

CPEC Sustainable Development Project: Prospects and Challenges for Gilgit-Baltistan's Tourism Industry

Muhammad Ismail

University of Karachi, Pakistan

Iryna Tykhonenko

Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Ukraine

Noor Fatima

National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan

The research makes an attempt to analyze China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Sustainable Development Project which offers both opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry in Gilgit-Baltistan. The study used H. R. Sontag's Dependence theory, which allows to examine how Chinese investment and economic dependence affect the resilience and sustainable development of the country's tourism sector. The research makes a conclusion that the implementation of a sustainable development project within the framework of the CPEC for the Gilgit-Baltistan region and its tourism sector potentially will have the following consequences. In a positive format: economic growth, improved interaction between the population, development of infrastructure and logistics routes and regional development in general, creation of new jobs, promotion and marketing. The challenges in this case are security, cultural, religious issues and threats to the ecology and environment. The methodological basis of the study is using systematic and statistical methods (sampling method). The comparative analysis of tourist flows based on open data from Pakistani government agencies were made. Secondly, sociological polls were conducted at the Karakoram International University and the stakeholder on the public perception of the impact of the CPEC on the development of the region's tourism industry .

Keywords: China-Pakistan economic corridor, China, Gilgit-Baltistan, sustainable development, tourism.

The tourist industry is considered to be the largest in the world and is vital to the progress of any state's economy. In numerous countries, tourism serves as the principal means of stimulating economic expansion and launching novel economic ventures. Economic gains for host cities are the consequence of increased demand for goods and services, jobs created within the economy, and infrastructure development facilitated by tourism. By promoting tourism, the less developed countries increase income and revenue, which lowers poverty and increases the number of employment chances. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a massive infrastructure and development project, aims to build a network of pipelines, railroads, and roads to connect Xinjiang, a region in northwest China, with the Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan. CPEC has the potential to provide Pakistan's tourism industry both large benefits and obstacles, despite its primary focus on energy and transportation infrastructure (Menhas, et al., 2019).

Currently in a crucial element that influences the host community's behavior in terms of tourist development is the local community's level of satisfaction with beneficial tourism. A straightforward route to tourist attractions is made possible by improved transportation and road infrastructure, which also strengthens economic activities that have a big impact on the level of living in the surrounding areas. It is anticipated that the development of this global initiative will transform Pakistan's northern areas, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, into the nation's tourism hub. Beautiful resorts, lakes, and glaciers can be found in these regions. According to a number of studies, improving local roads and transportation systems is crucial for boosting tourism in the region and developing new tourist attractions (Ismail, 2021).

Firstly, boost to economic of country. Creation jobs for whole region. Secondly, enhancing the living stander of peoples. Built Road and Railway system to easy transportation system. Exports and imports are increased. Overcome energy crises. Security of life and property.

However, CPEC presents difficulties that must be carefully handled due to comprehensive strategy that takes into account economic, social, and environmental concerns is necessary for sustainable development must involve stakeholders at all levels of decision-making (Alam et al., 2025).

Objectives of study: 1) to assess the impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector in Gilgit-Baltistan; 2) to identify and analyze the challenges faced by the tourism industry in the context of CPEC, examining potential obstacles and risks; 3) to explore opportunities that arise from the CPEC project for the development and growth of the tourism sector in Pakistan, considering economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Sustainable Development via CPEC: Gilgit-Baltistan's example

The CPEC is the greatest investment Pakistan has received since independence, and China's largest investment in any country. The project is seen as critical to Pakistan's economic, social and strategic development. The Pakistani media and government have referred to the CPEC investments as a game and fate changer for the region, and both China and Pakistan hope that the enormous investment plan would convert Pakistan into a regional economic powerhouse and strengthen the two nations' already strong ties. The corridor is significant for Pakistan's trade and industry, social development, overcoming the energy crisis, and as a benefit project for the people of Pakistan and China, as well as the advancement of both countries' futures (Hussain et al., 2021).

It should be stressed on the port city of Gwadar in Pakistan which is connected to the Chinese province of Xinjiang through this project. China is funding several infrastructure initiatives in Pakistan, including building roads, ports, trains, industrial zones, telecommunications, health care facilities, and educational institutions. Pakistan's social and economic circumstances would be greatly enhanced by the successful completion of these projects. After thorough investigation, both countries will see changes in geography and economy. This project will be beneficial in many ways, such as increasing investment and creating jobs in the local community. Additionally, it enhances the system of integration and transportation (Awais et al., 2019).

