

THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Case Study on Chinese Infrastructure Projects in Pakistan

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative, a gigantic infrastructure project adopted by China in 2013, raises many criticisms about the Chinese government's motives. Research has shown that the economic cooperation project could allow China to develop naval military facilities in the Indian Ocean and that poor BRI partner countries could risk falling into a debt trap. This study aims to contribute to the discussion on China's motivations based on the implementation of BRI projects in Pakistan. The objective is to determine whether the BRI partnership with Pakistan is a win-win-economic cooperation or whether China is trying to assert its dominance in the region.

This research builds on International Relations theories to investigate which theory best explains China's motives behind the BRI projects in Pakistan. For each theoretical proposition of offensive realism, defensive realism or complex interdependence, indicators have been defined to compare the propositions with the collected data.

The data analysis showed that a mix of complex interdependence theory and defensive realism theory provides the most relevant explanation. The results found that by promoting win-win cooperation, China is pursuing soft-power economic diplomacy, which can be seen as a means of supplanting US soft power in Pakistan. The BRI projects in Pakistan have fostered a close relationship of economic interdependence between Beijing and Islamabad, but that China benefits more from the BRI projects.

On this basis, it is recommended that China should be more transparent about the commercial viability of projects, the conditions of cooperation and the results achieved. Further research is needed to examine the share of Chinese workers in the projects, and the social and commercial relevance of the projects.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
API	Asian Power Index
ASEAN	Association of SouthEast Asian Nations
BLA	Baloch Liberation Army
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CHEC	China Harbour Engineering Company
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
DOD	Department Of Defense
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FTA	Free trade agreement
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International relations
NDB	New Development Bank
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RMB	Renminbi
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement
UN	United Nations
URSS	Union des Républiques Socialistes Soviétiques
US	United States
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

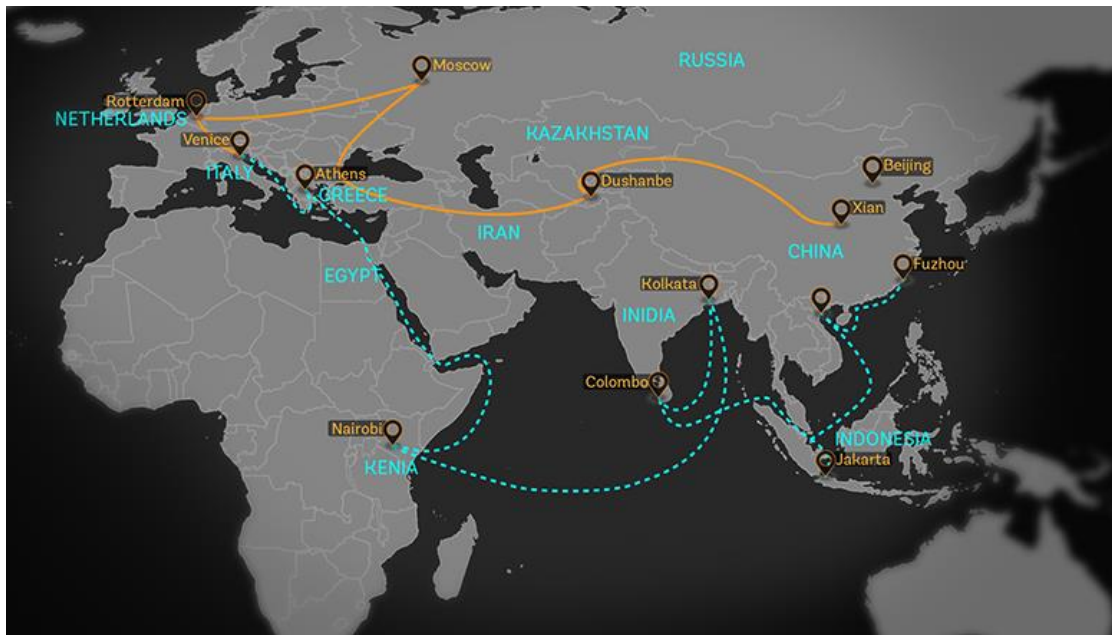
The 2008 financial crisis, Brexit and Donald Trump's withdrawal from international agreements (Paris Climate Agreement, Trans-Pacific Partnership, Iran Nuclear Deal...) mark a change in the global political and economic order (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018). Since the beginning of the 21st century, scholars have acknowledged the decline of the West and the rise of China as a new key player (Layne, 2018; Stuenkel, 2016). Westerners no longer have a monopoly on aid and China is on the path to becoming the largest donor of the developing world (Kobayashi, 2013). More than 4300 infrastructure projects were financed by China in 140 countries between 2000 and 2014 (Dreher et al., 2019). In addition, its gigantic transcontinental "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) now labelled "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) could become the largest regional cooperation ever achieved in the history of globalization.

1.1 One Belt, One Road

Inspired by the ancient Silk Road established during the Han dynasty, the BRI consists of two continental and maritime roads: the "Silk Road Economic Belt" connecting China to Europe and Central Asia, and the "New Maritime Silk Road" linking China to South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (see Figure 1). Established in 2013 by the Chinese president Xi Jinping, the project includes infrastructure activities such as the construction of roads, railways, airports, harbours, fiber-optic and communication systems and gas pipelines in many developing countries. The ambitious project would enable China to build strong trade partnerships in more than 65 countries that account for 60% of the global population (World Bank, 2018). Overall, the BRI costs are estimated at US\$800 billion, financed by China and supported by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as well as the New Development Bank (NDB) (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018, p. 2).

Over the past few years, international institutions have acknowledged the importance of the BRI in strengthening trade and cultural exchange throughout the World (UN, 2017; WTO, 2017; Global Water Partnership, 2018). The initiative has gained momentum and many developing countries have expressed interest in participating in the project. Nonetheless, China's motivations behind the implementation of the BRI are yet to be studied in depth.

Figure 1: The Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road.



Source: The World Bank, 2018.

According to the World Bank, the project has a clear commercial focus and could radically transform the developing world's economy by "reducing trade cost and improving connectivity" (World Bank, 2018). The UN Secretary-General António Guterres has compared the BRI to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), arguing that "both strive to create opportunities, global public goods and win-win cooperation" (Papadopoulou, 2017, para. 2). However, researchers are divided on whether the BRI has a genuine objective of economic cooperation (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008; Ahmad, Asmi, Ali, Rahman, Abbas; 2017). The China-led project was met with suspicion by many Western scholars (Schortgen, 2018; Pehrson, 2006). After the publication of China's loan deals with BRI countries, journalists expressed concerns about the debt trap that would be faced by poor nations (Kuo & Kommenda, n.d.). China lends millions of dollars in infrastructure development to developing countries, many of which are unable to repay their debts and forced to sell their assets to the Chinese government in the event of a default in payment. Some countries have already been affected, such as the Sri Lankan government. The country has been forced to hand over the port of Hambantota for 99 years to China, after failing to pay its debt (Abi-habid, 2018). China's appropriation of strategic infrastructures has prompted Chinese academic Huang (2018) to declare that the Maritime Road initiative not only has economic cooperation objectives but plays a crucial role in the government's agenda to create new overseas strategic pivots. Many Western and Indian strategists highlight that the economic cooperation project would, in fact, allow China to develop a chain of military infrastructure in the Indian Ocean (Huang, 2018). Similarly, the Director of the South Asian Institute, Raja Mohan, highlights that "the world has underestimated the pace of China's military modernisation, the intensity of its naval build-up and its consequences" (Mohan, 2014, para. 3). In other words, they both fear that China would rise as a

military hegemony power through the new Maritime Road. As a result, many Western countries and India have been reluctant to support the BRI.

To sum up, scholars do not agree on China's real motivations behind the BRI. While some argue that the purpose of the Maritime Road is economic connectivity, others emphasize its geopolitics and military objective.

1.2 Aim of the research

This master thesis aims to contribute to the discussion on China's intentions behind the BRI by focusing on the establishment of BRI projects in Pakistan. Many scholars argue that China's efforts to build infrastructure through the BRI is driven by the strategic objective to acquire military naval facilities along the coast. However, as Khurana highlights, "such an argument remains speculation, backed by frail" (2008, p. 1). Therefore, this research aims to determine whether the BRI has a diplomatic and economic purpose, or whether it is motivated by military and geostrategic goals.

The discussion over China's intentions behind the construction of ports in the Southeast Asian region has divided researchers. In particular, the question whether the ports funded by China could benefit its security and military interests. Strategists Ahmad et al., (2017) claim that China's financing of ports in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan serves a military purpose. Similarly, the New York Times points out the Maritime Road's military purpose, stating that Gwadar Pakistani port gives Beijing a strategic asset to counter India and the US in case of naval blockades (Abi-Habid, 2018). In response, Lijian Zhao, Deputy Head of Mission at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, described the report as Western propaganda and stressed that infrastructure only has an economic purpose (Chandran, 2018). The debate on whether the Maritime Road's harbours have economic or military vocation fits well within a broader debate on China's motivations behind the BRI.

Therefore, this thesis builds on existing research to determine which theoretical propositions of realism and liberalism better explain China's investment in BRI host countries such as Pakistan.

1.3 Research question

The main question is whether China's growing bilateral partnership with Pakistan is part of Beijing's declared policy of "peaceful development" or whether China is trying to assert its dominance in the region with the BRI.

From an economic point of view, the BRI can be interpreted as "an attempt to challenge the existing global financial system based on Bretton Woods agreement", (Jeganaathan, 2017, p. 163). If this research reveals that the project is of a purely economic nature, countries reluctant to join the BRI could

potentially join in and contribute to achieving global economic cooperation. However, if the BRI's military objective were to be confirmed, the implementation of this gigantic cooperative plan would radically change the security environment of the region. In other words, China's increased involvement in the region will pose a serious threat to India and the US. To determine which of the diplomatic-economic or strategic-military theoretical proposition best applies to China's motivations, this research will use a congruence analysis and apply both Realist and Liberalist theories to the BRI.

The central research question is, therefore: *Which IR theory better explains the motives behind China's BRI projects in Pakistan?*

1.4 Sub-questions

Given the width of the research question, this thesis will address several sub-questions:

1. According to previous studies, what are China's motivations behind the BRI and specifically the infrastructures of the Maritime Road?
2. Which theoretical propositions can be derived from the Realist and the Liberalist theories?
3. Which theory explains better China's motives in financing various infrastructures projects in Pakistan?

1.5 Approach

This thesis will use qualitative analysis as a research approach. In other words, this research will conduct a specific investigation of the implementation of the BRI in a selected country. Three designs can be used to conduct small-N research, including the co-variation approach, the causal-process tracing approach and the congruence analysis. This research uses congruence analysis to examine the congruence between empirical evidence and "the explanatory relevance [...] of one theoretical approach in comparison to other theoretical approaches (Blatter & Haverland, 2014, p. 144). In other words, the congruence analysis determines which theoretical explanations best explain the research question.

Two types of congruence analysis can be applied: the complementary theory approach and the competing theory approach. The first one implies that "theories lead to complementary implications in the real world", while the second assumes that "theories stand in stark opposition to each other" (Blatter & Haverland, 2014, p. 145). For this research, the competing approach is applied to the case study. This thesis focuses on realism and liberalism among International Relations (IR) theories since they are the most likely explanations for the phenomenon under study. Both theories are competing: while power

and conflict are the dominant themes of realism, liberalism emphasizes stability, interdependence, and cooperation among states.

1.6 Relevance

1.6.1 Scientific Relevance

According to Lehnert, Miller & Wonka, relevant research “helps us to arrive at a better understanding of a phenomenon that we study theoretically or empirically” (2007, p. 23). In this respect, the scientific relevance of this thesis is based on its contributions to existing theoretical studies on the BRI and more particularly on the implementation of the Maritime Road.

First, OBOR is a relatively new phenomenon since the project was launched in 2013. This thesis, therefore, participates in the ongoing collective dialogue on the implementation of the project, its obstacles and motivations. Although many studies question China's motivations, little research has focused on the use of the BRI for military purposes. In addition, no study has analysed in detail the function of ports receiving Chinese funding along the Maritime Road.

1.6.2 Societal relevance

Based on Lehnert, Miller & Wonka’s definition, relevant research “furthers the understanding of social and political phenomena which affect people and makes a difference with regards to explicitly specified evaluative standards” (2007, p. 27)

To this extent, the result of this research could potentially affect citizens living in the Indian Ocean region. Indeed, the Indian Ocean is of crucial interest to the oil shipping path and provides valuable military and economic resources. If it turns out that the BRI is part of China's military plan to acquire strategic ports, security tensions could increase between the US, China, and India, three major world powers. With respect to the above definition, the instability of the region and the lack of security would be used as evaluative standards to assess the impact of the project on the citizens. Overall, the BRI could have an impact on 60% of the world’s population in terms of development, connectivity and trade. It is therefore essential to analyse the motivations behind this new form of regional cooperation.

Secondly, the BRI merits further in-depth analyses given its potential impact on the global economic environment. The successful implementation of the project could transform global trade by significantly reducing the cost and time of international exchanges.

Finally, in the light of Beijing's motivations for the investments in infrastructures, this research could impact the policy-makers of the BRI's partner countries. In other words, if the Realist theory prevails, it could lead countries to redefine China's involvement in financing their infrastructure. However, if the Liberalist theory predominates, it could stimulate the previously cautious Western countries to get involved in the region's development project.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This research is divided as follows: Chapter 2 will elaborate upon a literature review of the BRI. This part will include previous researches carried out on China's motivations behind the Maritime Road. Subsequently, Chapter 3 will provide the theoretical framework that forms the guideline for the empirical analysis. In this part, the theoretical propositions of the Realist and Liberalist theories will be developed. Chapter 4 will elaborate on the selection of the case study and the methodology including the operationalization of the variables. Following this, Chapter 5 will analyse the Chinese motivations behind the financing of specific infrastructures in Pakistan, comparing the theoretical propositions of realism and liberalism in support of empirical evidence and discuss the findings. Finally, Chapter 6 will answer the research question and suggest areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in the introduction, this research is about China's motives behind the BRI and focuses on the Maritime Road. The academics' view of China's strategy is rather divided. In order to better understand China's motivations, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first one analyses the country's economic interests behind the establishment of the BRI. The second part summarizes the geopolitical motivations behind the BRI. The last part analyses the military motivations behind the Maritime Road.

2.1 Economic motivations

The international economic system is facing complex and profound changes. As the world enters a new era of globalization, researchers have argued that China has established the BRI: (1) to address domestic growth challenges, (2) to reform the global economic and monetary system, (3) to pursue soft-power economic diplomacy, (4) to build an influential maritime platform in South Asia.

2.1.1 Addressing domestic growth challenges

Since 1980, China has undergone gradual stages of international opening, starting with the establishment of export-oriented special economic zones. This was followed by its formal accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the internationalization of Chinese enterprises, the creation of the Shanghai Free Trade Zone and, last but not least, the BRI (Zhang & Chang, 2016). Thanks to an export-oriented policy and foreign direct investment (FDI) from the West, China has grown exponentially in 30 years of economic reform. However, according to Huang (2016), "China's development model seems to have reached a bottleneck" (p. 315). Over the past decade, China has suffered from "slower economic growth", "industrial overcapacity" and "underdevelopment" in the western rural areas (Cai, 2018, p. 838). Analysts argue that China cannot remain dependent on exports of labour-intensive manufactures and needs a new economic model to avoid the "middle-income trap" (Huang, 2016). Therefore, through BRI, China has the opportunity to expand its external markets and explore new opportunities for cooperation to sustain its growth. Researcher Tang (2018) explains that China's comparative advantage has changed, as rising wages no longer allow for a massive export of products. Today, labour costs in China average between USD 4,000 and USD 5,000 per year, which is much higher than in most developing countries in Asia. Replacing China's low-cost, labour-intensive workforce, whose manufacturing industry employs about 124 million people, is a major challenge. According to researcher Lin (2018), Africa is the only region with a similar emerging workforce. Given that average wages in Africa account for only one-tenth to one-fifth of workers in China, BRI would enable the transfer of labour-intensive industries from China to Africa. In addition, Silin et al (2017) explain that the slowdown in the Chinese economy has affected the domestic labour market, arguing that BRI would

create new jobs for Chinese citizens. In addition, both Enderwick (2018) and Huang (2016) argue that excess capacity in China's "steel, glass, cement and aluminium" industries could be exported to BRI partner countries for infrastructure construction. In addition, the BRI will also reduce China's economic dependence on the United States, since the United States is China's largest partner, accounting for 18 per cent of total exports in 2015 (Silin et al., 2017). Finally, Pencea (2017) and Silin et al. (2017) explain that BRI aims to accelerate the pace of development in China's western rural areas and reduce the clustering of economic activities in coastal areas. The economic belt of the Silk Road is intended to strengthen China's economic cooperation with Central Asia, Western Asia and Eastern Europe, while the maritime route is rather intended to strengthen political relations between China and Southeast Asia.

