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Analysis of China's Interests in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Policy in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze China's interests through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) policy in Pakistan. Currently, Pakistan is China's strategic partner in implementing the BRI project. Infrastructure development for several sectors in Pakistan is being carried out massively through direct financial loans from China. Of course, this raises questions about China's interests in Pakistan and this study attempts to answer these questions. This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods, with literature study as a data collection technique. In analyzing the issues raised, this research uses the theories of offensive realism, hegemony, and national interests. The results of this research show that China's efforts in Pakistan are a form of Chinese maneuvering that plays an active role in achieving its interests, namely hegemony. Through the BRI project, China can connect with the largest oil-producing countries to meet high industrial needs. Second, the connectivity created by BRI allows China to increase its force projection capabilities in the South Asia region. Third is political interests, where China can create a positive image to ensure a substantial increase in diplomatic power in strengthening its international status. Meanwhile, the last one is ideological interests, where China uses slogans such as "Chinese Dream" for the stability and legitimacy of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party towards their domestic society.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, Hegemony, Pakistan National Interest

1. Introduction

China is a country that is very aggressive in carrying out foreign policy through foreign aid. One of the goals is to fund various activities or investment projects. A white paper document released by China's Information Office of the State Council shows that since 1950 China has provided aid amounting to Renminbi (RMB) 256.3 billion to various countries, including grants amounting to RMB 106.2 billion. In 2013, under President Xi Jinping's administration, China launched a foreign policy through the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project (Anam & Ristiyani, 2018). In this regard, the Aid Data report states that China is currently financing 13,427 projects in 165 countries worth \$843 billion. The term One Belt One Road or "one belt, one road" refers to the Silk Road Economic

Belt that stretches through Eurasia connecting China and Europe. Meanwhile, the Road refers to the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century, which connects China to the Mediterranean Sea reaching East Africa and the Indian Ocean, and ultimately connecting China with more than 60 countries. In 2016, One Belt One Road (OBOR) was later refined into the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in official Chinese documents (Islam, 2019).

The rise of China is currently seen as an effort to compete with the major powers in the world, namely the United States and Russia. China's transformation into one of the largest countries in the world is also supported by its foreign policy. During the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China rose to become an increasingly unrivaled world economic power. One of the leading economic development policy strategies launched by President Xi Jinping is "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) which has been transformed into the Belt Road Initiative (BRI). This strategy was formed based on the inspiration of traditional trade routes known as the Silk Road in the past (Sucipto, 2018). The following is a map of the Belt Road Initiative proposed by China.



Figure 1: Map of China's Belt Road Initiative

Source: Xinhua Net, 2018

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) policy is one of China's giant projects that crosses 3 (three) continents, namely the Asian continent, the European continent, and the African continent. If this project is successfully implemented, the One Belt One Road (OBOR) project will be the most ambitious initiative ever initiated by a government in the contemporary era, because it will involve a total of 65 countries on three continents with a total population of around 4.4 billion people (Wijaya, 2020). The Belt Road Initiative aims to improve global networks between developed and developing countries. The Belt Road Initiative (BRI) focuses on strengthening networks that facilitate the flow of free trade to be efficient and productive as well as further integration in international markets, both physically and digitally (Putri & Ma'arif, 2019).

The goal that President Xi Jinping wants to achieve through the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) policy is to revive the glory days that China achieved through the Silk Road in the past. Not only that, through the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) President Xi Jinping also wants to bring China's rise to a strong country compared to other countries in the future by his dreams as stated in the Chinese Dream (Li, 2015). The Belt Road Initiative (BRI) program is currently aimed at the South Asia region, in this region China is trying to build its hegemony and is also trying to win the sympathy of South Asian countries from its rival country, namely the United States. The South Asia region is an important strategic partner in China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI) program, this region functions as the main link of the maritime silk route which aims to connect the Chinese coast with South Asia, the Middle East, and the European continent via the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of China's soft power strategies in the South Asia region. This strategy is used to compete with large countries such as the United States, which has already established its hegemony in the South Asian region. China under President Xi Jinping's progress in various fields shows a revival from previously sinking under the unipolar superpower United States (US). Today China is back to life with an average economic

rate of above 7%. Even Standard Chartered Bank research in 2010 predicted that by 2030 China's economic strength would shift US dominance to second place. China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) are two interconnected agendas in the "Belt and Road". This connectivity project is being intensively promoted by China because it involves massive infrastructure components which have generated controversy regarding China's potential to be transformed into the global geopolitical landscape (Blanchard & Flint, 2017).

