Issue Brief

March 20, 2026

False Promises, Real Leverage: SEZs under CPEC in Pakistan

Sriparna Pathak

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China's investment in Pakistan predates the announcement of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), yet tangible improvements across key economic and social sectors remain limited. Despite over a decade of promised investments from China, primarily through the $68 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan has seen minimal improvement owing to project delays, high debt servicing, and security issues. In fact, Pakistani officials have acknowledged that political instability has discouraged investors, and undermined expectation that CPEC would be a "game changer." This issue brief examines selected Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under CPEC Phase 1, along with some of the energy and railway projects to assess their economic and strategic implications. It argues that China leverages its deepening economic footprint in Pakistan to secure diplomatic support in multilateral forums, including UN agencies.

Introduction

In 2021, during a speech at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative (GDI) as a major multilateral initiative. One of the proposed goals of the GDI is to accelerate the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by revitalizing global development partnerships, and by focusing in greater depths on greener and healthier development.[1] Additionally, the GDI emphasizes priorities such as poverty alleviation, food security, climate change responses, pandemic prevention, digital economy, connectivity, green development and innovation- driven growth.[2] Early supporters of the GDI were Cambodia, Laos, and Pakistan. In fact, despite the ambiguity on what the GDI would actually entail, more than 100 countries and international organizations expressed their support for the initiative, and 50 countries in January 2022 joined the UN Group of Friends of the Global Initiative, which was set up by China.[3]

Pakistan's immediate backing of the initiative was not surprising, given that it supports China on almost all its initiatives, if not all, at the UN. Pakistan has repeatedly spearheaded or supported joint statements at the UN defending China's actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet, opposing the "politicization of human rights" by Western countries.[4] China and Pakistan, have pledged support to each other on "core and major interests", as well, which includes cooperation to address terrorism, and in turn China, as a member of the permanent five members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), blocked efforts to list Pakistani terrorists.[5] There are scores of such examples where Pakistan steadfastly supports China in return for promises of development.

If some of the few areas that the GDI seeks to address through multilateral cooperation are analyzed, i.e. those of poverty alleviation, food security, digital economy and innovation-led growth, Pakistan fares poorly in all of them. Pakistan's rankings in these indicators are given in Table 1.

Despite the rhetoric of the all-weather friendship, while China has promised funding for new projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it has also cited risks to personnel, unpaid debts and Pakistan's deteriorating economic conditions. Key projects, like the $6.7 billion Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway has stalled, forcing Pakistan to seek alternative financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).[10] What thus remains odd is China's offer of the GDI to Pakistan, and Pakistan's immediate acceptance of the GDI. The explanation lies in China's increasing grip over Pakistan, with its false promises and myriad formats of influence operations, of which economic maneuvers stand out.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs): Creation of Industrial Leverage and Dependency

The CPEC is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and includes plans for SEZs to drive industrialization, to attract foreign investment, to boost exports, to create jobs and to foster technology transfer. The CPEC Secretariat Office, Islamabad, states that the fiscal benefits under the SEZ law, include a one-time exemption from custom duties and

Table 1: Pakistan's rankings in some of the realms addressed by GDI

No.	Realm	Ranking	Ranking Agency
1.	Poverty alleviation	Pakistan ranks among the top five countries globally with the highest number of people living in poverty	Human Development Index[6]
2.	Food Security	Pakistan ranks 109th out of 127 countries in the 2024 Global Hunger Index	Global Hunger Index[7]
3.	Digital economy	Pakistan ranks 68th in the Huawei Global Digitalization Index 2024	Huawei, China[8]
4.	Innovation led growth	Pakistan ranks 99th among 139 economies	Global Innovation Index, World Intellectual Property Organization[9]

Source: Author, compiled from various news sources.

taxes for all capital goods, imported into Pakistan, for "the development, operations and maintenance of a SEZ (both for the developer as well as for the zone enterprise) and exemption from all taxes on income for a period of ten years."[11]

