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Political Cartoons' Representation of Pak-China Relations on CPEC: A Multimodal Analysis

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Abstract

The present research explored the political cartoons' representation of Pak-China relations in the context of CPEC. This research is very significant as Pakistan and China have long standing friendship. As a result of this friendship China and Pakistan initiated China Pakistan Economic Corridor and China brought huge economic investments in Pakistan worth millions of dollars. On one hand CPEC strengthened the ties between Pakistan and China but on the other hand it made many neighboring countries and super powers conscious of the implications of this mega economic project. That is why it becomes a topic of utmost importance to explore that how Pakistani English language elite newspaper, Dawn, treats CPEC in political cartoons. Ledin and Machin's (2020) and Machin and Myre (2007) frameworks for Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis were used to explore the visual and linguistic discourses and ideologies inherent in the political cartoons of Dawn on CPEC. The population of the study was political cartoons on CPEC published from January 2017 to December 2023. A purposive sample of four cartoons was selected for the analysis. The results of the study revealed that Dawn cautiously selected discourses to represent CPEC. Moreover it presented certain ideologies regarding CPEC and Pakistan's current position in the context of CPEC. But these ideologies were presented in a subtle manner.

Keywords: Political cartoons, Pak-China relations, CPEC, Multimodal analysis, Dawn.

1- Introduction and Background

In the contemporary challenging landscape of international relations and economic collaborations, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has come up as a transformative

project, promising economic growth and regional connectivity. As this ambitious project unfolds, it is supplemented by an innumerable size of critiques, expectations and perspectives. This research project endeavors to undertake and investigate the media discourse surrounding CPEC through the lens of political cartoons.

Political cartoons are considered a very important tool for political and social commentary, providing comprehensive and humorous understandings about the complexities of the current issues. According to Ghilzai and Bajwa (2020) political cartoons are such caricatures that overemphasize some personal attributes to present a humorous picture of the political figure. Linguistic and graphic devices used by the cartoonists can change and influence the opinion and thought of the reader (Shahzad, Din, & Ahmad, 2023; Lent, 2023). Political cartoons have a long history of providing insights about the complex issues that otherwise considered difficult to comment on. A primary function of these cartoons is that they not only serve as watchdog of political parties and government but also identify potential issues and then campaign to resolve those issues (Lent, 2023). Another important aim of a cartoon is to initiate a discussion (Sanathanan & Balakrishnan, 2023). In the context of CPEC political cartoons are observed to be providing depiction of myriads of dimensions revolving around it. From the depiction of geopolitical power dynamics to the portrayal of economic implications, the political cartoons on CPEC are providing a unique and engaging perspective on how this multifaceted project is perceived by various stakeholders.

As the magnanimity of CPEC is unfolding in the global landscape, the visual representation of this economic initiative through political cartoons becomes a subject of utmost importance for analysis. The current research aims to unveil the meanings embedded in the visual representations of CPEC in the form of political cartoons, exploring the satire, symbolism, and cultural references used by Pakistani mainstream newspapers. During the course of this research a curated selection of cartoons will be examined to explore the underlying meanings and recurring themes on CPEC that take part in developing public perceptions about CPEC.

Numerous researches have been conducted on political cartoons and their influence on public opinion. Shahzad, Din, & Ahmad (2023) studied the representation of political ideologies through political cartoons published in a leading Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*. They used Machin's multimodal analysis technique and discovered that cartoonists used visual language to influence the political ideologies of readers. Moreover they also revealed that many political and social issues were addressed through cartoons in newspapers. Ghilzai and Bajwa (2020) explored that how interior and foreign affairs of Pakistan were presented through political cartoons and analyzed that how newspapers use language in the form of political cartoons. The results of their research showed that political cartoons perform the function of healthy criticism and hence are an embodiment of national interest. Tehseem and Bokhari (2019) while exploring the comic

