

**Geostrategy and Regional Connectivity Issues: A Comparative Analysis
of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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October, 2021**



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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**Geostrategy and Regional Connectivity Issues: A Comparative Analysis of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Professor B.C. Vaidya for his invaluable advice, continuous support, and patience during my PhD study. His immense knowledge and plentiful experience have encouraged me in all the time of my academic research and daily life. I would also like to thank Dr. Santana Khanikar, Dr Madanmohan, and Dr. Krishnendra Meena for their teachings and support during my coursework. I would like to thank all the members of CIPOD family. It is their kind help and support that have made my study and life in JNU a wonderful time. I would like to extend sincere thanks to my teachers from BHU, Dr. Sarfaraz Alam, Dr. M.L. Meena and Professor Rana P. B. Singh for their treasured support and blessings since my Master degree. Special Mention to Dr. Debendra Mahalik and Dr. Raj Yadav for being a constant source of motivation during the tough times of COVID pandemic. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my mother Mrs. Yashoda Gupta, and father Mr. Sanjay Gupta, brothers Shubham and Satyam, and dearest friends Mukesh, Neha, Upasana, Priyanka, Kapil, Praffulit, Ankita, and Usha. Without their tremendous understanding and encouragement in the past few years, it would be impossible for me to complete my study.

Date :

Shalini Shikha

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CASA	Central Asia South Asia
CCAP	Connect Central Asia Policy
CCWAEC	China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COPHC	China Overseas Port Holding Company
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
EIA	Energy Information Administration
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HOPE	Hormuz Peace Endeavor
IDSA	Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis
IGA	Inter-Governmental Agreement
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IMSC	International Maritime Security Construct
INSTC	International North–South Transport Corridor
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IPGPL	Indira Port Global Private Limited
IRAM	Center for Iranian Studies
IRGCN	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy
IRIN	Islamic Republic of Iran Navy
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

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Abbreviation	Description
KW	Kilo Watt
LNG	Liquified Natural Gas
LOSC	Law of the Sea Convention
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MHC	Mobile Harbour Cranes
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MW	Mega Watt
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OBOR	One Belt One Road
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
POK	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
PSA	Port Singapore Authority
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
QTTA	Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
REAP	Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SLOC	Sea Lanes of Communication
TAPI	Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
USCENTOM	United States Central Command
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic

Chapter-1

Introduction

1.1: Background

The present research examined the Geostrategy and Regional Connectivity of Chabahar and Gwadar Port projects and to understand the significance of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports in shaping the geopolitics of Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf and on the history and geography of the establishment of Chabahar and Gwadar ports. Chabahar and Gwadar are two important Gateways to Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, these are crucial to the geopolitics among major superpowers including China, India and United States. Since, Chabahar is an India funded project located in Iran. The study attempted to locate India and Iran amidst the geopolitical developments by China-Pakistan (CPEC) and its role in the International North-South Corridor. These gateways open to a wider geostrategic network that extends to Afghanistan. For deeper understanding of the genesis of these ports the India-Iran agreement over Chabahar and China-Pakistan Memorandum of Understanding over CPEC and Gwadar has been analysed. CPEC is one of China's major initiative of its Belt and Road Project at the mouth of which Gwadar is situated. Chabahar port project is seen as geostrategic competitor for Gwadar port project. Countering Chinese infrastructural development has been the most pressing concern of 21st century. In this respect the study tends to understand the importance of Chabahar as a response to China's CPEC. This primary basis of the comparison of the ports has been done in terms of capacity, funding, routes of export and import, presence of naval powers, surveillance of the maritime site, instances of conflict, and the development of urban centres surrounding the ports in Iran and Pakistan respectively.

The presence of United States naval and military bases in the Persian Gulf region i.e. surrounding the port imposes a lot of geopolitical pressure on the functioning of economic and transnational flows, at the same time the presence of US in Afghanistan has also to do with monitoring terrorism and largely this oil rich region. Therefore, the work has also taken into account the role of United States as a major stakeholder in the region, its influence and impact in the maritime region. This study is centred upon two ports of Chabahar and Gwadar analysing the convergence of various states for the purpose of trade, security and diplomacy in the Arabian Sea.

The two ports are located at the proximity of approximately 72 km offering tremendous geopolitical upheaval. Chabahar is a coastal city and an ancient trading centre as well as Iran's only port with direct access to the Indian Ocean. It is situated at the mouth of Strait of Hormuz and having close proximity to UAE and Oman. It is 800 kilometres closer to Afghanistan than Pakistan's Karachi port. This region is heavily patrolled by various nations to protect sea lanes transporting oil from West Asia to various countries around the globe. Geographically, it is very important for Afghanistan trade as it is a landlocked country that it previously dependent on Pakistan's transit routes to access the sea. Chabahar is yet not just a gateway to west Asia but Central Asia, Russia and to Europe also. It offers benefit to most of the countries involved in the North-South Corridor which leads Chabahar right upto St. Petersburg, Moscow and beyond. This nodal point for the trilateral relationship of India-Iran-Afghanistan trade and communication partnership has witnessed tremendous political and economic struggle before its establishment. This region involves a lot of nations willing to expand their activities, like India in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran itself, the United States anti-terrorism exercises in Afghanistan and West Asian countries, Japan as a part of Asia-Africa Growth corridor has found further interest in this region and it is also considered to work as a neutralizer for the CPEC also creates a lot of further political and economic rivalry zone for the countries. Most importantly it is the gateway for the oil and cargo transshipment route to the world hence carrying utmost value across the globe.

Gwadar port project as part of the CPEC is expected to reduce the confrontations of the US and China sparing China from the "Malaccan Dilemma". India's apprehensions from the Chinese strings of pearls have led to more patrolling by Indian navy in this Strait of Malacca. Thus, this development of Gwadar has benefitted China and Pakistan on one side and attracted more geopolitical implications on the other side. The two powers have come together to develop defence logistics like inter-ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads. They enjoy close relations in manufacturing sector particularly of military hardware. A major portion of Pakistani equipment and weapons are now supplied from China. The ties between the two you are now very close due to China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Both China and Pakistan are persuading Iran, Russia, and Afghanistan in favour of CPEC.

The two have ambitions of indulging with India's close companions in Europe Central Asia in order to strengthen CPEC geopolitically. India has been in opposition of CPEC as the project has been built through the disputed territory of Gilgit- Baltistan and it incorporates areas under Pak occupied Kashmir. Both the places where the ports are situated i.e. Iran and Pakistan carry their own histories and shared cultures and economic ties. However, the development of Chabahar and Gwadar ports have triggered the New Great Game in South Asia and acts as important gateways to what Spykman calls as the Rimland for the verification of which the study looks closely into it from a geopolitical perspective. Within this framework my work explores the geopolitics triggered by these two nodal points of connectivity found out geopolitical perception of different stakeholders behind strategy and economic flows for which the ports are constructed. For this the area of study are the two port projects namely Chabahar and Gwadar that offer intense geopolitical significance consisting transnational flows from a number of stakeholders.

1.2: Review of Literature

This section is divided into three major sections. The first deals with the Geography and Geopolitics of Arabian Sea that includes theoretical side of the study incorporating the relevant geopolitical theories and contemporary situations. The second and third section lays down the significance of Chabahar and Gwadar ports that includes the role of the host countries i.e. Iran and Pakistan respectively, and the proceeding sections looks into the larger political interests of the major stakeholders in the region.

(a) Geography and Geopolitics of Arabian Sea

Arabian Sea is one of the most crucial strategic region of the world, the focus on which can be seen in most of the geopolitical theories laid down by geostrategic thinkers. Though this region is marked by trade and economic flows in the globalised world of 21st century still “Globalisation has not replaced regionalism nor has geoeconomics replaced geopolitics” as argued by Scott. So, behind every infrastructural development and establishment of connectivity networks by different states here it is always about geopolitics. Geopolitics of this region has been defined by the geographical limits, thus geography is the key to understand how geopolitics in this region operates.

Øyvind Østerud opines, “Geopolitics traditionally indicates the links and causal relationships between political power and geographic space, in concrete terms, the geopolitical tradition had some consistent concerns, like the geopolitical correlates of power in world politics, the identification of international core areas, and the relationships between naval and terrestrial capabilities”. The region around Chabahar and Gwadar seems like such a convergence point of power and politics. A geographical space offering tremendous reserve of oil on one hand and ways to reach the reserve through sea and terrestrial routes on the other. In regards to when we look at Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and its linkages are key for understanding the Indian Ocean is among Nicholas Spykman’s “maritime highways of the world”, a region for geostrategic tussle due to its geographical significance as a road for facilitating flow of resources globally. The most crucial sea lanes of the world are situated in this area, like the straits of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca, the product of which two projects of Chabahar and Gwadar have been developed here. Spykman stated, “The fundamental fact which is responsible for the conditions of world politics is the development of ocean navigation and the discovery of sea routes to India and America; Maritime mobility is the basis for a new type of geopolitical structure, the overseas empire.

The British French and Japanese empires and the sea power of the United States have contributed to the development of a modern world which is a single field for the interplay of political forces. It is sea power which has made possible to conceive to the Eurasian continent as a unit and it is sea power which governs the relationship between the old and the new worlds.” This century old theory still holds relevant in the case the geopolitical setting of Chabahar and Gwadar. The major powers in the South Asian region are contesting for a strong hold on the resources and the routes. If looked closely, the strategy of encircling a state and getting encircled by a state around the maritime borders is at play in this region in search of supremacy. Agnew’s point of “pursuit of primacy” and the “necessity for hierarchy” among geopolitical powers makes a great relevance in this region. Gwadar port is not only a point from where the CPEC starts rather it is also the same point where the String of Pearls conclude. This gives China an upper hand in geostrategy and a benefit of economic corridor to connect its vulnerable eastern part with trade and establish control over its own unstable region. Gwadar port hence, looks very associative with Chinese pursuit of primacy.

Alfred Thayer Mahan is recognised as a geopolitical strategist. Zahira Naizi argues, China's maritime strategy is apparently based on Mahan's theory of sea power, similar to the concept followed by the United States at the time of cold war. He envisioned the superior location of the Indian Ocean in global context. He opined that whoever captures the control over the Indian Ocean gains potential to dominate the whole of Asian continent. Mahan states, "It is the wish of every nation that this shipping business should be done by its own vessels. The ships thus sail to and fro must have secure ports to which to return, and must, as far as possible, be followed by the protection of their country throughout the voyage. In this three things production with the necessity of exchanging products; shipping, where by the exchange is carried on; and colonies, which facilitate and enlarge the operations of shipping and tend to protect it by multiplying points of safety is to be found the key to much of the history, as well as of the policy, of nation bordering the sea". According to Mahan, if the sea lanes of communication are secured it can give geostrategic benefits to the countries for planning blockade of supply chains against others.

(b) Strategic Significance of Chabahar Port Project

History confirms that Indian economy has always been benefitted by trade linkages via maritime routes. In this regard ports play an important role and has always been critical for providing nodal connectivity between continents and oceans. Chabahar port at present plays an important role in India's foreign policy. The establishment of Chabahar Port has intensified India's regional politics over hard infrastructure like deep sea ports. The development of Chabahar Port has been seen as a contradictory response to Gwadar port of Pakistan, opines Singh (2016). As aforementioned, Chabahar is a coastal city and an ancient trading centre as well as Iran's only deep water port having direct reach to the IOR.

It sits at the opening point of Strait of Hormuz having close proximity to UAE and Oman. It measures nearly 800 kilometres close to Afghanistan as compared to Karachi port in Pakistan. Iran has great significance for the energy security of India due to its vast reserves of oil and gas. Iran is also a geopolitical pivot for the connectivity of India and Eurasia. The establishment of Chabahar Port has formed a foundation for Indian foreign policy moderation with respect to Eurasia, argues Roy (2012). Morady argues that Iran plays the role of a geographical corridor to bridge Africa, Europe, South Asia, and South East Asia.