In summary, the researchers argue that BRI is designed to address China's domestic challenges and provide a new economic model that ensures continued growth and internationalization.

2.1.2 Reform the global economy and monetary system

The 2008 financial crisis has shaken the global economy and resulted in increased trade protectionism and isolationism. Many researchers argue that the BRI is an ideal platform for China to exert greater influence in the changing international system. Lairson (2018) argues that just as the US and Great Britain sought to create economic cooperation following the Great Depression of 1945, China has seized the opportunity to reform the global economy after the 2008 financial crisis. Some researchers even draw a parallel between the BRI and the Marshall Plan. The author argues that "the Marshall Plan is the closest analogy to the BRI in terms of scale, scope and purpose" (p. 42). However, many Chinese scholars distinguish between the two initiatives. According to Hu (2018), the Marshall Plan "was a product of Cold War ideology" (p. 16), whereas the BRI aims to achieve common prosperity. This view is widely criticized by some researchers who argue that China is taking advantage of the power vacuum in the global economy to implement its liberal economic vision (Yağcı, 2018). According to Cai (2018), China built on the 2008 crisis to set up new financial instruments through the BRI, since the rules of the current international monetary system are holding back its development. Furthermore, Schortgen argues that the launch of the AIIB as a financial instrument of the BRI reveals "China's frustration with the continued Western dominance of the WB and IMF" (2018, p. 25). While Cai argues that "Beijing has neither the intention nor the ability to completely replace the existing system with a new one", it is clear that the BRI could pave the way for the rapid expansion of the renminbi (RMB) as international currency (2018, p. 839). Since the Chinese currency is used by all BRI partner countries as a currency for infrastructure construction, the global use of the RMB is likely to increase rapidly. In response to critics pointing to the expansion of China's liberal economic vision, Tang (2018) and Hu (2018) argue that the BRI aims to counterbalance international trade rules (represented by the Transpacific Partnership (TTP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP)) from which developing

countries are excluded. They claim that the BRI could break the encirclement established by developed economies.

In summary, these studies argue that China has taken advantage of a global economy still suffering from the consequences of the 2008 crisis to implement its economic liberalization plan through the BRI. In addition, it provides China with the opportunity to become a counterweight to US domination through the development of the AIIB and the internationalization of the RMB.

2.1.3 China's soft power economic diplomacy

Many Chinese researchers seek to reduce the perception that China is the dominant player in the project. They argue that the primary objective of BRI is to promote win-win cooperation and common prosperity. According to Huang (2016), the BRI differs from current international economic organizations in that it is a project that does not exclude any interested partner (all countries, regional and international organizations are invited to participate). Hao (2018) states that the BRI emphasizes the guiding principles of "openness and cooperation; harmony and inclusion; tolerance and respect for the development choices of other countries; peaceful coexistence; mutual benefit and win-win for all countries" (p. 116). In a speech in 2014, President Xi Jinping further stated that the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' of the UN Charter are the cornerstone of the BRI (Schortgen, 2018, p.24):

“China is guided by the principle of boosting amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in deepening mutually beneficial cooperation with its neighbors and strives to deliver greater gains to its neighbors through its own development”.

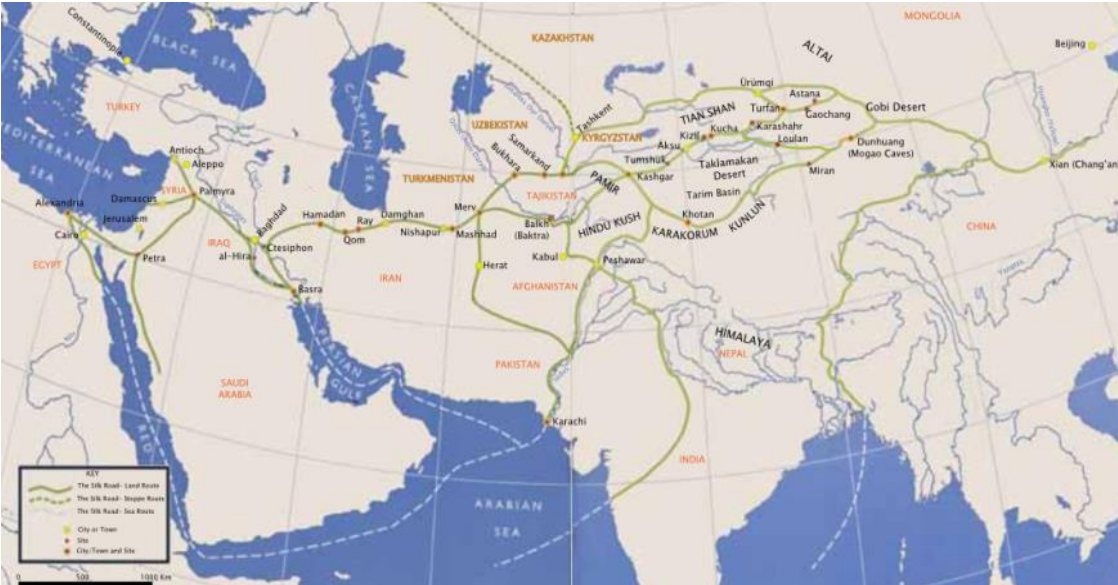
The President had previously delivered a similar speech at Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev University at the launch of the OBOR initiative in 2013, where he promoted people-to-people friendship and the creation of a better future (i Klett & Serrano Oswald, 2018). Chinese researcher Hu (2018) defines the BRI as a “the first-ever non-zero-sum game” whose goal is to build "a community of common destiny in the world" and to help low-income countries access the mega-size market (p. 21). In his research, Bingguo (2010) points out that economic globalization has turned the world into a "global village" whose interests are more intertwined than ever (para. 3). By promoting a liberal global economic order and win-win cooperation, China pursues soft-power economic diplomacy. The BRI is particularly effective in promoting soft-power diplomacy since China can rely on its gigantic economic reserves to fund projects in more than 60 countries. According to Yağcı (2018), when countries can rely on their hard power resources, they can use their soft power much more effectively.

Furthermore, Chinese researchers and officials promote Chinese culture by associating the BRI with the ancient Silk Road (see Figure 2) More than two millennia ago, trade between China and Europe flourished along the ancient Silk Road: in exchange for silk and spices, Asia received metals, tableware,

glass, gold and silver. At that time, economic cooperation was mutually beneficial for all countries (Silin et al., 2018). In 2015, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to the BRI as the New Silk Road and stressed the similarities between modern and ancient routes, such as "the opening of trade and several cultural exchange routes" and "the contribution to prosperity and development" (Ge, 2018, p. 2). In many speeches, President Xi Jinping describes China's dream of restoring its glorious legacy from the Silk Road era (Schortgen, 2018, p. 20). Holmes & Yoshihara (2008) argue that China's emphasis on the former harmonious trade between the merchant ships of China, Arabia, Persia and India is to better promote the peaceful establishment of the Maritime Road. Thus, China seeks to revive memories from the prosperous trade era of the ancient Silk Road in order to attract potential participating countries.

In short, China is promoting a liberal economic vision of win-win economic development without political conditionality to appeal to developing countries. Chinese researchers and officials are trying to present China as an equal player to all partners through soft power diplomacy.

Figure 2: Historical roads of the Ancient Silk Road.



Source: Waugh, 2010.

2.1.4 Building an influential maritime platform in South Asia

Many scholars acknowledge that the establishment of the Maritime Road will reshape the Indian Ocean's regional economy (Fan, 2018). According to Chinese researcher Zhao (2018), China's main motivation behind the Maritime Route lies in the development of a maritime economy platform that will strengthen commercial ties and expand trade in the region. Fan (2018) explains that the Maritime Road will help to address the lack of cooperation between India, Myanmar and Bangladesh and thus jointly develop the three most important countries of South-Asia. The author highlights the enormous potential of the area through the reduction of shipment delays and the development of close collaboration between

neighbouring countries. In this perspective, China has worked diligently to build a large number of ports in South Asia to ensure connectivity. Jie (2018) argues that the construction projects in South Asia have “not only helped complete local infrastructure but also boosted the development of portside industries” (p. 105). Moreover, the ports, once built, will attract new sources of goods and improve exchanges between countries (Jie, 2018). According to Khan & Khalid (2018), increased connectivity in the region and a more efficient network will also improve cooperation between China and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and boost China's influence in the region.

In summary, studies claim that the Maritime Road aims to establish a powerful maritime network to strengthen strategic cooperation between South Asian countries and develop trade in the region.

2.2 Geopolitical perspective

China's international expansion is fuelling a growing debate between Chinese and Western researchers on the country's geopolitical motivations behind the BRI. Scholars have argued that the BRI aims: (1) to expand China's geopolitical influence, (2) to ease the tensions in the region, (3) to counter India and US influence in the Indian Ocean, (4) to ensure long-term energy access and secure resource shipping lanes.

2.2.1 Expanding China's geopolitical influence

Although many developing countries responded positively to the project, it was received with great scepticism by Western countries and in particular by the US. Most of them fear that the BRI will not benefit partner countries and will only be intended to extend China's geopolitical influence (Cai, 2018). Many researchers have highlighted the numerous economic, operational and political challenges facing the implementation of the BRI in establishing the two trade routes. They explain that most partner countries "are extremely poor, with limited experience in implementing major infrastructure projects and considerable levels of corruption" (Swaine, 2014, p. 15). In addition, Pencea (2017) highlights that the difficult topography of partner countries with extreme climatic conditions makes infrastructure construction difficult and costly. As a result, Western researchers doubt the possibility of profits for the poor countries concerned and consider the BRI as a geopolitical tool to assert China's power (Cai, 2018). Moreover, Silin et al. (2017), point out that China has imposed legislative barriers to foreign companies' access to its domestic market despite the government's statements on the BRI's promotion of free trade. Meanwhile, China is strengthening its influence on the European market through partnerships along the Silk Economic Road. According to Zhang, Alon & Lattemann (2018), whether the BRI is a "Trojan horse" to extend China's geopolitical influence remains to be determined, but the initiative will inevitably transform the geopolitical landscape and global power relations.

2.2.2 Ease tensions in the region

However, although China is a major trading partner for most ASEAN countries, the Maritime Road was also launched as a diplomatic tool to reduce mistrust among South Asian countries (Cai, 2018). Until the early 2000s, China benefited from a favourable geopolitical environment since it was not considered a threat by other nations. However, its growing power has alarmed neighbouring countries, particularly on very sensitive issues of territorial conflicts over the control of islands and ocean areas in the South China Sea (Cai, 2018, Lairson, 2018). According to Jenne (2017), the conflict involves Taiwan, Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and China, which claims the largest part of the disputed area. Over the past decade, several regional powers in South Asia have even established a set of bilateral relations that oppose the expansion of Chinese actions and power (Lairson, 2018). Therefore, the Maritime Road aims at reducing the tensions derived from the disputes and open the door for further negotiations and cooperation (Marwah, 2018). However, some ASEAN members perceived the Maritime Road and their dependence on China's economy as a threat to their foreign policy (Soong, 2018). Indeed, given the long-term nature of infrastructure projects, the Maritime Road could bind South Asian countries for decades and significantly reduce their ability to withstand China (Stuenkel, 2016). India, in particular, expressed many reservations about its participation in the initiative. Indeed, India's position is that the Maritime Road would allow China to increase its influence within South Asia, which India considers its own sphere of influence (Ploberger, 2017).

To summarize, scholars state that China aims to ease the climate of tension that has prevailed between South Asian countries since the dispute over the South China Sea. However, the initiative is sometimes perceived as a threat of China's domination.

2.2.3 Counter India and US influence in the Indian Ocean

According to Prabhakar (2018) and Khan & Khalid (2018), China not only aims to ease tensions but also to decrease India's and the US's influence in the region. Prabhakar (2018) argues that the establishment of the Maritime Road was a direct response to the US re-engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. Under Obama's mandate, the US announced its intention to strengthen its bilateral economic partnerships in South Asia. As a result, the establishment of the TPP in 2016 reinforced the US diplomatic and economic role (the US withdrew in 2018), at the expense of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) partnerships (Prabhakar, 2018, p. 167). On the other hand, Rong & Zhu (2017) argue that the purpose of the Maritime Road is to bypass India's significant influence on small countries in South Asia. China fears that India's unfavourable attitude towards the Maritime Road could interfere in the establishment of economic partnerships with other countries that support its opinions, such as Nepal and Bangladesh (Rong & Zhu, 2017, p. 26).

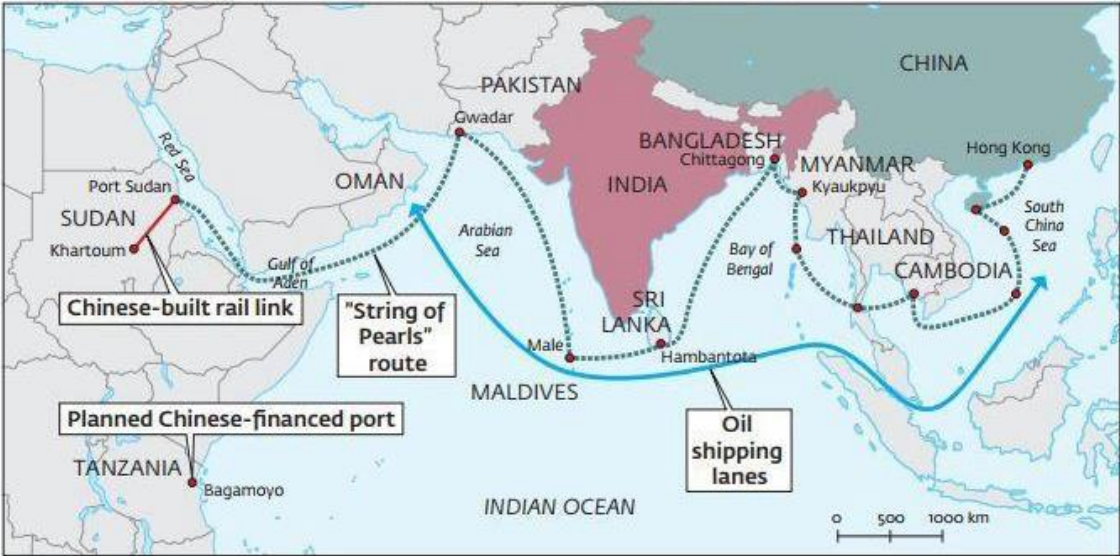
In summary, some researchers argue that the Maritime road aims to replace the influence of India and the US in the region, through the establishment of new infrastructure partnerships.

2.2.4 Ensure long-term energy access and secure resource shipping lanes

Highly dependent on oil import, China seeks to ensure its access to natural resources and is developing oil and gas pipelines in Eurasia through the BRI (Pencea, 2017). Thanks to the Silk Economic Road, Chinese enterprises already hold “25% of Kazakhstan’s oil production”, as well as “shares of Russian oil and gas companies” and have concluded “gas and uranium agreements with Uzbekistan worth \$15 billion” (Silin et al., 2017, p. 7). According to Qiao (2018), energy deals with Central Asian countries are not only a means of ensuring access to resources but also an opportunity to strengthen China's influence in countries where the US does not have much control (p. 44)

Moreover, Western and Indian strategists drew a parallel between the construction of the BRI ports and a string of pearls (Rong & Zhu, 2017, Ahmad et al., 2017). Lieutenant-Colonel Pehrson (2006) described each pearl of the string as a strategic infrastructure funded by China and implanted in the Indian Ocean, offering significant geopolitical advantages. As a whole, the pearls extend from the coast of southern China, the Strait of Malacca and up to the coasts of the Persian Gulf (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The string of pearls and strategic roads in the Indian Ocean.