In this context, it is pertinent to understand the difference between CPEC Phase 1 and CPEC Phase 2. Phase 1 of the CPEC, or roughly the time period between the years 2015-2020, focused on foundational infrastructure, energy ports and Gwadar Port development, with the additional aim of resolving power shortages. Phase 2 in contrast, from 2021-2025 and onwards, tries to pivot towards industrialization, through greater focus on SEZs, agriculture and socioeconomic development, while expanding the digital and technology sectors, with the aim to boost Pakistan's export capacity.[12]

As of early 2026, 44 SEZs are proposed under the CPEC 2.0, focusing on sectors like textiles, agriculture, and manufacturing.[13] Initially, nine SEZs were planned to accelerate industrialization.[14] The four priority SEZs at advanced stages include Rashakai (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Allama Iqbal Industrial City (Punjab), Dhabeji (Sindh), and Bostan (Balochistan).[15]

a) Rashakai (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa):

The announcement of the Rashakai project was made in 2016-17 while the development push for it began around 2019-20. The site was identified by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and formally approved for inclusion in the CPEC during the 6th Joint Cooperation Committee meeting on December 2016, in Beijing.[16] After a gap of three years, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC) and the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC).[17] The duration between identification and approval of the site and the signing of the MoU cannot be missed. The formal concession agreement was only signed in April 2019.[18] The development agreement was signed on September 14, 2020, and the groundbreaking was finally conducted on May 28, 2021.[19]

In 2024, it was reported that bottlenecks like the lack of ease of doing business, and governance issues were major problems in the Rashakai SEZ. Additionally, the failure to address the issue of bulk rates of provision of electricity to SEZs was another major hurdle.[20] Liaquat, Ahmed, Malik, Bangash and Islam in their research on the Rashakai SEZ note that challenges such as high interest rates of 21-22 percent, inflation at 30-35 percent, limited infrastructure and poor connectivity with ports hindered industrial growth; reliance on imported raw materials further exacerbated trade imbalances, while high energy costs and irregular power supplies continue to disrupt industrial productivity, "highlighting the need for reliable utilities, and cost-effective solutions."[21] While some infrastructure has been completed in the first phase of the project in Rashakai, the SEZ faces delays in providing basic utilities such as electricity to the end users' enterprises, to initiate commercial activities. In 2024, it was reported that the Pakistani Federal Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal, instructed the government departments concerned to confirm land prices to the China Century Steel Mills, as the company sought land on discounted rates in Rashakai.[22] The backdrop to this was communication from the Rashakai Special Economic Zone Development and Operations Company (Pvt.) Limited (RSEZDOC) which warned the government that industrial cooperation between China and Pakistan will be "affected" if issues of SEZ are not settled by the government.[23] The warning was conveyed by Chief Executive of the RSEZDOC, Lyu Ming, in a letter to the Secretary of the Power Division, Pakistan, a copy of which was also shared with Iqbal.[24]

b) Allama Iqbal Industrial City (Punjab):

A premier 3217-acre SEZ located in Faisalabad in Pakistan's Punjab province, the Allama Iqbal Industrial City is near the M-4 motorway Sahianwala Interchange. It aims to attract both foreign and domestic investment by offering a

10-year tax exemption and duty-free import of machinery.[25] Inaugurated in January 2020 by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, the SEZ is being developed by the Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEDMC), and is the only priority CPEC SEZs where industrial production has commenced.[26] The SEZ was conceptualized and approved in 2016 following the 6th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting.[27] By mid-2021, reports indicated that the first phase of the project had been completed. Around 20 industrial units had either begun production or initiated construction covering approximately one-third of the first phase.[28]

However, the SEZ has faced significant operational inefficiencies, as well as environmental and community-related challenges. Karim, Xiang and Hamid (2024) found that the Allama Iqbal SEZ was developed on land predominantly occupied by farmers whose property was acquired for the project. Although farmers received monetary compensation, much of it was reportedly used for personal consumption rather than productive investment, generating limited long-term economic benefit. Consequently, substantial public funds were expended without commensurate gains, contributing to concerns about underperformance..[29]

The SEZ has also been linked to environmental and public health issues in surrounding areas. Reports indicate increased cases of respiratory and water borne diseases, attributed to industrial pollution and water contamination.[30] The hazardous accumulation of industrial waste has further affected the local environment and community health.[31] Also, the surge in heavy machinery and industrial traffic has led to increased traffic jams and road accidents, often exacerbated by the narrow roads.[32]