Total reserves of oil and gas in Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea account for 60% of world's oil and gas reserve and a major portion is moved through the Indian Ocean. The graph of world energy consumption is rising, and from 2007 to 2035 it is expected to rise by 49% since the energy demand from most populous countries like India and China is increasing. The significance of Chabahar project was also brought to light by the foreign secretary of India in July 2010 where he highlighted that Chabahar project is at the core of the mutual vision of India and Iran. Both India and Iran plan for increasing efficient flow of goods and services to Afghanistan and Central Asia as a whole. Both envisioned establishment of transportation lanes and pipeline network that which can facilitate stability peace and prosperity to the population of Afghanistan, Iran, and India. On a similar note, Blank (2003) also argues that Chabahar is a natural area of interest that may help to promote trade in between IOR by expanding transit facilities in the region. Chabahar is mainly crucial due to its potential for economic development as well as to counter terrorism in Afghanistan. Saghafi Ameri (2009) opines that, Iran actively engages in ensuring stability in the region secure economic development. This argument was supported by Iran's think tank, the Centre for Strategic Research stating "Iran's cooperation with the United States in 2001 was an important element that facilitated the removal of the Taliban from Afghanistan".

However, the stiffness between Iran and United States has raised great difficulties for Iran. Roy (2012) states that the increased number of confrontations between that two countries over uranium enrichment and the harsh economic sanctions levied by the EU and the US upon the Iran's oil and gas sector isolated Iran from the larger international community. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed repeated global sanctions on Iranian economy. As a response to the EU and US economic sanctions on Iranian energy and banking sectors, Tehran also threatened to start a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz (Aneja 2012). Sumera B Reshi, an Indian journalist states, if Chabahar and Gwadar, are to form an interlink between the South Asian and Central Asian region and to enhance trade relations then what is the reason behind the rivalry between Chabahar Port and Gwadar Port. China's and India's defence military, particularly the naval presence in these deep sea ports can potentially intensify the age old rivalry of China and India inside the Indian Ocean. Chabahar can devalue the importance of Gwadar Port from the point of view of being a transit hub as well as being a gateway to Afghanistan and larger Central Asia.

As a matter of fact, Gwadar port project reflects Chinese regional power politics. Gwadar Port, the CPEC and now the port of Chabahar are playing as the integral pillars of “the new great game” that apparently has numerous fielders in the arena. For India, Chabahar Port seems as an opportunity to align its role amidst the “land corridor mania that has gripped mainland Asia and to stake its claim as Afghanistan’s primary economic partner”. China is definitely aiming to grab a win-win situation as far as matters of trade and commerce concern. Iran also secures benefit from the Indo-China trade agreements and the United States would monitor with a hawkish eye upon the inter-regional South and Central Asian politics, mainly China. However, Pakistan definitely has to mark a line for safeguarding itself amidst the India-US, India-Iran, India-US-Afghanistan modalities.

(c) Strategic Location of Gwadar Port Project

Gwadar port, from the other side, was previously a clustered town comprised primarily of fishing villages along the Makran Coast of Pakistan until it was built as the entryway to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Gwadar Port is located on the Arabian Sea coast in the city of Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan. This port is located roughly 533 kilometres from Pakistan's largest metropolis, Karachi, and 120 kilometres from the Iran border. It is located 380 kilometres (240 miles) south of Oman and adjacent to critical oil shipping channels from the Persian Gulf. Around two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves are located in the broader surrounding region. Additionally, it is the closest warm-water harbour to the isolated but oil-rich Central Asian Countries, and also Afghanistan. Additionally, China's quickest marine route to European, African, and the Middle Eastern part is via the Malacca strait.

Beijing, as the world's largest buyer of oil, obtains roughly 80% of its supplies from West Asian republics and African countries via this strait, ensuring its energy security. Nevertheless, the passages are intensively guarded by US naval forces. Nations develop and implement a variety of strategies in global politics in order to advance and protect their financial interests (Khan 2013). Port of Gwadar offers a viable and cost-effective path for commerce with Central Asia, the landlocked republics that are abundant in natural resources. It is regarded as critical to Pakistan's economic development since it would serve as a focal point for regional trade operations. Pakistan's international exchange reserves can be increased through transit fees.

Gwadar has the ability to address Pakistan's unemployment problem while also increasing the country's growth rate, as there is a strong correlation between trade and development. (Tanoli, 2016). China's key goals in the Gwadar port, according to Haider (2005), are to continue solidifying its relationship with Pakistan through large-scale collaborative development projects, to diversify and protect its crude oil importing lines, and to expand its activities in the Indian Ocean Region.

(d) Chinese Interest in Gwadar Port Project

Chinese infrastructure investment in Pakistan has mostly been concentrated on two significant projects. To begin, China provided the majority of finance for the construction of a new port in Gwadar, Pakistan, on the Arabian Gulf coast. Second, China spearheaded a development project to rebuild the Karakorum highway in north-eastern Pakistan, establishing a contiguous, all-weather link between Gwadar and western Chinese regions. Although each country contributed resources to the Gwadar port, China supplied the lion's share: 80 percent, or \$198.4 million, of the US\$248 million in original development expenditures (Daniels, 2013). According to Munir Akram, a Pakistani journalist, a new great game is unfolding in regional geopolitics as a result of the Chabahar deal, One Belt, One Road (OBOR), and CPEC, with China and the US as the primary participants this time. India, Pakistan, Iran, and other smaller South Asian countries play supporting roles. Pakistan should align and enhance its ties with China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey in order to offset a growing Indo-Iranian and Indo-American nexus. Additionally, Adam V Larkey says that China plays a similar role in Gwadar as India does in Chabahar, but the US is pleased with India's presence to counter China's expansionist ideology.

(e) The United States Goals

The United States' objectives in the region are sometimes couched in conspiratorial rhetoric. Afghans believe the US instigated the war against the Taliban in order to legitimize a regional presence that is primarily focused on natural resource acquisition, while China feels the US presence in Afghanistan is part of a broader containment policy (Rubin, 2008). This covert purpose is referred to as a "new containment strategy," which includes American ties with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, several Southeast Asian nations, and India. In summary, Greater Central Asia (all five Central Asian countries plus Pakistan, India, and China's Xinjiang province) is a region characterized by emerging powers who harbour significant suspicions about the

objectives of the United States. Gwadar benefits China in two ways: first, the port and its overland linkages give an alternate shipping route for manufactured commodities (Niazi, 2009). This is consistent with China's "Go West" plan, which aims to develop the country's western areas concurrently with the established eastern seaboard, therefore narrowing the economic divide between the two internal regions. As 97 percent of Pakistan's exports and imports pass through the established ports of Karachi and Port Qasim, Gwadar is intended to serve the unique needs of Central Asian trade and to connect China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan via rail and road; Second, Gwadar is a critical component of China's "String of Pearls" strategy, which envisions strategic ports along the Arabian Sea as a "string of pearls."

(f) Urgency for having Access to Afghanistan

According to Masood (2007), current infrastructure initiatives in Afghanistan might help re-establish links between ethnic groups and lay the groundwork for a strong central authority that could reap the benefits of increasing trade throughout Central Asia. Afghanistan serves as a land bridge between Pakistan, India, Iran, China, and Central Asia, but it also suffers from being a landlocked state with varying degrees of "bad neighbour" status, a lack of adequate infrastructure, ineffective trade facilitation mechanisms, onerous trade restrictions, and governance issues affecting customs and goods transport. Infrastructure projects have the potential to significantly contribute to economic growth. Afghanistan has a similarly perilous investing environment. Suicide bombings and kidnappings by terrorists have targeted Indian contractors (George, 2012). Despite the growth of competitive ports and India's substantial presence in Afghanistan, China's fear of US encirclement keeps it involved in Afghanistan's infrastructure investments.

China was a party to a mining development agreement that includes infrastructure side projects, with China promising to build neighbouring electrical plants, schools, and mosques (Jae et.al, 2011). While Western critics have criticised China's lack of development support to Afghanistan, China has been significantly involved in non-security-related projects, consistent with its development model, which draws no distinction between aid, trade, and investment. To counter the presence of American troops in the area, China is reaching out to the Afghan government and people through infrastructure projects as part of a long-term effort to establish influence over Afghanistan's energy resources and transit routes.

India favours Afghanistan in order to avert anti-Indian terrorism, reduce Pakistani and Taliban dominance in the country, get access to resource-rich Central Asia, and project power and demonstrate global interest in the region Chalk (2012). Hence, the two port projects are significant in letting these states access Afghanistan that as a part of larger geopolitical situation. China and India's geopolitics are not confined to the Arabian Sea and their rivalry has far-reaching consequences. According to Donald L. Berlin (2002), no place in the twenty-first century is as likely to play a critical role as the Indian Ocean due to its combination of oil, Islam, and the likely rivalry between India and China.

However, when examined closely, the region represents a shift in geopolitical power from the West to the East, as K.B. Usha argues that the 'New Great Game' was developed in Central Asia, involving Russia, America, Europe, and China as major players as well as Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan as regional players. America views India as a counterbalance to Russia's and China's participation. According to Nishtha Kaushiki (2014), the role of various international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, combined with the interests of each individual country in this region, have given a strategic boost to Central Asia's new great game. Western powers' involvement in Afghanistan, which acts as a gateway between Central and South Asia, has heightened the region's geostrategic and geopolitical significance. The world is currently focused on possible developments in the region in the case of the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. "Hence this region is experiencing a convergence of world powers altogether, to which Chabahar and Gwadar would serve as gateways and means to establish supremacy through trade and connectivity. these two projects will keep fuelling the Iran-Pakistan rivalry, while this is not in the interest of either state, both of which face enough problems on other fronts and would be well-served by deepening the process of normalization in relations that has been initiated. A positive outcome of these two apparently rival projects would be to find mutual advantages and build them in complementarity to each other. The two projects can easily be linked with one another, and server different sectors or markets, reducing competitions but also reducing expensive duplication. This, if ever done, will dramatically transform the geostrategic landscape of the region" (Zeb, 2003).

Given the contemporary nature of the study, the research aims to take the existing work and developing it further by incorporating the history, the interaction of contrasting geographical setting of this region and studying the geopolitical behaviour of states therein. This work incorporates multiple states like Iran, Pakistan, India, China and United States, and even Russia as major players in this Arabian Sea region in order to frame the geostrategic infrastructural development vs regional connectivity along with the predictable challenges in the region. Hence, taking this as a literature gap the proposed study will attempt to fill that gap. Moreover, Chabahar and Gwadar port projects are recent projects having immense geopolitical value attached to it. Thus, this work would also add to the literature by documenting the on-going geopolitics while the work progresses.

1.3: Definition

Geopolitics is the exercise of politics over a recognized territory. In international Relations Geopolitics is appraisal of power factor on geographic features. The term was initially coined by Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen. Geopolitics in contemporary discourse has been used as a synonym for International Relations. Vladimir Toncea writes, “Geopolitics focuses on political power linked to geographic space. In particular, territorial waters and land territory in correlation with diplomatic history. Topics of geopolitics include relations between the interests of international political actors and interests focused within an area, a space, or a geographical element; relations which create a geopolitical system.” Geopolitics being a branch of Political Geography deals with the interrelation of geographic space and power.

The term Geostrategy was accepted way later than Geopolitics in the field of Political Geography. Although the term was used in German school colloquially to refer to military and political aspects. Geopolitics were given concisely, but this gap could not be filled. Brill 1985 argues, “this research gap is more regrettable because the term like hegemony, strategy, peripheral strategy, Third World, balance of power, grey zone, encirclement, opposite coasts, sea, land and air power, geopolitics, Europe, Middle Europe, Central Europe, East-middle Europe, heartland, borderland, living space only a few to mention require not more an explanation than the term geostrategy”. Geography happens to be the foundation for every nation’s power. “As against Karl Haushofer, Carl Schmitt considers geo as a specific opposite term and differentiates land, territory, terrain from ocean, sea and air as three different power and operational fields of human and historical activity”.

Andrew Gregory (1969) states, “Geostrategy is a branch of study of geopolitics dealing with questions concerning strategy; similarly, the use of geostrategy, by government is geopolitics based, a combination of political and strategical factors characterizing a particular geographical region”. Geostrategy, just like all kinds of strategies, focuses on linking means to ends. Geostrategy is a link between the resource of a nation with its geopolitical interests and ambitions varying on local, regional, or global scale. Strategy marred to geography as much as geography is marred with nationhood. As Colin Gray and Geoffrey Sloan opine that “Geography is the mother of strategy”. As opposed to geopoliticians, geostrategists take a nationalist perspective to geopolitics. Geostrategic principles are designed to revolve around a nation’s sovereignty, historical imperatives, nationalist impulses, resources base (limited or extensive), political ambitions, political geography of the space and time, technological advancements, military power, political stability, economic strengths, and soft power of the nation. Geostrategy may be used as a guideline to guide a country’s foreign policy choices. Notable geostrategic thinkers like Mahan, Mackinder, Kjellen, Ratzel, Haushofer, Spykman, Kissinger, Brzezinski, all have put geographical location that the core of their strategic theories and planning.