cartoon representation of political and social issues of Pakistan concluded that comic imagery of socio-political issues awakens the satirical consciousness of the readers. Bakhtiar, Ismail & Baig (2023) studied the political cartoons published in one Pakistani and one Indian newspaper to gauge the relationship between India and Pakistan. They found that in total five major frames were used by both the newspapers in cartoons. Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* focused more on peace efforts while Indian newspaper *Times of India* emphasized the blame game through cartoon depiction. Sarwar et al. (2023) studied the semiotic and linguistic features of cartoons in Pakistani English language newspapers. The results of their research showed that cartoonists use their art to depict harsh political realities through humor and satire. Moreover they provided insights about the influence of political cartoons on the construction of public opinion. The literature review of studies on political cartoons showed that numerous researches have been conducted on political cartoons in the past. And such researches deemed very useful in analyzing the relationships between countries. As difficult situations are masked with satire and humor in political cartoon representation so it become comparatively easier for the media outlets to present issues which otherwise are challenging. It is proven from the previous literature that political cartoons' representation of political ideologies is very influential and could have undeniable impacts on the readers. In this context it is pertinent to deconstruct and analyze the political cartoons to understand the current CPEC situation between Pakistan and China.

Many researches have been conducted on depiction of CPEC either Pak-China relations in the context of CPEC, or challenges around CPEC. A comprehensive review of the relevant researches is given below.

Umer, Sharma and Hussain (2018) examined the presentation of CPEC in the press of Pakistan, India and China. The findings indicated that Pakistani press depicted CPEC as an economic game changer while India and China emphasized on restoration of trust between the key stakeholders. Ittefaq, Ahmed and Pantoja (2021) analyzed the framing of China in seven English language newspapers of Pakistan and identified five major frames. They concluded that Pakistani English language press “promotes China’s goodwill through an overwhelming positive reporting of its culture, diplomatic support and investment.” They argued that this much positive reporting of China in Pakistan is related to China’s soft power. Yuanyuan et al. (2023) examined the positive and negative coverage of CPEC in national and international newspapers. The findings of their research showed that stock market rates rose when more positive coverage of CPEC was given by the newspapers. Qusien & Robbins (2023) analyzed the coverage of CPEC in Pakistani media with a special focus that how media of a developing country frames such a mega project. Although Pakistan’s position is vulnerable in the context of climate change yet Pakistani media is focusing only on the economic outcomes of the project. A somewhat similar research was conducted by Ahmed (2023) where he concluded that Pakistani English language newspaper

Dawn gives favorable coverage to CPEC and discusses its implications positively even after COVID-19 pandemic.

The review of the recent literature on political cartoons and CPEC showed that a scientific research is direly needed to examine the content of political cartoons on CPEC to fill this significant gap in the literature. The current research project will be beneficial for the relevant stakeholders and government officials of both the countries as it will enlighten them that how media outlets use various elements in cartoons to depict political ideologies and how satire and humor in these political cartoons are used to influence the political ideologies of the readers.

2- Research Questions

The following research questions were constructed to meet the objectives of the current research:

- 1- How the issue of CPEC is represented visually and linguistically in Pakistani English language newspaper *Dawn*?
- 2- What ideologies dominate the political cartoons' discourses on CPEC?

3- Research Methodology

The research methodology in the present study is qualitative in nature as it analyses the multimodality of political cartoons' discourses through the lens of Ledin and Machin's (2020) and Machin and Myre (2007) framework for MCDA. The visual and linguistic analyses are done to reveal the underpinned ideologies in the selected political cartoons' texts. The visual analysis is done by taking insights from the Ledin and Machin's (2020). They say "image can shape our experience of the world. This can be in relation to the kind of truth claims they are making and also how they are set up to allow their viewers to engage with the things that they depict.....images are composed to conceal or enhance certain elements" (2020, p. 61). The visual analysis uses the following elements from Ledin and Machin's (2020) framework;

a- Participants

Visual depiction of people in political cartoons is very important as semiotic choices meaningfully convey the desired ideologies through these choices. Ledin and Machin (2020, p. 47) say "we focus on how people are represented as acting which can connote ideas and values about these persons".

b- Setting

Setting is used to document the event either with detailed or abstract background. According to Ledin and Machin (2020) settings are used to communicate wider meaning, identities and values.

c- Poses

Ledin and Machin (2020) say that poses are used systematically to connote specific meaning, a certain kind of person, a certain set of values and discourses.

d- Object

Objects choices in the images are meaning-potential as Leiden and Machin (2020, p. 43) say ‘simply the choice of objects placed into or onto any visual design can signal a discourse.