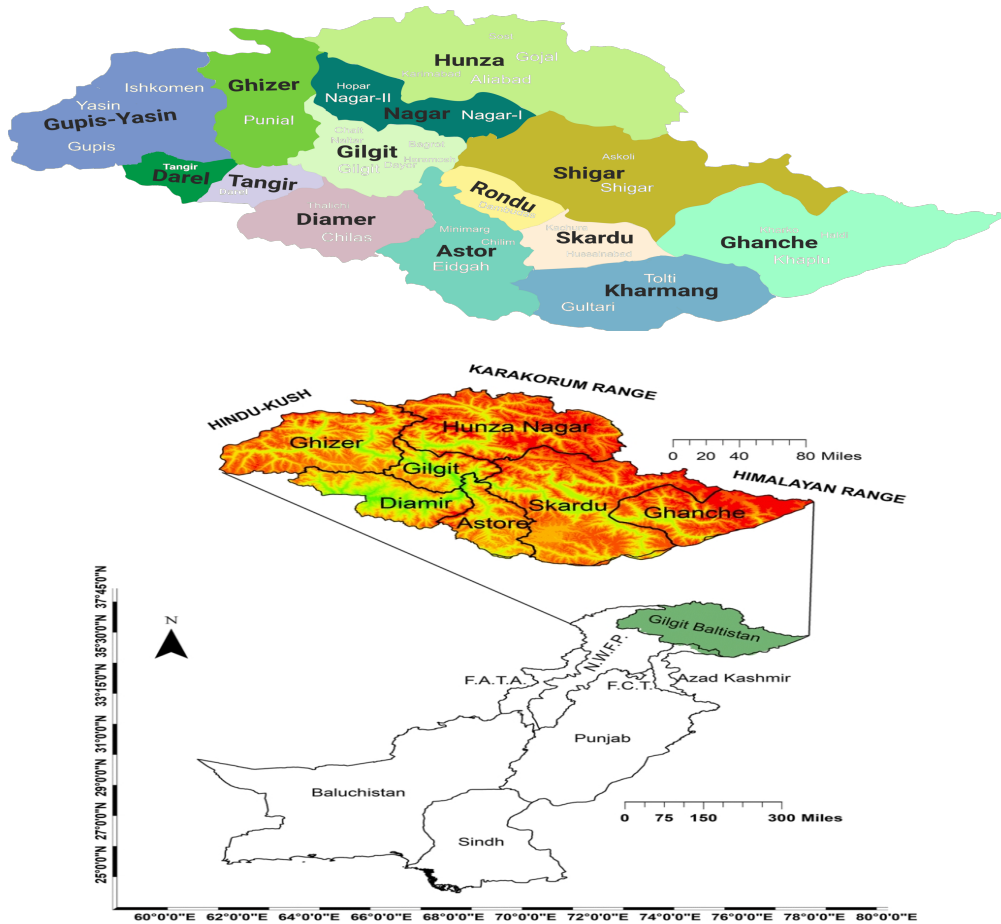
Pakistan's location between the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, and China makes it excellent. Pakistan is regarded as the middle place for any commercial activity or business trade due to its ideal location. Without a doubt, it is anticipated that the CPEC will provide many benefits, including potential for economic development in both nations, particularly in Pakistan because to its wealth of natural and people resources. Here in some examples which are include energy projects, the building of the Gwadar port, road infrastructure, special economic zones, Lahore Mass Transit, fiber optics, etc. The project has completely changed Pakistan's economy. It will stimulate business development, increase employment opportunities, and manage the electricity shortage. Additionally, it will result in a greater connection between urban and rural areas. Thousands of new job opportunities are created by this flagship project for local communities,

rural areas are connected to major cities, new educational facilities should open, healthcare facilities should also improve, new technologies are adopted, and Pakistan’s social situation is improved (Mahmood et al., 2020).

These innovative projects are anticipated to have positive effects on society by raising people’s standards of living and altering their perspectives, in addition to bringing economic and social wellbeing. In turn, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) is part of a project that updates research on the impact of the CPEC on the tourism sector of this region of Pakistan.

Figure 1-2.

Geographical location of Gilgit-Baltistan



Source: Ali, Wang, Hussain, Lu & Nurunnabi, 2021.

Geography of Gilgit-Baltistan

Pakistan’s administrative territory in the north of the nation is called Gilgit-Baltistan. August 29, 2009, saw the awards of self-governing status to it. There are 12 districts in three divisions of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Baltistan Division includes the four districts of Skardu, Kharmang Shigar, and Ghanche; the Gilgit Division includes the four districts of Gilgit Ghizer, Hunza, and Nagar, which were separated from the Gilgit District; and the third division, Diamer, includes the districts of Chilas and Astore (which was separated from the Diamer District in 2004). Gilgit and Skardu are the principal political hubs. Gilgit-Baltistan is home to some of the world’s highest mountain ranges. The main ranges are the Karakoram and the western Himalayas. The Pamir mountains are to the north and the Hindu Kush lies to the west. Amongst the highest mountains are K2 (Mount Godwin-Austen) and Nanga Parbat, one of the most feared mountains in the world (Figure 1-2).

Theoretical framework and methodology of the study

According to the H.R. Sonntag, the Dependency Theory can provide important insights into the dynamics of economic development and dependency in a case study on the difficulties and prospects facing Pakistan's tourism industry within the context of the CPEC. Dependency theory is a school of thought in modern social science that aims to comprehend underdevelopment, analyze its origins, and to some extent, provide ways to overcome it. It emerged in Latin America in the 1960s, gained traction in academic settings, and gained regional traction (Sonntag, 2001).

The main aspects and tasks of the theory:

- analyzing Economic Dependency and examine how Pakistan's tourism sector is dependent on external factors, such as China for investment on infrastructure development, and tourism-related projects under CPEC;
- Assessing Power Imbalances of power dynamics between Pakistan and China in the context of CPEC. China's economic influence affect Pakistan's decision-making and policy choices related to tourism development;
- Sustainability through that's examined whether the dependency on external investments, including those from CPEC, has implications for the sustainability of Pakistan's tourism sector (Sonntag, 2001).

In this research paper, applying the Dependency Theory in a case study can help to comprehend the effects of economic ties and external dependencies, notably those with China via CPEC, on Pakistan's tourism industry. Within the broader framework of economic reliance, this theory can assist in identifying potential challenges and opportunities for sustainable development particularly in tourism sector.

The area of study: to make a research on the challenges and opportunities for the tourism sector in G-B within the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; to assess of the impact of CPEC on the Sustainability and Development of the Tourism Sector in Gilgit-Baltistan.

In research mixed-methods approach, combining stakeholder interviews, tourist surveys, and on-site observations, to analyze the impact of CPEC on Pakistan's tourism sector and derive data-driven recommendations for sustainable development. To identify the position of the population of G-B regarding the impact of the CPEC on the region, a sociological survey was conducted, the results of which are analyzed in the articles. Statistical data on tourist flows in the province of Gilgit-Baltistan were also provided.