1.4: Rationale and Scope of Study

Rationale behind the study is to look into the ongoing geopolitics in the Arabian Sea region in general, and the competition for power through connectivity and infrastructure in particular. The study is centred upon the two important straits of Hormuz and Malacca on the mouth of which the two port projects of Chabahar and Gwadar are situated. On one hand it will help India in locating itself amidst the global politics of trade, communication and counter-terrorism activities in Afghanistan and maintain its good relationship with Iran on the other hand, as India is the third largest importer of oil from Iran and most of the oil refineries of India are designed for the Iranian oil.

Therefore, it becomes important for India to have strategic stand in Iran also to counter Sino-Pakistan containment moves across the ocean owing to the string of pearls that India apprehends. The great game of two major powers of the world USA and China have major interest in the region. Gwadar port project, on the other hand is China’s base that gives no concern of Indian disputed territory of Gilgit and PoK while building CPEC and OBOR.

India-Pakistan rivalry is also a reason that affects the movement of cargo and goods across the region as Pakistan denies India to reach Afghanistan through its territory, it is important to hold a counter strategic position like that of Chabahar in the region. This work would also contribute to the existing literature of the subject that may be built up in future with the progress of the regional geopolitics. For the scope, the study limits itself to explaining the geostrategic relevance, security issues and geopolitics of South and West Asia due to Chabahar and Gwadar port projects. This primarily includes the comparison of the ports in terms of capacity, funding, routes of export and import, presence of naval powers, surveillance of the maritime site, instances of conflict, and the development of urban centres surrounding the ports in Iran and Pakistan respectively. It is theoretically limited to explaining the geopolitical phenomena with a historical approach. The study will restrict itself by discussing the security issues for China, India, Iran, Pakistan and US in the Arabian Sea specifically in the Gulf of Oman because this region has numerous stakeholders. The study takes these six countries into consideration stressing more on the role of the host countries Iran and Pakistan for explaining the geopolitical setting of the region through the gateways of Chabahar and Gwadar.

1.5: Research Questions

- (1) How strategy and regional connectivity is developing in the 21st Century in Arabian Sea region?
- (2) What is the geostrategic significance of Chabahar and Gwadar Port Projects respectively and what are the legal provisions underlying the development these ports?
- (3) What are the economic, strategic and geopolitical advantages and disadvantages of these port projects to the host countries of Iran and Pakistan?
- (4) How the presence of United States in the region influences the geopolitics of the region owing to its relations with Iran and China?

1.6: Hypotheses

- (1) Growing Regional Connectivity through Chabahar and Gwadar Port Projects establishes peace and cooperation across the region.
- (2) Gwadar port project has intensified Chinese geostrategy in the Arabian Sea.

- (3) Chabahar port project has enabled India in countering containment by China through trade and naval presence.

1.7: Research Methodology

The study employs comparative research. Comparative analysis focuses on explaining differences and explaining similarities which helps to establish relationships between two or more phenomena and provide valid reasons. The study is descriptive in nature that employs Theories of Geopolitics and Sea Power to understand the history and course of development of the Chabahar and the Gwadar port projects. The study takes an Inductive approach to establish a geostrategic understanding of Chabahar and Gwadar port projects on the basis their geographical setting, the connectivity networks (cross border roads, rail networks, oil reserves, sea routes, straits etc) and intervening topography of the various states influenced by the port (like Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc) for explaining the geopolitical dynamics and implications of the region. The research employs both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources include official reports, news reports, and government documents like MoUs, speeches, bilateral and multilateral agreements. The secondary sources include books, articles of academic journals, reports from think tanks and agencies, relevant and reliable internet sources has been used. Online articles on opinions and news interviews of respective academicians, journalists, IFS officers, strategic thinkers and representatives of civil society related to these port projects. As it is political geography research, therefore, optimal use of charts, maps and diagrams has been used to make research comprehensive, objective and reliable.

1.8: Chapter Scheme

The first chapter presents an introduction to the background of the research area, and explains the concepts. This introductory chapter examines the existing literature along with identifying the definition, rationale and scope of the study. The chapter reviews existing literature on Geography and Geopolitics of Arabian Sea, Strategic Significance of Chabahar Port Project, Strategic location of Gwadar Port Project, Chinese Interest in Gwadar Port Project, The United States Goals, Urgency for having Access to Afghanistan. The second chapter is titled as Geo-strategy and Regional Connectivity in Arabian Sea. This chapter is designed to understand the geopolitics behind the strategic connectivity projects being carried out in Arabian Sea. Existing maritime projects in Asia has been discussed in detail.

This chapter incorporates inter-regional tensions over strategic infrastructural developments primarily by China, India, and the United States. The study advances on from geographical and historical reviews to contemporary setting of the region. The major discussions include Geography of the Arabian Sea, Geopolitics of Indian Ocean Region and Arabian Sea, China in the Indian Ocean Region, Geography of the Persian Gulf, History of the Persian Gulf, America and the Persian Gulf. These discussions lay down a basis for understanding the present day geopolitics followed by discussions on International Maritime Security Construct, Major International Organisations influencing the region, Major projects the region, Maritime Security and International Law of Sea, and Freedom of Navigation. At the end the chapter closes itself by highlighting the maritime doctrine of India, Iran and Pakistan in order to understand the prospects of the Chabahar and Gwadar port projects. The third chapter is dedicated to the Geopolitical Study of Chabahar Port: Rethinking Strategy and Risks. This chapter deals with India funded project of the Chabahar port. The chapter analyses the history and geography of Iran where Chabahar is situated, and its role in shaping the trilateral relation of India-Iran-Afghanistan.

The chapter progresses from discussing Chabahar Port's Location, Importance of Chabahar amidst the geography of Iran, to understanding the connectivity through Chabahar, linkage with Central Asia, significance of connectivity to International North-South Corridor, the Strait of Hormuz factor, and Chabahar Port and Iran's Looking to the East Policy. The later part of the chapter throws light on India-Iran relations, India-Afghan relations, and the significance of Chabahar in the trilateral relation of India-Iran-Central Asia. At the end sub projects of Chabahar Port project has been discussed as Chabahar-Zahedan -Zaranj (Afghanistan) Rail Line Project, followed by the geopolitical stand of United States, Russia, and China on the port project. Chapter four is devoted to Gwadar Port Project: Revisiting Strategy and Politics in the Arabian Sea. This chapter focuses on China backed Gwadar port project and its geopolitical relevance. This chapter opens with the study of history and geography of Gwadar, Capacity of Gwadar Port, Geostrategic Significance of Gwadar Port, and its role in shaping the Sino-Pak relation and the CPEC project. The strategic value of this port on transnational flows, and strategic competition in the region has been mentioned by highlighting linkages with Central Asia, the Khorgos Gwadar Axis, the Quadilateral Traffic and Transit Agreement, and other relevant projects.

The end part of this chapter incorporates discussing Chinese ambitions in Gwadar Port, countering the US Hegemony in the Persian Gulf, and concerns for India. The fifth chapter is the Comparative Analysis of Chabahar and Gwadar Port Projects. This chapter presents a detailed comparison of two port projects of Gwadar and Chabahar in terms of establishment objectives, economic factors, strategic connectivity, transnational flows, and regional power politics. This chapter also looks at the role and perception of various stakeholders like China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and United States of America towards these two projects respectively and to conclude a discussion on the New Great Game and the role of the two ports has also been incorporated. The last chapter or the sixth chapter provides a conclusion for the whole research. The conclusion summarizes the findings by revisit all the arguments of the previous chapters to present a comprehensive understanding of the comparative research analysis of Chabahar and Gwadar ports.

1.9: Limitation

This study has been carried out during COVID-19 pandemic therefore it bears reasonable limitations in certain aspects. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic field visits were restricted and primary surveys could not be conducted. The study took the data generated by trusted online sources into account. Inferences hence drawn in the study rely on the international data and the reported series of events occurring in the area of study. GIS mapping could not be carried out due to closure of academic institutions and personal help from experts could also not be arranged due to obvious reasons of social distancing. Consequently the maps and tables incorporated here are obtained from valid sources. This is a contemporary research, henceforth all the necessary literature was accessed, however due to travel restrictions international archives could not be accessed. The methodology is purely comparative and inferential in nature through which evaluation of geopolitical theories in the context of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports were made on the basis of a number of factors. Lastly, due to international academic stagnation along with paucity of possibilities for mobility and exchange of resource and development the study utilized a limited time period for completion. Therefore, the study positively being on outcome of rigorous research also assimilates inherent limitations owing to the unprecedented situation emerging in the form of a global pandemic.

Chapter-2

Geo-strategy and Regional Connectivity in Arabian Sea

2.1: Introduction

The Arabian Sea in oceanic terms transitions through the South and the West Asia. The South-central Asian region remained as the most disconnected region during late 90s. The past decade has brought significant transformation in the region and the most important element is growing regional connectivity. All important projects in Asia are aiming to establish permanent links between the South and Central Asia. This region is dominated by security issues, political tensions and economic planning. India, Pakistan, China, Iran, the GCC countries and the Central Asian countries, particularly Afghanistan are the major actors. Afghanistan gained a lot of geopolitical attention by the ever presence of the USA. The numerous reasons highlighting the significance of Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries have been discussed in present study but this region was very isolated from rest of the world during the 1990s, since then, there has been fundamental shifts in the socio-political and economic order of the country.

In order to keep Afghanistan engaged in the region by making it a part of the regional fabric. It is imperative to make Central Asia, a part of the Asian neighbourhood. There are four major areas of regional connectivity which illustrate the development of Energy, Trade and Transit, Customs and Borders, and People to people. In terms of Energy, first time in the history of region such technological developments have been achieved and has transformed the face of energy creating a regional energy grid that linked surplus energy resources from Central Asia to energy starved South Asia. Multiple investors of US, India, China have invested in hydropower projects, electricity lines and gas pipelines. Trade and Transit aspect needs both hard and soft infrastructural development. Hard infrastructural development incorporates building ports, rails, roads, bridges. The soft infrastructural development includes trade facilitation agreements, customs agreements, cross-border trade agreements, and technical elements that are indispensable in establishing the whole mechanism. The last decade has witnessed great progress in both hard and soft infrastructural development. More than 200 small and big road projects have been operated in Afghanistan alone for building and maintaining roads in the past decades. Not only in Central Asia, but foreign investors have also invested in Pakistan and other South Asian countries.

Mega projects like BRI, INSTC, CASA 1000 and numerous trade agreements between the numerous stakeholders have taken place. In order to link the region for better. WTO has played a key role in harmonising trade and custom regimes of this region and bringing a region which was not a part of the global trade fabric to join the global trading norms for an efficient and peaceful business. Third element is Customs and Borders, it is extremely important in moderating cross-border movements. The aim of establishing connectivity networks in this regard is to reduce the cost, time taken for transit, and smooth transaction. The idea is to identify area where unlocking borders and customs harmonisation is possible.

This comes with great security risks and challenges. Political leadership plays a pivotal role for starting and restarting borders and customs related conversations, cooperation and policy making. People to people aspect of regional connectivity created networks of entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, businesses through multiple trade forms, symposium, trade fares, education, academics, vocational training and building a communication network in the region so that people who have historically been isolated from each other can connect. Therefore, the main agenda of building connectivity networks unlocked the full potential of the South-West-Central Asian region. The region needs greater linkages and less hostilities, more open borders and less hard lines of control. But, security issues are the real in this region. Hence, geostrategy is naturally latched with connectivity infrastructures of all kinds. It is region of complexity with contrasting geographical conditions, ethno-political plight and geopolitical predicaments.

2.2: Geography of the Arabian Sea

In north western part of Indian Ocean lies the Indian Ocean covers 38, 62,000 square kilometres. The Arabian Sea forms an essential sea route between India and Europe. In the western part the horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula bounds the Arabian Sea whereas in the north it is bounded by Iran and Pakistan, the eastern side is the Indian Territory and the southern part is the Indian Ocean. The gulf of Oman, in northern side connects Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz. In the Western side the Gulf of Aden joins the Arabian Sea with the Red sea through to the strait of Bab-El-Mandeb. Along with India the Arabian Sea also shares border with Iran Pakistan Oman Yemen and Somalia.