For linguistic analysis, Machin and Myre’s (2007) modal was utilised as they say

“language is an available set of options, certain choices have been made by the author for their own motivated reasons.....the lexical choices can tend to appear neutral to the analyst. But a closer look at these choices nevertheless help us to reveal the way the author selects from range of possible language choices to represent the situation” (2007, p. 33-47).

The linguistic caption analysis is done to highlight the hidden ideological perspectives of the producers.

Data

The data for the present study is collected from one of the leading Pakistani English newspapers *Dawn*. Newspapers of last six years were consulted to see how CPEC has been portrayed through political cartoons’ discourse in the selected newspaper. *Dawn* was selected for the analysis as it is one of the oldest and widely read newspapers in Pakistan. It has a large circulation of 95,446 copies and a total readership in excess of 524,953 (www.dawn.com). A purposive sampling technique was used to select the political cartoons on the issue out of published cartoons in the last 6 years from 2017-2023. Four political cartoons were finalized for the multimodal critical discourse analysis.

4- Data Analysis

In this section, the political cartoons on the selected issue were analysed. The multimodal critical discourse analysis of the selected political cartoons was done to unveil the ideologies deeply embedded in the cartoons. Figure 1 is taken from the leading English language newspaper *Dawn*.



Figure 1 taken from *Dawn* published on 23 January 2020

4.1- Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Figure 1

a- Participants

There are two participants in this cartoon, the first one standing on the top is American representative and second one standing on the lower road is Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan. The American representative's position shows his power and authority. He is wearing a hat on which American flag is printed that shows undying pride and arrogance. He seems instructing Imran Khan as his pose strongly conveys this message. The black zigzag lines on the edge of the road indicate intricacy and complicity of the project as the Boss America does not seem happy with this project. The facial expressions of the participants reveal many ideologies. The cunning face of the American representative signifies his cruelty and brings forth their ugliness in the form of policies they design for Pakistan whereas Imran Khan's face shows his dejection and utmost helplessness. He seems completely at the disposal of his Boss and seems like ready to surrender to the orders.

b- Poses

Postures of both participants have meaning potential and suggest numerous meanings. The posture of the American representative is a kind of arrogant connoting his command and influence. It also connotes how causally he orders by alluding to CPEC as he knows his orders are to be followed by all means. His open arms and position of the hands suggest his supremacy and dominance. On the other hand, the posture of Imran Khan is very defensive. His closed arms suggest his obedience and submission to the superpower. This posture shows his helplessness and vulnerability. He in an attention position is standing in dismay mood with shoulders down, arms closed and all set to take orders and act upon them. This signifies Pakistan has been shrouded in by many pressures therefore can't take stand against the superpower and acts like an obedient servant.

c- Setting

Setting is plain and much is being communicated through participants and linguistic caption. Setting in figure 1 connotes two roads, one is leading to "CPEC" and the other is leading to "not CPEC". The color of both the roads is white, black lines are used to give the impression that the roads are on a higher altitude. But both the roads are empty. That is why Pakistan is sketched as confused and helpless. Though Pakistan wants to go on the road leading to "CPEC" but she is confuse as there is nothing visible on this road. The black zigzag lines on the edge of the road indicate intricacy and complicity of the project as the Boss America is not happy with this project.

Objects

The objects in the cartoon are the two billboards on which the linguistic captions are written. Both are fixed at the end of the two long roads where one leads to the destination which is CPEC and the other leads to somewhere else but definitely not CPEC. This is the linguistic caption that makes the political cartoon significant and strictly speaking gives meaning to the entire cartoon. The billboards are not merely the objects but are full of ideological discourses as CPEC has different meaning for America and Pakistan. Their interests are different therefore these billboards are presenting different messages to the representatives of both the countries.

4.1.1 Linguistic Analysis of Figure 1

The linguistic captions in figure 1 are highly ideological as these convey broader discourses embedded in complicated foreign relations of Pakistan with superpowers China and America.

