

## Working Paper

SWP Working Papers are online publications within the purview of the respective Research Division. Unlike SWP Research Papers and SWP Comments they are not reviewed by the Institute.

RESEARCH DIVISION ASIA / BCAS 2018 | SESSION NR. 1, OCTOBER 2018

# The New Politics of Space: Asia's Geopolitics is Remapping the Global Geography

*Mohammadbagher Forough*

## Introduction: the Research Problem

The research problem that this paper aims to analyse can be best summarized as follows:

“We don't live in normal times anymore. We are living in deeply abnormal times. The abnormality is driven by deep disruptions to the way in which we conduct our political and economic life and the life between nation-states. We see it in geopolitics. We see it in geoeconomics. We see profound disruption being driven by technology. The slow burn disruption that is sustainability, population, climate change, and the impact which all these have cumulatively on the capacity of our political systems to remain abreast and to chart a strategy forward given the systemic disruptions which are simultaneously underway.”<sup>1</sup>

Most, if not all, contemporary experts agree with Kevin Rudd's statements above. Our world is undergoing systemic and simultaneous disruptions, perhaps a reordering. However, in terms of the nature of what exactly this reordering is and what it entails for various actors across different regions, there is no agreement.

The current shifts have been described in terms of the rise of Asia, or Eurasia, or for some even Afro-Eurasia<sup>2</sup>. For some, this rise is deeply entangled with the rise of China, BRICS, or the so-called Global South. For some, the reordering is about the Washington vs. the Beijing consensus.

Taking a look at most of the conceptual vocabulary above including Kevin Rudd's, one cannot but notice that the common denominator among all these ways of thinking is 'space'.

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Rudd, Former Prime Minister of Australia and current President of Asia Society Policy Institute, speech on July 18, 2018, Sydney Australia. Link to the speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUX2AYAVwGc&t=122s>

<sup>2</sup> Frankopan, Peter, "The silk roads: A new history of the world", Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

That is to say, many would agree that the current shifts are spatial, multifaceted, inter-linked, simultaneous, and co-constructive of one another. What kind of geopolitical respatialization is taking place? What parameters define the new Asian geopolitics? No general consensus there. This is partly due to the contested nature of space, be it material or ideational.

What Kevin Rudd calls 'geopolitics' and 'geo-economics', seems like a promising conceptual point of departure. The overall argument in this paper is that without understanding a geo-economic respatialization of (Eur)Asia, the new geopolitics of Asia cannot be fully understood. It is in the interlinkage of these two slippery concepts, geopolitics and geo-economics, that this research paper will address the question of the respatialization of Asian geopolitics. More particularly, by using this conceptual duad, the paper will look into China's BRI (also known as the New Silk Roads, NSR) and how it is respatializing Asian and by extension global political and economic geography. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be investigated to shed light on the distinction between geopolitics and geo-economics.

## **Geopolitics and Geo-economics**

Geopolitics and Geo-economics are both highly contested concepts that are thrown around, 'used and abused'<sup>3</sup> by both experts and non-experts. The concept of geopolitics has existed since ancient times, for instance in the writings of Aristotle, who combined his geopolitical thinking with an (geo)economic argument in favor of autarky. Geopolitics as a systematic mode of reasoning in the modern sense of word could be said to have started in the writing of thinkers such as Ratzel and Kjellen. For such thinkers, geopolitics was intimately enmeshed with the vaguely defined 'organic theory of the state', which is a philosophical approach of understanding the state.

This theory suggests that all the components of a state grow together into one 'body' that has its own 'life'. "The state is, in its essence, a spirit, or idea, in which, and through which, all nationals are bound spiritually into an organic oneness"<sup>4</sup>. Such ideas were deeply rooted in biology and Darwinism and smacked of environmental determinism to a great extent, leading to the catastrophic and genocidal consequences in the Second World War<sup>5</sup>.

Another trend starting from around the outset of the twentieth century, originating in the Anglo-Saxon world, looked into 'absolute' concept of space<sup>6</sup> together with imperial and military considerations in terms of land and naval warfare. Such geopolitical thoughts led

<sup>3</sup> Kristof, Ladis KD, "The origins and evolution of geopolitics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4, no. 1 (1960): 15-51.