Socotra off the horn of Africa, Kuriya Muriya Islands by the coast of Oman and Lakshadweep Islands are some of the few islands that lie in the Arabian Sea. There are no islands lying in the middle of Arabian Sea. The Arabian Sea is also fed by the Indus and Narmada rivers of India. The Arabian Sea has more than 2990 meters of depth. The deep water reaches the coast of Pakistan, Iran and India. The geology of the Arabian Sea is nearly 50 million years old. It came into existence as the Indian Subcontinent drifted towards Asia. The Carlsberg Ridge, lying southeast of Socotra island, joins the Indian Ocean bifurcating the Arabian Sea into two basins, east and west respectively, the Arabian Sea Basin and Somali Basin. The Murray Ridge separates the Gulf of Oman from the Arabian Sea. It is a zone of seismic activity that meets the Carlsberg ridge from northeast to southwest. The Malian subduction zone lies at the western side of Murray Ridge. According to the morphology of the Arabian Sea, the Indus River has cut a deep submarine canyon forming nearly 860 km wide and 1500 km long, with a deposition of thick sediment. This is an abyssal plain covering most of the sea floor in the north-eastern part of the Arabian Sea. The Somali basin forms another abyssal plain on the eastern Somali Coast. Along the Arabian Peninsula, the continental shelf is narrow. The Somali Continental shelf is narrower.

In climatic aspects, the Arabian Sea region has predominantly a monsoon climate. Air temperature varies from a minimum of 24 to 25 degrees Celsius on the surface of the sea during January and February months. While during June to November, the temperatures recorded are higher than 28 degrees Celsius. The southwest monsoon winds blowing from April to November bring rains over the region, affecting the salinity of 35 parts per thousand in the upper 45 metres or for 150 feet of the sea surface. During November to March, the region experiences a dry season, mostly due to the north-east monsoon winds blowing from the Indian subcontinent that also affects the salinity to more than 36 parts per thousand, extending over the whole Arabian Sea region. As the rate of evaporation increases, the annual precipitation and riverine influx decrease. On the other hand, the Somali current flows across the coast of Socotra, attaining a speed of 7 knots. In the Arabian Sea, the Somali current flows along the western frontier of north-western Africa. The Somali current reverses seasonally, unlike other powerful western boundary currents; its reversal has been attributed to the seasonally reversing Indian monsoon wind. For both regional climate and ecology, the Somali Current is significant and can potentially affect the precipitation of monsoons.

2.3: Geopolitics of Indian Ocean Region and Arabian Sea

The whole study encompasses the region of Arabian Sea, the western flank of Indian Ocean which surrounds the Gwadar Port, and its extension of Persian Gulf where Chabahar Port is situated and aided the important sea lanes of communication in the region. The Indian Ocean region extends from Africa to its West, Cape Agulhas to its south, Asian continent forming its northern border from Suez to Malayan Peninsula and on the eastern side, it is surrounded by Singapore, Indonesia, Australia and Tasmania. The southern end of Indian Ocean reaches to 60° South latitude as per the Antarctic treaty of 1959. Indian Ocean consists of 51 States including both coastal and landlocked. It also has four most critical waterways Suez Canal, Bab-el-Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. Some important seaports are Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Colombo, Durban, Jakarta, Melbourne, Richards Bay. Indian Ocean has a long tradition of trade, cultural exchange, and military interaction all around the globe. It is an international maritime trade highway with ever-growing geopolitical significance as it contains one-third of the global population, a quarter of the global landmass, and almost 40 percent oil and gas reserves of the world. For India, it is extremely important as it is dependent on these Maritime highways for almost 70 percent of its import. The majority of the global seaborne trade particularly the oil transits happen through the major choke points in the Indian Ocean where the Strait of Hormuz accounts for 40 percent, strait of Malacca accounts for 35 percent, and Bab El Mandeb Strait accounts for 8 percent of these transits.

However, the Indian Ocean is also a largely conflicted zone where most of the conflicts continue to be localized but it also triggers regional conflicts that are often of international significance. The most notable conflicts of the Indian Ocean is situated in its westernmost flank or the Middle East for example the Israel Palestine conflict, Iraq conflict, the tussle between Iran and the United States, instability of Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Tamil conflict of Sri Lanka and the evergreen India Pakistan conflict. It is also home to continuous evolving connectivity and strategic infrastructural development by regional powers like China, India, Pakistan, and Iran. This region has potential for nuclear confrontation between joint Nations of India and Pakistan, military confrontations between us Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. It is also a centre for terrorism, piracy, and exploitation of marine resources.

All the major powers in the world possess military bases in the Indian Ocean. Like the headquarter of the fifth fleet of United States is situated in Bahrain, Diego Garcia as an air and naval base, Chinese string of pearls, Indian bases in Seychelles and Chabahar, and other bases of France, Britain, and Germany. Varma, R. (1967) argued that “As a country with major interest in the Indian Ocean, India cannot afford to plan her defences on her own frontiers; she has to encourage naval development in the area; a power vacuum around her may tempt aggressor of tomorrow; she can easily co-operate with her neighbours in the following fields: Creation of training institutions of all types of naval warfare- gunnery, anti-submarine and so on- and providing facilities to naval personnel of other Asian countries in these; providing similar facilities in the proposed merchant navy academy; India is the first to start a ship-building industry in the area; this offers a nice field for co-operation; light craft, frigates and other vessels could make a small effective navy; for defensive purposes, a naval arm has also to be developed; joint exercises on the sea are the easiest way of co-operation in the naval sphere”. Sound military presence in the Indian Ocean is desirable to secure future interests in the region. Ahmad (2020) writes that, “India’s strategic vision for the IOR is based on the initiative named Security and Growth for All in the regions (SAGAR); SAGAR has the potential to provide solutions to India’s maritime security challenges; it can forge a consultative mechanism aimed at strengthening India’s geo-strategic outreach; but doing so solicits a strategic depth, not social media representations”. Thus, as China contains India projects that may secure Indian defences are needed.

2.4: China in Indian Ocean Region

China is now an aggressive power in the region transforming the dynamics of IOR. China is providing a huge amount of loans on unrealistic repayment terms and conditions as well as it is investing in humongous infrastructural projects of building roads, highways, railways, ports, dams, and power plants. Through its veto power in the UN, it is also extending military assistance and political support in sensitive regions on sensitive issues. Also, its interventions in the South China Sea have brought a stir in the international politics. Jawli, N. (2016) explained that “the South China Sea is dubbed by China as the ‘second Persian Sea’ for its oil reserves; it has 1,367,000 barrels oil production a day; the Chinese have calculated that the South China Sea will ultimately yield 130 billion barrels of oil; if these calculations are correct then it contains more oil than any area of the globe except Saudi Arabia; China is desperate for finding new energy resources as Chinese oil reserves account for only 1.1 percent

of the world total, while it consumes over 10 percent of world oil production and over 20 percent of all the energy consumed on the planet; Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation has invested \$20 billion in the region with the belief that there are vast reserves of oil in the area, which it can exploit”. Hence, India and the Indian Ocean are very critical in balancing power in the region and to secure the rights of every country in the region. Obama administration termed the IOR as the pivot to Asia underlying its significance in rebalancing the world powers. Post 9/11 the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean has grown considerably as it provided access to Afghanistan, via land and sea, the connecting it with sea lanes has facilitated an unprecedented cost cutting. The United States war on terror, its presence in Afghanistan for decades, and now its withdrawal from Afghanistan and have serious impact on global peace and security. For the same purpose India and Iran’s joint venture of Chabahar port project stands important for both the countries. It provides 60 percent cost cutting through maritime transport and 50 percent reduction of time taken by shipments from India to Central Asia and vice versa.

Similarly, Pakistan’s Gwadar port is capable of altering the region politics of IOR as it a part of CPEC. Experts argue that this project is strategically beneficial to China but this mega-investment may put Pakistan in a serious debt crisis in future. In additions, this project has also instigated apprehensions to India. China and India are struggling to maintain their hard earned cooperation but they are constantly seen in contestation over land border issues. But given the amount of trade deficit India has with China and the scale of infrastructural projects laid down with China, it becomes important for India to strive for cooperation in place of contestations because “neither Japan nor the US can offer India an economic prowess comparable to what ‘strategic competition’ with China can do; if India is hesitant to collaborate with China on infrastructural development, it must offer an alternative project for the benefit of IOR riparian countries; this may be done jointly with Japan, but will require a robust roadmap and huge financial commitments; on the other hand, the US has not proven its ability to hold its security guarantees for the riparian states; it is actually in a process of retreating from global engagements toward an inward-looking, protectionist stance”, Ahmad (2020). Therefore, it can be said that China is currently ruling the Indian Ocean Region and this makes it difficult for other countries to keep enough hold on this resource rich region. Thus, higher level of cooperation between democratic powers is imperative keep this region away from Chinese monopoly.

2.5: Geography of the Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf or Arabian Gulf or Iran's Gulf is the western most flank of Indian Ocean via the Strait of Hormuz that is situated between Iran at the north-western part and Arabian Peninsula at the South Western part. River Shatt Al-Arab drains at the north-western part of the Persian Gulf forming a significant delta. The Persian Gulf is situated in West Asia and is Mediterranean in nature. It is home to a number of fishing grounds, coral reefs, pearl oysters, Longtail Tuna, Skipjack Tuna, Kawakawa and more. As it is part of the old and famous Persian Empire this region has seen many wars both old and new, oil trade, transportation and industrialisation. The ecology of Persian Gulf has been greatly damaged by it. The Persian Gulf dates back to the Cenozoic era which accounts for the subduction of Arabian Plate into the Zagros Mountain ranges. Due to rise in sea levels the basin flooded fifteen thousand years ago due to the Holocene glacial retreat and got its present day look. Persian Gulf countries include Iran, Iraq, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. There are some territorially disputes islands within the Gulf as well. Bahrain is an island state. Iran's Qeshm Island is the largest island situated in the Gulf which is situated at the Strait of Hormuz. Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Kish are other Iranian islands. Kuwait administers Bubiyan Island, Saudi Arabia has Tarout Island, and UAE has Dalma islands. Artificial Island of like the World Islands of Dubai and The Pearl Island of Doha in Qatar are great tourist attractions.

The oceanographic characteristics of the Persian Gulf is peculiar as it experiences water deficit. Rivers feed the Gulf with about 2000 cubic metres of water and precipitation accounts for 180mm of water. However, due to greater rate of evaporation the balance between river discharge and evaporation goes in a deficit of 100 cubic metres per year. Therefore the salinity is high. The saline water flows through the bottom of Strait of Hormuz into the Indian Ocean while low salinity water from the Indian Ocean flows into the Persian Gulf through the surface. In other words, high density water flows out through the bottom and low density water flows in over the higher salinity. Finally, name of the sea has been named after Iran's old name Persia but the naming suffered a lot of dispute from the Arab nation's mostly rival nations of Persia or present day Iran.

2.6: History of Persian Gulf

The first War in the Persian Gulf took place in January 1991. Iraq was having an armed conflict with a coalition of United States, Britain, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, a total of 39 countries. Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in the month of August 1990 as a result of which this war happened. The reason behind the war was allegedly the overproduction of crude oil by Kuwait which competed with Iraq's oil prices in the world and Saddam Hussein the then president of Iraq couldn't withstand a loss of nearly estimated to be 14 billion per year. Kuwait was also accused for pumping crude oil from Iraqi territory of Rumaila oil fields. The UN Security council tried to become an intermediate by calling Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and majority of trade with Iraq was embargoed. As Saudi Arabia is a close ally to the United States, the states moved to Saudi in order to protect its oil fields. The United Nations ordered Iraq to withdraw by January 15, 1991 but Saddam Hussein refused. As a response to this non-compliance Operation Desert Storm was launched by the US on 18, January, 1991. The United States with its coalition launched a massive air strike on Iraqi forces destroying a number of military and civilian infrastructures. Again as a response Iraq with the help of its terror groups set in motion scud missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel, in order to unsuccessfully intensify the war by attacking the allies.