The challenges mirror issues observed in other China-backed SEZs abroad, including the Morowali Industrial Park in Indonesia,[33] the Cambodia-Sihanoukville SEZ,[34] and the Laos- Saysettha Development Zone,[35] among others.

c) Dhabeji (Sindh):

The Dhabeji Special Economic Zone (DSEZ) in Sindh is another priority 1,530-acre CPEC project, aimed at boosting industrialization through public-private partnership (PPP). Located in Thatta, the DSEZ is close to Port Qasim and has seeks to attract investment in specialized sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, and electronics, with major commercial launches anticipated in 2026.[36]

The DSEZ was initially conceptualized in 2016, and was granted an SEZ status in 2023. Like the Rakashai and Allama Iqbal SEZs, the long gap between conceptualization and actualization cannot be missed. A feasibility study was completed in April 2018, followed by the formal launch the Sindh government in October 2019. In February 2022, a concession agreement was signed to develop the zone under a PPP model. In 2022, then Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed displeasure over delays in the project's launch and urged the provincial government to provide an additional 1500 acres of land that had been promised for its expansion.[37]

In 2025, the Sindh government signed an agreement with Chinese and local investors to develop the DSEZ under Phase 2 of CPEC. The agreement was signed by the Sindh Economic Zones Management Company Chief Executive, Abdul Azeem Uqaili, Zhair Khan Zahir Khan Brothers (ZKB) CEO and Chairman Mohabat Khan, and Cheng Qiang of Power China International, with the support of China's National Development and Reform Commission.[38] Although the DSEZ was initially part of CPEC's first phase, it now features in the second phase.

Despite its strategic importance, the DSEZ has already faced significant challenges, including slow development progress, with as construction only around 10.6 percent complete as of early 2025.[39] Additional issues include land encroachment, regulatory delays, and infrastructure shortcomings[40].

d) Bostan (Balochistan):

The Bostan SEZ is a 1000-acre CPEC industrial zone located in Pishin, Balochistan, near the N-50 national highway.[41] Approved in 2020, its 200-acre Phase 1 features operational, under construction and planned units aimed at boosting local employment, agriculture and food processing.[42] Expected to create 55,000 to 100,000 jobs, the Bostan SEZ is envisioned as a major hub for socio-economic development in the province. In 2021, a delegation from the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industries was given a tour of the Bostan SEZ by the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade.[43]

In October 2025, the Balochistan High Court directed the relevant authorities to make the zone fully functional by mid-December.[44] However, as of early 2026, no public confirmation has indicated that the SEZ has become fully operational.

The project has been hindered by persistent security issues in Balochistan, creating a high-risk environment for workers and investors. In October 2024, for instance, coal mines in the Duki district were attacked by gunmen, resulting in the deaths of 20 workers in a rocket attack.[45] Duki lies approximately 150 kilometers from the Bostan SEZ. More broadly, Balochistan has witnessed numerous attacks targeting workers, infrastructure and investors in different areas including Gwadar (in January 2026), Mastung, Pasni, Kalat, Quetta and Duki, underscoring the tense security environment in which the SEZ operates.

In addition to security concerns, the Bostan SEZ has experienced significant delays in the provision of essential infrastructure and utilities, like gas, water and electricity, which are needed to make the zone fully functional.[46] Additionally, there is an acute shortage of skilled labor.[47] Although Pakistan has a large workforce, there is a severe gap in vocational and technical skills that are required for manufacturing or machinery operations—only about 7% of the labor force is considered to be skilled or semi-skilled.[48] The SEZ has also faced resistance from the local community, in addition to investors reporting slow bureaucratic processes, including delays in customs clearance for machinery and capital equipment.[49]

As observed in the cases of the Rashakai SEZ, the Allama Iqbal Industrial City, the Dhabeji SEZ, and the Bostan SEZ, slow implementation, bureaucratic hurdles, and security concerns remain recurring challenges in China-funded SEZs in Pakistan. Despite these persistent issues, China and Pakistan have continued to expand the number of proposed SEZs under the CPEC 2.0 framework, with approved zones increasing from seven in 2019 to 44 by early 2026. The anticipated economic returns have yet to materialize at the levels initially projected. This raises broader questions regarding the long-term viability, strategic motivations, and developmental outcomes associated with the continued expansion of SEZs under the evolving China–Pakistan partnership. One rational explanation is that as China's grip over Pakistan tightens, Pakistan's willing alignment with China on all aspects of international relations has been on an upward swing.