<sup>4</sup> See Kristof, Ladis KD, "The origins and evolution of geopolitics." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4, no. 1 (1960): 15-51. Page 21

<sup>5</sup> It was Ratzel after all who had coined the term *Lebensraum* (in a 1901 article) as a biological metaphor for understanding human society. Kjellen who coined the term 'geopolitik' for the first time, gave the concept of *lebensraum* a "scientific" touch and turned it into a geopolitical concept or theory. Later, Nazi propagandists and generals adopted such conservative ideas, added a racial element to them, and took such concepts to their genocidal conclusion during the Second World War. For more on the origins of this concept, see Smith, Woodruff. "Friedrich Ratzel and the origins of *Lebensraum*." *German Studies Review* 3, no. 1 (1980): 51-68.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey, D., 2008. 'Space as a Keyword', in Castree, N., & Gregory, D. (Eds.). in: *David Harvey: a critical reader*. John Wiley & Sons. Page 272

to concepts and theories such as the influence of naval power by Alfred Mahan<sup>7</sup> and the so-called Heartland Theory by Mackinder<sup>8</sup>. This line of thinking continued later into the century in the writings of geopolitical thinkers and policy-makers such as Brzezinski who conceived of the geopolitical space as a grand chessboard<sup>9</sup>, indebted as it was to Mackinder's Heartland theory although the focus shifted from Mackinder's Eastern Europe to Central Asia for Brzezinski in this Grand Chessboard.

Critical geopolitics appeared in the last two decades of the twentieth century and questioned the basic spatial assumptions of the classical geopolitics and tried to historically contextualize the very rise of classical geopolitics as a discourse, or more precisely, as a geopolitical discourse. Critical geopolitics investigates the historical, economic, and geographical processes whereby the very field of geopolitics, especially classical geopolitics, developed as a scientific discourse, producing its own 'form of knowledge and rationality'<sup>10</sup>.

### **Geoeconomics: The Rise of a New Discourse**

In the past two decades or so, the discourse of geoeconomics has been receiving increasing currency in political, academic, and even popular lexicons. However, unlike geopolitics, geoeconomics do not boast of a long theoretical or conceptual historiography. The first conceptually systematic use of 'geoeconomics' can be traced back to Jacques Boudeville who used the term to explain the liberal growth pole theory in the 1960s<sup>11</sup>. According to Baru<sup>12</sup>, geoeconomics appeared in Paul Kenney's work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, where Kenney argues major global transformations in 'military-power' have followed transformations in the productive balances.

Cowen and Smith have a more nuanced and systematic approach to the topic and start with a discursive and critical contextualization of the formal 'science' of geopolitics as a 'post-Enlightenment European invention'<sup>13</sup>. Modern geopolitics, in their view, came to being as part of the larger project of 'modern nation-state building and the rise of capitalism'.

Geopolitics was therefore 'never only about the state's external relations but rather, we argue, involved a more encompassing "geopolitical social" that both crosses and crafts the distinction between inside and outside national state borders'<sup>14</sup>. The formal 'science' of geopolitics therefore read and still reads national economies, societies, cultures as more or less in keeping with the territorial divisions of the world known as nation-states, i.e., national territories. The making of the inside (the national society) was in a dialectical relation with and co-constructive of the making of the 'geopolitical social' at the global level.

<sup>7</sup> See Mahan, Alfred Thayer, "The influence of sea power upon history", 1660-1783. Read Books Ltd, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Mackinder, Halford J., "The geographical pivot of history," In *Geopolitics*, pp. 44-48. Routledge, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "The grand chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives". Basic books, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Dalby, Simon, and Gearóid Ó. Tuathail, "Introduction: rethinking geopolitics: towards a critical geopolitics." In *Rethinking geopolitics*, pp. 13-27. Routledge, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Boudeville J-R (1966), "Problems of Regional Economic Planning", Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

<sup>12</sup> Baru, Sanjaya, "Geo-economics and Strategy." *Survival* 54, no. 3 (2012): 47-58.