After February 24, 1991 the coalition army stormed Kuwait and Southern Iraq. In four days they liberated Kuwait, defeated and encircled Iraq. The war came to end on February 28th when a cease fire was declared by US President Bush. As a result of the war, the coalition allegedly won, enormous damage was suffered by Kuwait and Iraq, but the war couldn't overthrow Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Hussein then used the Shiite and Kurds revolts to provoke the US in the region. Although Iraq agreed to the terms of peace with the coalition forces but the Iraqi side kept on violating the terms of the peace treaty. Iraq mostly had uncooperative behaviour towards UN weapon inspection in particular. In response to these provocations a small war like situation broke out in 1993 when the US, Britain, France set air attacks by cruise missiles against Iraq. The US also blamed Iraq to plan for President Bush's assassination. Due to all this attacks and response from both sides the bombings, raids, trade sanctions, embargoes continued. A second Persian Gulf War took place in March 2003. It was also known as the Iraq War. Iraq was invaded by US and Britain forces. The core reason is the non-cooperation by Iraq in weapon inspections by the US.

The United States favoured the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and post 9/11 attack the United States went on its war terror incorporating its first-strike doctrine. The then defence secretary of US Rumsfeld openly suggested a possible strike on Iraq as early as in 2001 October and by November 2001 President Bush reviewed the war-plan by Rumsfeld. Iraq, Iran and North Korea were accused to be the “axis of evil” by US President Bush. As Iraq failed to abide by the UN weapon inspection, the United States accused it of having weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism. The US instigated for a regime change in the Iraq and published false news of military plan for waging war. President Bush built pressure on the UN Security Council to act strictly against Iraq or loose relevance as an organisation in the world. The US congress approved military action on Iraq in October 2002, by November the Security Council asked Iraq to co-operate with the UN weapon inspection as a final call. Iraq agreed with the inspection and intense inspections were made. Iraq gave a declaration that it had no weapons of mass destruction in December 2002 but later on it was refuted as incomplete and misleading by the US However, by January 2003, the inspection committee by the UN actually had no evidence of Iraqi possession of nuclear weapon or any related programs.

The opposition against Iraq decreased in the international arena but despite of increased resentment from France, Germany and Russia, the US and British militaries intensified their bases around Iraq. The US and British kept on insisting that Iraq is hiding nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Turkey refused to allow base for the allied powers on its territory. Turkey base could have stood strategically significant as a north front for Iraq. However, most of the allied forces were in position by March 2003. The US failed to win the approval from UN Security Council. Even though, US president Bush gave an ultimatum to Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein to surrender on March 17. Two days later a massive war was declared on Iraq targeting Saddam Hussein and other leadership of Iraq. Ground forces stormed Baghdad, captured the southern oil fields of Iraq, and took over the port facilities of Iraq. Along with the Kurdish people the Anglo American allied forces opened the northern front by the end of March 2003. Saddam Hussein’s army was defeated, government fell, the allied powers took control of the cities, and Hussein disappeared by mid-April. To prove the constructive role the allied powers started rebuilding Iraq and resettlement of new Iraqi government. President Bush declared victory over Iraq on 1st May, 2003.

No weapons of mass destruction were obtained anyway but in order to justify the massive war, the allied forces exaggerated Iraqi biological and chemical dangers to the world. Saddam Hussein was captured by end of 2003 in December. A trial against Saddam Hussein ran in 2004 and he was convicted of crime against humanity, and finally his execution took place in 2006. As an aftermath of the war, Iraq and largely most part of the Middle East suffered great economic loss, insurgencies, and ethno-political violence. The US officially ended its combat operations in Iraq by August, 2010 and they totally retreated by December, 2011.

2.7: America and the Persian Gulf

The on-going tensions in the Persian Gulf are also geopolitically important to note. Koushki, M., & Moslehi, S. (2019) opines that “America’s expansion of presence in this region and above all the Persian Gulf’s hydrocarbon resources have been effective in the international politics of this region and since it hosts approximately 50 percent of the world’s oil resources, and thus plays an important strategic and geopolitical role; this region is of paramount importance in the international system and its significance will probably continue until its hydrocarbon resources are depleted”. At this time Iran is having stressed relations with the United States and its allies. During May of 2019 the United States again started intensifying its military presence in the region in opposition to Iran’s alleged plans to attack bases of the US and its interest in the region. This invited political tussle between Khomeini and Trump administration. It also includes the US withdrawal from JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). New sanctions and embargos were levied against Iran. Trump administration also termed Islamist Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran’s military as a terrorist organisation. Iran, in retaliation, designated US Central Command as a terror group.

Furthermore, a number of ships were destroyed in the Persian Gulf during May and June of 2019. Iran was blamed by the allied nations while Iran denied it’s involvement in these instances. Later on in June 2019, an American surveillance drone was flying over the Strait of Hormuz which was shot down by Iranian forces. The tensions between the two aggravated sharply and the region nearly escaped an armed conflict between US and Iran. Again in July of 2019, the British seized Iran’s oil tanker in the Strait of Gibraltar accusing it to be transporting oil to Syria which violated the sanctions levied by the European Union.

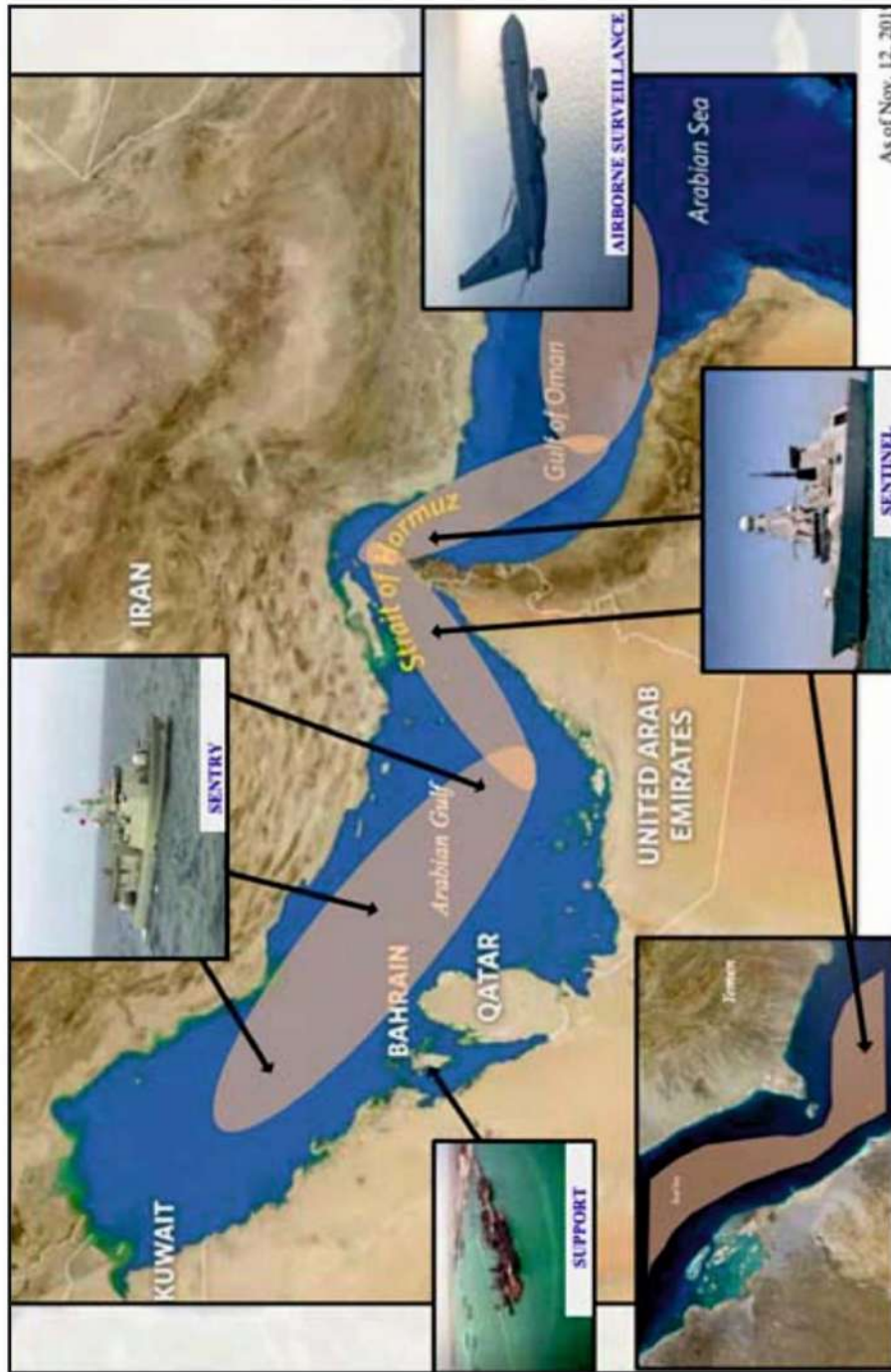
Again in response the Iranian side seized an oil tanker of Britain in the Persian Gulf along with its crew members. However, both UK and Iran released each other's tankers. US Department of Defence meanwhile established an International Maritime Security Construct which aimed to intensify the whole surveillance and security movements in major waterways in the Middle East. The crisis never halted. It escalated again by the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. It was when a segment of Iraq's Popular Mobilization forces, Kata'ib Hezbollah militants allegedly assassinated an American contractor. As retaliation, the US launched an airstrike on Hezbollah facilities located in Iraq and Syria. 25 militia were killed and Hezbollah responded by attacking the United States embassy located in Baghdad. This attack prompted the deployment of hundreds of US marine troops to the Middle East region. The US declared that it may carry out a pre-emptive attack on Iran's non-state actors or proxies located in Iraq. Later on Iran's IRGC commander Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis Iran's PMF commander were assassinated in a drone airstrike conducted by the US.

Khomeini pledged to avenge the death of its commanders. In response the US sent 4000 military troops to the conflict region while Israel, a close US ally, toughened its defences. By January 5, 2020, Iran got itself out of JCPOA and resolved to remove every foreign military force from Iranian territory. Within few days an open conflict broke out between the United States and Iran. The Islamist Revolutionary Guard Corps launched ballistic missile attack on two US bases in Iran to avenge Soleimani. The whole process came too close to the brink of war. Upon investigation the US didn't find any casualties of its troops hence they indirectly responded by putting new sanctions on Iran. The investigation later on suggested that many troops of the US survived the attack. The tensions between the two sustained. Iran later on shot down a Ukrainian passenger aircraft mistaking it for US aircraft (The Guardian).

2.8: International Maritime Security Construct

Earlier called Operation Sentinel, the International Maritime Security Construct is a multilateral maritime collaboration established by the United States to maintain peace and security in the gulf (Fig.-2.1). It came into existence as a response to Iran's seizing commercial tanks and shipments. It was formed during July 2019, to combat the increasing threatening situation to the freedom of navigation as well as the free flow of trade and commerce for legal mariners in the Middle Eastern international waters.