One of China's priority zones regarding the BRI project is South Asia. This is because of South Asia's strategic location at the crossing point of China's proposed Silk Road Economic Belt. China's Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia includes four sub-projects namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM), Trans-Himalayan Corridor and China's cooperation with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives (Singh, 2019). In this region, Pakistan is the country that is the largest part of China's flagship project. This can be seen from the comparison of BRI project budget allocations in each country. For example, Bangladesh, under the BRI project, Chinese investment in Bangladesh reached more than 38 billion USD (Singh, 2019). Another comparison is Nepal where in 2020 the Prime Minister of Nepal signed an agreement worth 2.4 billion USD for the BRI project. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, China is willing to spend huge amounts of money to build mega-mega projects which have become known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The BRI sub-project is a series of giant infrastructure development projects in Pakistan which include road construction, energy production, storage facilities, ports, transportation, and various other elements. The plan for an economic corridor between Pakistan and China has been discussed since 2013 and at that time the signing of an agreement between the two parties had begun. In the same year, eight more agreements were signed worth 18 billion USD as part of this economic corridor. In the following year, further development was experienced through the commitment of Chinese banks and companies who pledged approximately 45.6 billion USD for the development of infrastructure and energy projects (Ahmad & Mi, 2017). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was officially launched in April 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan. The two governments then drafted a "Long Term Plan", starting in 2017 and drastically expanding the projected timeline for implementation to 2030. Projected costs rose to 62 billion USD. Until now, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered a flagship project for its speed of progress. Currently, there are more than 20 projects that have been completed (Mardell, 2020). The project is by far one of the most ambitious and most expensive components of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and for China CPEC is the pilot and main project of the BRI. This project in Pakistan has even received a lot of international attention and scrutiny, especially from countries where other BRI projects are located (Habibie & Zhu, 2020).

The huge loan funds provided by China for various projects within the BRI-CPEC framework certainly raise questions about China's goals or interests in Pakistan. The main argument in this research is that China's interest in Pakistan through the Belt and Road Initiative policy is that China wants to expand its hegemony in the South Asian region by controlling strategic sectors in Pakistan which will later influence the Chinese economy. In this case, Pakistan, apart from having great economic potential, also has the potential to be used as an ally by China in balancing the power of the United States in the South Asia region. Therefore, China uses its economic and financial power to invest, provide economic assistance, and provide opportunities for its partner countries to borrow. In this case, looking for opportunities to gain more advantages over other countries, with the final result of gaining hegemony. For this reason, this research aims to analyze China's interests through the Belt and Road Initiative policy in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

In this research, several previous studies were used as references to support and compare the research results obtained. This research focuses on the Chinese project, namely the Belt and Road Initiative in Pakistan, and the Chinese interests behind the project. The following are some of the references used: The first research is entitled "Factors Influencing China to Shape the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Cooperation", by Simosir and Pahlawan (2017). The results of this research explain the reasons why China formed CPEC. The factor that influenced China to establish CPEC was to provide transportation access for China to reduce the distance between Chinese energy imports and international trade which must pass through the Strait of Malacca to reach the Arabian

Sea. As part of OBOR, CPEC will provide economic opportunities for the western region of China and the South Asian region, especially Pakistan.