This nexus is highly complicated as the vested interests of both powerful countries are different and Pakistan became sandwich in this complex chain of relations. The first caption on the billboard which is fixed by American representative says ‘No CPEC’. America is warning PM of Pakistan not to go for CPEC. The caption gets its meaning the way it is being said by the American official, his pose and facial expressions are highly threatening as America wants to stop it immediately whereas the second caption ‘CPEC’ shows the desire of the Prime Minister of Pakistan as the road on which he stands leads to ultimate destination which is CPEC. This shows its significance for Pakistan and its people. Being the PM of Pakistan, he represents his people who are in the favor of this project as it would bring a lot of economic opportunities for the people of Pakistan.

4.2- Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Figure 2

Expanding the CPEC base



Figure 2 taken from Dawn published 11 September 2018

a- Participants

There are two participants in the cartoon, on the right is PM of Pakistan Mr. Imran Khan while on the left is President of China, Mr. Xi Jinping. Both are sitting in a very relaxed mood. The

position shows their friendship and here it signifies Pakistan's long-standing friendship with China. The issue being discussed between the two is CPEC. The sitting position of the participants on the table is highly significant, it connotes frankness and closeness. Additionally, they are discussing the issue in a lighter mood while eating something with chopsticks. It signifies that Pak-China relation has always been strong and they trust each other as close allies since centuries and this new venture CPEC is their new project of mutual interest. Imran Khan's folded sleeves further shows his intimacy with the counterpart. He without any formality communicating his desires to expand CPEC with the Chinese President.

b- Setting

The setting in this cartoon is rich and has many details. Chairs are placed around the round table which connotes the official setting of the meeting. Round table seating connotes intimate setting as it maximizes the friendly environment which could produce good results. In this particular setting the chairs are empty and only two participants are present and they chose to sit on the table. Being the heads of state, it seems an unusual position, but this is deliberately shown to give a picture of all-weather friends in a very intimate position where the matter under-discussion has strategic importance. It also suggests that without any intervention they both discussing such an important issue in privacy.

c- Poses

Poses in figure 2 are very interesting as they produce numerous ideologies. The poses of the participants show their strong yet friendly relation. They are sitting close with legs crossed which is an easy pose. It shows comfort and calm. It signifies that they are all set in this comfortable pose to discuss something in a very pleasant mood. Imran Khan's pose is more informal as his sleeves are folded back and his tiny look makes him appear inferior in status to his counterpart which actually shows China's economic power and Pakistan's dependency on its aid. The posture of Chinese representative is more composed and his firm body suggests his economic superiority and authority.

d- Objects

The objects in figure 2 are chairs, tables, eating bowls and chopsticks. The chair and table setting signifies the meeting. It is note-worthy that all seven chairs are vacant and the participants are sitting on the table which is very strange as we generally can never accept it from the head of states to sit in this pose. It seems two intimate friends are sitting close and discussing the matter in a very light mood. This is highly meaning-potential and sends a particular set of discourses to the audience. It shapes participants' identity. The eating bowls with chopsticks in closed and intimate set up further enhances and makes the image of Pak-China long-standing friendship for

viewers clear and vivid. It suggests that both countries are on one page and will stand by each other's side through thick and thin.

4.2.1 Linguistic Analysis of Figure 2

The linguistic caption in figure 2 ' *Expanding the CPEC base* ' provides meanings to the whole cartoons. The participants informal pose of chatting gets meaning through this caption. They are actually discussing how this mega project between the two countries could be expanded to reap more benefits. Both the participants seem devoted to materialise this plan of expansion. Though, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan appears more enthusiastic as his body language sends this message across and the president of China, calmly engaged in this conversation. So the linguistic caption talks about the most important economic initiative in the form of CPEC in the region. It further shows the interest and intention of both head of states. They are serious and all willing to discuss this as an important agenda and that too in a private setting where these two only without any assistance discussing the plan of CPEC expansion.