<sup>13</sup> Cowen, Deborah, and Neil Smith, "After geopolitics? From the geopolitical social to geoeconomics," *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009): 22-48. Page 24

<sup>14</sup> Cowen, Deborah, and Neil Smith. "After geopolitics? From the geopolitical social to geoeconomics," *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009): 22-48. Page 23

This geopolitical social, for Cowen and Smith, forms an 'assemblage' of territory, economy, and social forms. Things however are shifting.

Under contemporary conditions of social, economic, and political life, this geopolitical social is being 'recast' by what could best be called geoeconomics, with its own concomitant social forms, producing a geoeconomic social.<sup>15</sup> The word 'recast' is of utmost importance here. The geopolitical social is not being replaced or jettisoned. We are not witnessing the end of geopolitics or the disappearance of the global geopolitical social or the liberal economic order but a 'recasting' of the geopolitical social through dynamic processes of the rise of the geoeconomic social. The main spatial ingredient of the geopolitical social (in terms of the us/them discourse, inside/outside, domestic/foreign, and national/international) is 'national territoriality [which] has become the challenge rather the resolution to insecurity'<sup>16</sup> in the rise of geoeconomics. Territorial and national security are undergoing transformations. This is a key point in the rise of the geoeconomic social and the dialectical relation it has with the geopolitical social.

Cowen and Smith argue that the following changes, inter alia, in contemporary life see 'the geopolitical forms being recalibrated by market logics' and the rise of geoeconomic social:

- Conflict between global flows of capital and territorial logic of states
- Questioning of state power
- Proliferation of non-state actors
- The changing nature of border space, citizenship and social forms
- The severing of longstanding connections between citizenship and soldiering, and the creative destruction of national conceptions of social security
- Privatization of the state itself under conditions of neoliberal globalization
- The disentangling of the institution of military from citizenship due to the rise of private military actors
- The privatization of domestic police and justice system (such as private prisons)
- The rise of social movements that defy national boundaries and the geopolitical border (such as 'sanctuary cities' in the US or anti-globalization movements)
- Inventions like shipping 'containers' and 'just-in-time' production techniques, that have underwritten major economic transformations
- New security systems and apparatuses at ports and airports such as Container Security Initiative (CSI), which installs US border patrols at ports around the world and Transportation Workers Identity Credential (TWIC) that creates a zone around US ports where various labor and privacy rights are suspended

Analyzing some of the above-mentioned changes in the way the geoeconomic social is being performed by the US, Cowen and Smith argue that understanding these changes is necessary to understanding contemporary transformations. What shape will the geoeconomic social morph into? They come to the conclusion that the 'shape of the geoeconomic social is probably still a radically open question, especially with the onslaught of global economic crisis'<sup>17</sup> (in 2007/2008), in the immediate aftermath of which (2009) Cowen and Smith wrote their seminal article. Almost a decade after this argument was presented, one can still ask the question: what shape has the geoeconomic social morphed into given contemporary shifts in global geopolitics and geoeconomics, such as the election of Donald

<sup>15</sup> For a full presentation of this argument, see Cowen, Deborah, and Neil Smith, "After geopolitics? From the geopolitical social to geoeconomics" *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009): 22-48.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, page 31

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, page 44

Trump and introduction of Chinese BRI. This paper will expand and apply this argument to examine the new geopolitics and geoeconomics of Asia through an investigation of BRI and more specifically CPEC. BRI is as an essentially geoeconomic initiative that is respatializing Asian geopolitics and beyond, through corridors and infrastructure connectivity. It is the most forceful and arguably the only global geoeconomic initiative currently unfolding in the world. This geoeconomics is producing new and dynamic spaces of geopolitics in Asia.

## **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

BRI has six geoeconomic corridors, the most developed of which is CPEC. Despite some recent setbacks, it is the poster child among all six corridors that China has proposed for the BRI. China has pledged 65\$ billion and has already invested more than \$12 billion in Pakistan. The geoeconomics of CPEC entails profound geopolitical repercussions, which will be discussed in this part. However, CPEC cannot be understood solely as a geopolitical corridor. It contains a certain geopolitics, but it cannot be reduced to that. The interplay between geoeconomics and geopolitics in this corridor speaks volumes about how BRI is respatializing Asian geopolitics.