Source: Reformer, 2018.

According to Pehrson (2006), China would seek to extend its power in the Indian Ocean by strengthening its influence within the infrastructures constituting the string of pearls. Among the pearls are the container shipping facility in Chittagong (Bangladesh) and the constructions of deepwater ports in Sittwe (Myanmar) and Gwadar (Pakistan). The sea road delineated by the string of pearls is of crucial

importance for several reasons, starting with the strategic dimension of the Indian Ocean. As the world's third-largest ocean, endowed with rich marine resources and crisscrossed by many international trade routes, the Indian Ocean has long been a key asset for the major powers (Huang, 2018). China has a particular interest in maintaining its position in the region, as more than 80% of its oil imports are shipped from the Middle East and Africa through the Strait of Malacca (Enderwick, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2017). Highly dependent on foreign oil, China is seeking to open overland trade routes through Central Asia to reduce its dependency on commodities imported from abroad (Cai, 2018). However, maritime transport from the Middle East and Africa will remain China's main mode of oil import (Pehrson, 2006). As a result, China will suffer serious consequences if another power has control over the oil route (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008). The authors even argue that the country controlling the Indian Ocean will control the whole East-Asia region (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008). Therefore, according to Ouyang (2018), securing the Indian Ocean is a "matter of life and death" for China's trade and oil routes (p. 155). The Chinese are carefully surveying US naval operations in the region which extends from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Indeed, China fears that the US will take control of the Strait of Malacca in an attempt to limit the rise of emerging powers and control the flow of global energy (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008). In order to circumvent the American threat, the author explains that China has invested extensively in the construction of the port of Gwadar in Pakistan. Oil from the Persian Gulf could be unloaded at the port of Gwadar and transported by land to China (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008).

In summary, researchers argue that through agreements with BRI partner countries, China aims to gain long-term access to natural resources and energy and thus strengthen its influence in the geopolitical sphere. Besides, some studies show that China's primary objective is to ensure the security of its maritime energy routes through the construction of ports facilities along the Maritime Road (Rong & Zhu, 2017, p. 16). However, the Chinese initiative has also raised military concerns. According to Ploberger (2017), the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) could use the naval infrastructure to expand China's maritime power.

2.3 Military motivations

Regarding the military objective of the Maritime Road, researchers argue that China seeks to militarize strategic overseas ports to expand its armed force in the region.

2.3.1 Militarize strategic overseas ports

In addition to the geopolitical and economic advantages, some researchers argue that the Maritime Road could be designed to increase China's military presence in the region (Stuenkel, 2016; Khan & Khalid,

2018). The authors also refer to the string of pearls, stressing that each strategic port on the Maritime Road not only serves to secure access to resources but can also be militarized to counter an attack by hostile forces (Huang, 2018). Rong & Zhu (2017) argue that regional powers' distrust regarding Chinese military expansion is mitigated by the primary commercial function of the harbours. Researchers identified the ports of Gwadar (Pakistan), Djibouti (Djibouti) and Hambantota (Sri-Lanka) as China's major assets in terms of military strategy, as well as Kyaukpyu (Myanmar) and Chittagong (Bangladesh) to a lesser extent (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008; Huang, 2018; Schortgen, 2018; Khan & Khalid, 2018). According to Huang (2018), two key characteristics of these pearls can be identified. First, they are the result of a low-key plan, as the concepts of "naval base" or "military" have never appeared in official Chinese government documents. Secondly, the author categorizes the ports according to their distinct functions. On the one hand, Huang (2018) explains that some of them are used to transport resources imported from Africa and the Middle East such as Gwadar. On the other hand, some ports are supply points for PLAN patrol operations overseas, such as Djibouti. However, he points out that Djibouti is not a real military base as Western strategists have stated, as it is not designed for face-to-face combat operations but to "support facilities". The author points out that the economic and political functions of the ports are more important than their military functions (Huang, 2018). However, not all researchers share this point of view. Indeed, the strategic importance of those ports has led many Indian academics to strongly criticize the Maritime Road due to the potential threat of Chinese military domination in the region. According to Holmes & Yoshihara (2008), Sino-Indian relations could even suffer a serious setback despite the recent improvement in geopolitical relations between the two countries. Rong & Zhu (2017) explain that India is increasingly worried about being surrounded by China and trapped in the security dilemma. Ahmad et al. (2017) even predict a "chess game" that will be played between the US and China to conquer the Indian Ocean (p. 40).

However, it is important to take into account that these challenges remain mainly in the field of speculation. For its part, the Chinese government has consistently denied the existence of the pearl chain's strategy (Khurana, 2008). At a press conference on the 6th of June 2017, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying reiterated China's position regarding its expansion in the region, stating that China's military strategy is purely defensive in nature (Huang, 2018). Some Chinese researchers argue that the militarization of the Maritime Road is not intended to extend China's power but to protect trade routes against piracy and terrorism. (Zhao, 2018; Ge, 2018). In his research, Zhao (2018) points out that traditional security issues, such as naval arms race or wars at sea, are no longer relevant. Meanwhile, non-traditional security issues, such as terrorist crimes, drug trafficking or piracy, are constantly increasing (Zhao, 2018). For example, the scholar Ge (2018) refers to the China-Pakistan partnership, explaining that the Taliban threat weakens the security of infrastructure under construction. In addition, he emphasizes the necessity to provide military support along the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal to ensure the protection of strategic areas (Ge, 2018). Zao (2018) explains that President Xi Jinping has proposed the establishment of security cooperation agreements to tackle transnational

crime along the Maritime Road. However, Khan & Khalid (2018) point out that China has established nuclear submarine patrols in the Indian Ocean since 2013. According to them, this maritime fleet is far too powerful to be used exclusively for the protection of merchant ships and is intended to secure China's strategic points.

To summarize, some scholars agree that the port constructions have significant strategic objectives and will change the security environment in the Indian Ocean. According to Indian scholars, the Maritime Road is a strategy to expand China's military sphere of influence. Yet, China argues that the militarization of the road is only intended to secure resource access roads and aimed at protecting merchant ships from piracy and terrorism.

In conclusion, China's motivations behind the BRI are fuelling a growing debate among Chinese and Western researchers. While many Chinese scholars promote the BRI as a liberal economic vision based upon win-win cooperation, Western scholars argue that it is a propaganda strategy to pursue China's soft-power diplomacy. They claim that the BRI is not intended to provide mutual benefits but aims to strengthen China's geopolitical influence by building an influential maritime platform in South Asia and easing tensions in the region with neighbouring countries. Some argue that China has used the vacuum of economic power to reform the global economic and monetary system. For others, China aims to counter the influence of India and the US in the Indian Ocean. Overall, most researchers agree that the BRI is intended to ensure long-term access to natural resources in Central Asia and Africa, secure resource shipping routes and boost China's declining domestic growth. However, the biggest controversy lies in the potential militarization of strategic overseas ports financed by China. While Western academics denounce the expansion of the Chinese military into the Indian Ocean with new port facilities acquired through the BRI, Chinese officials deny it and stress the need for military protection against terrorism.

In light of the above discussion, it is interesting to examine China's motives with regard to the Maritime Road, since this area has important geostrategic implications. This research will conduct a study of infrastructure projects in Pakistan to determine whether China aims to improve the region's connectivity and commercial influence or whether it seeks to increase its military power.

Table 1 summarizes the Chinese-based studies regarding China's motivations behind the BRI.

Table 2 synthesizes the previous findings related to non-Chinese-based studies.

<i>Table 1: Chinese-+B2:F19based studies on China's motivations behind the BRI</i>				
Authors (Chinese-based studies)	Country*/Type of field	Belt and Road Initiative		
		Economic motivations	Geopolitical motivations	Military motivations
Bingguo (2010)	CN - Policy, State Councilor	Soft power economic diplomacy		
Chia-Yu Huang (2018)	CN - Academic		Secure access to resources shipping lanes	Militarize strategic oversea ports
Fan (2018)	CN - Academic, Social Sciences	Build an influential maritime platform Soft power economic diplomacy	Strengthen China-ASEAN cooperation	
Ge (2018)	CN - Academic/Policy, CPPCC Standing Committee	Soft power economic diplomacy		Protect merchant ships against terrorism /piracy
Hao (2018)	CN - Academic, Social Sciences	Soft power economic diplomacy		
Hu (2018)	CN - Academic, Economy	Reform the global economic system Promote its liberal economic vision Soft power economic diplomacy		
Huang (2016)	CN - Academic, Development Studies	Promote its liberal economic vision Reform the global economic system Soft power economic diplomacy Address growth domestic challenges		
Jie (2018)	CN - Academic, Transportation Management	Build an influential maritime platform Soft power economic diplomacy		
Lin (2018)	CN - Policy, Senior Vice president of the WB	Promote its liberal economic vision Address growth domestic challenges		
Ouyang (2018)	CN - Academic, Global Environmental Studies	Soft power economic diplomacy	Secure access to resources shipping lanes	
Qiao (2018)	CN - Academic, Military	Soft power economic diplomacy	Ensure long-term energy access	
Rong & Zhu (2018)	CN - Academic, Economy		Counter India/US influence in OI Secure access to resources shipping lanes	Militarize strategic oversea ports
Tang (2018)	CN - Policy, Counselor of the State Council.	Reform the global economic system Address growth domestic challenges		
Zhao (2018)	CN - Academic, Law	Build an influential maritime platform		Protect merchant ships against terrorism /piracy
Zhang & Chang (2016)	CN - Academic, Social Sciences	Reform the global economic system		

* Notes: CN, China
Source: Cited Studies

Table 2: Non Chinese-based studies on China's motivations behind the BRI

Authors (non Chinese-based studies)	Country*/Type of field	Belt and Road Initiative		
		Economic motivations	Geopolitical motivations	Military motivations
Ahmad, Asmi, Ali, Rahman & Abbas (2017)	CN - Academic, Public Affairs		Secure access to resources shipping lanes	Expand military power in the region
Cai (2018)	CA - Academic	Address growth domestic challenge Reform the global economic system	Expand China geopolitical influence Secure access to resources shipping lanes Ease tensions in the region	
Casas i Klett & Serrano Oswald (2018)	CH - Academic, Global studies	Reform the global economic system Soft power economic diplomacy		
Prabhakar (2018)	IN - Academic, International relations		Counter India/US influence in IO	
Enderwick (2018)	NZ - Academic, International Business	Address growth domestic challenges Soft power economic diplomacy	Secure access to resources shipping lanes	
Pencea (2017)	RO - Academic, Economy	Reform the global economic system Address growth domestic challenges	Ensure long-term energy access Expand China geopolitical influence	
Ploberger (2017)	UK- Academic, Political Sciences	Promote its liberal economic vision		
Vines (2017)	UK - Academic, Economy	Promote its liberal economic vision		
Hafeez Ullah, K., Ijaz, K. (2018)	PA - Academic, International relations	Build an influential maritime platform	Counter India/US influence in IO	Militarize strategic oversea ports
Holmes & Yoshihara (2008)	US - Academic, Military		Secure access to resources shipping lanes	Expand military power in the region
D. Lairson (2018)	US - Academic		Ease tensions in the region	
Pehrson (2006)	US - Academic, Military		Secure access to resources shipping lanes	Militarize strategic oversea ports
Schortgen (2018)	US - Academic, Political Sciences	Promote its liberal economic vision Reform the global economic system Soft power economic diplomacy		Expand military power in the region
Silin, Kapustina, Trevisan, Drevalev (2017)	RU - Academic, Economy RU - Academic, Economy IT - Academic, Economy RU - Academic, Economy	Promote its liberal economic vision Address growth domestic challenges	Ensure long-term energy access Expand China's geopolitical influence	
Stuenkel (2016)	BR - Academic, International relations			Militarize strategic oversea ports
Yağcı (2018)	TU - Academic International relations	Promote its liberal economic vision		
Zhang, Alon & Lattemann (2018)	US - Academic DE - Academic NO - Academic		Ensure long-term energy access Expand China's geopolitical influence Strengthen China-ASEAN cooperation	

* Notes: BR: Brazil; CA: Canada; CH: Switzerland; DE: Germany; HU: Hungary; IN:India; IT: Italy; NO: Norway; NZ: New-Zealand; PA: Pakistan; RO: Romania; RU: Russia; TU: Turkey; UK: United Kingdom; US: United States

Source: Cited Studies

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This Chapter will provide the theoretical structure to analyse China's motivations behind the Maritime Road. The first part will discuss the choice of applying the theories of realism and liberalism to the case study. The second and the third part will elaborate on the propositions of both theories as well as their derivatives: neorealism and neoliberalism. The final section will identify the propositions derived from the theories, linking it back to the research question.

3.1 IR Theories Selection

First, this research focused on the academic discourse on the BRI: What theories have been developed and what are the main paradigms? On the one hand, realism dominated the theoretical debate on international relations throughout the 1980s. On the other hand, liberalism increasingly challenged the predominance of realism, since the latter failed to explain the end of the Cold War. In this perspective, two main schools of thought of the IR will be used to determine China's dominant strategy in the Indian Ocean. According to Walt (1998), while realism focuses on the struggle for power among states, liberalism emphasizes how to reduce conflicts through economic interdependence. For instance, from a realist perspective, China's rising power can be seen as a dangerous threat to the global balance of power. However, from a liberal perspective, China will not trigger conflicts that could jeopardize its economic prosperity and stability. These assumptions reflect different points of view among researchers but are both correct. Indeed, "no single approach can capture all the complexity of contemporary world politics (Walt, 1998, p. 30). Therefore, this research does not aim at theoretical innovation but seeks to contribute to the academic debate by focusing on the major theoretical controversies between realism and liberalism. In this perspective, this theoretical framework will refine realist and liberalist theories and use offensive realism, defensive realism and complex interdependence regarding China's strategy behind the Maritime Road. In addition, this congruence analysis will gain internal validity from using multiple competing theories rather than a single theory.

3.2 Realist theory

Realism was the dominant theory in the study of world politics throughout the Cold War (Walt, 1998). According to Walt (1998), its popularity lay in the fact that realism provided simple but strong explanations for wars, alliances, imperialism and obstacles to cooperation. Authors Baylis, Smith & Owens (2014) argue that the theory is still the most prevalent today as it teaches states how to maximize their gains in a highly competitive environment. Realists argue that states are rational and unitary actors. In other words, a state behaves according to its preferences and speaks with one voice in the international

system. From a realist perspective, the goal of the states is to increase their security by enhancing their power in the anarchic system. It should be noted that the anarchic condition of the system does not mean chaos, but implies that there is no overarching central authority (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014). In other words, the sovereign states do not recognize a higher power than their own authority in the international system. Realists also make a clear difference between the anarchic international system and the structured domestic system, the latter being shaped by hierarchical relations among political actors (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014). The anarchic nature of the system does not guarantee the survival of all countries. As a result, states are seeking to maximize their security by increasing their own power. Moreover, regardless of the power of a state, the primary concern of all states is their survival. According to the Realists, states' self-help behaviour is a necessity to survive and little trust is placed in other states and international institutions. In this perspective, if a state feels threatened, it would inevitably increase its military capabilities. However, Baylis, Smith & Owens (2014) point out that smaller states may behave differently when confronted with a much more powerful state and adopt a balance of power mechanism. In other words, smaller states form an alliance to counter the power of a threatening state, thus ensuring equilibrium of power so that one state does not dominate the others. Therefore, from a realist perspective, economic interdependence is more likely to increase insecurity among trading partners rather than reduce conflicts, as each state seeks to maintain its access to resources (Waltz, 1979).

Realism school of thought has evolved throughout the Cold War. Nowadays a distinction is made between classical realists and structural realists also called neo-realists (Walt, 1997). Classical Realists such as Thucydides (ca. 430-406 BC), Machiavelli (1532), or Morgenthau (1958), explain the anarchic structure of the international system as a result of human's desire to dominate others. Indeed, Morgenthau (1958) claims that “the struggle for power on the international scene [...] is not the result of some historic accident, of some passing social constitutional, legal, or economic configuration, but that it is part and parcel of human nature itself” (p. 6). On the other hand, structural realists such as Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (1994) argue that it is not human nature which drives the dog-eat-dog world but the anarchic structure of the international system itself. In other words, the struggle for power is the result of the lack of superior authority among sovereign states (Walt, 1998).