4.3- Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Figure 3

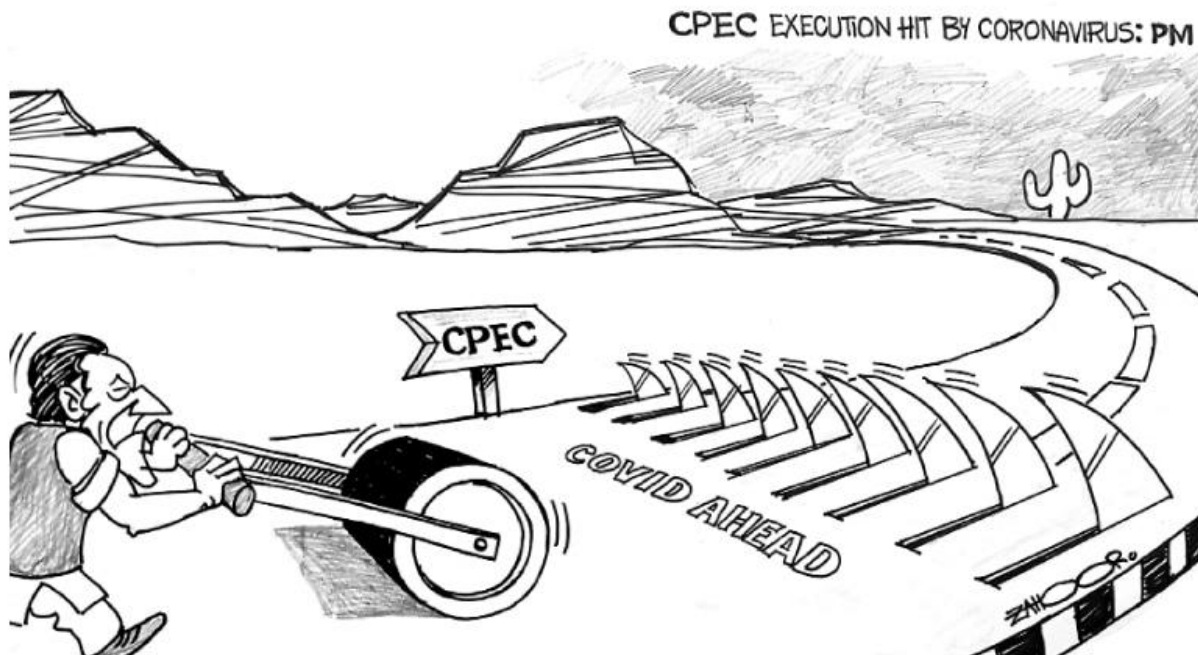


Figure 3 taken from Dawn published on 2 October 202

a- Participants

In figure 3, only one participant is present who is looking off the camera. He is the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan. Setting in this cartoon is full of details so even the participant is given less space and more meanings are being conveyed through setting, objects and linguistic caption. The participant is wearing Pakistani national dress *shalwar qameez* and waistcoat, to suggest his identity. He is moving a hand driven roller. He actually wants to flatten the road to smooth its surface but unfortunately, the road ahead is blocked with automatic road blocker. This actually connotes Pakistani PM's plan of CPEC execution that cannot be materialized due to COVID-19 pandemic. The progress in CPEC is obstructed by COVID-19 and all the high schemes for economic growth are standing still and cannot be initiated. PM Khan's tiny body stature signifies Pakistan's weak economic position.

b- Settings

Setting in the figure has many minute details related to the issue under discussion. We can see that setting dominates all other aspects of the cartoon. There are mountains in the background, which actually suggests the Gawadar port area where this project (CPEC) connects Pakistan with China. It is a high mountainous region where China built a silk road by spending US\$554 billion. Therefore, the road in the political cartoon signifies this Silk Road constructed by China to start CPEC related projects in Pakistan. The mountains in the cartoon suggest the difficulties Pakistan is facing now due to COVID-19 that has made the mega project un-operational at the moment. PM Khan despite his best efforts is unable to combat this natural disaster that has stopped progress in the project.

c- Poses

There is only one participant in the cartoon and his pose is meaning potential. His side pose suggests he does not care about the audience and just striving hard to achieve his goal. This also shows his commitment to the cause and indifference to the distractions. In side pose as Machin (2020) suggests the audience is not given importance or acknowledged, they are just there to witness the scene. The participant is struggling to move the hand roller with all his strength as his right foot position indicates that he is pushing the object tirelessly. His folded sleeves suggest that he is working hard like a laborer to achieve the goal. He seems a bit dejected by looking at the obstacles coming his way and hindering his plans.