Pakistani territory is a space that under conditions of the geopolitical social has been rendered geopoliticized and securitized in the US-led era of globalization. It has been geopoliticized in the following senses: 1) it found its geopolitical borders (i.e. nation-state borders) in 1947, in the final stages of British colonialism, borders which it has never been able to fully control, hence, many of its security troubles with India and Afghanistan. 2) It has been a security and logistical corridor to support the NATO troops in landlocked Afghanistan through what is called Ground Lines of Communications (CLOGs) and Air Lines of Communication (ALOCs). 3) It has been receiving military and financial aid, which amount to geopolitical tools to keep the Pakistani political, military, and intelligence elite in check. 4) It has had geopolitical border disputes and clashes with India, clashes that are the epitome of the geopolitical social, in the sense of nation-state borders, especially in the Kashmir region. 5) Its nuclear rivalry with India. 6) During the Cold War, Pakistan continued to be a geopolitical player by siding with the West, facilitating the Nixon visit to China, and indirectly combatting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. 7) It has been viewed in both elite and popular discourses as a hotbed of radicalism and fundamentalism, for instance, as the place where suicide bombings and terrorist attacks occur frequently and as the place where Bin Laden was hiding and got killed. 8) And finally related to the domestic aspect of geopolitical social (nation-statehood), it has not been able to integrate all its demographic and religious components within its borders into a stable unity, hence its security problems in various regions such as Baluchistan and Waziristan among others. All these aspects (and more) have kept Pakistan as a geopoliticized space, that did not play a major role in global (geo)economics.

Since 2013 and the introduction of multi-faceted investments in infrastructure connectivity through CPEC, the Pakistani territory is becoming slowly but tangibly reterritorialized. CPEC is rendering Pakistan connected and potentially relevant (even perhaps crucial in the long term) to the regional and global affairs in ways that did not formerly exist. CPEC includes (but is not limited to) creating connectivity through infrastructure projects, transportation systems (such as roads, tunnels, railways, highways, and airports), energy infrastructure projects such as oil and gas pipelines and electricity power plants, creation of industrial zones and free economic zones, modernization of Gwadar port, soft power

and cultural initiatives (such as Confucius institutes and educational exchange programs), among other things. All such aspects reconfigure the material and ideational geography of Pakistan.

This respatialization of Pakistani space can be analyzed along two spatial lines: domestically (for both Pakistan and China) and regionally. Domestically, and in terms of Pakistan, one could argue that the multipronged CPEC is energizing the dormant Pakistani economy and bringing the country with its sizable young demographics and massive economic potentials further to life and also further into Chinese geoeconomic orbit. The underlying security or geopolitical logic, according to the Chinese discourse, is what I would call 'security through development', namely, the idea that a political system can take care of its security concerns (such as extremism and separatism) only through a fundamental long-term approach to economic development. One could unpack here the underlying 'embeddedness' (a la Polanyi<sup>18</sup>) of the economic and the political in the 'social' logic of CPEC and more broadly in the NSR. In this social logic, the political, economic, and security logics are embedded and inseparable from one another.

In the geoeconomic logic of CPEC, development is first and foremost possible through infrastructure projects, which Pakistan has too little of and China has surplus capacity of. The Pakistani political elites have contributed to the so-called 'China model' of development through infrastructure investment and upgrade. The Pakistani populace is overall very positive about China's activities in the country, by 78%<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, China, through CPEC, is not only upgrading Pakistani infrastructure, but, offering a new form of social organization and development, or what Walter Benjamin calls 'collective social desire'<sup>20</sup>, a model of development in which the economic, political and social development co-evolve. The material aspect of this model is 'infrastructure'.

In terms of Chinese domestic logic for CPEC, China is implementing the same embedded security approach in its own restive provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet. Part of the domestic logic of NSR is to turn Xinjiang (which suffers from security issues) into an energy hub for China, Central Asia, and the Middle East (to a considerable degree via CPEC's energy connectivity), based on the same discourse of 'security through development'. This 'social' logic has caused China to push for dialogue with Taliban in both Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent years. China's aim is to potentially change social relations (by 'embedding' local insurgents in the political and economic organization of life in Pakistan and Afghanistan) and bring all these restive regions in China, Pakistan and Afghanistan within the workings of its geoeconomic logic, a logic that if implemented will unavoidably lead to a new geopolitics.