Classical realism has long been a dominant theory during the Cold War, explaining, for example, the military escalation triggered by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. However, academics have criticized the theory for overemphasizing conflicts and nation-states (Waltz, 1979; Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014). In addition, classical realists stress that a change of power can only be made through war. In this perspective, the theory has failed to explain the end of the Cold War and the peaceful transition to a unipolar system (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014).

3.2.1 Structural realism or neo-realism

For most academics, structural realism is based on Kenneth Waltz's book "Theory of International Politics" (1979) (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014). Both theories agree on the anarchic structure of the

system, with states as primary actors and power as the central element of the political system. However, structural realism differs from classical realism in several aspects. First of all, as mentioned above, Waltz (1979) argues that competition between states stems from the anarchic structure of the system, rather than from human nature. Indeed, since each state is a potential threat, all states seek to gain as much power as possible in order to maximize their security (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2014). A second difference between classical and structural realists is the view of power. While classical realists define power as an end in itself mainly through military capacities, structural realists consider power to be more than the use of military force to control other states. Indeed, Waltz (1979) explains that the amount of power held by each state gives it its position in the international system and that states behave accordingly. In addition, Waltz (1979) argues that states function as similar units. In other words, states behave in a similar way since they all aim to maintain their position in the system. In this perspective, the distribution of power is explaining recurrent international patterns such as the balance of power, formation of alliances or conflicts.

3.2.2 Offensive and defensive realism

An important refinement to structural realism was its division into two competing theories: offensive realism and defensive realism. Offensive realists such as Mearsheimer (1994) argue that states seek to maximize their power relative to the other states. On their side, defensive realists such as Walt (1997) or Snyder (2000) claim that states are more interested in relative gains. The distinction between the two theories is further detailed in the following subsections.

Relative VS Absolute gains

According to the realist theory, in the anarchic international system, states consider relative gains more important than absolute ones (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). In other words, states are not interested in the number of their own gains but seek to accumulate more gains than other states. In this perspective, a state may choose to increase its own capacities, thus strengthening its power against another state. Alternatively, a state may choose to join forces with one or more states to balance a more powerful state. However, a state will only decide to cooperate with other states if it cannot rely on its own military strength and if the benefits of an alliance outweigh the commitments it entails (Morgenthau, 1978).

Offensive and defensive realists are divided on whether states can cooperate in the context of a balance of power. Indeed, offensive realists argue that balancing does not occur as often as defensive realists claim. According to Mearsheimer (2010), states are more likely to engage in a “buck-passing” behaviour. In other words, they attempt “to get other states to assume the burden of checking a powerful opponent while they remain on the sidelines” (p. 83). Defensive realists argue that states are also interested in absolute gains and will use cooperation as a way to enhance their power (Peou, 2002). However, Walt (1998) points out that states are still concerned with relative gains and how much power

other states can achieve from cooperation. Indeed, if a state receives more gains than other cooperating states, the latter will feel threatened (Walt, 1998). In addition, when states cheat and fail to comply with the rules, other states may abandon international cooperation and act on their own. The incentive to cheat is higher if the benefits are not equally distributed among the participants. As a result, from a realist perspective, international cooperation is difficult to achieve.

3.2.3 Realist theory and China

Realism was the dominant theory of research on South-East Asia until the 1980s. The outbreak of multiple conflicts in the region, including the three Indo-China wars between 1945 and 1989, contributed to promoting realist assumptions (Peou, 2002). As a result, many scholars such as Glaser (2011) and Peou (2002) have used realism to analyse China's rise as a regional power. According to Li (2008), most realist studies on the emergence of China focus on the relationship between structural change in the international system and the rise of great powers. In other words, researchers analyze China's foreign policy in the context of the transition from a bipolar system during the Cold War to a unipolar world ruled by the US hegemony. According to Li, rising states with strong economic growth are more ambitious and capable of challenging the unipolar system (2008, p. 8). Therefore, many realist scholars describe China as the greatest challenge to the dominant position of the US in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the USSR as the dominant power in the South-East Asian region have left room for emerging regional powers. In this perspective, some realists argue that China took advantage of the structural change in the balance of power to seek greater power (Li, 2008, p. 9). In addition, for realists such as Mearsheimer (2001) and Morgenthau (1978), the rise of China in a zero-sum world implies the decrease of other powers. Indeed, in a realist world, states gain power at the expense of others. Thus, based on China's increasing military spending and successful economic development, many argue that China seeks to weaken US leadership in Southeast Asia (Li, 2008). Nonetheless, offensive and defensive realists hold different assumptions regarding China's rise to power.

3.2.3.1 Offensive realism and China

As mentioned above, from an offensive realist point of view, the ultimate goal of a state is to become the hegemon in order to ensure its survival. Given the complexity of having control over all territories and thus the impossibility of achieving global hegemony, great powers seek instead to become the regional hegemon (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2013). However, states do not want competitors and try to prevent other great powers from becoming regional hegemons. Therefore, from an offensive realist perspective, China's objective is to push US' military forces out of the region and become the unique regional hegemon in South-East Asia. In addition, China seeks to maximize its power against potential

other regional hegemony such as Japan, Russia, India, as they could be threats to its security (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2013). However, offensive realists argue that the transition of power within the international system leads to military conflicts between rising powers and hegemony. Indeed, offensive realist Mearsheimer (2001) predicts an aggressive US military intervention if China tries to dominate the region. In the article “Clash of Titans”, the author claims that:

“China cannot rise peacefully, and if it continues its dramatic economic growth over the next few decades, the US and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war” (Brzezinski & Mearsheimer, 2005, p. 48).

Finally, offensive realists argue that great powers such as Japan, Russia and India will seek alliances with the US to counter China's growing power (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2013). Critics blame offensive realists for over-focusing on the role of the US in the international system, as well as lacking explanations from a domestic perspective (Brzezinski & Mearsheimer, 2005). Overall, most offensive realists describe China as a revisionist threatening US hegemony (Feng & He, 2017).

3.2.3.2 Defensive realism and China

For their part, defensive realists offer a more optimistic approach of China's rise to power. Like offensive realists, they argue that the structure of the international system creates strong incentives for China to enhance its power, leading to security competition in the region. However, defensive realists claim that China will only seek to increase its power in a limited way, so as not to provoke a coalition of great powers against it. Indeed, to pursue regional hegemony may trigger a security dilemma and undermine China's efforts to improve its security. In addition, China has experienced tremendous economic growth in recent years without attacking other countries, showing that conquest by military force can be avoided. Moreover, it is unlikely that conflict will escalate between China and major powers such as India and Russia, which possess nuclear weapons. Indeed, the principle of deterrence prevents states from attacking with their nuclear weapons for fear of retaliation and mutual destruction. In this perspective, according to Dunne, Kurki & Smith (2013) “China should be able to coexist peacefully with both its neighbours and the US” (p. 89). However, defensive realists do not exclude the possibility that domestic political considerations may lead China to act in a foolish way.

To conclude, realism is the dominant theory of world politics and the one most commonly used to analyze China's foreign policy. In addition, the theory is the most advanced and relevant approach to explain conflicts and military expansion. The realist approach encompasses several sub-theories that allow for a more in-depth analysis of state behaviour. Since offensive and defensive realists disagree on how much power a state wants, they are divided on whether China's rise to power will be peaceful. From an offensive realist view, China is a revisionist power seeking to overthrow the existing international

order by military force. From the viewpoint of defensive realists, China is essentially trying to maintain its security. Thus, by using these two sub-theories, this research can define China's motivations more precisely than if it had been based solely on realism.

3.3 Liberalist theory

Although realism is the dominant theory of world politics, it has been challenged with the emergence of liberalism. Classical liberals such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant have rejected the dog-eat-dog world described by realists and argue that rational states seek justice in the international system. Therefore, through the principles of law, democracy, social and economic rights and equal opportunities, liberalism embraces the idea of lasting peace between states. According to Baylis, Smith, Owens (2014), the theory became a major influence in political and economic discourse from the end of the First World War. With the outbreak of the Second World War, however, the idea of building peace through cooperation seemed to be less relevant. At the end of the war, liberal ideas were revived by the creation of the UN (Baylis, Smith, Owens, 2014). Similarly to Realism, the liberalist theory argues that states are rational actors within an anarchic international system (Baldwin, 1993). However, they reject the idea that anarchy irreversibly leads states to adopt self-help behaviour. For their part, they argue that it is the character of a state which determines its behaviour in the international system. In other words, liberals take into considerations the domestic characteristics of a state: while some states may have belligerent tendencies, others may be inherently peaceful (Keohane, 1984). No matter their difference, the objective of all states is not to seek power, but to ensure their economic prosperity and stability in the anarchic system. Therefore, Liberals believe that the freedom of states must be compromised to achieve collective security. In other words, states must comply with the rules of international organizations in order to establish political and economic cooperation that guarantees overall stability.

Three theories have emerged from the liberal thought, each of them offering a different solution to achieve peace between states: commercial liberalism, democratic liberalism and institutional liberalism (Baldwin, 1993). First of all, trade liberalism argues that economic interdependence between states would prevent wars, as each side seeks to preserve its prosperity (Keohane, 1984) Secondly, democratic liberalism, driven by the vision of US President Woodrow Wilson, claims that democratic states are more peaceful than authoritarian states. In this perspective, democracy is essential to the stability of the international system as democratic regimes do not fight each other (Walt, 1998). Finally, institutional liberalism arose from the recognition that peace is not a natural condition, but must be built by an international authority that could regulate the anarchy of the system. In this view, Walt (1998) argues that international institutions “could help overcome selfish state behaviour, mainly by encouraging states to forego immediate gains for the greater benefits of enduring cooperation” (p. 32). However, recent failures of multilateral institutions, such as the 2008 financial crisis or the withdrawal

of President Trump from the Paris agreement, have called into question the theory of institutional liberalism (Baylis, Smith, Owens, 2014). In addition, rising powers and emerging security issues are challenging cooperation among states. According to Ikenberry (2018), the decline of international institutions could bring states back into the unstable inter-war system, where the League of Nations struggled to prove its effectiveness. In short, liberalism helps to explain cooperation in an anarchic international system that first suggests that cooperation is not beneficial. However, the theory struggles to explain why conflicts occur despite cooperation.

3.3.1 Neoliberalism

From an academic point of view, neoliberalism is a school of thought derived from liberalism, which emerged at the end of the Second World War. The theory is grounded in a set of assumptions borrowed from neo-realism. Indeed, neoliberals such as Keohane, share the realist assumption that the international system is anarchic and that states are central actors in the system (Baylis, Smith, Owens, 2014). However, the two theories diverge on the possibility of achieving cooperation despite the anarchy of the system (Baldwin, 1993). Indeed, neoliberals argue cooperation is easy to implement in areas where states have common interests, through international institutions. Indeed, according to them, international organizations enable information to be shared among members, reciprocity to be strengthened and desertion to be punished (Keohane, 1984). Neoliberalists recognize that cooperation is difficult to achieve when states do not respect the rules and cheat to protect their domestic self-interest (Keohane, 1984). However, they believe that states will comply if institutions allow mutual benefits so that each can maximize absolute gains through cooperation. Overall, the main difference lies in the fact that neorealists focus on issues of military security, survival and relative gains, while neoliberals claim that states are more concerned with economic welfare and likely to cooperate if the gains are shared fairly (Baldwin, 1993, Keohane, 1984).

According to Jervis (1999), the difference between neorealism and neoliberalism has been exaggerated, as the latter borrows equally from realism and liberalism. In his words, “neoliberalism does not see more cooperation than does realism; rather, neoliberalism believes that there is much more unrealized or potential cooperation than does realism” (p. 47). Neoliberalism is often confused with defensive realism. While they do not consider international institutions to be the most effective way to prevent conflicts, defensive realists share the idea that institutions can reduce the security dilemma. In addition, both defensive realism and neoliberalism consider conflicts to be unnecessary: if one state increases its security, other states feel threatened and are drawn into the security dilemma, which undermines their stability (Jervis, 1999). For this reason, defensive realists and neoliberalists will only use conflicts as a last resort. However, defensive realists consider that only a subset of situations makes conflicts unnecessary. Secondly, according to them, leaders can never be sure whether an aggressive action by another state is an expansionist action or a preventive policy to protect their security. Finally,

defensive realists believe that it is difficult to find areas of mutual interest in which states can cooperate (Jervis, 1999). For neoliberals, mutual interests go beyond trade considerations and include new security concerns, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and pandemics. Neoliberals argue that threats to a country's security can no longer be addressed unilaterally and advocate regional and global cooperation that promotes foreign policy coordination.

3.3.2 Complex interdependence

In “Power and Independence” (1977), neoliberals Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye introduced the notion of Complex Interdependence to explain the dynamic of the current world. The concept borrows from the assumptions of neoliberalism. They argue that the globalization of the world, free trade, the expansion of international networks and the rapid diffusion of communication technologies have made states more dependent on each other than ever before (Keohane & Nye, 2012). The authors define interdependence in world politics as a strong connection between two states, whose destruction would cause irreversible damage (2012). It should be noted that they distinguish between interconnectedness and interdependence: according to them, interdependence relations will always entail constraints and costs, since interdependence restricts autonomy. Besides, interdependence must be egalitarian, since an asymmetrical relationship would lead to unilateral vulnerability and the risk of one party exploiting the other.

Complex interdependence has three main characteristics: (1) Multiple channels connecting actors across national boundaries. Indeed, societies are connected through a complex network of formal and informal channels such as international organizations, companies, NGOs, corporations which transcend state to state relation. (2) No hierarchical agenda within states, in that there is no distinction between low and high politics. In other words, all issues are important, not only military but also economic and social. (3) The decline of military force and a shift toward economic and social welfare. In other words, as societies become entangled in a network of economic and social ties, the cost of disrupting these ties will prevent states from using force to pursue their own national interests (Keohane & Nye, 2012). Indeed, the use of military force would devastate the interdependence and cause damages.

3.3.3 Liberalist theory and China

While realists emphasize the anarchic structure of the international system to explain China's rise to power, liberals focus on its domestic characteristics such as culture, policies and ideology (Li, 2008). According to liberals, China is pursuing a peaceful foreign policy, oriented towards its political and economic openness on the international arena. Indeed, they highlight China's increased commitment to international institutions, its efforts to resolve disputes through negotiation and democratic processes, and its strong support for globalization and economic interdependence.

From the commercial liberalism perspective, China's growing influence is the result of its successful economic reforms and liberalization strategy. Commercial liberals argue that China and its trading partners have a common interest in maintaining prosperity, as economic cooperation increases each other's absolute gains. Moreover, economic interdependence increases the cost of conflicts and thus, reduces the intensity of strategic competition between China and the US (Feng & He, 2018). From the democratic liberalism perspective, Li (2008) points out that the emerging middle class demands more freedom and greater participation in the decision-making process. Democratic liberals believe that democracies are more reluctant to use force to resolve territorial disputes with neighbouring countries and to use military means. From the institutional liberalism perspective, China has benefited greatly from the current international order after the Cold War. While realists believe that China could challenge the security order, the institutional liberals argue that the stakes are too high for China to overthrow the entire system. There is no doubt that China will challenge some components of the international order. However, if China uses military force to overthrow the existing order, a conflict of power will occur and threaten the region's stability. On the other hand, if China uses pacific means, such as interdependence, to challenge some aspects of the international order, the transition of power may not be conflictual.

3.3.3.1 Complex interdependence and China

Given its opening up foreign policy and extensive economic and security ties with the world, China is becoming involved in the global process of complex interdependence. In this perspective, the theorists explain that China's domestic interest is limited by its commitment to international institutions. Indeed, as explained above, the cost of disrupting the established ties would have a disastrous impact on China's economic stability and prosperity. Therefore, institutional liberals are advocating China's engagement in international institutions (Feng & He, 2018). In addition, they highlight China's new multilateral institutions such as the BRI and the Asian Development Bank, as a form of inclusive institutional balancing. Inclusive balancing refers to the process of integrating a state into an institution and using the institution's rules and standards to constrain the state's behaviour.