d- Objects

There are three objects shown in the cartoon, the roller, automatic road blocker and a billboard. These three in combination convey meaning about the subject. The portrayal of hand-roller is highly significant as it is used for rolling down the surface/road. Here, it refers to PM Khan's efforts to materialize the mega project CPEC in Pakistan. This symbolic roller represents the intentions of Khan to smoothen the road towards economic success and uplifting of the country. The placement of automatic blade road blockers against the roller suggests hurdles and difficulties due to which this plan seems hindered. The sharp blades suggests the intricacy and complexity of the situation as no progress is achievable due to COVID-19 blockade. The third object in this cartoon is the billboard on which CPEC is written. It gives meaning to all the setting painted in the cartoon.

4.3.1 Linguistic Analysis of Figure 3

In figure 3, there are two linguistic captions, one is the statement by PM Imran Khan regarding the CPEC during COVID-19 pandemic. It says "*CPEC execution hit by Coronavirus*" and second linguistic caption written on the billboards is "*CPEC*". The first caption states about the recent catastrophe of corona virus that hit the world so hard that almost seized all the project undergoing in the entire world including Pakistan and China. Therefore the mega project CPEC had to stop which is a bad news for both the countries. PM Khan was eager to start and expand the project but now it's hindered due to corona pandemic and it seems impossible to continue the work on it.

4.4 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Figure 4



Figure 4 taken from Dawn 11May 2017

Participants

Figure 4 presents four participants. The person holding rope with both hands and lifted up feet is in the middle and presented as PM Nawaz Shareef while three participants standing on the ground are head of different neighboring states of Pakistan. On the left, Indian Pime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Wajpai is standing, next to him is the President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani and last in the row on the right side, is the Iranian President, Mr. Hassan Rouhani. These three participants are looking up and watching Pakistan’s Prime Minister, enjoying swings by holding the rope of CPEC. He is lifted up and just looking towards the sky, which is a limit now after initiating CPEC with China. The amazed and surprised faces of three participants show their anxiety and anxiousness over the commencement of CPEC with the biggest economic power in the region. All seems highly concerned and dismayed by PM Nawaz Shareef’s move. While PM Shareef’s excitement is portrayed through this childish act as he overenthusiastically holds the CPEC rope and completely ignores the presence of all three heads of the states. This signifies that in the continuation of this mega project with China he does not care about the neighboring countries’ reservations. He is neither looking on them nor towards the audience but

just holding a strong gaze towards the destination. This suggests the complex ties of Pakistan with immediate neighbors. All three heads of the states have a common concern over the initiation of this project between China and Pakistan. They do not seem happy with this development and their perplexed faces show their dismay and worries.

Settings

Setting is less documented in figure 4 as meanings are being conveyed through participants. The black lines at both sides of the central figure show complex situation in which PM of Pakistan is shown. He from all sides of boarder facing threats because Pakistan's neighboring countries are not happy with this decision and Pakistani PM so he is under immense pressure. The heads of states realized the economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan therefore they want to stop it by being on one page. India, Iran and Afghanistan consider it a great challenge and scared of Pak-China alliance. The bright white on the scene suggests hope and optimism for Pakistan in the form of CPEC whereas black thick lines signify the negative role of neighboring countries.

Poses

Poses of all participants in the cartoon are meaning-potential. PM Nawaz Shareef's pose is the most striking one as he is in the most uncomfortable position. While holding the rope tightly, he ignores all the participants present around him. This shows his focus and determination to the cause. He is all committed to achieve it. His side pose is intentionally shown to disseminate two types of meaning; first, he is not interested what the other participants think of him, secondly he doesn't care about the audience. He doesn't acknowledge anyone's presence as this could divert his attention from the goal. Prime Minister of India, Mr. Vajpai is shown putting all his efforts to look up and watch PM of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Shareef's moves. Mr. Vajpai seems absolutely puzzled and bewildered over the situation so is the condition of Afghanistan's President. They both stand close and this signifies their close diplomatic ties as well as their same stance on the issue. Iranian President as worried as his counterparts equally unhappy and watching this situation with great displeasure.