China's Energy Corridors and Railway Networks in Pakistan

The primary energy and infrastructure corridor of the PRC in Pakistan is the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Envisioned as a strategic link between Kashgar in China's Xinjiang region and Gwadar Port in Pakistan, the corridor runs largely through the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and is designed to integrate transport, energy, and industrial infrastructure. While the stated objectives of the BRI and CPEC—regional connectivity, economic growth, and energy security—are ambitious and outwardly developmental, a closer examination of outcomes on the ground presents a far more complex picture. The main components of China's energy corridor in Pakistan are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Major Components of China's Energy Corridor in Pakistan

No.	Name of the component/project	Stated purpose
1.	Gwadar Port and Pipeline	The deep-sea port serves as a pivotal energy hub at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz, planned for oil and gas infrastructure
2.	Karakoram Highway (KKH) Expansion	Often called the China-Pakistan Friendship Highway, this route acts as the main artery for land-based connectivity
3.	CPEC Energy Projects (includes 1320MW Coal-fired Power Plant at Port Qasim, Karachi; 1320MW China Hub Coal Power Project, Balochistan; 660MW Engro Thar Coal Power Project; 1000MW Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park (Bahawalpur)	To generate energy, coal and solar.
4.	Green Corridor (CPEC 2.0)	A newly proposed initiative focusing on renewable energy and environmental sustainability.

Source: Author, compiled from various news sources.

The Gwadar Port and adjoining Free Zone are considered as the cornerstone of the CPEC. The Gwadar Port concession agreement was originally signed in 2007 with the Port of Singapore Authority International (PSAI), under a Build-Operate-Transfer arrangement.[50] However, the PSAI was unable to develop the port and its free zone as envisaged, and in 2013, China Overseas Ports Holding Company assumed operational control. Thus, the core terms and conditions governing the port were defined long before the CPEC came into being.[51] As of 2026, the Gwadar Port is fully functional, with the Phase 1 Free Zone completed.[52]

The Gwadar Eastbay Expressway was inaugurated in June 2022, and it connects the port to the Makran Coastal Highway, while the New Gwadar International Airport was inaugurated in 2024, to enhance regional connectivity.[53] A 5MGD water desalination plant is in progress.[54] Yet, beyond the fanfare, the Gwadar Port cannot handle even half of Pakistan's cargo shipments, as it only manages around 11 million tons of bulk cargo annually, which is roughly 17 percent of Karachi Port's capacity.[55] While the government has set ambitious goals to route 50 percent of public cargo through Gwadar, limited infrastructure and security issues make the target unrealistic.[56] The region itself has faced many security challenges, which have slowed development, but the efforts to build a "Smart Port City" under the 2050 Master Plan continue.[57]

The Karakoram Highway (KKH), 1300 kilometers long, was completed in 1979, and operationalized in 1986, again much before the CPEC was conceptualized. It was included in the CPEC framework upon its formal launch in 2013.[58] Between 2013 and 15, the KKH was expanded, with major projects like the 24-km Attabad Lake bypass tunnels, which were inaugurated in 2015. Phase II, involving reconstruction of the Raikot–Havelian section, was initiated following a 2014 MoU, with construction commencing in 2016 and supported by loan agreements between China Eximbank and the Government of Pakistan..[59]

Despite China's sophisticated plan to develop the transit corridor, the KKH remains vulnerable to geological and climatic disruptions. In 2010, a massive landslide in the Hunza Valley submerged sections of the highway, creating a 20-km-long artificial lake and halting traffic between China and Pakistan for months.[60] Even in 2025, reports indicated periodic blockages near Rakaposhi viewpoint and Passu due to protests by "local China importers"[61] and heavy snowfall.[62] Such recurring disruptions continue to challenge its viability as a stable transit route linking Xinjiang to Gwadar.