To conclude, liberalism is often opposed to realism since both theories are competing. From a liberal perspective, China should maintain the current international order which largely benefits it. The liberal approach encompasses several sub-theories that allow for a more in-depth analysis. This research uses Complex Interdependence since this sub-theory focuses on economic interdependence, which happens to be the essence of the BRI. Indeed, the project established strong economic partnerships with many countries. The sub-theory points at China's opportunity to create economic interdependence by integrating states into the BRI, thus improving political relations and the stability in the region. For which of the Liberalist or Realist theories best explains contemporary international affairs, academics do not have the answer. Many admit that realism is very appealing for understanding international relations given states' concerns about the balance of power and the risk of conflict. However, realism

does not explain everything and liberal theories help to better understand cooperation and how states can achieve common interests. In this perspective, the theories of realism and liberalism should not be considered as two separate answers, but as a common response in which one theory prevails.

3.4 Propositions regarding the Maritime Road

It should be recalled that the objective of this thesis is to understand China's motivations behind the establishment of the Maritime Road. In other words, are China's infrastructure partnerships in the Indian Ocean part of genuine economic cooperation or is China trying to assert its military dominance in the Indian Ocean? To answer this question, the Maritime Road is analyzed through realist and liberalist perspectives. The theoretical framework outlined above is a synthesis of the theoretical assumptions regarding both competing theories. Given the divergences within the same school of thought, this research has refined the theoretical framework to the theories of offensive realism, defensive realism and complex interdependence. Each proposition is formulated as an explicit statement providing an explanation to the observation of a phenomenon. In the context of this thesis, the main unit of analysis is the states.

3.4.1 Offensive realism proposition

According to offensive realism, states strive to maximize their power in order to maintain their survival in an anarchic system. Thus, the distribution of power and the military means at the disposal of states are decisive in understanding their behaviour. Moreover, the theory argues that great powers seek to achieve regional hegemony while ensuring that no other state can challenge their domination. Based on the perspective of offensive realism, the first proposition is presented below:

Proposition 1: The Maritime Road is intended to boost China's naval expansion through the establishment of new military bases overseas. China aims to reverse the US and India power in Southeast Asia and thus be the only regional hegemon in the Indian Ocean.

3.4.2 Defensive realism proposition

According to defensive realism, the anarchic structure of the international system encourages states to adopt moderate behaviour and defensive strategies. Indeed, states seek to maintain their power only to improve their security. Based on the perspective of defensive realism, the second proposition is presented below:

Proposition 2: The Maritime Road aims to strengthen security cooperation between China and its partners. China aims to maximise its domestic security.

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3.4.3 Complex interdependence proposition

The theory of Complex Interdependence advocates economic cooperation between states in order to improve the political stability of the region. According to Keohane and Nye (2012), states do not make their decisions according to the military means at their disposal within the system but rather based on economic interdependence established through multiple channels. The theory also notes the absence of a hierarchy between the issues on the political agenda of states. The emphasis is therefore on bilateral partnerships with equal economic gains and limited use of military force. Based on the Complex interdependence perspective, the third proposition is the following:

Proposition 3: The Maritime Road is conceived as an instrument for achieving economic interdependence creating a balanced relationship between states through multiple channels of connectivity. Military and security issues do not have priority over trade on China's agenda with Pakistan.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

As stated in the Introduction, this thesis uses congruence analysis as a research design. This approach aims to determine which of the competing theoretical explanations of realism or liberalism best explain China's motivations behind the establishment of the Maritime Road. As a small-N study, it is relevant to conduct this research in the form of a case study. First of all, the focus on a particular case study allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject and the collection of a wide range of observations. Secondly, the case study enables "to reflect intensively on the relationship between empirical observation and abstract concepts", as pointed out by Blatter & Haverland (2014, p. 144). Finally, this design permits a deeper understanding of "difficult-to-observe phenomena" (Johnson & Reynold, 2007, p. 203).

This Chapter will first elaborate on the criteria used to select the case study and conclude on the case selection. A second section will present the operationalization of the variables and the assessment of the propositions, in other words, how to measure the theoretical propositions. A third section will describe the data collected for empirical observations. Finally, this Chapter will outline the validity and reliability of the research design.

4.1. Selection criteria

The criterion for case selection is based on the number of infrastructure projects funded by China within each country in the Indian Ocean. For the purposes of data collection, the country with the highest number of BRI projects within its territory will be selected. The presence of a large number of infrastructures generates more sources to be analyzed.

4.1.1 China-funded infrastructures projects

As part of the selection process for this case study, this research examined the presence of China-led infrastructures in the Indian Ocean countries. Projects under the BRI mainly concern infrastructure development in 8 sectors: (1) transport, (2) energy, (3) mining, (4) Information and Communications Technology (ICT), (5) industrial parks, (6) special economic zones (SEZs), (7) tourism, (8) urban development. Table 3 lists the BRI-related projects in the Indian Ocean accordingly. Table 4 contains only China-Pakistan BRI projects due to their large number. In both tables, it should be noted that the projects are either funded by BRI funding mechanisms or officially accredited by the BRI. The listed infrastructures may be under preparation, under construction or already in operation.

Table 3 : China's infrastructure projects in IO countries. Pakistan excluded

Project	Country	Type
Madhya Pradesh Rural Connectivity Project	India	Transport
Mumbai Metro Line 4	India	Transport
Lake Toba Tourism District	Indonesia	Urban
Jakarta-Bandung Railway	Indonesia	Transport
Kuala Tanjung Port	Indonesia	Transport
International Airport Lembah	Indonesia	Transport
MNC Lido City	Indonesia	Tourism
Kayan River Hydropower Plant	Indonesia	Energy
Mombasa Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway SGR	Kenya	Transport
Forest City	Malaysia	Urban
Melaka Gateway	Malaysia	Urban
East Coast Railway	Malaysia	Transport
Gemas-Johor Bahru Railway	Malaysia	Transport
Sino-Thai – High-Speed Railway	Multiple	Transport
Single Gauge Trans-Asian Railway	Multiple	Transport
Djibouti-Ethiopia Railway	Multiple	Transport
Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail	Multiple	Transport
Pakistan-China – Fiber Optic Project	Multiple	ICT
Dawei Port	Myanmar	Transport
Myitsone Dam	Myanmar	Energy
Kyaukpyu Deep Sea Tanker Port	Myanmar	Transport
Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone	Myanmar	Transport
Muse-Mandalay Railway	Myanmar	Transport
Duqm Port Commercial Terminal and Operational Zone	Oman	Transport
Colombo South Harbour	Sri Lanka	Transport
Port City Colombo	Sri Lanka	Urban
Hambantota Port	Sri Lanka	Transport
Bangkok-Nong Khai Railway	Thailand	Transport
Bangkok-Chiang Mai Railway	Thailand	Transport

Source: Belt and Road Portal, official Chinese website, 2019.

Table 4 : China's infrastructure projects in Pakistan.

Project	Country	Type
Diamer-Bhasha Dam	Pakistan	Energy
Gwadar Port	Pakistan	Transport
Engro That Block II Power Plant	Pakistan	Energy
Tarbela 5 Hydropower Extension Project	Pakistan	Energy
M4 Motorway	Pakistan	Transport
Sahiwal 2x660MW Coal-fired Power Plant	Pakistan	Energy
Hydro China Dawood 50MW Wind Farm	Pakistan	Energy
UEP 100MW Wind Farm	Pakistan	Energy
Sachal 50MW Wind Farm	Pakistan	Energy
Thar Mine Mouth Oracle Power Plant	Pakistan	Energy
Peshawar-Karachi Motorway	Pakistan	Transport
Havelian Dry Port	Pakistan	Transport
Gwadar International Airport	Pakistan	Transport
Balloki Power Plant	Pakistan	Energy
Gadani Power Project	Pakistan	Energy
Hakla–Dera Ismail Khan Motorway	Pakistan	Transport
Khunjerab Railway	Pakistan	Transport
M5 Motorway	Pakistan	Transport
M8 Motorway	Pakistan	Transport
Matiari–Lahore Transmission Line	Pakistan	Energy
Orange Line Lahore Metro	Pakistan	Transport
Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute	Pakistan	Education
Pakistan Port Qasim Power Project	Pakistan	Energy
Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park	Pakistan	Energy
Karakoram Highway	Pakistan	Transport
Sahiwal Coal Power Project	Pakistan	Energy
Suki Kinari Hydropower Project	Pakistan	Energy
Gilgit KIU Hydropower	Pakistan	Energy
Cacho 50MW Wind Power Project	Pakistan	Energy
Keti BUnder Sea Port Project	Pakistan	Transport
Rashakai Economic Zone	Pakistan	SEZ
China Special Economic Zone Dhabeji	Pakistan	SEZ
Bostan Industrial Zone	Pakistan	SEZ
Allama Iqbal Industrial City	Pakistan	SEZ
ICT Model Industrial Zone	Pakistan	SEZ
Mirpur Special Economic Zone	Pakistan	SEZ
Mohmand Marble City	Pakistan	SEZ
Moqpondass Special Economic Zone	Pakistan	SEZ
Greater Peshawar Region Mass Transit	Pakistan	Transport

Source: Belt and Road Portal, official Chinese website, 2019.

4.1.2 Conclusion on the case selection

For this research, the case study focuses on China-led infrastructure in Pakistan. Table 4.2 illustrates the very large number of initiatives currently being carried out by China in Pakistan, making it a prime target. From all Indian Ocean countries, Pakistan held the highest number of BRI projects (comparison between Table 4.1 and Table 4.2).

Besides, recent geopolitical literature has focused attention on Pakistan-China relations. The strengthening of Sino-Pakistani relations is often compared to their rival duo, US and India (Afridi & Bajoria, 2010). According to some researchers, infrastructure projects in Pakistan could give China a geostrategic position to counter the US and India, two competing regional powers (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008). According to Asian Power Index (API), Pakistan ranks among the top countries in terms of "future resources" due to the growth of its working-age population. Its military capability is also effective, with a relatively high score on the "Asian military posture", which is the ability to rapidly deploy armed forces in the event of a conflict in Asia (API, 2019). Afridi & Bajoria (2010) highlight the strengthening of military ties between China and Pakistan, more than any other Indian Ocean country, including the transfer of sensitive nuclear technologies and military equipment. Among the infrastructure's projects, the port of Gwadar, in particular, has raised concerns in India, which feels threatened by China's close presence on the Pakistani coast (Kanwal, 2018). Pakistan has six ports along its coast, including the Ports of Muhamamad Bin Qasim, Pasni, Gwadar, Karachi, Ketu and Qasim. Located near the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar is Pakistan's third deep-water port. It is of particular interest since it is the only port in the country that receives Chinese funding through the BRI (Ijaz, 2015).

4.2 Operationalization

Based on the propositions set out in the theoretical framework, this research formulates indicators. Indicators allow for the measurement of abstract concepts derived from the theories. This operationalization phase is essential since it creates a logic linking propositions with the empirical observations. First of all, this research identified the key concepts in each proposal. An indicator is associated with each key concept so that it can be assessed.

The offensive realism proposal is the following: *Proposition 1: The Maritime Road is intended to boost China's naval expansion through the establishment of new military bases overseas. China aims to reverse the US and India power in Southeast Asia and thus be the only regional hegemon in the Indian Ocean.*

From the key concepts of the proposition (1), three indicators are defined to validate the first theoretical proposal.

Table 5: Operationalization of the offensive realism proposal

	Key concepts	Indicators
1	China's naval expansion	The China-Pakistan cooperation helps to expand China's naval military forces
2	Military overseas bases	Gwadar harbour is intended to be used as a military overseas base
3	Reverse the US/ India power	The China-Pakistan cooperation threatens the power of the US / India

Source: proposals from the theoretical framework

The defensive realism proposal is the following: *Proposition 2: The Maritime Road aims to strengthen security cooperation between China and its partners. China aims to maximize its domestic security.*

From the key concepts of the proposition (2), two indicators are defined to validate the second theoretical proposal.

Table 6: Operationalization of the defensive realism proposal

	Key concepts	Indicators
4	Security cooperation	There is a predominance for non-aggressive security-related initiatives in China's agenda with Pakistan
5	Maximise domestic security	Infrastructures increase China's domestic security

Source: proposals from the theoretical framework

The Complex interdependence proposal is the following: *Proposition 3: The Maritime Road is conceived as an instrument for achieving economic interdependence creating a balanced relationship between states through multiple channels of connectivity. Military and security issues do not have priority over trade on China's agenda with Pakistan.*

From the key concepts, four indicators are defined to validate the third theoretical proposal.

Table 7: Operationalization of the complex interdependence proposal

	Key concepts	Indicators
6	Economic interdependence	Pakistan and China are economically dependent upon each other
7	Balanced relationship	Pakistan has influence over the implementation of the projects
8	Through multiple channels	China and Pakistan are connected through a complex network of formal and informal channels
9	Security issues have no priority	There is no visible priority of security issues over trade on the China-Pakistan agenda

Source: proposals from the theoretical framework

4.3 Assessment of the theoretical proposals

In the following chapter, the empirical data collected will be compared with the indicators mentioned above for each theory. The level of congruence between empirical data and the indicators is based on the interpretation of the researcher. The analysis will determine which of the three theories prevails over the others.

The analysis can lead to the following results for each prediction:

- a) the observations are only in line with the Offensive Realist theory (OR);
- b) the observations are only in line with the Defensive Realist theory (DR);
- c) the observations are only in line with the Complex Interdependence theory (CI);
- d) the observations are in line with two complementary theories (OR) and (DR) or (DR) and (CI);
It should be noted that (OR) and (CI) is not a possible outcome as Offensive Realism and Complex interdependence are competing theories.
- e) the observations are not in line with any of the theories and are outside the predictions related to theory (OR), (DR) and (CI).

4.4 Data collection

In order to obtain the most accurate perspective possible, as many primary and secondary sources as possible will be examined, of different nature and provenance, such as official discourses of the Chinese government regarding the announcement and progress of the Maritime Road's work; foreign policy statement; official communiqué of China Ministries of Defence and Ministries of Foreign Affairs; analysis of interviews from strategists specialized in the region; relevant documents published by international organizations such as the UN, press articles on the Maritime Silk Road and the string of pearls; military reports on the Indian Ocean such as naval vessels patrols or acquisition of weapons. The latter takes into consideration that China may not disclose its military intentions, or at least hide some of its motives from the public. To facilitate data collection, the infrastructures examined will be the ones whose official contract have been made public.

4.5 Validity and reliability

It is important to stress that the validity and reliability of research depend on the method used. It is challenging and irrelevant to have similar quality standards for quantitative and qualitative approaches. The two research methods have neither the same objectives nor the same research design. Qualitative research is subjective and entirely related to the context of the study, whereas quantitative research is objective and more easily generalizable (Whitmore & Mandle, 2001). However, since qualitative research is often characterized by interpretation and uncertainty, it is essential to introduce criteria for validity and reliability.

Internal validity refers to the truthfulness of the results. Because qualitative research gives rise to the researcher's interpretation, bias or inadequate representation of phenomena must be addressed. Interpretations may vary among different researchers, which implies exploring alternative hypotheses and being aware of biases. In this sense, the literature review in chapter 2 gives equal weight to the researchers' differing opinions, seeking to be as thorough and unbiased as possible. Besides, internal validity is supported by the choice to use three different theories: offensive realism, defensive realism and complex interdependence, which allows a wider range of proposals to be explored. Each alternative hypothesis is analysed with the same rigour and credibility.

The external validity of a thesis is based on the possibility of generalizing the results beyond the case study. It is difficult to address external validity since each qualitative research presents a different context. Rather, the validity of qualitative research depends on the transferability of the results to similar contexts. Overall, the results of this study may be hardly applicable to other countries as the findings are related to each country's specific political, economic and military relations with China. However, comparisons can be drawn with Indian Ocean countries whose strategic ports have benefited from BRI infrastructure projects.