The second research (Kurniawan, 2016), is entitled “One Belt One Road (OBOR): China’s Liberal Security Agenda?”. This research discusses the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative offered by the Chinese government as a multilateral cooperation mechanism across regions, which includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The OBOR initiative is important to examine from various scientific perspectives because it is the most ambitious multilateral cooperation idea ever offered by a single country. From a geographical perspective, OBOR cooperation will be bigger than the European Union and only smaller than the United Nations. Using the perspective of liberal thought as an analytical framework, this article frames the OBOR initiative as the Chinese government’s agenda to maintain and improve security stability in the region. The main argument in this paper is that regional security stability is an important condition for China to maintain its rise in the international political arena. Through multilateral mechanisms, the Chinese government invites countries in the region to be actively involved in sharing roles (division of labor) in maintaining and improving regional stability with economic cooperation as a cornerstone sector.

The third research is entitled “Implementation of China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) Policy Concept in the Infrastructure Development Cooperation Framework in Indonesia” by (Fahrizal et al., 2019). The research aims to determine the influence that China’s OBOR has on infrastructure development in Indonesia. The research results show that infrastructure cooperation between the two countries continues to increase, which has a significant impact on Indonesia’s infrastructure development, although it cannot be denied that many obstacles must be faced. The potential of OBOR can be used to achieve Indonesia’s national interests because OBOR is in line with the vision of the World Maritime Axis. This is related to three of the five pillars contained in the World Maritime Axis vision, namely maritime connectivity, maritime economy, and maritime culture. It is hoped that the development of maritime infrastructure will increase the connectivity of maritime routes throughout the archipelago, which will then have an impact on Indonesia’s maritime economic activities. This route will be used to further speed up the development process, as well as equalize development results. So, this can boost Indonesia’s economic growth. In this research, several previous studies were used as references to support and compare the research results obtained. This research focuses on the Chinese project, namely the Belt and Road Initiative in Pakistan, and the Chinese interests behind the project.

3. Framework

3.1 Offensive Realism

John J Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer, 2001) introduced the theory of offensive realism which explains that a country’s policies are expansionist to achieve hegemony. According to him, the basis for this action was the result of uncertain conditions in the anarchic international system, giving rise to concerns about threats from other countries.

In the view of offensive realism, all countries will compete to maximize their power through aggressive and expansive policies at every opportunity to gain benefits that exceed what has been sacrificed. In increasing its strength, a country can increase its weapons, unilateral diplomacy, implement a mercantilist economic system, and expand aggressively to other countries. The ultimate goal is that every country will compete to become a hegemon country, at least at the regional level and ultimately at the global level. Hegemony is carried out so that other countries cannot and do not dare to act aggressively (Toft, 2005).

Offensive realism states that states are motivated to ensure their security within the system. Therefore, security will be achieved through regional hegemony to become the most powerful country in the system, as Mearsheimer said only a misguided country will miss the opportunity to become a hegemon in the system (Dugis, 2016).

3.2 National Interest

To achieve national interests, a country establishes foreign policies to regulate the country so that it is more focused on conducting international relations. National interests indirectly also function as a country's access to see cross-border phenomena. State activities in international relations also need to be considered because every action taken must take into account the policies that have been established by that country. Because national interests influence a country to make decisions in establishing international relations. National interests are divided into several categories, namely based on their importance, nature, and scope (Pea, 2016).

National interests are the goals and ambitions of a country whether economic, political, military, or cultural. According to the mainstream in International Relations Studies, this concept is important as a basis for countries in conducting international relations. National interests are closely related to state power as a goal and instrument. When national interests aim to pursue power and power is used as an instrument to achieve national interests, the consequences in the international system are the emergence of a balance of power, conflict, and war (Bainus & Rachman, 2018).

3.3 The Concept of Hegemony

Hegemony is defined as a state that is so strong that it dominates all other states in the system on both a global and regional scale. To achieve hegemony, a country must have sufficient power. However, power of course requires the support of economic prosperity to fulfill other powers. Therefore, one type of power that a country must have to achieve hegemony is economic. Economic strength is mentioned by Mearsheimer as latent power which talks about socio-economic capabilities that help build military strength. The power referred to is very closely related to the economic welfare of a country. Therefore, superpowers or great powers expand their power to achieve hegemony (Toft, 2005).