Objects

The only object shown in the cartoon is the rope. Though it was one object yet most of the meanings are being sent across through this. This is not a common rope but a special one which PM Nawaz Shareef is holding tightly and trying to pull it to reap the benefits. Pulling the rope would bring CPEC closer to Pakistan so Mr. Shareef is trying hard to bring it home. Here, the cartoonist wants to exhibit the importance of CPEC for Pakistan. It also signifies that Pakistan is eager to be a part of it. The other semiotic resources confirm this notion as the presence of heads of states of neighboring countries that seem to sabotage this project.

4.4.1 Linguistic Analysis of Figure 4

The linguistic captions used in the cartoons are *CPEC and Pakistan*. These captions alone provide meaning to all other signs in the cartoons. If we remove these captions, the whole meaning is lost. CPEC being the central idea and Pakistan being the main beneficiary of it, the cartoon suggests the strategic importance of the project in the region. This idea is not being welcomed by the neighboring countries. That is why they all came forward to safeguard their vested interests. Pakistan is facing challenges due to this resentment and dismay of neighboring states.

5- Discussion and Conclusion

During the course of the current research four political cartoons, depicting CPEC, published in a Pakistani English language newspaper *Dawn*, from 2017 to 2023, were analyzed by using the multimodality framework of Ledin and Machin's (2020) and Machin and Myre (2007). Two research questions were explored. The results indicated that *Dawn* represented Pakistan's internal and foreign affairs through the political cartoons. This observation is congruent with the results of Ghilzai and Bajwa (2020) that political cartoons are used to discuss the internal and external affairs of a country.

The first research question was about visual and linguistic presentation of CPEC in Pakistani newspapers. The results indicated that *Dawn* did not give a lot of coverage to CPEC in political cartoons. But simultaneously it was observed that whenever something of substantial importance, related to CPEC happened, other than the narrative stories *Dawn* published political cartoons on it. The in-depth multimodal critical discourse analysis of the selected political cartoons reveals and unpacks the hidden ideologies being disseminated through the discourses of political cartoons on CPEC. It shows that CPEC is not only important for Pakistan and China rather it is considered greatly significant for all the immediate neighbors of both the countries. They are very suspicious and extend great unhappiness towards this mega project between Pakistan and China. The political cartoons' discourses highlight that this project is of great importance for Pakistan keeping in view its low economic position therefore both of the Pakistani Prime Ministers, Mr. Imran Khan and Mr. Nawaz Shareef, in all cartoon shown eager to avail this opportunity regardless of the challenges which Pakistan is facing or has to face in future in the form of superpowers' pressure and neighboring countries' resentment. Visually and linguistically CPEC was shown as an economic venture of utmost importance for Pakistan. It was also presented through these political cartoons that Pakistan is extremely eager to remain a part and initiate CPEC projects. Pakistan's perplex situation regarding neighboring countries and America was also represented through political cartoons.

As Lent (2023) says that a pertinent function of political cartoons is to identify issues for discussion so the second question was about the dominant ideologies in the political cartoons on CPEC. The visual and linguistic discourses disclose that spread of certain type of ideologies is high on the agenda so the newspaper frequently presents Pakistan's as a weak partner and interested to get this project by taking all kinds of risk like bad diplomatic relations with immediate neighbors. However, representation of China is portrayed in a very positive and authoritative manner which shows that the importance of economic supremacy and empowerment. This extremely positive portrayal of China also represents China's soft power (Ittefaq, Ahmed and Pantoja, 2021). Other than the supremacy of China, America's role as a super power is also shown as unhappy with Pakistan's involvement in CPEC and China. Neighboring countries unhappiness over CPEC also remained an issue of prime concern for PM Nawaz Shareef's government. COVID-19 pandemic and its implications on CPEC were also discussed.

It was observed that *Dawn* carefully selected discourses to disseminate a desired set of ideologies to its readers. It was established through the results of the current research that media plays a central role in the construction of ideologies and make them appear natural.

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