The structure method allowed to consider the Gilgit-Baltistan region as a unit of the administrative structure of Pakistan. Gilgit-Baltistan becomes as an object on the influence of CPEC in the system of bilateral relations between Pakistan and China with a projection on the internal policy of the state. The next level of analysis of subsystem of the study is projection on complexity of factors influencing the development of the tourism industry of Gilgit-Baltistan as a component of the national one, such as geo-political, security, cultural, religious and environmental factors. As a result of the systemic analysis of the impact of the CPEC sustainable development project on the tourism industry of Gilgit-Baltistan, both prospects and challenges were eradicated.

In order to confirm the results of the study, a sampling method was used. In international relations and foreign policy analysis, the sampling method introduced as a statistical process of selecting a subset (sampling) from a population (general sampling), for example, from all countries or citizens, in order to draw conclusions about this entire population. This allows scientists to study individual cases to understand global processes, and is a key tool for analysing big data and forming generalizations in the social sciences.

First of all, the researcher determines the general group that is investigated. Secondly, a smaller group (sampling) is selected from this population so that it is representative and reflects the characteristics of the entire group. Thirdly, research and analysis of the data obtained from the sampling are carried out.

Fourthly, the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the sampling are generalized to the entire general population, allowing us to understand trends and patterns at the global level.

A practical example of using the sampling method is the study of public opinion, in particular, polling a small group of citizens of different categories to understand the general attitude towards a certain event.

The sampling method has a certain research methodology, which is based on conducting a survey. A survey is a method of obtaining primary information based on an oral or written address to the person or group of people under study with questions which content constitutes the problem of the study. There are two main types of surveys – questionnaires and interviews. When conducting a survey, the respondent (respondent) fills out the questionnaire himself in the presence of a researcher (interviewer) or without him. According to the form of conducting it, it can be individual or group. In the latter case, a significant number of people can be interviewed in a short time. The survey is group, individual, in target audiences, face-to-face and correspondence, etc.

Opportunities for tourism sector in Gilgit-Baltistan

Economic growth

A more stable environment for investment in the tourism industry may result from the economic advantages of CPEC. There may be more money available to spend for both residents and visitors as a result of increased economic activity. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's potential impact on Pakistan includes economic advantages significantly. Pakistan is anticipated to gain a sizable number of jobs as a result of CPEC. This includes openings for employment in the industries of construction, logistics, and transportation, all of which will be essential during the project's development. Long-term job prospects can also be produced by the expansion of businesses and services linked to rising economic activity. CPEC can accelerate trade and investment, which will help Pakistan's economy thrive. The country will undoubtedly become easier to do business in as the transportation infrastructure advances, luring both domestic and foreign capital (Asees et al., 2020).

This may result in greater industrial output and overall economic growth. The CPEC encompasses multiple provinces and regions, promoting more equitable regional development. Pakistan now has a more direct and quick commercial channel with China and other regional nations because to the CPEC's transportation network. Pakistani goods may be more competitive in global markets thanks to shorter transit times and lower transportation costs, which could lead to higher exports. The energy projects included in CPEC are intended to fill Pakistan's energy gaps. Energy infrastructure development and power plant building can help stabilize the nation's energy supply, minimizing production disruptions and fostering industrial expansion. With regard to CPEC, the government can make money in a number of ways, including by charging tolls on newly built highways and charges for utilizing ports and transit hubs (Baig et al., 2020).

Improved Connectivity

The development of road networks and other transportation infrastructure by CPEC may increase tourists' access to previously inaccessible locations. This could open up hitherto inaccessible tourist destinations. Through CPEC, China and Pakistan will have a more effective and affordable commerce route. Increased bilateral trade between the two nations would be made possible by this connectivity, and Pakistan may even get the chance to act as a gateway for Chinese goods into the larger South Asian and Middle Eastern markets. Foreign investment may come to Pakistan as a result of improved connectivity. The infrastructural initiatives of CPEC will improve connectivity, both within Pakistan and with its neighbors.

This may encourage regional integration and cooperation, which may result in favorable economic effects from cross-border trade and cooperation on various projects. Reduced transit times and transportation costs will result from the CPEC's extensive network of highways, railroads, and ports. It's critical to handle the potential drawbacks of more connection, including environmental effects, community dislocation, and

the need for sound planning and regulation to ensure sustainable development. In order to gain the long-term benefits of enhanced connection, infrastructure must also be maintained and upgraded (Alam et al., 2021).

Job creation

Pakistan is anticipated to gain a sizable number of jobs as a result of CPEC. This includes openings for employment in the industries of construction, logistics, and transportation, all of which will be essential during the project's development. Long-term job prospects can also be produced by the expansion of businesses and services linked to rising economic activity. CPEC projects provide a sizable number of jobs during the development and construction phases. The construction of roads, infrastructure, and power plants are examples of labor-intensive activities in this category. Unskilled laborers, skilled engineers, and technicians can all find work in these positions, which cater to a diverse group of individuals (Faisal, 2019).

The Project managers, architects, civil engineers, and technicians, among others, are needed for CPEC projects. Due to a growth in demand for technical and engineering education and training, the general skill level of the Pakistani workforce may rise as a result. Pakistan must handle possible issues including labor rights, environmental concerns, and a fair distribution of work possibilities if it is to reap the benefits of job growth through CPEC. To ensure a workforce that is well-prepared to take full advantage of the employment prospects afforded by CPEC projects, investments in education and vocational training should also be in line with the skill requirements of the changing job market (Kousar, 2018).

Regional Development

Under the mega project CPEC, infrastructure development is not restricted to a certain area. It encompasses multiple provinces and regions, resulting in more evenly distributed regional development. More connectivity may result in more economic activity and higher living standards in underdeveloped places. Regional development is a key component of the CPEC, which has the ability to encourage economic growth and lessen regional inequities within Pakistan. Promoting balanced economic growth across Pakistan's diverse regions is one of the main goals of CPEC. The infrastructural development, economic possibilities, and accessibility to essential services, there have historically been large regional differences. By making investments in less developed regions, CPEC aims to reduce these inequities. The CPEC is made up of a number of development corridors that cross several Pakistani provinces and regions. The Western Route, Central Route, and Eastern Route are a few of these corridors. Each corridor seeks to promote local development by boosting economic activity in the areas it traverses (Ali, 2020).