The reliability of a thesis depends on the stability of the results. In other words, it refers to the replicability of the processes and the results. However, if the same case study on China and Pakistan were observed twice, it is unlikely that the exact same results would be obtained since the geopolitical context is constantly evolving. Nevertheless, this thesis describes a detailed methodology that could be easily replicable with other case studies.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

This Chapter will analyse the Chinese-led infrastructures implemented in Pakistan and its impact on the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. This chapter first introduces the evolution of the Sino-Pakistani relationship to establish the context. It then summarizes the observations in the subsequent three sections: offensive realism proposition (1), defensive realism proposition (2), complex interdependence proposition (3). The empirical observations collected will be then compared with the indicators, to determine which proposition best explains Chinese motivations behind the Maritime Road.

5.1. The Sino-Pakistani relations

5.1.1 *Evolution of a strong alliance*

For decades, Beijing and Islamabad have maintained close ties, mainly based on a shared enmity with India. The China-Pakistan alliance has been repeatedly described by the leaders of both countries as “an all-weather friendship”. On a visit by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in 2010, former Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani further claimed that the Sino-Pakistani alliance was "higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, stronger than steel and softer than honey" (Kanwal, 2018, para. 5).

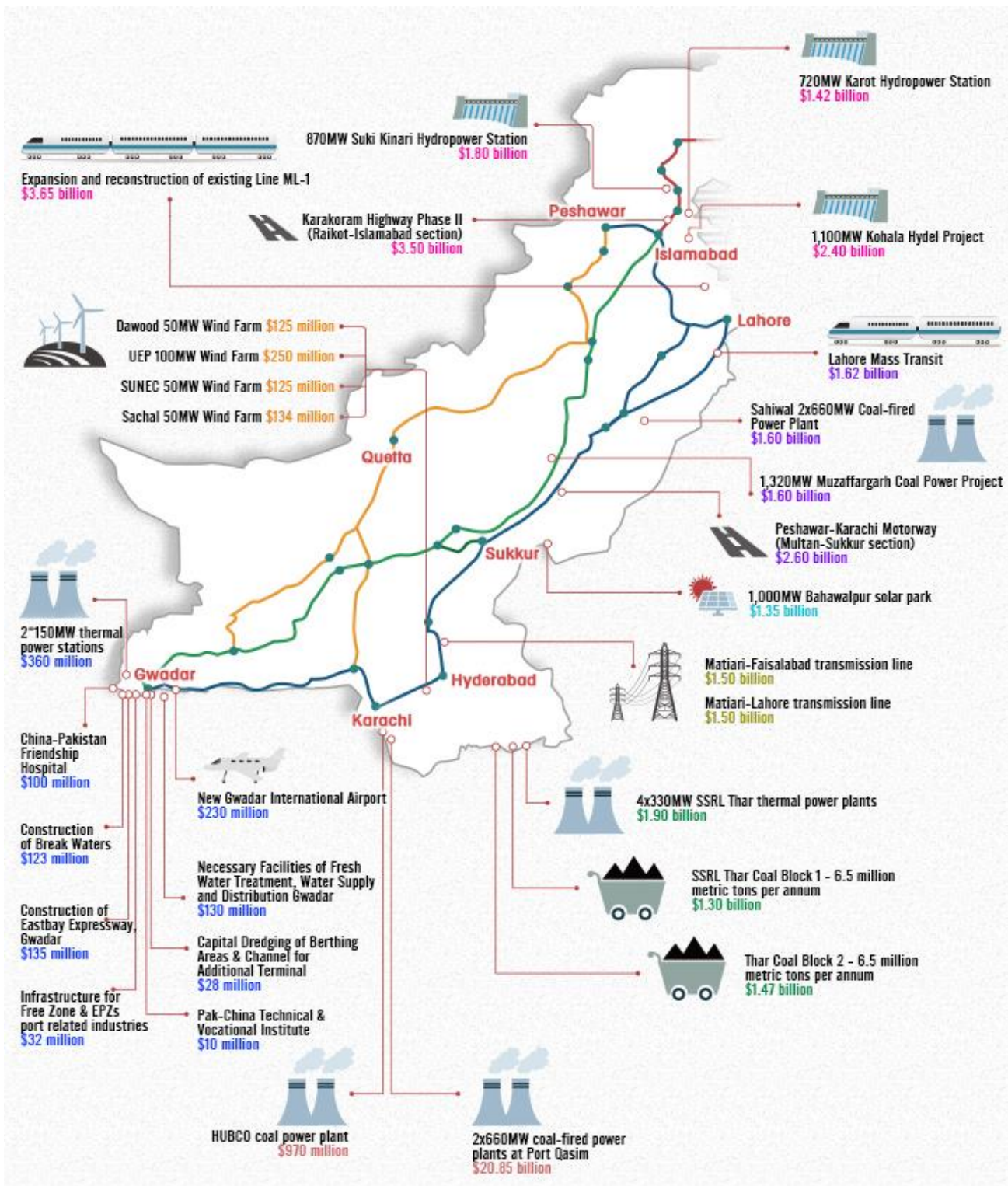
The first Sino-Pakistani strategic cooperation emerged during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, in response to India's alliance with the URSS (Sering, 2012). Later, the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, during which China got involved on behalf of Pakistan, formed the basis of China's status as the “all-weather friend” (Sering, 2012, p. 5). Although China and Pakistan have never been treaty allies and their armies come from radically different traditions, China's economic and military support has been unfailing. After Pakistan's severe defeat in 1971, China helped the country in strengthening its military capabilities, even providing Pakistan with the materials necessary for the construction of nuclear weapons (Small, 2015). Small (2015) highlights that close collaboration in such a sensitive area has created a level of trust between the two countries that a traditional partnership might not achieve. Moreover, close collaboration between the two countries can be seen as a joint effort to counter India's influence, their mutual enemy. India sees Chinese influence in the South Asian region as the main challenge to its own regional hegemony and has very tense relations with Pakistan over the disputed Kashmir region. For China, India's historical influence in the South Asian region is a potential threat, as some smaller countries rally to India over territorial dispute issues, such as Tibet (Freeman, 2010). Besides, China is concerned about the rapprochement of the Indo-American alliance. This cooperation undermines the security of China's western border, has the potential to threaten its energy supply from the Middle East, and encourages other countries such as Japan to strengthen ties with India. In the face of this cooperation, China takes a mainly defensive stance to preserve regional stability by supporting Pakistan.

For its part, Pakistan served as an intermediary between Nixon and Mao during China's years of diplomatic isolation and even supported Beijing in its disputes with the USSR towards the end of the Cold War (Small, 2015). Besides, Islamabad has always supported Beijing's diplomatic and economic relations with the Middle East (Sering, 2012). Despite the strengthening of Pakistan's ties with the US and the rise of Islamist forces in the Muslim-majority region of northwest China supported by Pakistani extremist groups, the Sino-Pakistani relationship has shown remarkable resilience throughout history (Small, 2015).

Today, China-Pakistan partnerships have never been stronger. For Pakistan, China could represent a way out of instability and economic weakness. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in particular, aims to strengthen Pakistan's economy through infrastructure projects, establish SEZs and improve electricity supply (see Figure 4).

Assuming that each project is successfully implemented, the value of the Chinese-led initiatives would exceed all foreign direct investment in Pakistan since 1970 and represent about "17% of Pakistan's GDP in 2015" (Tunningley, 2017, p. 5). Besides, China's economic assistance is provided without regard to human rights or political transparency. However, the scale of the promise is such that it is challenging the Pakistani government's capacity to meet the targets. Without appropriate economic reforms, Pakistan will not be able to use this opportunity to its advantage and its economy could suffer the consequences of the huge debt owed to China. On the other side, Chinese benefits seem far more certain. Small (2015) argues that "Pakistan is a central part of China's transition from a regional power to a global one" (p. 4). Indeed, the country is at the heart of the BRI's network of ports, pipelines, roads and railways linking the Middle East's oil and gas fields to East Asia. Moreover, its coastline is becoming a crucial crossing point which can extend China's scope of influence from the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf. Besides, Pakistan's secret service assistance against Islamic extremism is a vital asset for China as it strives to stabilize the eastern part of the Middle East to develop new commercial partnerships (Small, 2015).

Figure 4: Overview of all projects under CPEC in Pakistan



Source: Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, 2016.

5.2 Offensive Realism proposition

5.2.1 China's naval military force

According to the US Secretary of Defense (2017), China has intensified its maritime activities in foreign ports to provide logistical support for UN peacekeeping operations, escort missions near Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, and provide humanitarian assistance. Enhanced military partnerships with other NATO countries could enable China to present itself as a responsible global player. In addition, China has increased its port facilities to support overseas troops. In February 2016, China established its first military base in Djibouti. It should be noted that Japan has previously established a base there, as have France and the US. Before the launch of the BRI in 2011, Pakistan publicly proposed to China to host a second military base on their territory but Beijing declined (Samaranayake, 2019). Nonetheless, that does not mean that China will not seek to convert one of its commercial port facilities in Pakistan into a military base. The author explains that if China were to build a second military base overseas, "this would represent a fundamental shift from the status quo in the region" (Samaranayake, 2019, p. 23). On its side, China maintains that its military strategy is based on active defence and has committed itself only to respond in the event of an attack (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019). Officials have released a White Paper outlining China's military strategy, and its peaceful development (The State Council of People's Republic of China, 2011):

"China's peaceful development has broken away from the traditional pattern where a rising power was bound to seek hegemony. [...] China has decided upon peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation as a fundamental way to realize its modernization, participate in international affairs and handle international relations. [...] Countries should trust each other and settle international conflicts peacefully rather than resorting to war. Use or threat of use of military force should be avoided."

Collins and Erickson (2011) argue that despite China's willingness to provide defence policy information in the White Paper, there is still a certain lack of transparency, particularly on the development of anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) in China.

To summarize, over the past decade, China has increased its military partnerships in the Indian Ocean with counter-piracy, non-combatant evacuation operations, UN peacekeeping operations and its first military base in Djibouti. However, China will have to be cautious about its increased military operations abroad combined with the lack of transparency about its military intentions. This has led several researchers to question the peaceful nature of the BRI. To conclude, China is expanding its naval military partnerships with other countries but does not seem to use its cooperation with Pakistan as an opportunity to increase its military facilities, which contradicts the offensive realism proposal. Nevertheless, some concerns have emerged regarding the potential militarization of the Gwadar harbour.

5.2.2 Gwadar, a Chinese military overseas base?

The string of pearls proposition stems from a 2004 study conducted by Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH). According to it, China could build on its existing partnerships to establish a series of military overseas bases (Yung & Rustici, 2014). Some US and Indian analysts have thus argued that China would use Pakistan's port facilities to establish overseas naval bases. The Annual Report to US Congress explains that Pakistan is likely to host a Chinese military base given the close relations between the two countries and Pakistan's strategic position in the Indian Ocean (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019). From a realistic offensive perspective, the port of Gwadar could offer China the opportunity to host troops and resources in the region and serve as a cover for secret stockpiles of ammunition. Whether or not Gwadar will be a military threat is uncertain, as China would need the permission of host countries to establish military bases within their territory (Yung & Rustici, 2014).

The deep-sea port of Gwadar, previously managed by the Singapore Port Authority (PSA), is currently being developed by the state-owned China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC). The port will mainly benefit the Chinese since CHEC will obtain a 91% share of revenues from port operations (Kanwal, 2018). According to the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute, it is unlikely that China would build a military base in Gwadar since the site would be within striking range of India's missiles. Secondly, the Chinese army does not have a large enough maritime fleet to effectively defend the port of Gwadar (Yung & Rustici, 2014). Finally, US Analysts compared the current (in 2012) and projected (in 2035) physical components of the string of pearls potential sites (see Table 5). They found that major combat operations would require logistical and support capabilities that go far beyond what Gwadar could provide (Marantidou, 2017). Gwadar is a deep-water port with a depth of over 35 feet, which allows it to handle large ships loaded with heavy cargo. It is also a warm water port, which gives it the advantage of being operational year-round since the water does not freeze in winter. However, the port of Gwadar does not currently have sufficient berths or adequate rail unloading facilities to serve as a military base, and the inland rail network to the port facilities is still limited. The BRI construction plans include access to at least one major commercial rail carrier and three 200-metre-long berths. These infrastructures will be suitable for accommodating deployment ships that require facilities similar to those found in commercial ports. However, aircraft carriers and warships both require specific port infrastructure that is not included in the BRI list of port improvement projects. Thus, Gwadar will not reach the adequate minimum DOD requirements to support major combat operations. The improvements planned by 2035 mainly aimed at supporting the expansion of commercial activities.

Table 8: US DOD Port requirements applied to String of Pearls Candidates

Requirements	Gwadar		Hambantota		Chittagong		Coco Islands	
	2012	2035	2012	2035	2012	2035	2012	2035
Recommended infrastructure								
Three berthing spaces 1,000 linear feet each		X		X	X	X		
Minimum water depth of 35 feet	X	X	X	X				
30–45 acres of open storage	X	X		X	X	X		
Four rail offloading spurs of 1,000 feet of straight track each								
Four rail/truck end ramps					X	X		
Gatehouse/security	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Access to port-owned interchange yard to support switching two trains per day					X	X		
Suitable area to land/service helos (~5 acres)	X	X		X	X	X		
Two container handlers	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Adequate interior roadways to port facilities		X		X	X	X		
Office space with adequate utilities and communication service	X	X	X	X				
Processing area for 30 trucks		X			X	X		
Wash rack that meets USDA requirements								
<i>Terminal Access</i>								
Close proximity (<10 miles) to interstate highway system		X		X	X	X		
Access to at least one major commercial rail carrier		X		X	X	X		
Water channel access width of 500 feet and depth of 35 feet	X	X		X	X	X		
Access to commercial rail interchange yard (if port-owned facilities are inadequate)		X		X	X	X		

Source: Yung & Rustici, Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2014.

Moreover, on the diplomatic level, China will have difficulty convincing its neighbours to overtly host a Chinese naval base. Whatever financial investments China might offer in return, the creation of a military base would jeopardize relations between the host country and the US (Townshend, 2011). Indeed, the construction of full-fledged military bases raises fears that often have high diplomatic costs (Collins and Erickson, 2011). In conclusion, little evidence supports the string of pearls proposition and even less China's intention to overthrow American hegemony. Moreover, US maritime power and logistics infrastructure are significantly superior. However, this does not detract from Gwadar's strategic

importance, as the port enables Chinese tankers to unload oil from the Persian Gulf instead of passing through the Strait of Malacca (Townshend, 2011). Ultimately, Holmes (2014) argues that while there is currently little evidence of a Chinese military offensive strategy, there is no guarantee that China's development will remain peaceful.

To summarize, there is very little evidence supporting the string of pearls proposition. It is unlikely that China will build a military base in Gwadar, as the site would be within the range of Indian missiles and the Chinese army has no maritime fleet large enough to effectively defend the port of Gwadar. To conclude, Gwadar harbour is not intended to be used as a military overseas base but rather as a key commercial port, which contradicts the offensive realism proposal.

5.2.3 Threat to the US and Indian power

Since the establishment of the BRI, the US and India have strongly criticized some projects which, in their view, have no economic basis and have led countries to cede their sovereignty. The example of Sri Lanka is often cited, which ceded the port of Hambantota to China for 99 years after failing to repay its debts. Moreover, although there is no significant military threat as discussed above, the plans to improve the port of Gwadar are of concern to both countries, which fear the increase in China's geostrategic and military advantages (Tarapore, 2019). To counter China's influence, the US is strengthening its network of partnerships with, among others, Japan and Australia. However, it should be reminded that China lags far behind the US in terms of military power. According to Harvard Professor Nye (2019), US military spending is still three times higher than China's. He concludes that China is not in a position to exclude the US from the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, the BRI could challenge US interests by promoting China's soft power economic diplomacy. But currently, the Soft Power Index 30 (2019) places the US in fourth place, while China ranks 27th.

On its part, India has many concerns about the CPEC project, which crosses the disputed territory of Kashmir claimed by Pakistan, India and China. The economic corridor through Kashmir to Gwadar can be seen as an acknowledgement by the Chinese of Pakistan's claims to Kashmir, which may seriously damage bilateral relations between China and India. In conclusion, China does not have the military means to threaten the security of the US and India through its cooperation with Pakistan, which contradicts the proposal of offensive realism. Although its soft economic power diplomacy is being strengthened through the BRI projects, it is still far from surpassing American hegemony. However, the CPEC crossing Kashmir could have consequences for China's bilateral relations with India, which sees its territorial claims threatened by the Sino-Pakistani cooperation.