In contrast, the American approach towards such security issues has been security-oriented and militaristic (read, geopolitical) as evidenced by the invasion of Afghanistan and regular drone bombing in Pakistan's restive regions. Needless to say, the American approach, representing the geopolitical social, has not remedied (even worsened) the situation. It is not an accident that only 12% of Pakistani viewed the US positively in 2011 and

<sup>18</sup> Polanyi, Karl, and Robert Morrison MacIver. *The great transformation*. Vol. 2. Boston: Beacon Press, 1944.

<sup>19</sup> Pew Research on How Asians View Each Other: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/>

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*, ed. R Tiedemann. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press

'most Pakistanis see the U.S. as an enemy, consider it a potential military threat, and oppose American-led anti-terrorism efforts.'<sup>21</sup> Given such security issues, neoliberal capitalism has also shunned Pakistan as a place of 'high risk' for investment, contributing to the 'uneven geographic development'<sup>22</sup> under neoliberalism.

CPEC is not about Pakistani and Chinese domestic concerns alone. From a regional perspective, CPEC is instigating a reterritorialization of regional and indirectly global spatial configurations. Through creating connectivity between Pakistan and the region, especially through the port of Gwadar, for instance, CPEC reduces China's dependence on the strategic chokepoints of the Strait of Malacca, often referred to as The Malacca Dilemma<sup>23</sup>, through which passes around 80% of China's imported oil, not to mention other trade items for China and other major economies such as Japan and Korea.

It also has the potential to considerably reduce China's dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, another strategic chokepoint susceptible to Iranian-American geopolitical rivalries. In business terms, China can (via CPEC) save thousands of kilometers of shipping by avoiding the Malacca Strait through reorienting the commercial and energy transport routes. Through Gwadar and land transport (via railways, highways, and pipelines) China can save those thousands of kilometers of commercial shipping, thus reconfiguring that pocket of global geoeconomics, while avoiding the geopoliticized straits of Malacca and to some extent Hormuz. One can see the intertwinement of the geoeconomic and geopolitical processes in CPEC's spatial logic.

CPEC has other regional consequences that are reconfiguring Asian geoeconomics and geopolitics. It is connecting Pakistani (and Chinese) economy via a different geography to Middle Eastern economies and energy resources, and via The Middle East to Africa (via maritime routes) and even to Europe (indirectly through Iran and Turkey via land routes).

CPEC is also solidifying Pakistani position in regions that are disputed with India and solidifying the 'geopolitical' borders of Pakistan to the detriment of India. It has also created the perception of geopolitical 'containment' in India. Such geopolitical facts have instigated India's own geoeconomic initiatives. India has been trying to come up with its own response to such perceived encirclement by initiating its own Act East<sup>24</sup> policy and the introduction of its own North-North Trade Corridor (NSTC)<sup>25</sup> to compete with the (East-West) Silk Roads of China. In terms of NSTC, India has been investing in the Chabahar Port of Iran (not too far from Gwadar) to gain connectivity via Iranian territory to Afghanistan, Central Asia, Caucuses, and Europe. However, compared with CPEC and generally BRI, Indian geoeconomic initiatives are in their infancy.

Chinese CPEC investments in Pakistan has recently resulted in mounting debt for the Pakistani economy, debts mostly owed to China. To rid itself of the debt burden, Pakistan has recently invited Saudi Arabia to invest in CPEC and specifically in the port of Gwadar, very

<sup>21</sup> Pew research on US Image in Pakistan, 2011, <http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/06/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Pakistan-Report-FINAL-June-21-2011.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Harvey, David. "Spaces of neoliberalization: towards a theory of uneven geographical development." Vol. 8. Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Zhang, Zhong Xiang, "China's energy security, the Malacca dilemma and responses." *Energy policy* 39, no. 12 (2011): 7612-7615.

<sup>24</sup> Lee, Lavina, "India as a Nation of Consequence in Asia: The Potential and Limitations of India's 'Act East' Policy." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2015): 67.