The energy dimension of CPEC, initially presented as a solution to Pakistan's chronic power shortages, also presents a mixed record. Major projects include the Port Qasim Power Project, the Hubco Coal Power Project, the Engro Coal Power Project, and the Qiad-e-Azam Solar Park at Bahawalpur.

The Port Qasim Power Project had its groundbreaking in April 2015, and the project became operational in 2018.[63] By early 2025, accumulated payment arrears had reportedly reached Rs 93.5 billion, reflecting broader circular debt and liquidity challenges within Pakistan's energy sector. In 2025, Wang Dongfang, the CEO of Port Qasim Electric Power Company (Private) Limited (PQEPC), stated that the total payment due for the project had reached Rs 93.5 billion (approximately $334 million) as of February 26, 2025, with a payment delay of over six months, and this could escalate further.[64] In November 2025, frustrated by unpaid dues, Qatari giant Al-Thani Group, expressed its intention to withdraw from the Port Qasim Power Project.[65]

The story for the 1320 MW China Power Hub Generation Company coal-fired power plant in Balochistan is no different, as it faces operational issues, including chronic financial liquidity problems, severe security threats from local groups, and local resentment over resource exploitation.[66] The 660MW Engro Thar Coal Power Project, while boosting Pakistan's energy supply, faces severe problems regarding environmental degradation, social displacement, and water scarcity. Major issues include high pollutant emissions, destruction of local grazing land, groundwater contamination, and displacement of indigenous communities.[67] The 1000MW Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park (QASP) in Bahawalpur faces significant operational challenges, primarily high efficiency losses (up to 23%) due to heavy dust/soiling in the Cholistan desert. Other issues include construction delays in later phases, tariff disputes, and financial management challenges regarding debt repayment and payment delays to Chinese investors.[68] By 2022, unpaid dues to Chinese investors, and developers had reached roughly $52 million.[69]

More broadly, the so-called "Green" or "Growth Corridor" under CPEC 2.0, has encountered financial constraints, security risks, environmental concerns and governance challenges.[70] While not all projects have failed, many operate below expectations or under persistent structural strain. The question that arises here is what does Pakistan gain from these false promises? What tangible and sustainable benefits accrue to Pakistan, and how might future initiatives—whether under CPEC 2.0 or broader frameworks such as the Global Security Initiative—be recalibrated to address the lessons of the past decade? Table 3 shows some impacts of CPEC driven diplomatic alignment on Pakistan's support for China in UN bodies.

China's economic investments in Pakistan, as seen in Table 3, foster Pakistan's alignment to shield Beijing from scrutiny in international bodies, while pretending to bolster Pakistan's stability, through false and never to be completed promises. Joint statements from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reaffirm Pakistan's "firm", or "unyielding" support for China on Xinjiang, Tibet (which China and Pakistan label as 'Xizang'), Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea in the UN and multilateral settings. The pledges are explicitly tied to promises of CPEC upgrades, as seen in the "high quality" Phase II, focusing on industrialization, agriculture, green corridors and so on, and these were enhanced during Pakistan's UNSC term as well.

Table 3: China's Investments and Pakistan's Multilateral Backing, a case of quid pro quo