The different Special Economic Zones will be created along the corridor as part of CPEC. These zones are intended to draw domestic and international investment, produce jobs, and advance industrialization. For instance, the Gwadar Port is anticipated to play a significant role as an economic hub in the southwest region. In several regions of Pakistan, CPEC include the building and upgrading of vital infrastructure, including roads, trains, ports, and energy facilities. This infrastructural improvement improves connections and promotes regional economies. The equitable distribution of the economic advantages of CPEC throughout all regions of Pakistan also depends on transparent governance and efficient coordination between federal, provincial, and local authorities (Durani & Khan, 2018).

Promotion and Marketing

The government may use the extra attention Pakistan is getting as a result of CPEC to promote Pakistan as a tourist destination. Through effective marketing and promotion initiatives, Pakistan can be repositioned as a safe and enticing travel destination. The development of contemporary infrastructure, including as hotels, resorts, and recreational facilities, along the CPEC route can improve Pakistan's entire tourism industry. Tourists are more likely to visit locations with plush lodging and superior services (Aman et al., 2022).

Challenges for tourism sector in Gilgit-Baltistan

Security Challenges

The first and most vital challenges in way of promote tourism is security issue. Security issues are among the biggest obstacles that Pakistan's tourism industry must overcome. Political instability and terrorism are two security challenges that the nation has occasionally faced. The expansion of the industry may be hampered by these worries turning away potential visitors. In several parts of Pakistan, particularly in the northwest border areas, there have been instances of terrorism and extremist violence (Ismail, 2022).

Both people and visitors have previously have been targeted in terrorist assaults. Tourists are scared off from visiting the country by such incidents and refrain from doing so. Regional conflicts, particularly with Pakistan's neighbor India, are a result of its geographical position. The safety of visitors near border regions may be impacted by these tensions, which occasionally cross over into border zones. Many foreign governments issue travel warnings warning their citizens against visiting particular areas of Pakistan owing to security concerns. Tourist arrivals may be greatly impacted by these warnings (Waldmüller et al., 2019).

Political instability

Political turmoil, protests, and instability can turn away tourists and damage the sector's brand. For the tourism industry to continue to grow steadily there must be ongoing political unrest. Political instability describes a condition in which a nation or area regularly and significantly encounters interruptions in its political system or government. These disruptions can take many different forms and have significant effects on the stability, security, and growth of a country. Instability and unrest can result from a lack of continuity in government. Protests, demonstrations, and social movements are frequently indicators of political unrest (Omar & Imtiaz, 2019).

These can be brought on by a number of things, such as racial or religious tensions, governmental repression, or economic inequality. Political unrest can lead to armed conflict, such as civil wars, insurrections, or interethnic conflicts. These disagreements may result in exorbitant financial and human costs. Economic instability, political instability can be exacerbated by high inflation, high unemployment, and economic disasters. People may be more likely to take part in protests or support radical political movements when they are struggling to meet their fundamental requirements (Ahmar, 2014).

Sectarian Challenges

The tensions between various religious, ethnic, or cultural groups frequently result in bloodshed, discrimination, or social instability. For instance, shia-sunni conflict since 1988. These problems can take many different shapes and have caused a great deal of worry and conflict throughout history and in many different places of the world. It is frequently necessary to take a multifaceted strategy to handle sectarian issues, which includes making an attempt to foster communication, understanding, and reconciliation amongst various groups as well as addressing the underlying socio-economic and political causes of tensions. Solving these issues requires the cooperation of international organizations, governments, and civil society organizations (Ali, 2020).

Environment challenges

Water resource availability (as a result of climatic change) as well as the security and accessibility of tourism destinations may be impacted by these changes. Preservation of cultural heritage places is crucial for sustainable tourism, yet it is not just a concern for the environment. Historic and cultural assets may deteriorate due to ineffective management and a lack of conservation initiatives (Baig et al., 2023).

Cultural challenges

The term cultural challenge in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan tourism sector refers to issues with promoting and preserving the country's rich cultural legacy while also satisfying the needs and expectations of tourists. It is possible that international tourists have different expectations from Pakistan's traditional and conservative ways. Achieving equilibrium between maintaining cultural authenticity and accommodating

visitor needs could prove to be challenging. Communication breakdowns or cultural insensitivity may result from differences in culture between visitors and the local populace. Travelers need to be made aware of local customs and traditions by tourism stakeholders in order to promote courteous encounters. Commercializing ancient practices and customs for travel-related reasons may lead to a loss of authenticity. A challenging issue is striking a balance between preserving customs and making them tourist-friendly. Linguistic difficulties may make it more difficult for visitors and locals to communicate effectively. Providing multilingual materials and interpreters could potentially bridge this divide. A careful balance must be established in the twenty-first century to manage cultural challenges in the tourism industry while promoting tourism for economic development and safeguarding Pakistan's unique and appealing cultural heritage. Working together, the corporate sector, local communities, and government agencies can overcome these challenges and ensure that tourism has a positive impact on the economy and cultural preservation (Sun, & Zhao, 2019).

Religious challenges

One of the main religious issues facing the G-B's tourism business is the need to respect and accept the country's deeply ingrained religious beliefs and practices while also embracing visitors from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Islamic traditions and customs are deeply ingrained in daily life in the historical period of Great Britain Empire, where a sizable section of the populace is Muslim. It is imperative that tourism-related activities and processes respect these customs. Mosques, shrines, and historical structures are a few of the numerous significant Muslim religious locations in the region (Habib & Iqbal, 2022).