Figure-2.1: International Maritime Security Construct of the Persian Gulf



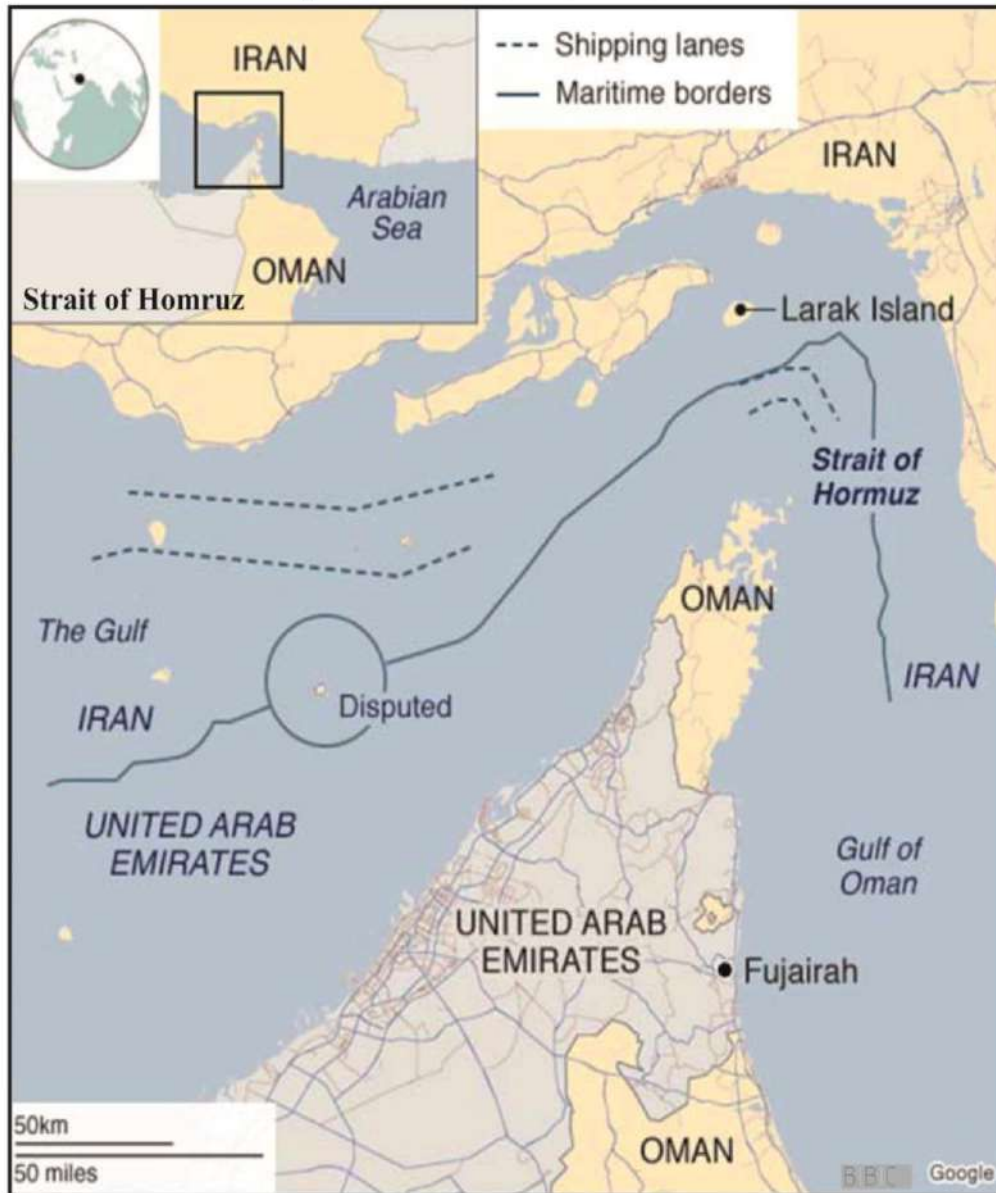
Source: <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org>

Coalition Task Force Sentinel is the operational wing of International Maritime Security Construct which came into effect on 7th November, 2019 to deter any state sponsored terrorism or piracy or any illegitimate activity in the Gulf to secure the merchant shipping industry. The area of operation extends from the Persian Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz to the Gulf of Oman extending through the Gulf of Aden, Bab-el-Mandeb into the Red Sea. Members of IMSC include Albania, Bahrain, Estonia, Lithuania, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the UK and the US. Recent clashes between Iran and the US show that such a Maritime construct can influence the politics of the Middle East to a great extent. Iran is aggressive with the US due to the never ending sanctions levied by America. On the other hand America is not willing to withdraw its influence from the Persian Gulf not only because of its resource base but also for its geopolitical significance in the world. America believes that such an aggressive behaviour from Iran can destabilize the international order. However, the international order in contemporary times is dictated by China and the United States of America only. Here, China is cooperating with Russia and Iran on Naval exercises. Iran, Russia and China operated a joint Naval exercise in September 2019. This exercise was considered remarkable as it happened during the tensions between US and Iran and when America is leading a naval patrolling coalition in the region. China however, maintains a low key stand in the fragile politics of Arab Nations. Russia extends substantial support to Iran in patrolling the Persian Gulf, and the Post-cold war rivalry between Russia and the United States prevails in the strategic planning of this region.

2.9: Geopolitical Significance of the Strait of Hormuz

Strait of Hormuz links the Persian Gulf on western side to the Gulf of Oman on east and also the Arabian Sea in the southeast (Fig.-2.2). North of the Strait is old Persian Empire or today's Iran while UAE is situated in the southern coast. The strait measures upto 55 to 95 kilometres in width as it separates the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamist Republic of Iran. It has a number of islands like Qeshm, Hormuz and Hengam. These islands are strategically and economically extremely significant. All oil tankers and shipments starting from Persian Gulf has to traverse through this Strait of Hormuz. Member of OPEC like Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, Kuwait, Iraq use the Persian Gulf for nearly all of their exports. Qatar is the world's largest exporter of LNG or liquified natural gas and it also depends on the Strait of Hormuz for its exports.

Figure-2.2: Strait of Hormuz



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49070882>

Although from strategic and economic point of view such immense dependence is unhealthy for the OPEC countries hence rich countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE have started investing in bypass routes, and pipeline projects but for a fairly long time the Strait of Hormuz will stand important and necessary for the trade and strategic activities. “Hormuz Strait is one of the vital geographical locations of the Persian Gulf and one of the world’s most important international straits; although Hormuz is located between Iran and Oman, it is Iran which controls this Strait; Oman has little military control over it; Hormuz Strait plays a key role in transferring oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf; Foreign vessels navigate through this strait and their presence is recognized as legal, according to international and maritime laws, article 38, 1982 UN convention on maritime laws; this Strait is important to America and European countries; they consider it as part of that law (Parsapoor, 2016). There are several important straits in the world which helps geostrategic and geo-economic objectives of all the countries. Some major straits are Strait of Malacca, Bab-el-Mandeb, Palk Strait, Sunda Strait, Mozambique Channel, Gibraltar Strait, Bosphorus Strait and Dardanelles Strait, Yucatan Strait, Mesina Strait, Otranto Strait, Cook Strait, North Channel, Hudson Strait, Magellan Strait, Makassar Strait, Tsugaru Strait, Bering Strait, Denmark Strait, Dover strait, Florida Strait and many more. These are the lifelines of maritime trade and security.

2.10: Major International Organisations influencing the Region

(a) G20

The official website of G20 states that “the G20 is the international forum that brings together the world’s major economies; its members account for more than 80 percent of world GDP, 75 percent of global trade and 60 percent of the population of the planet; the forum has met every year since 1999 and includes, since 2008, a yearly Summit, with the participation of the respective Heads of State and Government” (Fig.- 2.3). It consists of governments and governors of the Central Bank from 19 nations and the European Union. The 19 countries include United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, China, India, Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and South Africa.

Figure 2.3: Member Nations of the G20



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-48776664>

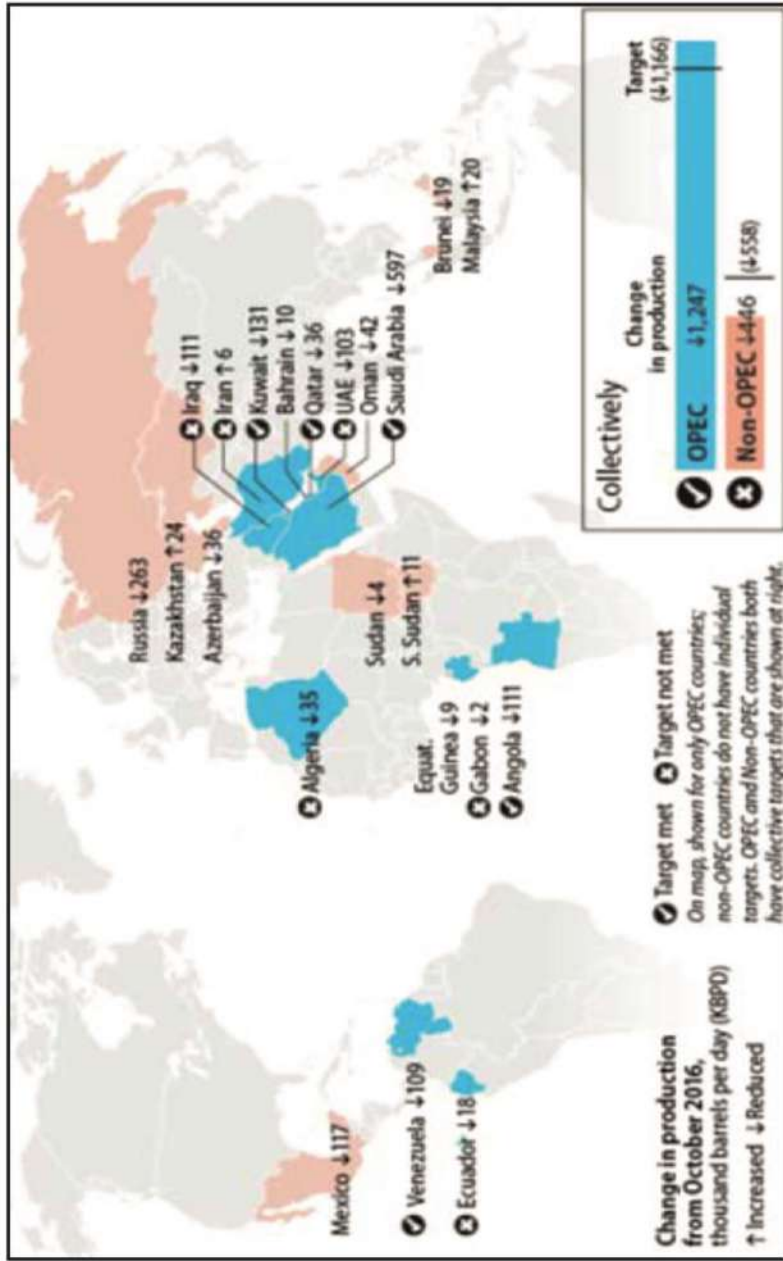
Note: The European Union is also a Member

The main agenda of the G20 group has been on Sustainable economic policies, global financial stability, balanced sovereign debt, and to contribute two different International organisations like World Bank and IMF also for strengthening global financial system. With time larger issues like transnational migration, digitisation, health care system, employment, and foreign assistance were added to G20 agenda. India being a member of the G20 has been playing an important role in balancing its relations with Iran and the US on the matters of investment of Chabahar port. Due to the importance of Indo-US relations, the US allowed special exemption from the sanctions imposed on Iran Chabahar project. In 2016 G20 summit, India raised its voice against CPEC, as this project involves the disputed area of Gilgit-Baltistan and POK that allegedly belongs to Indian Territory.

(b) Organisation of Petroleum Export by Countries (OPEC)

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a permanent intergovernmental organization composed of 13 oil-exporting developing countries that coordinates and unifies the petroleum policies of its members. According to its Statute, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has the mission of coordinating and unifying the petroleum policies of its Member Countries, as well as ensuring the stability of oil markets, in order to ensure an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, a consistent income for producers, and a reasonable return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry. With the signing of an agreement in September 1960 in Baghdad, Iraq, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was established. The agreement was signed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, who were to be the Organization's founding members and became the Organization's founding members. These countries were later joined by Qatar (1961), Indonesia (1962), Libya (1962), the United Arab Emirates (1967), Algeria (1969), Nigeria (1971), Ecuador (1973), Gabon (1975), Angola (2007), Equatorial Guinea (2017) and Congo (2018) (Fig.-2.4), as per the official website. Having the fourth largest oil reserve, Iran is an important member of the OPEC group and Chabahar port is expected to facilitate Iran's oil export too. India and Iran share age old buyer of Iranian oil. However, the recent US-Iran tensions affected the Indo-Iran equation. Iran had multiple UN sanctions during 2011-16.