Of course, the problem of hegemony launched by the state is in the context of realizing the national interests of that country. National interests are the goals and ambitions of a country, whether economic, political, or cultural. According to the mainstream in the study of International Relations, this concept is important as a basis for countries in conducting international relations. National interests cover several aspects. First, defense interests. In this case, a country's national interest is the protection of the nation-state and its citizens against threats of physical violence directed from other countries. Second, economic interests, in this case, increase the economic welfare of the nation-state in its relations with other countries. Third, political interests, in this case, the maintenance of an international political and economic system in which nation-states can feel safe. Fourth, ideological interests. This talks about the protection and continuation of the set of values that the people of a country have and believe in (Bainus & Rachman, 2018).

Therefore, the analysis of this paper is based on offensive realism, namely seeing that China's efforts through the BRI in Pakistan are to achieve hegemony in an uncertain international system. China's efforts are to pursue hegemony at the regional level with the subsequent aim of achieving global hegemony. The issue of hegemony launched by China is in the context of realizing its national interests. Furthermore, in this research, China's interests will be seen from the four aspects above, namely: defense interests, economic interests, political interests, and ideological interests.

4. Method

Researchers used qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. The author's data collection technique is to use library research. Qualitative research places more emphasis on analyzing inductive thinking processes that are related to the dynamics of relationships between observed phenomena and always uses scientific logic. The qualitative method aims to develop the concept of sensitivity to the problems faced, explain the reality related to exploring theories from below (grounded theory), and develop an understanding of one or more of the phenomena faced (Gunawan, 2013).

Qualitative research is interpretive research, in which researchers are directly involved in ongoing and ongoing research with informants (Creswell, 2019, p. 264). The data collection technique in this research is through library research, library research involves a step-by-step process used in collecting information to write papers, make

presentations, or complete certain research projects (Bungin, 2020: 232). The library research process itself includes identifying and finding relevant information, analyzing what the researcher finds, and then developing and expressing the researcher's ideas (Bungin, 2020, p. 232).

5. Results

The Belt and Road Initiative was first initiated by President Xi Jinping in 2011, this program was a big ambition during his leadership era (Cai, 2017). This program aims to strengthen infrastructure, trade, and investment networks between China and other developing countries, especially the continents of Europe and Asia (Eurasia), and $\frac{3}{4}$ of energy sources with a target of 4.4 billion from 30% of global GDP, 63% of the total global population (Khairani et al., 2019). The term belt itself means a series of land roads, pipelines, railways, and other infrastructure through Central Asia, all the way to the European continent. Meanwhile, the term Road refers to a series of ports and maritime trade routes that enter through the China Sea and Indian Ocean to the Middle East, the east coast of Africa, and beyond to the European continent (Wijaya, 2020).

The Belt and Road Initiative policy created by the People's Republic of China is based on historical, empirical, and practical values. According to the history of the founding of China, this trade route has existed for centuries. Through this policy, President Xi Jinping wants to try the Silk Road again. President Xi Jinping emphasized that this program will be the focus of foreign policy in his era of leadership and become economic diplomacy for China (Wei, 2016), thereby showing that this policy is used as a soft power tool in China's foreign policy towards countries on the Asian continent in the next few years.

China's Belt and Road Initiative has two land trade routes called the New Silk Road Economic Belt and a sea trade route called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The concept of the New Silk Road Economic Belt was introduced by President Xi Jinping during his first state visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. This land trade route starts from the Xi'an region in China, mainland Central Asia, and Russia and reaches Germany (Jetin, 2017). The following is a map of One Belt One Road China/China's Belt Road Initiative which depicts land routes and maritime routes.