It is difficult to strike a balance between the sacredness of these places and the ease of access for tourists. Some guests may have beliefs and customs that are at odds with the traditional Islamic principles of G-B. Promoting tolerance for different religions and respect for regional customs is crucial. The obstacles rooted in religion GILGIT can develop a tourism environment that attracts tourists from all walks of life while protecting its religious and cultural legacy by educating the public, especially the community, and upholding high standards. Maintaining regional customs and beliefs while also offering a friendly and enjoyable tourism experience must be balanced (Ismail et al., 2023).

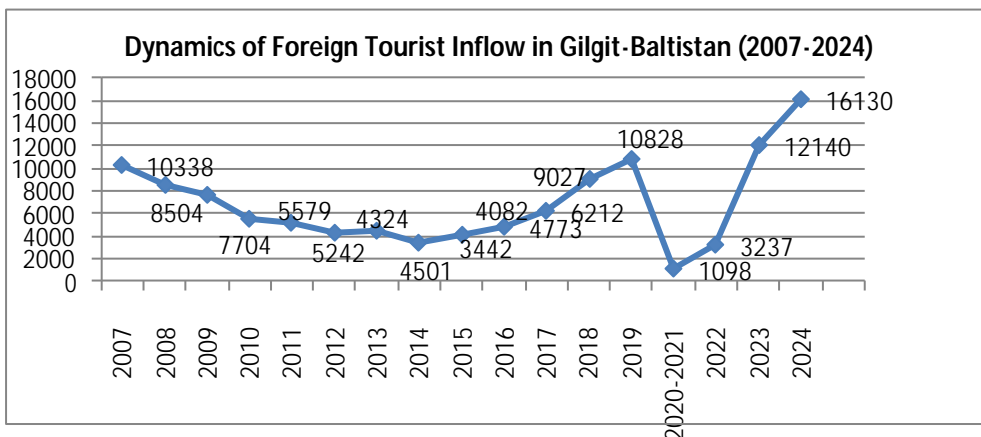
Data survey and statistics background

With the purpose to understand the level of tourism potential of Gilgit-Baltistan, an analysis of the level of tourist flows from 2007 to 2024 was conducted, according to open sources and data from the website of Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Department of Gilgit-Baltistan government. As is known, at the end of 2019, the world was shaken by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), and therefore foreign tourist flows to Gilgit-Baltistan during 2020-2021 decreased significantly (several months had indicators of "0") and were low in 2022. However, since 2023 they have increased and during the studied period – in 2024 they reached 16,130 foreign visitors (Figure 3).

One of the factors for the growth of tourist flows to Gilgit-Baltistan can be considered the involvement of the region in the general scheme of development of infrastructure projects of the corridor. It is illustrating positive trend in the implementation of the CPEC project.

A more thorough cross-section of data on tourist flows in the intra-regional dimension of Gilgit-Baltistan is demonstrated in Table 2. This allows to analyze each districts of Gilgit-Baltistan regarding its prospects in the tourism sector, the possibility of correlating the relevant data on tourist flows with regional and state policies. Of course, taking into account internal and external factors, as well as natural features (cataclysms).

Figure 3



Source: based on the data from Table 1

Table 1

Foreign Tourist Inflow

Year Wise And Month Wise Foreign Tourist Inflow In Gilgit-Baltistan (2007 to 2024)													
Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2007	52	74	230	580	1252	2061	1491	1562	1797	773	292	174	10338
2008	48	24	279	407	693	1317	1553	1377	964	929	552	361	8504
2009	95	52	902	337	1256	1448	1039	837	760	424	203	351	7704
2010	63	54	308	204	794	729	960	815	675	405	312	260	5579
2011	81	86	325	391	663	909	726	492	608	473	293	195	5242
2012	62	99	226	165	343	714	900	475	568	422	223	127	4324
2013	64	29	366	585	395	740	614	491	540	432	196	49	4501
2014	43	9	62	495	305	600	513	343	416	492	108	56	3442
2015	51	25	286	503	375	590	469	506	513	463	256	45	4082
2016	88	55	230	319	495	684	674	632	532	623	278	163	4773
2017	50	119	281	773	523	574	948	701	772	950	389	132	6212
2018	70	200	375	623	927	1190	1422	1663	1520	641	201	195	9027
2019	110	375	558	936	1078	1263	1577	1850	1790	754	331	206	10828
2020-21	37	60	150	0	0	0	0	0	210	356	163	102	1098
2022	71	95	196	306	195	403	350	388	393	470	202	168	3237
2023	58	96	440	687	974	1225	1680	1389	1401	3190	775	225	12140
2024	156	157	1000	2211	1394	1688	1285	1890	2040	3474	416	419	16130

Source: Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Department

Table 2

Domestic tourism data from 1st January, 2023 to 31st December, 2023

District	1 st Quarter (A)				2 nd Quarter (B)				3 rd Quarter (C)				4 th Quarter (D)			Total
	Jan	Feb	March	Total	April	May	June	Total	July	Aug	Sep	Total	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Astore	8514	8872	9372	26758	4780	6708	7615	19103	4272	4831	5709	14812	5334	5240	3370	13944
Diamer	9612	9772	14572	33956	8515	14410	21809	44734	20497	17471	9427	47395	8112	8170	5661	21943
Gilgit	10502	11412	12873	34787	5897	9162	12377	27436	6920	7513	4630	19063	6807	7070	5454	19331
Ghizer	10171	10592	11229	31992	5113	7566	10433	23112	12117	10774	9893	32784	3520	3330	2672	9522
Ghanche	622	720	920	1640	4959	5134	5500	15593	2050	2242	1473	5765	1855	2190	1810	5855
Kharomang	500	690	9985	11175	89	133	263	485	534	386	200	1120	645	1430	1256	3331
Hunza	11378	13527	18232	43137	15921	22079	43067	81067	9320	8212	5630	23162	9680	9902	8257	27839
Nagar	5294	7796	10242	23332	4470	4967	4355	13792	767	704	448	1919	4045	4540	3067	11652
Skardu	11880	17011	20901	49792	11144	12359	12975	36478	11670	10682	8422	30774	9653	9230	8336	27219
Shigar	9117	10542	13200	32859	941	1249	2272	446	2556	395	255	3206	1720	2416	2228	6364
G. Total	76968	90934	121526	289428	61829	83767	120666	266262	70703	63210	46087	180000	51371	53518	42111	147000
				A+B+C+D									882690			