Figure-2.4: Oil Production: OPEC vs Non-OPEC Countries



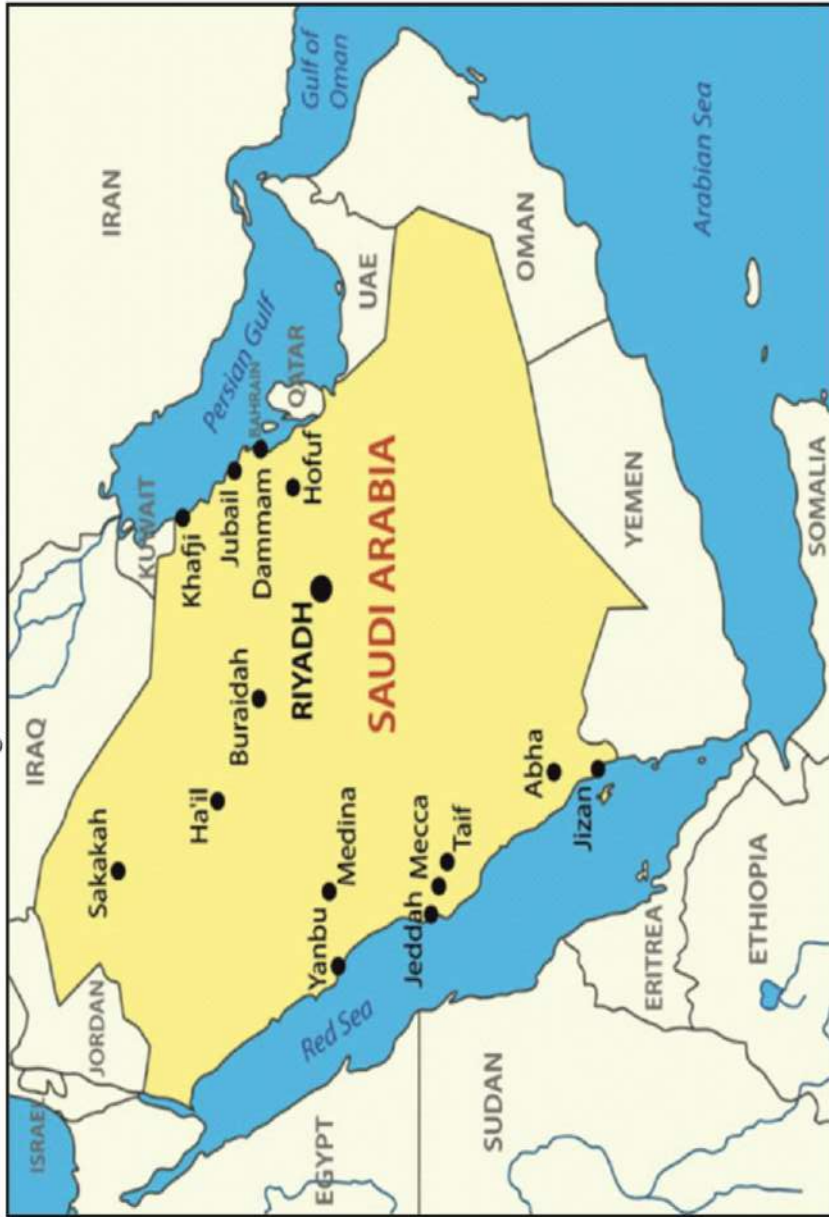
Source: <https://www.themaparchive.com/product/the-mauryan-empire-under-chandragupta-c-317-bce/>

At that time India's banks also ceased making transactions with Iran and hence India had to stop buying oil from Iran owing to the undue geopolitical pressure. Later India and Iran settled on trading half of the oil in Indian currency. Imports were substantially reduced post 2011. In 2016 as soon as the sanctions eased Iranian oil imports to India jumped upto 800,000bpd in July 2018. Iran received a payment of \$6.5 billion from India for past purchases of 2012-16, but reports say that since May 2019 India has not received oil from Iran. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, a very important member of OPEC has extended support to Pakistan by promising an investment of 10 billion dollar to establish oil refineries in the deep-water port of Gwadar in 2019. The soaring oil prices made Pakistan needy for financing assistance from such countries. In 2018, Saudi Arabia also helped Pakistan with 6 billion dollars to get sufficient crude oil imports. These investments would make Saudi Arabia a part of CPEC and establish good terms with China. While Saudi Arabia and Iran share age old rivalry on political, economic, and religious basis, such investments trigger some geopolitical competition between Chabahar and Gwadar too.

(c) Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC)

Gulf Cooperation Council also known as the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf which is a regional organization of Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia (Fig.-2.5). This organization aims to formulate regulations for cooperation on economic like trade, customs, finances and exchange, religious and scientific basis. Aims also include fostering industrial, agricultural, mining, water security, and biodiversity, setting up scientific and technical research centers, having joint ventures, and joint military like the Peninsular Shield Force. Hassan Rouhani in September 2019, optimistically released a project named "Hormuz Peace Endeavour" also known as HOPE in the 74th US General Assembly meeting. Iran assumes that it is its historical accountability to ensure peace, security and progress in the region. It particularly dominates the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. It wishes for the littoral countries of the Persian Gulf to join "HOPE" and work in cooperation. However, Iran is having the most troubled relationship with the GCC. GCC members don't acknowledge "HOPE" and ignore working with Iran in regional security maintenance. Saudi Arabia, being the most influential of GCC disregards this initiative.

Figure-2.5: GCC Countries



Source: Howard, Jason. (2014). Medical devices and the Middle East: Market, regulation, and reimbursement in Gulf Cooperation Council states. *Medical devices* (Auckland, N.Z.), 7, 385-395. 10.2147/MDER.S73079

Their relations went sour after the extremist attack of 2016, where the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tehran and the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Mashhad came under attack by Shia group to avenge the execution of Shia Cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others by Saudi Arabia for alleged terrorism. Since then the geopolitical terms between Riyadh and Tehran also soured. The US is a close ally of Saudi and both Saudi and Iran have been involved in proxy wars hence the regional stability remains at stake. Kuwait avoids face to face friction with Iran. It is a close US ally and possesses many military bases of the US. As Iran called for the withdrawal of the supra-regional military from the region Kuwait remains under threat. Since it shares borders with Iran and Iraq, two very aggressive countries, Kuwait prefers US presence on its territory as a measure of strategic deterrence against the two aggressive nations. Another important GCC member has not much trouble with Iran. Like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt ostracized Qatar and put economic bans in 2017, Iran came to its rescue by providing financial aid opening its Airspace and ports for transporting food and goods to Doha. They share healthy geopolitical relations. Even Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad, Emir of Qatar, paid a visit to Tehran in 2020. But Qatar aligns with the US on regional security, military and strategic matters. It did not join “HOPE”. As the US Central Command is situated in Al-Udeid base, Qatar, Iran designated the CENTCOM as a terrorist organisation in retaliation of US designating IRGC as a terror group.

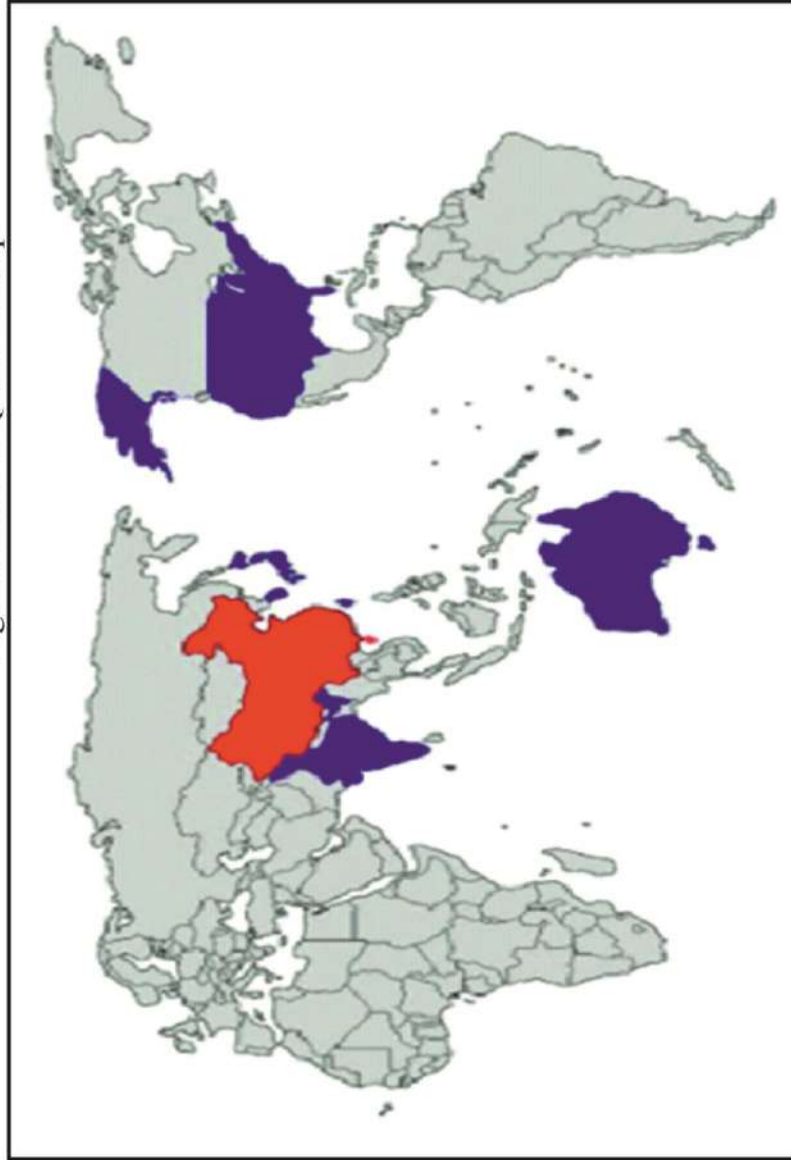
As Bahrain and UAE established normalcy with Israel, the project “HOPE” saw a major setback. Bahrain labels Iran as a permanent threat to its national security. Iran despises this move and considers the two countries treacherous. Even though Saudi Arabia stands against Israel in the recent Israel-Palestine war of 2021 it has given a couple of allowance to Israel in past. Therefore, GCC mostly has unfriendly terms with Iran which means that any development in Iran will not be taken normally by GCC countries. The development of Chabahar port however is backed by India which enjoys fairly good relations with the GCC. Pakistan on the other hand is losing ties with GCC for criticising OIC and changing GCC-Israel geopolitical dynamics. Only bilateral ties are holding the relationship closely. Furthermore, the CPEC poses strategic implications for the GCC but China-GCC relations have improved significantly in the last decade. This complicates the situation. From 10 billion dollars in 2000, the China-GCC trade has grown to 114 billion dollars by 2016.

Even though China-GCC relations suit the objective of BRI there has not been an officially acclaimed economic corridor on the Arabian Peninsula. Six corridors have been proposed under the BRI but none of them is formally involved with the GCC but absence of a corridor does not translate into a non-participation of GCC with China. Two corridors already feature the gulf as its end point. Gwadar port is the end point of both China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor and CPEC. These two corridors pose geostrategic concerns and challenges to the GCC countries. Even though China claims this to be an economic oriented project the political as well as security consideration remains for the countries from which these corridors are passing through. From another perspective BRI being the Chinese flagship project will open tremendous opportunities for bilateral and multilateral ties between GCC and China. It can enhance GCC-China oil trade directly from the Persian Gulf to Xinjiang. The only concern is strategic. Fulton states, “this corridor runs from western China, through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan with one endpoint in Turkey and the other in Iran; the latter, considered a key actor within this corridor, can provide China with access to an important Persian Gulf transport and logistics hub, as well as to Iranian energy exports given the tense state of relations between the G.C.C. and Iran, any such initiative is likely to be perceived by those on the Arabian side of the Gulf as problematic; deeper ties between China and Turkey is also a concern for some G.C.C. states”. Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E had unfriendly terms with Turkey and situations worsened when Turkey extended support to Qatar during Qatar-Saudi, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt diplomatic standoff. Meanwhile if Iran and Turkey become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation resulting into their closeness with China, China-Central-West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC) may problematize situations with the GCC. Hence, CPEC and Gwadar port being an integral part of the BRI may seem to be contesting the interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and since they are the most important, influential, and powerful members of GCC there is a greater probability GCC would not take part in China-Central-West Asia Economic Corridor.

(d) QUAD

Advancing from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific in recent times to the latest QUAD, this organisation is significant in this region and carries immense geopolitical leverage (Fig.-2.6). The constituting countries are America, India, Japan and Australia.

Figure-2.6: The QUAD Group



Source: <https://www.asianaffairs.in/rise-of-the-quad/>

Hua Chunying in a press conference on 12th May 2021 opined that QUAD is a divisive group, China takes it as a challenge from a counter alignment which is an attempt by other powers to instigate Chinese neighbourhood to go against China. In 2021, Bangladesh was advised not to join QUAD by Chinese ambassador of Bangladesh Li Ximing. China stated that any such alliance would result into friction in bilateral ties as QUAD group is an anti-China group. However, Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, the foreign minister of Bangladesh clarified that theirs is a sovereign country and they would do as they please within their sovereign power. Therefore, it's evident that the QUAD is causing geopolitical commotion in the region. China has been successful in consolidating its status in the Indo-Pacific region in a matter of few decades. Its growing assertion in the resource-rich South China Sea is a matter of geopolitical tension for the regional countries as well as for the global superpowers. QUAD held an online summit on the 12th of March 2021 with an agenda for cooperation on COVID 19, Climate Change, and other global issues but the framework also has buried aspirations of dominating the region by containing China. QUAD is spending in the matters of regional security, military, and naval exercises.