<sup>25</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/indias-eurasia-policy-gets-a-boost-with-long-awaited-trade-corridor/>

close to the Iranian-Pakistani border, which has seen incursions by Pakistani militants into Iranian territory. The prospect of Saudi investment and presence in Pakistan near the Iranian border is certain to raise alarms for the Iranian government, a geopolitical rival of Saudi Arabia.

The increasing engagement between China and Pakistan (including through CPEC), has also contributed to the widening distance between the US and Pakistan. The Trump administration has recently decided to suspend military aid to Pakistan, citing what they called Pakistani failure to combat terrorism<sup>26</sup>. Earlier this year, Pakistan was put on a 'gray list' of countries 'that have failed to prevent UN-designated terrorist groups' access to funds. Being on this list 'could affect access to foreign capital, remittances and credit.'<sup>27</sup> Pakistan immediately blamed the US for this vote. These are only the latest signs in an already very fragile and increasingly souring relationship between the two countries that were once Cold War allies. Needless to say, China and Pakistan's bilateral relations, traditionally described as 'all-weather friends' have been further solidified, so much that some have talked about Pakistan's pivot to China<sup>28</sup>.

### **Conclusion: The Interconnectedness of the Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Socials**

CPEC with all its perils and promises is emblematic of BRI and the geoeconomics and geopolitics it produces. There are several other geoeconomic and geopolitical dimensions of CPEC, explaining which is beyond the scope of this paper. The preceding aspects of CPEC provide ample support for the 'embedded' analytical framework adopted in this research paper. Pakistani social relations both domestically and regionally (even globally) are becoming reterritorialized in the geoeconomic logic of CPEC and the broader BRI. Through CPEC, BRI is simultaneously reconfiguring China's own restive province of Xinjiang and more broadly Chinese social relations, Pakistani social, economic, and political relations, while creating new geopolitical realities on the ground. It is, as an illustrative example of the broader BRI, an example of how the geoeconomic social is emerging in Asia. Without reference to and a deep understanding of this new geoeconomics, the new geopolitics of Asia and beyond cannot be understood properly.

There is an internal contradiction in the geoeconomic social. We are still living in a world dominated by the national borders of the geopolitical social and the dominance of the neoliberal logic in the international economic order, neoliberalism that aims to disembed the market from economic, political, and social relations. China and other actors are using history, culture, and trade to overcome this contradiction.

Is the geopolitical social dominated by the US disappearing? No! BRI, and more particularly China, is not destroying the liberal economic order but is 'recasting' or 'reconfiguring' it. It is entering spaces (such as, Africa, Eastern and Central Europe, and the Balkans)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-aid/u-s-suspends-at-least-900-million-in-security-aid-to-pakistan-idUSKBN1ET2DX>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/pakistan-blames-the-us-for-its-return-to-a-terror-financing-watch-list/2018/03/04/afa6457e-1c99-11e8-98f5-ceedfa8741b6\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.e596f331c274](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistan-blames-the-us-for-its-return-to-a-terror-financing-watch-list/2018/03/04/afa6457e-1c99-11e8-98f5-ceedfa8741b6_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e596f331c274)

<sup>28</sup> Claude, Rakistis, Pakistan's Pivot to China <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/pakistans-pivot-to-china/>

which have been rendered underdeveloped by and through neoliberal processes or entering spaces which have been rendered geopoliticized or securitized (such as Central Asia, Pakistan, and Iran) in the us-vs-them logic of the geopolitical social dominated by the US. China through BRI is geoeconomizing those geopoliticized or underdeveloped spaces. What specific ideational and material shape will this world morph into remains a radically open question. We are still far away from seeing the outcome of such processes, perhaps we will never see it, but some dynamics are getting increasingly visible as was shown in the case of CPEC.

*Mohammadbagher Forough* is researcher and lecturer at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

© Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2018  
**All rights reserved**

This Working Paper reflects the author's views.

**SWP**  
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik  
German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Ludwigkirchplatz 3–4  
10719 Berlin  
Telephone +49 30 880 07-0  
Fax +49 30 880 07-100  
[www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org)  
[swp@swp-berlin.org](mailto:swp@swp-berlin.org)