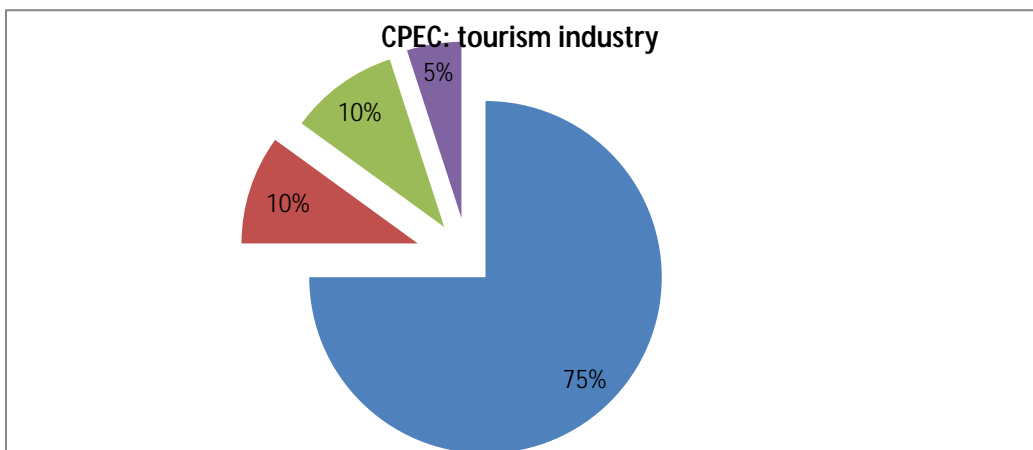
Source: *Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Department*

To assess the public’s perception of the CPEC’s results and its perception in a positive or negative light, a sociological survey was conducted. The research uses the sampling method via public opinion poll on the example of students of the Karakorum International University and rest of stake holder in different sector of Gilgit-Baltistan. . Therefore, from the youth of Gilgit-Baltistan (the general sampling), a group of different stake holder and students from the Karakorum University was selected. This group of students and stake holder with the purpose to form the general attitude of the youth of the region to the issue raised in article, was asked about their attitude to the CPEC and its impact on the tourism sector of Gilgit-Baltistan. Of course, the number of respondents participated in poll can raised a question about certain error and issue of verification in the statistical study, but overall it can be a representative indicator of a local study of public opinion.

A research study conducted in Karakoram international university (KIU), and stake holder of Gilgit in 2024 among 120 students and stake holder (50 males, 50 female and 20 stake holder). The representatives were asked: “How important do you think the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is for Pakistan’s development, job opportunities, reducing unemployment in tourism industry?”

Figure 4

Assessment of the CPEC’s impact on the development of the Gilgit-Baltistan’s tourism industry



Source: *conducted poll by authors.*

The respondents were asked such question: “Do you believe that CPEC is fruitfully for the industries development in Gilgit-Baltistan?” They were proposed several answers: a) Yes, I believe that China-Pakistan economic corridor can’t bring development and creations job for local peoples; b) No, I

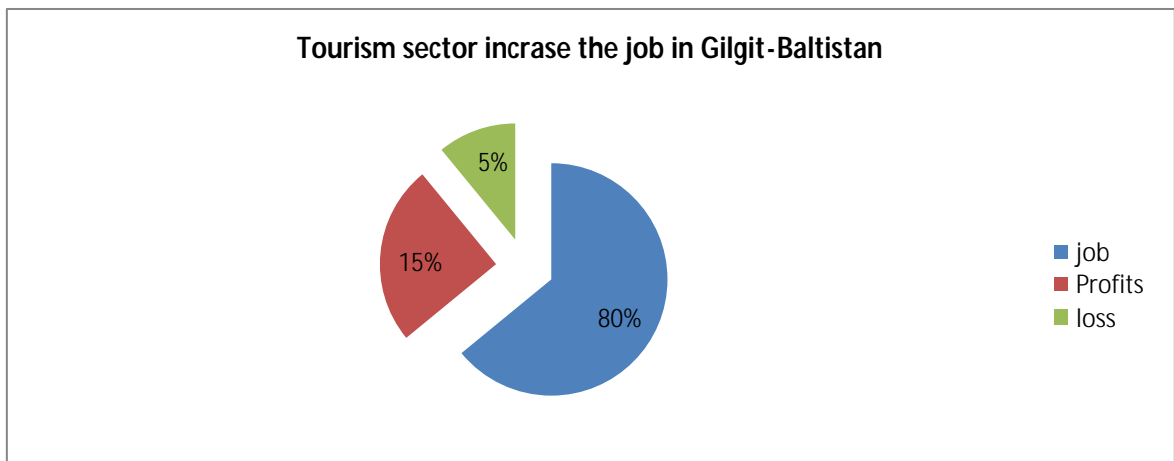
don't believe that China-Pakistan economic corridor can't bring development and creations job for local peoples; c) It may be development and overcome energy crisis in Pakistan; d) I do not know exactly.