Figure 2: Map of the Maritime Silk Road-Silk Road Economic Belt

Source: Thomson Reuters, 2017

The concept of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road was announced by President Xi Jinping when he visited Indonesia in October 2013. This route was built to strengthen China's diplomacy with the South and Southeast Asia regions which focuses on maritime trade (Wibawati et al., 2018). The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road will link China's southeastern coastal regions—Fuzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian Province, Guangzhou and Zhanjiang in Guangdong, Beihai in Guangxi, and Haikou in Hainan—to Europe via the South China Sea and Indian Ocean on one route, and the South Pacific on one route. another path. From Hanoi, Vietnam the sea route goes to the South China Sea and then the Strait of Malacca to Kuala Lumpur. It then joins Jakarta, Indonesia, before crossing

Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Kolkata, India. After that, it heads to Nairobi, Kenya, and continues north to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to reach Athens, Greece before finishing in Venice (Wibawati et al., 2018).

6. Discussion

China's various maneuvers in the international world in recent years have shown an expansionist gesture. In line with the offensive realism approach of (Mearsheimer, 2001), this aggressive and expansionist character depicts China's efforts to seize a strategic position in the region. Various policies that tend to be aggressive in Asia, such as the invasion of the South China Sea which does not respect the principles of international law, are China's strategic steps to achieve hegemony (Prawira, 2019).

Apart from expansion in the South China Sea, various investment policies through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in many developing countries are an integral part of China's big goals. In this case, the implementation of BRI in Pakistan is one part of the big steps and systematic efforts made by China to become a hegemon in this region. Furthermore, achieving BRI goals in Pakistan is driven by various motives which can be broken down into four interests, namely economic interests, security interests, political interests, and ideological interests.

6.1 Economic Interests

China, in its efforts to achieve hegemony in the region, is trying to maximize its economic power by formulating strategic policies in Pakistan. This is because a good or strong economy will maximize other strengths such as military, political, and so on. In other words, to have power you need the support of economic prosperity to fulfill other powers. One of the economic factors influencing China's interests in Pakistan under the BRI project is energy. Pakistan is a country that is very rich in energy resources such as oil, natural gas, coal, hydro, and nuclear electricity and has large wind potential. Based on data from Worldometers (2016), Pakistan's crude oil reserves reach 353,500,000 barrels. Every year Pakistan produces about 9.1% of its total oil reserves. Pakistan also had gas reserves of 19 trillion cubic feet (TCF) in 2017. As for coal, 2019 data shows that Pakistan has coal reserves of 3,064 million tons with production of 0.1% in 2019. Some literature even states that Pakistan has coal reserves totaling 175 billion tons which will last more than 200 years (BP, 2021). Apart from that, Pakistan also has huge wind potential, and is a form of renewable energy used to produce electricity. The United States Agency for International Development and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory stated that the energy potential in Pakistan has the potential to create a very large market in the future.

Pakistan, which is rich in energy resources, will of course be a fairly good bargaining position for large industrial countries like China. According to CEIC data (2021), in 2020 China's exports of industrial products were reported at 281.9 million USD. To maintain economic stability, the sustainability of domestic industry must continue to run optimally. Therefore, to drive industry, sufficient energy availability is needed. Very rapid economic growth means that energy needs are also increasing in China. As the largest industrial manufacturing country in the world (Richter, 2021), China is the second highest energy consumer in the world. Currently, energy has become a very crucial issue in the country. About 72% of China's energy needs come from coal. Meanwhile, energy demand for petroleum is estimated to increase by 3.8% every year, and in 2020 China's energy demand will even reach 8.8 million bpd. Currently, China is also trying to switch from oil to gas. This means that the need for natural gas energy in 2020 is estimated to reach 9.5 trillion cubic feet (TCF), an increase of 11.7% from the previous year (Alexander, 2018).