5.3 Defensive realism proposition

5.3.1 Predominance for non-aggressive security-related initiatives

The BRI has fuelled tensions within local Pakistani communities, such as the armed separatist group Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), leading to anti-Chinese attacks (Nouwens, 2019). In November 2018, a group of assailants attacked the Chinese consulate in Karachi to pressure China to withdraw from Balochistan (Boni, 2019). Stressing the need to combat these terrorist attacks to protect the safety of workers on the BRI, China announced close security collaboration with Pakistan. According to Boni (2019), the Special Security Division deployed along the CPEC includes 15,000 Pakistani soldiers tasked with securing infrastructure. India has expressed concerns about the deployment of armed forces in the disputed territory of Kashmir. In addition, in June 2015, the two countries signed an agreement for the construction of six patrol vessels to protect the BRI maritime infrastructure against piracy and terrorism, according to China. In 2017, Pakistan joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), established by China in 2001 to guide regional security coordination (Johnson, 2019). Besides, it should be noted that Pakistan is the main beneficiary of Chinese military equipment and that joint military and anti-terrorist exercises are frequently held between the two countries (Johnson, 2019). Finally, counter-terrorism cooperation has been extended to the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism between the armies of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan (Boni, 2019). China has also signed another trilateral agreement with Pakistan and Afghanistan on counter-terrorism security (Johnson, 2019). While strengthening regional counter-terrorism partnerships enhances the protection of Chinese BRI workers, it also enables China to ensure its own security.

In summary, China and Pakistan have strengthened their security cooperation, particularly in the area of counter-terrorism and the protection of Chinese BRI workers. Steps have already been taken towards large-scale regional coordination and joint operations targeting terrorist activities. China's anti-terrorist collaboration with Pakistan allows China to enhance its security, as predicted in the proposal for defensive realism.

5.3.2 Maximize domestic security

As an emerging power facing competition, China seeks to strengthen its domestic security through partnerships with strategic states (Fangyin, 2014). In this regard, Pakistan is a key strategic pivot in the Indian Ocean for China. First, Pakistan is a gateway to the Gulf States and the Middle East, where China wishes to enhance bilateral trade and diplomatic relations. Through the port of Gwadar, the CPEC will help to improve trade with Middle Eastern countries, particularly in the field of energy (Daim Fazil, 2015). Chinese imports of energy resources have significantly increased since the beginning of the 21st century. More than 70% of China's seaborne energy trade is transported by maritime lanes through strategic checkpoints in the Indian Ocean (Jash, 2015). The interruption of these supply routes by a

blockade on choke points such as the Strait of Malacca would have a deterrent effect on China (Marantidou, 2017). Therefore, the extension of the road and rail network connecting Pakistan to China allows energy resources to be transported overland without crossing critical choke points. The Pakistani naval base in Gwadar will be equipped to store and protect Chinese oil supplies (Sering, 2012).

Second, China argues that the Sino-Pakistani security partnership could help maintain stability in the region, especially in areas where terrorism has developed (Tunningley, 2017). The government has blamed terrorist attacks in recent decades on the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a separatist group founded by militant Uighurs (Maizland, 2020). In response to the separatist movements in the Muslim province of Xinjiang, where the Uighurs are the main ethnic group, the Chinese government has severely repressed the Uighurs as part of the fight against terrorism, even interning them in camps. However, it is important to note that Xinjiang Province is home to the largest coal and natural gas reserves in China and is part of the BRI's massive development plan towards Central Asia. Therefore, when China claims to benefit greatly from Pakistan's assistance in fighting terrorism and preserving regional stability, it is also an opportunity to crack down on the Uighur independence movements in order to further develop Xinjiang (Maizland, 2020).

In short, the CPEC offers China the opportunity to strengthen its diplomatic ties with the Middle East and gives it some energy security for its growing consumption. In addition, the BRI enables China to stabilise the resource-rich Xinjiang region under the guise of combating extremist Islamist Uighur movements. In conclusion, the BRI provides an opportunity for China to stabilise its energy or political security as described in the proposal of defensive realism.

5.4 Complex Interdependence proposition

5.4.1 Economic interdependence

According to Sering (2012), Pakistan depends on Chinese financial support for the development of landlocked regions and the revival of its economy. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has stated that Chinese investment in the port of Gwadar has given Pakistan a strategic position in the region, attracting FDI (Xinhua New Agency, 2019b). In February 2019, Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged to invest \$20 billion in Pakistan, half of which would support a refining and petrochemicals complex in the port of Gwadar. In this way, the CPEC will not only contribute to the country's economic growth, but will also strengthen Pakistan's political influence on neighbouring countries (Sering, 2012). Besides, the CPEC could also provide a solution to the country's energy crisis. In 2015, regular power cuts cost Pakistan 7% of its GDP. According to the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), a total of 21 energy projects have been planned under the CPEC, which would eventually produce "16,400 megawatts of electricity", about Pakistan's current capacity (ACCA, 2017, p. 12). According to economist Saad Hashemy, the CPEC will have an impact not only on the energy sector but also on

almost all key sectors of the economy. The government expects additional demand for 800,000 cars over the next 15 years, and steel used in civil engineering, railways and pipelines will see significant growth in production in 2015-2016 (ACCA, 2017). In addition, the Applied Economics Research Centre (AERC) has estimated that CPEC will provide about "700,000 jobs between 2015 and 2030" in Pakistan (ACCA, 2017, p. 15). According to Asim Khan, a spokesperson for the Pakistani Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, the average number of Chinese workers employed in projects has never exceeded 25% of the total number of employees (Khan, 2015).

However, ACCA's projections should be carefully considered, as they are based on an online survey of ACCA members and Chinese companies, such as the Pakistan China Investment Company, on their views of the CPEC. Moreover, ACCA is also active in the promotion of the CPEC since Sajjeed Aslam, Director of the Pakistan Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), promoted in Davos the business potential of the CPEC to attract FDI in Pakistan. Moreover, official statements from Pakistan and China often contradict each other on the exact figures that may be generated. It is also unclear what type of jobs will be created and whether these figures also include the jobs that Chinese people obtain in Pakistan through the CPEC. Besides, figures for employment opportunities are often only project-specific and do not provide an overview of the CPEC as a whole (Jacob, 2017).

Finally, Pakistan's Minister of Human Rights, Shireen Mazari, stated that the CPEC will help improve workers' rights, as multinationals will bring corporate social responsibility (Xinhua News Agency, 2018). In the Thar region, considered one of the most underdeveloped regions, Chinese media report that the CPEC has created employment opportunities for women in non-agricultural sectors (Xinhua News Agency, 2019a). However, complaints have emerged about the allocation of skilled work to Chinese engineers, leaving the employment of low-skilled jobs to Pakistanis (Jacob, 2017).

While Pakistan's economic growth depends on China, the latter is also dependent on Pakistan. After three decades of economic development, China's growth has slowed down and its domestic market is threatened by industrial overcapacity in sectors such as construction and energy (Tunningley, 2017). In this context, BRI projects allow the export of China's over-capacity reserves of steel, aluminium and cement for the construction of infrastructure in Pakistan. It should be noted that this benefit is not reciprocal since Pakistan is not affected by the dumping of over-produced materials. Furthermore, the numerous transport and energy infrastructure projects in Pakistan offer new business opportunities for Chinese companies which benefit from a significant advantage in the BRI public procurement. In Pakistan, the CPEC gives them the shortest access to the Middle East and Africa, where thousands of Chinese workers are involved in development projects. Economic disparities have widened between developed cities in the East and rural areas in Western China. Pakistan's infrastructure connects China's underdeveloped West with the rest of Europe and Asia through a rail and road network. Thus, the CPEC could attract investment and labour from the East, encouraging companies to create jobs in this underdeveloped area, particularly in the regions of Yunnan and Gansu (Tunningley, 2017).

In summary, infrastructure projects can provide a solution to the energy crisis in Pakistan and allow for the creation of new jobs with potential employment opportunities for women in non-agricultural sectors. However, the extent of employment remains unclear, as do the working conditions and skill levels required. On the other hand, cooperation with Pakistan is essential to revive China's economy, provide new business opportunities for Chinese companies abroad, deplete its stock in key resource sectors and connect its rural areas. In conclusion, there is a close economic interdependence relationship between the two countries, as set out in the complex interdependence proposal. However, it should be noted that the benefits of cooperation seem more certain for China than for Pakistan.

5.4.2 Pakistan's influence on the implementation of projects

World Bank analysts Gossein, Hoekman and Shingal examined the procurement practices used to award BRI infrastructures projects: who obtains the contracts? On what basis? to what extent are the procurement practices applied in BRI projects in line with international practices? According to them, there is remarkably little reliable information about public procurement practices and a lack of transparency on the fairness of the process. They argue that evidence suggests that Chinese companies have won the majority of BRI's public procurement (Gossein, Hoekman & Shingal, 2018). Indeed, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies points out that more than 60% of the BRI infrastructure projects funded by China have been awarded to Chinese companies. In comparison, Chinese companies “received only 30% of non-Chinese funded projects” (Gossein, Hoekman & Shingal, 2012, para. 2). In the case of Pakistan, the analysts claim that high-value projects financed through the EXIM Bank of China are reserved for Chinese contractors. According to them, China designates three Chinese companies to bid on the tender, each of which may choose to collaborate with their Pakistani counterparts through joint ventures. Chinese contractors may subcontract to local companies up to a maximum of 30% the market value, according to the CPEC agreement. The criteria used in the initial selection of the three Chinese entrepreneurs were not made public. Moreover, Gossein, Hoekman & Shingal (2018) point out that “Chinese contractors use their own labor and that BRI procurement contracts are not very helpful in providing employment opportunities within the country” (p. 7). Although Chinese companies have clear competitive advantages in global public markets, the World Bank analysts recommend that China applies the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) from the WTO to ensure that BRI projects are impartially awarded to the best-suited companies. China could thus create a fair competitive environment for all suppliers, regardless of their belonging or nationality (Gossein, Hoekman & Shingal, 2018).

To summarize, the World Bank analysis suggests that Chinese state-owned companies represent a significant proportion of BRI's public procurement. Although some projects may be carried out through joint ventures with Pakistani firms, China has authority over the majority of project

implementation. To conclude, it appears that Pakistan does not have influence over the implementation of the infrastructure projects, which contradicts the complex interdependence theory.

5.4.3 A complex network of formal and informal channels

According to Joint communique of leaders roundtable of Belt and Road forum, the BRI encourages the “involvement of governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and citizens”, as well as “the participation of micro, small and medium enterprises” (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). The Office of the Leading Group for the BRI also invites “political parties, parliaments, and localities as well as NGOs” to engage in the dialogue about the implementation of the BRI (Xinhua News Agency, 2017, p. 51). For instance, the three main national parties, PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League), PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) and PPP (Pakistan's People's Party), took sides in CPEC's discussions for the future of Pakistan, during debates organized for the government transition. In 2018, the Pakistan National Arts Council (PNCA) organized the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Caravan Festival under the theme "Art and Culture for the Creative Economy". Musical and cultural performances, fashion shows, photo exhibitions, documentary screenings from China and Pakistan were presented. According to the Express Tribune (2018), the PNCA Executive Director Jamal Shah, Cultural Advisor of the Chinese Embassy You Yi, academics, actors, singers and performers also attended the event.

Moreover, China has established the AIIB as a multilateral development institution responsible for meeting BRI' financial needs. The AIIB has sparked a lot of controversies, notably from Western governments. They fear that the AIIB could undermine existing international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. At the international level, the AIIB is perceived as an attempt to replace the post-war international architecture by undermining American hegemony (Lipsy, 2015). However, Lipsy (2015) argues that it is not in China's advantage to undermine the global architecture that reinforces its legitimacy. Indeed, the AIIB is unlikely to undermine international aid institutions, as relatively prosperous developing countries are free to choose from other multilateral, bilateral and private funding sources (Lipsy, 2015).

In summary, cooperation between China and Pakistan involves governments, political parties, international and regional organizations, NGOs, private sector enterprises, and civil society. In conclusion, it appears that China and Pakistan are linked by a complex network of informal links between government elites, formal foreign policy agreements, and multinational organizations such as the AIIB, as envisaged in the complex interdependence proposal.

5.4.4 Foreign issues on the China-Pakistan agenda

A striking feature of the Chinese Pakistani partnership is the multiplicity of areas involved at various levels of cooperation between the two countries. Although there are security-related initiatives as mentioned above, they are not high on the agenda and are mixed with issues such as trade, culture, education or agriculture (Ahmad, Sohail, Rizwan; 2018). In a press release, Xinhua News Agency (2019) reports that China and Pakistan will extend the CPEC to new fields such as industrial parks, agriculture and social welfare. Indeed, in July 2019, Pakistan's Prime Minister Khan declared that he had signed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with China to acquire their modern technologies to develop the agricultural sector. Although Pakistan's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, farmers still use old techniques to cultivate crops which limits productivity (Xinhua New Agency, 2019b). Likewise, the Pakistan Society of Interventional Cardiology, the Chinese Medical Doctor Association and the Chinese Cardiovascular Association have signed an agreement to establish a platform for cooperation in the health sector, particularly in the cardiology section. According to the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association and National Health, 30 to 40% of deaths in Pakistan are due to cardiovascular disease (China Daily, 2018). Similar bilateral agreements have been signed to strengthen cooperation on science and technology, such as joint laboratory construction and young scientists' exchanges (Xinhua News Agency, 2017a). On the other hand, the BRI has fostered strong cultural interactions, particularly in terms of language exchanges. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, chairman of the Pakistan China Institute think tank, reported that many Pakistani universities have made the Chinese language mandatory (Xinhua News Agency, 2018b). The official statement between Pakistan and China is a clear example of a simultaneous discussion on multiple issues for joint settlement. The two sides agreed to strengthen close cooperation in the use of marine resources, marine scientific research, environmental protection, water management, ecological restoration and wildlife protection. The collaboration also includes nanotechnologies, biotechnology and ICT, as well as space technologies with the signing of an agreement in 2012-2020 between the China National Space Administration (CNSA) and the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO). The countries have also agreed to develop bilateral links between respective universities, in particular through joint degree and exchange programmes. Finally, both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fields of culture, arts, cinema, sports, museums, heritage conservation and archaeologists' exchanges between the two countries (Xinhua News Agency, 2017a).

The extension of Sino-Pakistani cooperation to the sectors of trade, culture, education and science may reflect China's ambition to overtake the American soft power whose culture is proliferating in Islamabad. In the food industry, for example, several US brands have established themselves in the capital, such as Hardee's restaurant, McDonald's, Pizza Hut and KFC (Washington Post, 2011). Moreover, the former US ambassador in Pakistan, Richard Olson (2014) emphasizes extensive US assistance for anti-terrorist, economic, social and scientific development in Pakistan. For example, he points to the collaboration of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) with Pakistani scientists to

improve wheat yield and support Pakistani agricultural development. U.S. subventions and university partnerships have also led to the creation of several Pakistani universities dedicated to scientific and technological cooperation. Furthermore, while China is Pakistan's largest import partner, the US is Pakistan's primary export destination, its second largest supplier of military equipment after China and one of the main investors in Pakistan. However, the absence of political conditionality in the financial assistance provided to Pakistan distinguishes China from the US. Several regulations condition US aid and require Pakistan to meet specific criteria such as respect for human rights, the achievement of US foreign aid objectives, and anti-terrorist cooperation (Epstein, Kronstadt, 2012). In this context, China's unconditional aid to Pakistan across social-cultural and economic sectors can be seen as a means of supplanting US soft power in Pakistan.

Overall, the majority of projects relate to the extension of transport networks and the production of energy resources. Cooperation covers a wide variety of sectors, involving several levels of local, regional and national collaboration between the two countries. Far less developed, Pakistan has extended its collaboration with China to almost all its sectors, such as environment, social health-care, agriculture, education, space technologies, or poverty reduction. The unconditionality of Chinese aid gives it an advantage over US aid and could strengthen Chinese soft power at the expense of the US. To conclude, it seems that military and security issues do not have priority over trade and socio-cultural policy issues in the Pakistan-China agenda, which confirms the complex interdependence proposal.