Analysis of Questionnaires data (Figure 4)

A survey among students at the Karakoram International University (KIU) and stake holder came up with the fact that the overwhelming majority (75%) are of the opinion that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will greatly benefit the development of the tourism industry of Gilgit-Baltistan, thus enhancing the economy of Pakistan, generating job opportunities, and rendering direct benefit to the locals. Contrarily, 10% of the students / stake holder do not opine that CPEC will trigger development or provide jobs for local people, whereas 5% view it as a project that can assist in development and alleviating Pakistan's energy crisis. In the meanwhile, yet another 10% of students confessed that they were not aware of the project and its implications.

Figure 5

Indicators of defining the improvement of Gilgit-Baltistan's tourism industry



Source: conducted poll by authors.

Due to the flow of international and national tourist peoples in G-B, there is created jobs opportunities in hotel industry and fruits center in different area of G-B. Respondents were asked such question: "Do you believe that CPEC Created Job in Gilgit-Baltistan regard tourism industries?" They were proposed several answers: a) Yes, due to tourism industry jobs are increase b) I hope for the profits of local peoples by tourism sector c) due to the tourism sector there is a loss of natural beauty, environment issue and created cultural issue in G-B.

Analysis of Questionnaires data (Figure 5).

The findings of questionnaire analysis (Figure 4.) show that most KIU students/ stake holder (80%) are of the opinion that the increasing influx of national and foreign tourists to Gilgit-Baltistan has provided substantial employment opportunities, especially in hotels and fruit markets in various regions of the region. Moreover, 15% of students / stake holder were optimistic that development of tourism would yield economic benefits and direct gains to the local inhabitants. But a smaller percentage, about 5%, were concerned that the tourism growth could result in loss of natural beauty, environment degradation, and cultural issues in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Recommendations and Conclusions

According to the study's findings, G-B's sustainable development, especially the travel and tourist industry, can be facilitated by the massive CPEC. But in order to overcome obstacles and take advantage of opportunities, good management and planning are essential. In order to develop a balanced and sustainable

tourist sector that will ultimately benefit the nation, it is critical that all relevant parties the government, regional communities, and private businesses-work together.

A game-changer for Pakistan's tourism industry, the CPEC presents a plethora of chances for growth and development. Nevertheless, in order to effectively utilize these prospects, care must be taken to overcome the many potential problems. The promise of increased connectivity, economic expansion, and a variety of tourism options must be balanced against pressing issues including security worries, infrastructure development, environmental damage, and cultural preservation. To fully realize the tourism potential of CPEC and ensure long-term, sustainable growth in Pakistan's tourism sector, sustainable development, careful planning and coordination between the public and private sectors are crucial.

The tourism sector in Pakistan has a better future thanks to CPEC. Tourists may be able to visit Pakistan's numerous landscapes, from the towering Himalayas to the tranquil beaches along the Arabian Sea, with more ease because to the improved connectivity made possible by CPEC's infrastructural developments. In addition to enhancing local economies, generating jobs, and raising the living standards of towns along the corridor, this greater accessibility may also encourage domestic and foreign travel. The building of top-notch hotels, eateries, and tourism-related services is likely to follow as infrastructural development moves forward and draws investors and entrepreneurs. This has the potential to significantly improve the entire tourist experience and promote return trips. Pakistan's extensive cultural and historical legacy is set to gain from CPEC.

A stronger understanding of Pakistan's rich history and different cultures can be fostered by the newfound accessibility to historically significant locations, which may attract heritage and cultural visitors. The difficulties that lie ahead must be recognized. Potential tourists have long been discouraged from visiting Pakistan because of security concerns. For the tourism sector to expand, the government must be committed to safeguarding the safety and security of both domestic and foreign tourists. While CPEC improves infrastructure, tourism-specific facilities and services require coordinated planning and investment.

As the tourism industry grows, it is important to strike a fine balance between showcasing Pakistan's distinctive culture and legacy and avoiding cultural dilution and exploitation. It is critical to put rules and regulations into place to protect regional customs and cultures while promoting ethical travel. In terms of economic growth, cultural enrichment, and environmental preservation, CPEC offers Pakistan's tourism industry a transformative potential. The government, business community, and local communities must work together, though, in order to realize this promise. Pakistan may establish itself as a top travel destination and make a big contribution to its long-term sustainable development by addressing security issues, making infrastructure investments, applying sustainable practices, and protecting cultural assets. The road ahead may be difficult, but Pakistan's tourism industry and the country as a whole will reap enormous benefits. CPEC has the ability to alter Pakistan's tourist sector in terms of economic development, cultural amplification, and environmental preservation. To fulfill this promise, however, requires collaboration between the federal government, private sector, and local communities.

Through the security, challenges, investing in infrastructure, implementing sustainable practices, and safeguarding cultural assets, Pakistan may become a top travel destination and significantly contribute to its long-term sustainable growth. However, there is a danger of cultural exploitation as tourism expands. Pakistan must strike a careful balance between highlighting its own culture and heritage and avoiding commercialization, The CPEC and Pakistan's tourist industries coming together offers the country an once-in-a-lifetime chance. It has the ability to promote cultural awareness, advance economic development, and protect the world's natural beauties. The government, the corporate sector, and regional communities must work together strategically and purposefully to realize this promise. Pakistan can become a top travel destination by addressing security issues, making sustainable infrastructure investments, and protecting

cultural heritage. This would help Pakistan advance toward sustainable growth and prosperity over the long run.

Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendation for the enhance of the tourism industry in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Sustainable Tourism Infrastructure Development

Policy regulation based on the National Tourism Policy (2019), Pakistan Vision 2025, as well as the Public Private Partnership Authority Act (2017). Creations of funds within the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which will support financially different projects.

Community Participation and Skill Development

Regulatory and legal framework based on Pakistan Tourism Coordination Board Act. Assistance from the state authorities in providing grants to local communities in order to involve them in the development of the region's tourist attractiveness (support for folk art, crafts) its uniqueness and an element of the national image.