The problem of energy imports from the Middle East and Africa is one of the factors behind China establishing corridor economic cooperation with Pakistan (Simosir & Pahlawan, 2017). The Belt and Road Initiative project will provide opportunities for China to explore energy resources in Pakistan. That is why 33 billion USD from China's budget for BRI projects is allocated to build mega-mega projects in the energy sector. Apart from that, the BRI policy in Pakistan is a form of China's strategy in dealing with threats to its oil energy supplies that pass through the Malacca Strait. The Gwadar-Kashgar oil pipeline which is within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cooperation framework is a form of China's anticipation. So, it could be said that one of China's interests behind the construction and development of strategic ports such as Gwadar under the BRI policy is to

secure its energy availability. Infrastructure development in Pakistan will provide flexibility for China in securing its energy supplies. Apart from that, the construction of road, rail, and port infrastructure will facilitate the distribution and exchange of goods between the two countries. Pakistan's BRI policy has the potential to increase Eurasian regional connectivity. The existence of the BRI project in Pakistan will strengthen China's position vis-à-vis other industrial countries in the Middle East. BRI in Pakistan will significantly increase China's capacity to expand its economic and strategic ties with energy-rich Middle Eastern countries. BRI in Pakistan will also enable China to connect Arab countries to the BRI network in Central Asia and Eurasia. Due to their competition with Iran, many of these countries are reluctant to use Iran's transit routes for such purposes (Habibie & Zhu, 2020).

One of the BRI mega projects in Pakistan is the construction of a highway from Kashgar to Gwadar. Currently, this highway is actively used for bilateral trade between the two countries. If plans to modernize further actually occur, then economic activity will be even more massive and China's economic interests will be easily achieved. In addition, one of the categories of China's BRI project implementation in Pakistan is the Gwadar Project. Most of the BRI projects were even diverted to the Gwadar region, especially the construction and development of Gwadar Port. It is important to note that Gwadar Port is located at the meeting point between regions with great potential in terms of energy resources such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. The port is also located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, outside the Strait of Hormuz (VOA Indonesia, 2016). One of the important components of the BRI project in Pakistan, apart from facilitating industrial and infrastructure development and developing modern transportation and telecommunications networks that promote connectivity between China and Pakistan, Pakistan also allowed China to lease and develop the strategic Gwadar port for 40 years (The Maritime Executive, 2019).

This allows China to control this very strategic port. The BRI project at Gwadar Port will be China's gateway to international markets and will streamline energy imports for China. Pakistan will be a way for China to connect with countries in the region that have great energy potential. In other words, BRI in Pakistan will significantly increase China's capacity to expand its economic and strategic ties with energy-rich Middle Eastern countries. These conditions will of course provide great economic opportunities for China. For example, Gwadar Port will serve as a major transit and transshipment port for China's trade with the Middle East and Africa. The BRI project in Gwadar will also attract a lot of direct investment from Arab countries. For example, Qatar has planned to invest in food storage facilities to be established at the Gwadar port (Ilyas, 2019). In addition, the oil and petrochemical investment zone in Gwadar also attracts investment from oil-exporting countries that will produce refined petroleum products for the Pakistani and Chinese markets. The UAE has even planned to set up an oil refinery worth 5 to 6 billion USD in Gwadar. Saudi Arabia has also signed an agreement for the construction of an oil refinery worth 10 billion USD to be established at the deep sea port in Gwadar (Ahmed, 2019). The strategic location of Gwadar Port has made China very interested in investing in recent years under the BRI project. Apart from having a large economic impact on China, this port also opens up opportunities for China to increase its naval projection capabilities in South Asia through the Port of Gwadar (Rousseau, 2014). An example of the importance of the Gwadar area for China, because it is considered strategic, is China's commitment to convert a loan of 230 million USD for the development of Gwadar airport into a grant. Additionally, another 140 million USD for the development of a 19 km long toll road connecting Gwadar to Pakistan's coastal highway was also converted into an interest-free loan (Haider, 2015).