No.	Year	Event
1.	2021	Prime Minister Imran Khan's admission in 2021, "Because of our extreme proximity and relationship with China, we actually accept the Chinese version [on the Uyghur issue]".[71]
2.	2022	Pakistan's economic dependence on Chinese loans and CPEC pressured it to endorse China's Xinjiang policies at the UNHRC, with PM Imran Khan accepting China's version amid CPEC Phase II commitments.[72]
3.	2022	In the UNHRC vote rejecting a Xinjiang debate (19-17), Pakistan voted against alongside China; analysts attribute this to BRI/CPEC economic influence swaying Global South allies.[73]
4.	2023	In the joint statement on the Third Belt and Road Forum, Pakistan recognized CPEC's fruitful results as a BRI pioneer, reaffirming support for China's core interests (including Taiwan and multilateral coordination) in UN and other forums, linking economic gains to diplomatic solidarity.[74]
5.	2024	Pakistan firmly supported all efforts made by China to achieve national reunification, firmly opposing any form of "Taiwan independence," and expressed firm support for China on issues concerning Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.[75]
6.	2024	Joint statement between China and Pakistan, reaffirmed Pakistan's firm support for China on Xinjiang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South China Sea issues in UN/multilateral platforms; tied this to upgrading CPEC as an exemplary high-quality BRI project aligned with Pakistan's 5Es framework for shared prosperity.[76]
7.	2024	Pakistan pledged unyielding support for China's core interests (Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong, South China Sea, opposing Taiwan independence) and coordination in UN (including during Pakistan's 2025-2026 UNSC term); directly linked to deepening CPEC as a demonstration BRI project with growth, innovation, and green corridors.[77]
8.	2025	Pakistan expressed firm support for China on Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong, South China Sea, and the one-China principle (UNGA Res 2758); committed to deepening UN/multilateral coordination for developing countries' interests, while promoting CPEC upgrades under BRI's eight major steps, aligning with Pakistan's 5Es for industrialization and exports.[78]
9.	2025	Fifth Pakistan-China Consultations on Multilateral Issues focused on aligning positions in UN and other forums to safeguard core interests; underscored the strategic partnership's role in economic stability via CPEC, with commitments to enhanced coordination amid ongoing BRI investments.[79]

Source: Author's analysis

Conclusion

Through the BRI, China has extended, or promised to extend, billions of dollars in loans to developing countries, many of which lack the capacity to repay them. The CPEC, an integral component of the BRI, is no exception. Beijing's strategic calculation appears to be the conversion of potential economic losses into geopolitical gains. As China continues to extend or pledge large loans for commercially questionable infrastructure projects in debt-strapped countries such as Pakistan, a discernable pattern emerges. In this context, the GDI carries the potential to replicate what has already been witnessed under CPEC. A committee set up by former Pakistani PM Imran Khan to examine the causes for the high cost of electricity to Pakistani consumers, further exposed the corruption involving Chinese private power producers operating in Pakistan.[80]

The CPEC has already delivered a decade of unfulfilled promises, persistent delays, mounting debt burdens and escalating security risks. Projects such as the stalled Main Line-1 railway to chronic payment arrears in security projects like Port Qasin and Hub, the underwhelming progress in the flagship SEZs illustrate these challenges. The Rashakai SEZ continues to face utility bottlenecks and governance constraints; the Allama Iqbal Industrial City has been criticized for environmental degradation and community displacement; Dhabeji SEZ remains slow in construction; and Bostan SEZ faces persistent security threats. As a result, Pakistan has reaped minimal gains in terms of industrialization, job creation, export growth or poverty alleviation. These failures only mirror the broader structural shortcomings reflected in Pakistan's poor performance in global indices: 109th in the 2024 Global Hunger Index, 68th in Huawei Global Connectivity index, and 99th in the Global Innovation Index—all areas that the GDI ostensibly seeks to address.

Despite these realities, Pakistan's unwavering support for China's multilateral proposals such as the GDI, reflects a deepening asymmetric dependency. Yet, as is the case with CPEC, the GDI risks repeating the pattern of grandiose rhetoric masking leverage exercised through loans, promises of infrastructure, and economic entanglement that convert financial exposure into geopolitical influence. The GDI, building on the foundations of the BRI, carries both the potential and the intent to further entrench this dynamic, offering multilateral legitimacy for what is essentially a deepening bilateral dependence of Pakistan on China.

This issue brief is a part of the ISDP SCSA-IPA research project, "The Silk Noose: China's Power Architecture in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region".

Author –

Dr. Sriparna Pathak *is a Professor of China Studies, and the founding Director of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies at O.P. Jindal Global University, (JGU) Haryana, India. She also serves in the capacity of a Senior Fellow, at the Jindal India Institute. Additionally, she is also an Associate Director at the Motwani Jadeja Institute of American Studies at JGU. Her latest book is titled, 'Strategic Evolution of QUAD from 'Ocean Froth' to Asian NATO' (2026).Her areas of interest are China's domestic economy, trade and economic relations between India and China and China's foreign policy and economic linkages with the world.*

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