Environmental Protection and Regulation

Implementation within the framework of the national environmental policy based on the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (1997), National Climate Change Policy (2012), which will contribute to the development of tourist zones in accordance with generally worldwide accepted standards, the use of renewable sources of energy.

Promotion of Cultural and Heritage Tourism

Regulatory framework based on Antiquities Act (1975), National Culture Policy (2005) will encourage certain restoration works of historical and cultural monuments of the region, their preservation. Provision of appropriate grants for the formation of museums and separate institutions to popularize the cultural and historical heritage of Gilgit-Baltistan among tourists.

Integrated Tourism Governance under CPEC

Based on the Agreement on CPEC (2015), Special Economic Zones Act (2012), attracting joint Chinese-Pakistani investments in the region with an emphasis on the tourism industry. Creation of a Tourism Industry Development Plan and relevant grant proposals.

References

- Ahmar, M. (2014). Strategic meaning of the China-Pakistan economic corridor. *Strategic Studies*, 34(4/1), 35-9.
- Alam, M., Ali, D. & Jadoon, M. (2021). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a Gateway to Peace, Stability, and Tourism Sustainability, *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 3(4), 412-421.
- Alam, S., & Iqbal, K. (2025). Contours of connectivity: Socioeconomic Transformation and Local Perception of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in upper Hunza, Pakistan. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(3). 109-122.
- Ali, M. (2020). China–Pakistan economic corridor: prospects and challenges. *Contemporary South Asia*, 28(1),100-1
- Aman, J., Abbas, J., Shi, G, Ain, N.U. & GU, L. (2022). Community wellbeing under China-Pakistan economic corridor: role of social, economic, cultural, and educational factors in improving residents' quality of life. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 816592. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.816592>
- Asees Awan, M. & Ali, Y. (2019). Sustainable modeling in reverse logistics strategies using fuzzy MCDM: Case of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal*, 30(5), 1132-1151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEQ-01-2019-0024>
- Awais, M., Samin, T., Gulzar, M. A., & Hwang J. (2019). The sustainable development of the China Pakistan economic corridor: synergy among economic, social, and environmental sustainability. *Sustainability*, 11(24), 7044. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11247044>

- Baig, N., Khan, S., Bashir, I. & Ma, J. (2023). Does China Pakistan Economic Corridor become an avenue to achieve sustainable development goal no. 2 (food security) in Pakistan: Under the condition of COVID-19, *PLOS ONE*, 18(1), e0279520. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0279520>
- Baig, S., Qasim, M., Xuemei, Li, & Alam, K.M. (2020). Is the China-Pakistan economic corridor and opportunity or a threat for small and micro-entrepreneurs? Empirical evidence from Northern Pakistan, *Sustainability*, 12(5), 1727. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051727>
- Durani, M. Q. & Khan, M. B. (2018). The Environmental Impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Case Study, *Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 211-221.
- Hussain, S., Khan, F., & Ayaz, M. (2021). Politico-economic implications of CPEC on Pakistan. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(4), 147-162. <http://doi.org/10.51709/19951272/Winter-2021/>
- Faisal, M. (2019). CPEC and Regional Connectivity: Navigating the South Asian Politics, *Strategic Studies*, 39(2), 1-17. URL: https://issii.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/1-SS_Muhammad_Faisal_No-2_2019.pdf
- Habib, M. & Iqbal, M. (2022). Sustainable Development Goals: a Case Study with Reference to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 5(2), 1358-1377. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v5i2.519>
- Ismail, M. (2021). A project of China-Pakistan economic corridor: A case study of significant and drawbacks for Pakistan, *Global Economics Review*, VI (I), 95-104. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2021\(VI-I\).08](https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2021(VI-I).08)
- Ismail, M. (2022). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Case Study of Internal Security Challenge Faced by Pakistan, *International Journal of Policy Studies*, 2(1), 18-27.
- Ismail, M., Ul Hassan, T., Ul Haq, A., & Mir W. (2023). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Case Study of Strategic Implications for Pakistan, *Pal arch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 20(2), 346-355.
- Khan, A., Bibi, S., Ardito, S., Lyu, J., & Babar, Z. (2020). Tourism and development in developing economies: A policy implication perspective, *Sustainability*, 12(4), 1618. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041618>
- Kousar, S., Rehman, A., Zafar, M., Ali, K. & Nasir, N. (2018). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: a gateway to sustainable economic development, *International Journal of Social Economics*, 45(6), 909-924. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-02-2017-0059>
- Mahmood, S., Sabir, M., & Ali, G. (2020). Infrastructure projects and sustainable development: Discovering the stakeholders' perception in the case of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, *PLoS One*, 15(8), e0237385. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237385>
- Menhas, R., Mahmood, S., Tanchangya, P., Safdar, M.N. & Hussain, S. (2019). Sustainable Development under Belt and Road Initiative: A Case Study of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's Socio-Economic Impact on Pakistan, *Sustainability*, 11(21), 6143. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11216143>
- Sonntag, H. R. (2001). Dependency theory, In Neil, J., Smelser, N. J. & Paul B. Baltes P. B. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (p. 3501-3505), Pergamon. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/01890-8>
- Sultan, M. F., Omar, M. & Imtiaz, R. (2019). Analyzing prevalent internal challenges to China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) through public opinion, *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 10(7), 1-9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7176/JESD>
- Sun, Z., Jai, K. & Zhao, L. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and sustainability of local community: A case study of the transnational project in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, *Sustainability*, 11(22), 6456. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11226456>
- Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Department*. Gilgit-Baltistan government. URL: <https://visitgilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/>
- Waldmüller, J. M., Jamali, H. & Nogales, N. (2019). Operationalizing Sustainable Development Goals in Vulnerable Coastal Areas of Ecuador and Pakistan: Marginalizing Human Development? *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 20(4), 468-485. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2019.1666810>