The implementation of China's BRI policy in Pakistan consumes a large budget for the construction of mega-mega projects. However, this is China's strategy for expansion which will ultimately make China gain more benefits and exceed what it sacrifices. The BRI policy is a manifestation of China's economic power which is then used to invest, provide economic assistance, and even deliberately lend money to developing countries like Pakistan at high interest rates to get more profits. For example, the total budget of BRI projects in Pakistan is 62 billion USD. However, according to securities companies in Pakistan, the country must pay debts of 90 billion USD. In other words, by 2030 Pakistan must pay debts for the CPEC project on average 3.7 billion USD every year (Putri, 2019). The implementation of the BRI project in Pakistan has had a lot of influence on Pakistan's economy. This makes the government continue to strive to encourage the development of various infrastructure projects. However, this has resulted in increasing the percentage of the Pakistani government's debt to China. According to Forbes (2018), in the fourth quarter of 2017 Pakistan's government debt reached 85,052 million

USD, an increase from the third quarter of 33,172 million USD. In this case, in 2017 Pakistan's government debt was equivalent to 67.20% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (Panos, 2018). The amount of Pakistan's debt is indeed increasing every year. In fact, according to the Central Bank of Pakistan, in 2015 the ratio of foreign debt to Gross Domestic Product reached around 63.3 percent of Pakistan's foreign debt. In 2018, this figure rose to 72.1 percent (Aryaguna & Windiani, 2021). When Pakistan was unable to fulfill its debt obligations according to the applicable or agreed deadline and tempo, that was when China obtained economic and even political concessions. In this case, the debt then becomes a trap for Pakistan. China will take over BRI mega-mega projects, and it is this country that will receive tax benefits from each BRI mega project.

6.2 Security Interests

BRI policy is of course inseparable from the security interests of China itself. For China, to maximize its interests in every BRI mega-mega project in Pakistan, the country needs to guarantee the security of certain areas or points that are considered very strategic and important for the smooth running of its giant project. One of the most important points is the Strait of Malacca. About 60% of world trade passes through the Strait of Malacca. For China itself, around 80% of energy source imports originating from various regions pass through the Malacca Strait before reaching China (Nugroho, 2021). The existence of the Malacca Strait as an international trade route makes this area very vulnerable to various interventions. China's biggest concern is intervention from outside parties who want to gain interest from this route. For example, the United States and India have the potential to blockade China's oil access through the Malacca Strait. The United States does have the potential to control this waterway. This can be seen from the active presence of the US in Asia Pacific waters. Even the United States aircraft carrier USS Nimitz has carried out joint exercises with Indian Navy ships in the Malacca Strait (CNN Indonesia, 2020). The US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is certainly a lesson and a fear for China. If there is a blockade in the Malacca Strait, in less than six months the Chinese economy will stop (Rahmadani, 2019). Therefore, securing the Malacca Strait is a priority for China from economic and security aspects. In addition, collaborating with Pakistan will indirectly reduce China's dependence on the Malacca Strait.

Apart from that, in terms of security related to BRI, the projection of China's military power globally is related to the BRI project worth 900 billion USD which is currently being vigorously promoted by Xi Jinping. Pakistan's BRI policy will also provide an opportunity for China to increase its naval projection capabilities in South Asia to enhance its security. For example, the construction of a Chinese military base in Jiwani will supply the services, maintenance, and logistical support needed by China's warships. Jiwani is a region in Pakistan that has geographical proximity to Gwadar Port which is an important port for China's BRI Project (Irfan, 2018). So, in this case it is correct to say that the BRI policy in Pakistan is the reason for China to maximize its military capabilities and deployment. Pakistan and China's agreement to hand over the Gwadar Port area under Chinese management in the long term will also allow China to use this port as a means to secure its military supplies for the maintenance of its naval assets. If Gwadar is under Chinese management, then Gwadar port could be used to transport Chinese military equipment and personnel via Pakistan. In essence, Pakistan's BRI would allow China to substantially increase its military capabilities in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf.

Apart from that, the tense relations between Pakistan and India have a big impact on power competition in the South Asia region, especially for the two current superpowers, namely China and the United States, which are currently in tense relations due to the trade war. China itself, like Pakistan, is also often involved in border conflicts and various other conflict motives with India. In this case, China will be an ally that will offer assistance to Pakistan amidst India's aggressiveness which is currently strengthening relations with the United States. For China, Pakistan is a very strong country.

