crises, and climate change effects with adequate response. For this purpose, Pakistan needs good leadership and good governance practices for social and economic prosperity and, ultimately, stability in the country. With the help of the judiciary, military, and bureaucracy, the Government must play a leading role in achieving stabilization in the country.

Figure 4*Role of CPEC in Pakistan's Development*

Source: CPEC official website

CPEC has the potential to transform Pakistan into an economic hub by connecting the significant regions of Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia through trade, tourism, transportation, and energy. Geographically, Pakistan is an important junction with access to the sea for landlocked countries in Central Asia, making it a strategic location for mutual cooperation. However, Pakistan's hopes for CPEC are mitigated by China's apparent lack of interest in establishing an overland transit corridor and persistent counterterrorism concerns. The areas through which the corridor passes are plagued by conflict and Chinese workers have been repeatedly attacked by Islamic jihadists and Baloch separatist forces. To fully realize the benefits of CPEC, Pakistan needs to address several challenges, including political instability, financial and governance crises, and climate change effects. A comprehensive strategy is required to control terrorist activities from India and Afghanistan.

Good leadership and governance practices are essential for social and economic prosperity and stability in the country. As shown in the figure the government, with the support of the judiciary, military, and bureaucracy, must play a leading role in achieving stabilization. CPEC can be a game-changer for Pakistan's economy, but it requires a stable political environment, effective governance, and a focus on counterterrorism efforts to ensure the safety of the corridor and its workers.

Figure 5

China's Proposed Silk Roads



Source: Xinhua

Research Limitation

The present study recognizes limitations despite its comprehensive methodologies. Its scope may not encompass all facts of Pakistan's strategic communication, warranting further inquiry into specific domains. Additionally, constraints on data availability and reliability may impede in-depth analysis. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the communication landscape suggests that findings may necessitate ongoing reassessment and adaptation.

Recommendations

Leadership-driven

The country's leadership should be decisively engaged in strategic communication, and their decision must be unanimous in driving the strategic communication process.

Dependable State

There should be a national perception of truthfulness about leadership, and all political parties must respect driven to each other. This image must be built and delivered to the world through strategic communication.

Strategic Dialogue

Dialogue is always a way to go ahead. It is always considered as sharing multifaceted ideas to promote understanding, acceptance, and building relationships between dialoguing parties.

Expression of Unity

There should be a unity of efforts, and such efforts must be integrated and coordinated downward and upward.

Reactive State

Today's time is a time of information; the right message at the right time at the right place to the right audience is a key to strategic communication, and media is a tool to achieve these objectives.

Considerate First and Transmission

At a strategic level, there should be a deep analysis and understanding of attitude, culture, identities, behaviour, history, perspectives, and social systems. The problem is not what we do, say, or show; the real focus must be what others hear or see.

Persistency at the National level

Every action, image, or word delivers a message and inference, so continuous efforts are required to develop a persistent image at a national level. Action to achieve specific outcomes in pursuit of a well-articulated end state is required,

Constant Efforts

Industrious ongoing explorations, analysis, planning, execution, and assessment that feed planning and action are required.

The Message of Integrity

State sovereignty has become a matter of twenty-two million people, and the Government must emphasize it. The matter of regional integrity and national unity are also determinants of security assurance and stability. It should be at the top level of strategy development and communication.

Representation of the Patriotic spirit

The patriotic spirit should be integrated into the public by celebrating national days and should be part of our public policy. The nation is united; this message must be delivered by way of all types of media at the international level.

Rejection of terrorism, extremism, radicalism

Actual reforms to diminish the threat of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism need to be introduced, and strict punishment should be given to agents of them. Emphasis should be given to improving the educational system, especially madrassas.

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