5.5 Findings

5.5.1 Summary of the findings

This section presents the results of the analysis compared with the indicators in Table 8. It examines whether or not the data collected validates the indicators for each theory.

From Table 8, it appears that the results do not support the theoretical proposition of offensive realism. The observations are inconsistent with indicators (1), (2) and (3). Regarding the second proposal, the results verify the defensive realism proposition. The observations support the validity of indicators (4) and (5). Concerning the theoretical proposal of complex interdependence, it appears that the results generally support the third proposition. The observations are consistent with indicators (6), (8) and (9), but do not support the validity of the indicator (7). Overall, the complex interdependence and the defensive realism are the two prevailing theories.

<i>Table 9 : Empirical data compared with indicators</i>			
	Indicators derived from the theoretical proposals	Y/N	Results
<i>Proposition (1) Offensive Realism</i>	<i>The Maritime Road is intended to boost China's naval expansion through the establishment of new military bases overseas. China aims to reverse the US and India power in Southeast Asia and thus be the only regional hegemon in the Indian Ocean.</i>		
1	The China-Pakistan cooperation helps to expand China's naval military forces	N	Contradicts
2	Gwadar harbour is intended to be used as a military overseas base	N	Contradicts
3	The China-Pakistan cooperation threatens the power of the US / India	N	Contradicts
<i>Proposition (2) Defensive Realism</i>	<i>The Maritime Road aims to strengthen security cooperation between China and its partners. China aims to maximise its domestic security.</i>		
4	There is a predominance for non-aggressive security-related initiatives in China's agenda with Pakistan	Y	Verify
5	Infrastructures increase China's domestic security	Y	Verify
<i>Proposition (3) Complex Interdependence</i>	<i>The Maritime Road is conceived as an instrument for achieving economic interdependence creating a balanced relationship between states through multiple channels of connectivity. Military and security issues do not have priority over trade issues on China's agenda with Pakistan.</i>		
6	Pakistan and China are economically dependent upon each other	Y	Verify
7	Pakistan has influence over the implementation of the projects	N	Contradicts
8	China and Pakistan are connected through a complex network of formal and informal channels	Y	Verify
9	There is no visible priority of security issues over trade on the China-Pakistan agenda	N	Verify
<i>Notes : Y, yes (Indicator confirmed); N, no (Indicator not confirmed)</i>			
<i>Sources: Cited studies from the Analysis</i>			

5.5.2 Discussion of the findings

Many researchers, military, politicians, and economists have questioned China's motives behind its gigantic BRI cooperation project. Several hypotheses have been put forward, such as China's ambition to conquer the Indian Ocean by military force. Many analyses have focused on China's aim to protect its strategic assets and its domestic economy. But fewer stressed new forms of connectedness and relations of interdependence between actors in a globalised world. The key results of this thesis lie in a holistic approach that brings together these different theoretical perspectives to better understand China's BRI.

For the theory of offensive realism, this research revealed that China is expanding its naval military partnerships with other countries but does not seem to use its cooperation with Pakistan as an opportunity to increase its military facilities. The port of Gwadar has sparked much debate about its military potential. But it is unlikely that the port would be used as an overseas military base as the site would be within the range of Indian missiles. Moreover, the militarization of the port of Gwadar does not call into question American hegemony, whose military means remain far superior. However, the CPEC crossing Kashmir could have consequences for China's bilateral relations with India. As the work of Huang (2018) shows, the development of the BRI ports is mainly used to transport resources imported from Africa and the Middle East. They are not real military bases as foreign strategists may claim since the ports are not designed for face-to-face combat operations, but rather for economic objectives. Jie (2018) found that the ports will attract new sources of goods and improve trade in the region.

With regard to the theory of defensive realism, this thesis has shown that China and Pakistan have strengthened their security cooperation, particularly in the fight against terrorism in the Balochistan and Xinjiang regions. But beyond the desire to protect its workers, increased anti-terrorist collaboration with Pakistan allows China to maximize its security first. Chinese geopolitical scholars have shown that China does not seek to provoke a coalition of great powers against it since its economic growth is linked to regional stability. Moreover, the results of this research show how CPEC may provide a secure alternative route to the Strait of Malacca, ensuring China's energy security. Zhang, Alon & Lattemann (2018) and (Rong & Zhu, 2017) found that the construction of BRI port facilities is to ensure long-term access to resources and energy in Central Asia and Africa.

Concerning the complex interdependence theory, this thesis found that the CPEC could provide a solution to the energy crisis and allow for the creation of employment opportunities in Pakistan. However, the extent of employment remains unclear, as do the working conditions and skill levels required. As for China, cooperation with Pakistan helps to revive its economy by providing business opportunities for Chinese companies abroad through limited open procurement contracts. Moreover, it allows China to connect its rural areas to the Middle East, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. As work by Huang (2016) shows, the BRI enables China to expand its external markets and explore new opportunities for cooperation to sustain its growth. Silin et al (2017) show how the BRI creates new

overseas jobs for Chinese citizens affected by the domestic economic slowdown. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis show that China has expanded its collaboration with Pakistan in almost all sectors, such as the environment, health, agriculture, education and technology. The extension of Sino-Pakistani cooperation may reflect China's ambition to overtake the American soft power whose culture is proliferating in Islamabad. Moreover, the unconditionality of Chinese aid gives it an advantage over US aid. Finally, new mechanisms for dialogue between China and Pakistan have involved governments, political parties, business, NGOs and civil society. The results of this thesis do show economic interdependence between the two countries, yet, the benefits are less certain for Pakistan. Moreover, the BRI procurement is largely dominated by Chinese companies and Pakistan has little leverage for project implementation.

As for the theoretical implications of this thesis, the theory of offensive realism appears to be outdated to explain China's motivations behind the BRI. Previously, international relations were conducted by heads of state dealing between high-ranking politicians, and the use of military force was always possible in the event of conflict. Today, globalization and the scale and diversity of trade make offensive realist theory highly unlikely. As was shown with the BRI, relations between states no longer include only leaders but a multitude of political and economic actors within and outside government, such as international organizations and civil society. Military force has become a difficult instrument to use in these conditions of interdependence. The complex interdependence theory thus reflects the essence of BRI through partnerships of economic interdependence, networks of formal and informal channels, and collaborations not only in security but also in trade, commerce, and socio-economic sectors. This theory better captures the reality of international relations in today's fast-changing world. In particular, the theory helps to highlight China's diffusion of soft-power economic diplomacy. However, it is important to note that a complex interdependent relationship can be established with benefits unevenly distributed between the two participants, as here between Pakistan and China. Moreover, China's motivations are not only explained by the theory of complex interdependence, since the observations also fit the theory of defensive realism. The results are consistent with elements of both theories and enrich the understanding of China's motivations. Importantly, the results imply not to neglect security issues between states that remain at the core of States' primary motivations, which the complex interdependence does not highlight. Overall, the increasing complexity and connectivity of our world makes it very unlikely that any one phenomenon will fit into a single theoretical explanation. Finally, the complex interdependence theory should further recognize and value the role of civil society in shaping state interactions, as for example, the role of local people's movements against BRI.

These results contrast with several recent studies that have criticized the BRI as a project of Chinese military expansion in the Indian Ocean. For example, Khan & Khalid (2018) found that the BRI is designed to increase China's military presence in its neighbourhood, using strategic ports along the Maritime Road for military purposes. American researchers have also studied how the US and China could risk intense security competition, with considerable potential for war. The results of this thesis do

not support this hypothesis, nor that of Huang (2018) who found that each strategic port along the Maritime Road can also be militarized to counter an attack by hostile forces. Instead, the results are consistent with Holmes & Yoshihara (2008) argument that Gwadar is used to transport resources imported from Africa and the Middle East. To some extent, these differences can be explained by the different theoretical perspectives with which researchers have analysed the BRI. By focusing only on the military and defence aspects of China's ambitions, the BRI may appear as an offensive expansion plan. For instance, if one analyses the development of the port of Gwadar with no consideration for the broader military forces involved, Gwadar could be seen to have been intended to house some of China's military forces. Yet when compared with the far superior American military equipment, it becomes less pertinent to speak of a potential Chinese threat. By observing the BRI from a single lens, some researchers may have seen only a fragment of the overall motivations behind the BRI. Therefore, this thesis sought to broaden the angle of approach as much as possible to present a holistic overview of China's geopolitical, economic and military situation. A secondary explanation could be that offensive realists have overly focused on the role and importance of the US in the international system and lacked explanations from a domestic perspective.

Moreover, this thesis found that the rationale behind counter-terrorism cooperation is not only to protect trade routes from piracy and terrorism as Zhao, (2018) and Ge (2018) argue, but primarily to maximize China's security. These results echo Maizland's research, who argues that in the name of fighting terrorism, China took the opportunity to suppress Uighur independence movements to further develop the Xinjiang region (Maizland, 2020). Furthermore, the results do not confirm the assertions of Chinese academics Ge (2018) and Hu (2018) that BRi is a win-win cooperation with mutual benefits. While there is indeed an economic interdependence between China and Pakistan, the benefits are less to the benefit of Pakistan, whose possibility of mass employment is still uncertain and whose debt to China is accumulating. Finally, an important result of this thesis confirms the work of Yağcı (2018), who found that through promoting the BRI and win-win cooperation, China is pursuing soft-power economic diplomacy.

Overall, the BRI provides evidence that no country can survive independently without establishing relations with other countries around the world. In the era of globalisation, each state cooperates with other states for the development of their economic growth and increases their dependence on each other. This interdependence incorporates trade liberalization, free trade, investment and social and cultural exchanges. However, Mattli (1999) points out that this is only possible when a country plays its positive role for integration, reducing personal grievances for common interests.

Several developing countries have expressed interest in joining the BRI. As shown by the results of this thesis, the constructive evolution of Sino-Pakistani relations reveals that improved economic interaction can be a key factor in advancing diplomatic and socio-cultural ties. Thus, the development of the BRI in Pakistan has the potential to become a framework for further partnership between China and other regional countries. The CPEC could be the driving force for the integration of Central Asia

and the Middle East since it ensures connectivity between resource-rich and high-demand regions and reinforces the region's stability. It might be an opportunity for other countries to strengthen their integration into the global economy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to identify China's motivations behind the Belt and Road Initiative in the Indian Ocean. Given the breadth of the subject, this research was conducted in the form of 3 sub-questions.

The first sub-question looked at the findings of previous researches analysing China's motivations behind the BRI. This literature review found a general agreement among researchers on China's economic motivations behind the BRI. They mainly agree that the BRI is intended to ensure long-term access to natural resources in Central Asia and Africa, secure resource shipping routes and boost China's declining domestic growth. (Bingguo, 2010; Fan, 2018; Huang, 2018; Lin, 2018; Pencea, 2017; Schortgen, 2018). Zang, Along et Latteman (2018) found that the BRI is not intended to provide mutual benefits but aims to strengthen China's geopolitical influence by building an influential maritime platform in South Asia and easing tensions in the region with neighbouring countries. While many Chinese scholars promote the BRI as a liberal economic vision based upon win-win cooperation, Western scholars argue that it is a propaganda strategy to pursue China's soft-power diplomacy. Finally, this literature review highlights a controversy fuelled mainly by American and Indian researchers who denounce the expansion of the Chinese military into the Indian Ocean with new port facilities acquired through the BRI (Ahmad et al, 2017; Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008; Pehrson, 2006).

The second sub question drew theoretical propositions from the theories of realism and liberalism. The first proposition from offensive realist theory hypothesizes that China's Maritime Road is intended to establish new military bases abroad to overthrow American and Indian power in Southeast Asia. The second proposal from defensive realist theory postulates that the BRI aims to strengthen security cooperation between China and its partners and maximise China's security. Finally, the third proposal from the complex interdependence theory hypothesizes that the Maritime Road is conceived as an instrument to achieve economic interdependence between states by creating a balanced relationship through multiple channels of connectivity.

Finally, the last sub-question (also the main research question) draws on a case study to determine which theory best explains China's motivations for financing various infrastructure projects in Pakistan. Based on a qualitative analysis of infrastructure projects in Pakistan, it can be concluded that a mix of Complex Interdependence theory and Defensive Realist theory provides the most relevant explanation. The results show that BRI projects in Pakistan have fostered a close relationship of economic interdependence between Beijing and Islamabad, but that China gains greater benefits from the BRI projects. By promoting a liberal economic order and win-win cooperation, China pursues a soft-power economic diplomacy. Multiple channels of connectivity strengthen the ties between the two countries not only through infrastructure projects but also through socio-cultural partnerships. China's unconditional aid to Pakistan across social-cultural and economic sectors can be seen as a means of supplanting US soft power in Pakistan.

However, no qualitative studies can conclusively demonstrate the benefit of joining the BRI, and the results of this thesis should be interpreted with caution. It is important to point out several limitations in this research, starting with the methodology which relies on the researcher's interpretation. The internal validity of this qualitative research can be criticized as biased and lacking in rigor, since the researcher's interpretations may lead to a biased conclusion. For example, there may be a bias in the way I conceived, collected and interpreted the data, given that I study international relations in a Western context. Nevertheless, I have attempted to overcome this bias by using three different theoretical perspectives to investigate Chinese motivations and present a representation of the BRI as accurate as possible.

The external validity of this study might also be subject to criticism since the results are hardly generalizable. The findings cannot be used to state with certainty that the BRI is beneficial for all countries cooperating with China. While this case study concludes that Pakistan and China enjoy some beneficial cooperation, this may not be the case for all countries with different political, historical and economic relations with China. Recent works have criticized Chinese investments for wasteful spending, unfinished projects, environmental destruction and mounting debt. Further research should, therefore, examine the reasons for the failure of certain infrastructure projects. With regard to external validity, it should be remembered that the results of this qualitative study are not intended to be generalizable to every partnership between China and the BRI countries but rather to study the BRI in a certain context to understand its motivations. Lastly, the trustworthiness of the data collected through the official pages of the Chinese government is debatable. It is common among Western researchers to point out the lack of transparency of the Chinese government compared to other political institutions. However, the BRI demands greater integration into the international economy, which has required China to adopt more transparent information management.

Overall, the results contribute to the discussion on China's controversial motivations behind the BRI. The case study of Pakistan provides an in-depth analysis of the economic cooperation between the two countries and brings new insights into the situation from three different theoretical perspectives. Although the literature review stresses the work of several Indian and American researchers criticizing China's military ambitions behind its infrastructure projects, the results of this thesis do not support these claims. On the contrary, China's investments in Pakistan seem to have been mainly directed towards the economic development of the region and anti-terrorism cooperation to maximise China's security. The CPEC not only strengthens ties between China and Pakistan but also provides better access to the region's resources and enhances cultural exchanges. As such, Pakistan serves as a showcase to attract other developing countries to join the BRI. China, for its part, pursues its soft-power economic diplomacy by promising win-win economic cooperation without political conditionality.

However, it is important to note that the success of BRI projects must overcome several limits, starting with the economic and political situation in each country. Some of the countries hosting BRI projects lack the necessary political and technical capacity for the development of infrastructure. As a

result, projects can accumulate delays, foster corruption, displace populations and even generate resistance from the local population as it is the case in Indonesia. Besides, infrastructure projects carry economic and financial risks, and some may turn out to be wasteful for the country's economic development. Finally, some BRI projects carry risks of long-term environmental degradation. Thus, the promises of a long-term win-win cooperation have yet to be fulfilled and future research should investigate the sustainability and long-term benefits of the BRI. Additional field research could examine more closely the kind of work given to foreign workers, the working conditions, the share of Chinese workers in the projects, and the social and commercial relevance of the projects.

To overcome the scepticism of some countries, China must become more transparent regarding the commercial viability of projects, the conditions of cooperation and the results achieved. An online English database of the infrastructure projects accessible to all could increase the transparency of the BRI. Furthermore, it is important that China complies with international anti-corruption conventions and requires environmental impact assessments before the construction of projects begins. Finally, China should implement a procurement system to ensure that contracts are awarded based on the best quality. In the case of Pakistan, public procurement should be more open to Pakistani companies and projects should allow a higher share of Pakistani workers to be employed on the construction sites and management teams.

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