6.3 Political Interests

Political interests cannot be separated from China's BRI project. This is because even in the preparation of this project carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it was stated that this project was very important as a diplomatic and political tool (Simosir & Pahlawan, 2017). Therefore, in every implementation of BRI projects in various countries, China's political interests will continue to exist in it. China's political interests behind the

BRI policy in Pakistan can be seen in its efforts to strengthen its international status. This speaks about China's image in the eyes of the world behind this huge project.

In this regard, BRI seems to have been presented by China as a solution to various countries' problems, especially developing and less developed countries with minimal infrastructure such as Pakistan. Pakistan faces various problems such as poverty, low human development index, regional disparities in rural and urban areas, and lack of infrastructure to support accessibility, even over the last 40 years, infrastructure investment in Pakistan has been very low. Pakistan only has one large port, namely in Karachi, and does not have a capable rail system. Therefore, the BRI policy is present as a solution to these various problems which will then build a positive image of China.

In this regard, China's BRI project in Pakistan in recent years has received a lot of attention and good response from the international community, it could even be said that it has never escaped media coverage. If this project goes ahead it could have significant consequences for China's political interests. The BRI project in Pakistan will ensure a substantial increase in China's diplomatic and political power in international interactions. Investing in Pakistan will allow China to maximize its relations with Middle Eastern countries, especially members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and Iran (Habibie & Zhu, 2020).

6.4 Ideological Interests

China is a country that has national strength in the form of Natural Resources (SDA) and Human Resources (HR). However, the country's previous movements were isolationist, due to the leadership style of the rulers at that time and the communist ideology that China had as a country. This was seen during the leadership of one of China's leading figures, Mao Zedong. However, since Deng Xiaoping's leadership in 1978, a policy known as the "Open Door Policy" or economic reform was initiated, making China officially make the economy the basis of their foreign policy. This trend was continued by subsequent Chinese leaders, Hu Jintao officially emphasized in 2003 the concept of Peaceful Development, which refers to China's rise in contrast to the rise of previous great powers that used hard power as a weapon. Xi Jinping in 2013 expanded this concept by issuing the "Chinese Dream" policy (Oedi, 2019).

The use of the terms above by Chinese presidents is suspected to maintain the legitimacy of power and public trust (Nufus, 2014). Xi Jinping used the ideology of China's rise to suppress domestic politics regarding the issue of the democracy movement. Public trust in the president and the Chinese Communist Party is maintained by evoking ideologies rooted in Confucianism with slogans that are close to the public (Nufus, 2014). The BRI project is one embodiment of the "Chinese Dream" which confirms China as a country that is truly active in fulfilling the vision that President Xi Jinping has loudly voiced. This project is considered to threaten the dominance of the United States after the end of the Cold War (James, 2021). China is truly taking a "peaceful" approach to fulfill its interests in other countries. This can be seen from several Chinese projects in African or Asian countries which did not receive significant upheaval from these countries, including Pakistan.

During the Cold War, ideology became something crucial in campaigning for hegemony in a region. Today, ideology remains important but is not actively voiced compared to economic interests which are a more promising proposition. For this reason, China's ideological interests in the BRI project are more about the stability and legitimacy of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party towards their domestic society. The ideology related to the rise of China through slogans that have emotional closeness to society is considered capable of awakening the spirit of nationalism among the Chinese people in general. This is also a medium for the Chinese Communist Party to remind the people that China's rise from colonialism in the past cannot be separated from the role of the party itself.

7. Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative project in Pakistan is a form of Chinese maneuvering as one of the active efforts currently being made to achieve its interests. China has economic interests related to energy needs for the

sustainability of its industry, China will also be connected to the largest oil-producing countries. Other interests are related to security which will provide an opportunity for China to increase its naval projection capabilities in South Asia and make Pakistan an ally in countering Indian aggression. The third is political interests, where China wants to build a positive image to ensure a substantial increase in diplomatic power to strengthen its international status. While the latter is an ideological interest, in this case, China uses slogans such as “Chinese Dream” for the stability and legitimacy of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party towards Chinese domestic society.

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