India participated with French naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal for a three-day joint military exercise in La Perouse on 5th April 2021. The aim was to promote maritime cooperation via an open and free Indo-Pacific. Other joint naval exercises scheduled to be held in the Persian Gulf with UAE have made Iran conscious. China is utilizing this insecurity by investing a huge amount in energy cooperation, estimated to be 400 billion dollars to date. Experts speculate that China and Iran can also start cooperating in defence and strategic activities. Iran may find it significant in countering America and its Arabian allies but China will not damage its relations with the Arabs or the Israelis. However, there are great chances that China would indulge Iran in the BRI and keep buying oils from Iran despite American sanctions. Such ties come as discomfort to India as the two moves towards permanent and strategic ties. The India-Iran relations have been shadowed by the American sanctions. Although, the US exempted the Chabahar port project the progress has been irregular and sporadic. With Iran excluding India on the rail link project, India resumed its proactive role in the infrastructural development as it cannot afford to lose this promising connectivity network to Central Asia. China is developing the Gwadar port in Pakistan and Iran planning to link it with Chabahar, India's purpose of investing can be partly defeated.

(e) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation consists of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. India was one of the founding members of SAARC. It was established in 1985 with the idea of cooperating on economic, technological, social, cultural matters. India, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been the members of SAARC but due to Indo-Pak rivalry Pakistan never gave India a safe and secure passage to Afghanistan. For a long time India kept persuading Pakistan to allow a land transit as Afghanistan is a land locked country. India added Afghanistan to SAARC in 2007 in order to get greater cooperation from Pakistan but it didn't happen. Pakistan and Afghanistan signed an agreement over connectivity and transit trade in 2010. India expected that now Pakistan may allow Afghanistan to transport goods to and from India's border in Attari but Pakistan did not agree on this movement as well. By building Chabahar port India gained direct access to Afghanistan. Yet, Pakistan claims that India's presence in Afghanistan may destabilise Pakistan. India, Iran and Afghanistan got Chabahar port as an important means to carry out trade freely and also reducing Afghan's dependency on Karachi deep water port. Gwadar port is surely enriching Pakistan and China.

(f) Other Important International Organisations

Other important international organisations influencing the Asian region include Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Arab League.

2.11: Major Projects of the region

Asia is one of least connected region in the world but the past few decades have marked the emergence of multiple mega projects aiming towards regional integration. Most of the countries in this region have been under the British rule or other imperial powers and by the withdrawal of previous rule the countries struggled to develop their economy and society. With the beginning of the 21st century this region became home to most powerful economies in the world yet the underlying security issues, political disturbances, social inequalities, and resource scarcity couldn't be ignored. Powerful countries across Asia began with trans-national infrastructural development to ensure smooth operation of global supply chains, trade, and preservation of national interest.

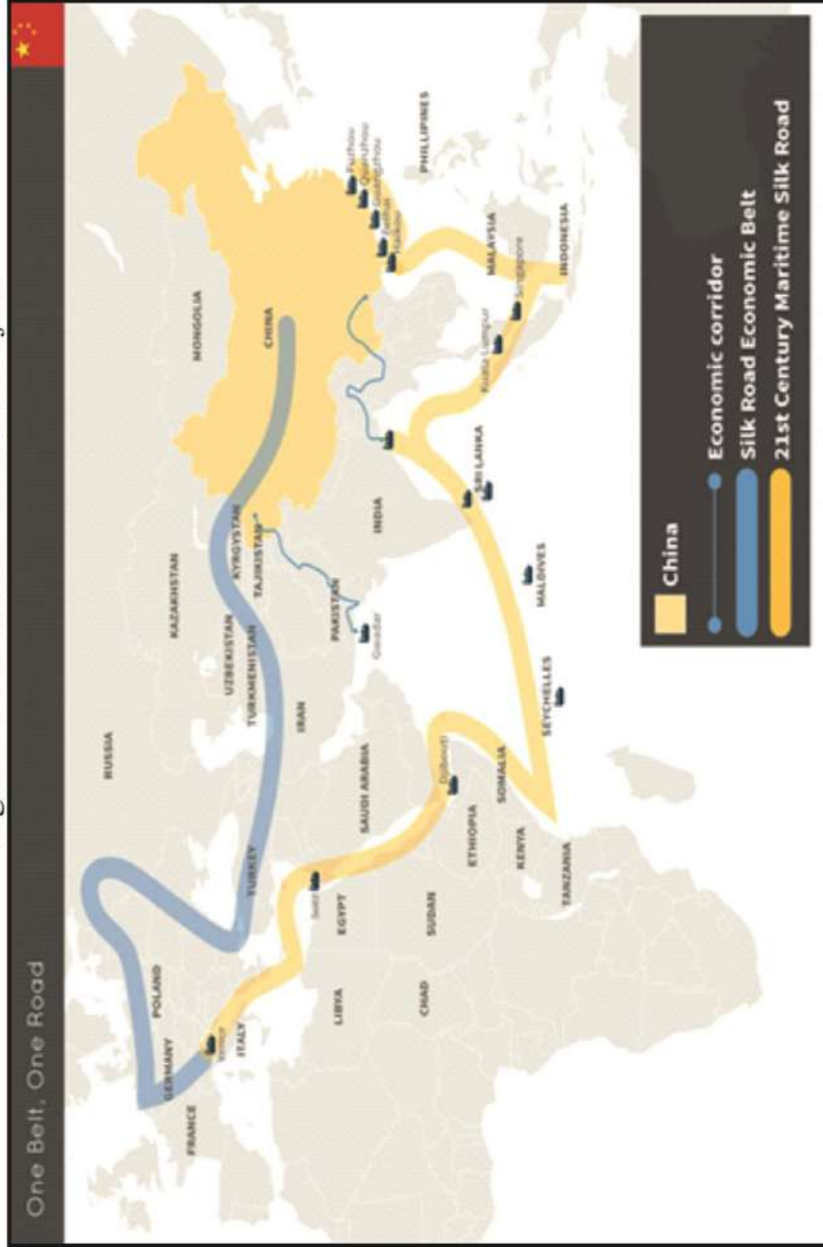
This section highlights few important infrastructural projects that are transforming the face of Asia in this century.

(a) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative is a megaproject with potentials of changing the geopolitical landscape of Asia (Fig.-2.7). “Originally announced by Chairman Xi Jinping in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to bolster China’s connectivity with the world; while the name Belt and Road Initiative implies two routes, a maritime road through the Indian Ocean and a land belt across Central Asia in reality, BRI projects encompass multiple, interconnected global networks; the BRI combines old and new projects, covers an extended geographic region, and includes efforts to strengthen infrastructure development, investment, and cultural ties; according to official estimates, the Chinese government is pursuing BRI projects in 138 countries primarily in South, Southeast, and Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; despite Xi’s claims that BRI is an open and inclusive process, and not about creating an exclusive China club, the initiative is viewed by many as the centrepiece of China’s foreign policy aspirations”, Anwar (2019). Firstly, China suffers from regional instability due to ethnic diversity, economic inequality, and geographically contrasting topography making it difficult for the state to establish control. Eastern seaboard is far wealthier than the western side. Therefore, regional connectivity via BRI is taken as panacea for Chinese growth and development.

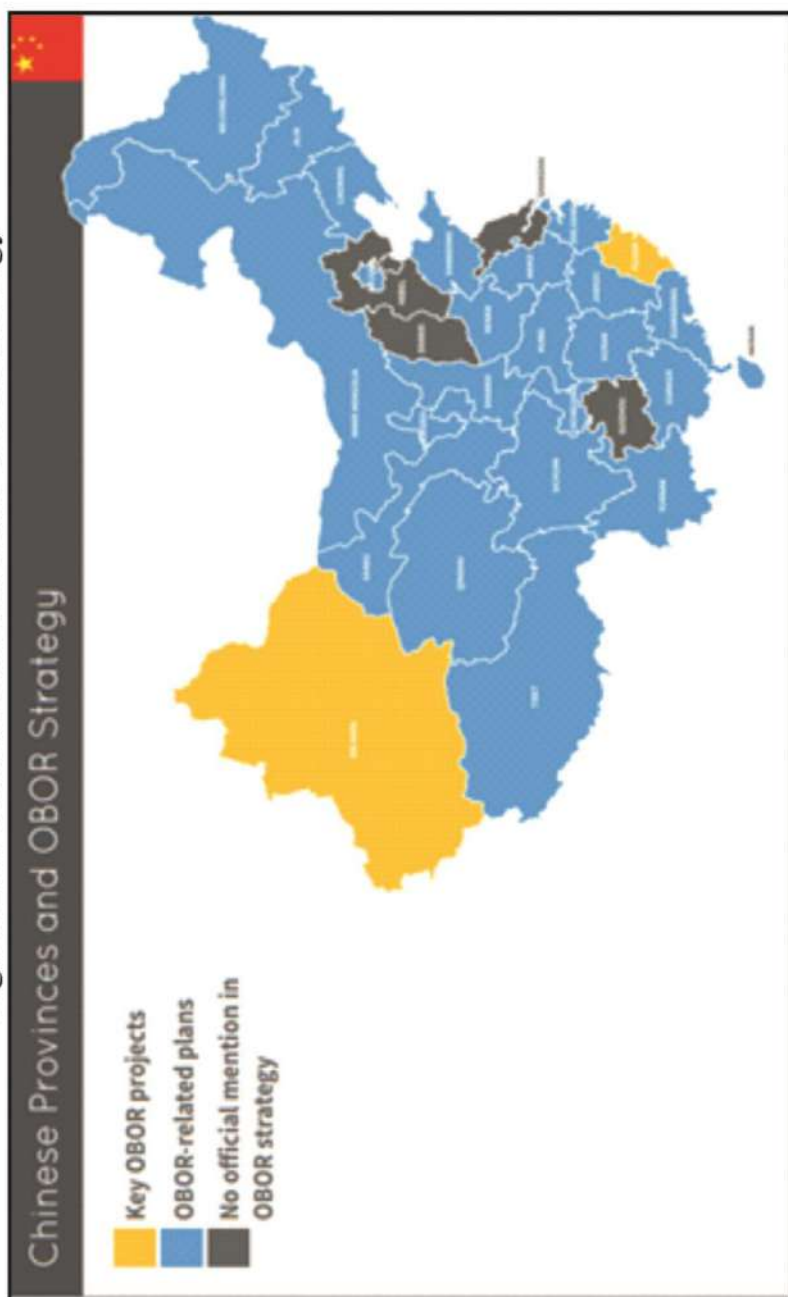
Secondly, BRI offers an enormous opportunity for Chinese companies to expand their business across Asia, Europe and parts of Africa. President Xi Jinping has intimately associated his political identity with BRI as the Chinese Communist Party enshrined BRI in its charter in 2017. The leadership promotes the “Chinese Dream” of prosperous China capable of creating a better international order by building a global community of shared destiny. BRI consists of five routes. Three of which are land based routes and two are maritime routes. The continental routes link China to West Europe via Russia, Central Asian and west Asian region. Meanwhile, the maritime routes link South China Sea to the IOR (Fig.-2.8). In 2017, The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) encapsulate the six economic corridors that connect China to rest of the globe as follow:

Figure-2.7: One Belt One Road Project



Source: Cai, P. (2017). (Rep.). Lowy Institute for International Policy. Retrieved May 29, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10136>

Figure-2.8: Chinese Provinces and OBOR Strategy



Source: Cai, P. (2017). (Rep.). Lowy Institute for International Policy. Retrieved May 29, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10136>

1. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM)
2. China-Indo Peninsula (ICP)
3. China-Central-West Asia (CAWA)
4. New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB)
5. China-Mongolia-Russia (CMR), and,
6. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Despite of geo-economic considerations the BRI is seen to be more geo-strategically driven. “The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor is a prime example; it is widely regarded as one of the flagship projects of OBOR and is enthusiastically supported by both Beijing and Islamabad; the proposed corridor is expected to connect Kashgar in Xinjiang in China’s far west with the Port of Gwadar in the province of Baluchistan; given the port’s proximity to the Persian Gulf, it could be used as a transshipment point for China’s energy supplies obviating the need to go through the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia; apart from serving as a commercial port, Gwadar is also deep enough to accommodate submarines and aircraft carriers; indeed, the military logic behind the development of the port is becoming increasingly prominent as the People’s Liberation Army Navy embarks on far-flung activities from anti-piracy missions in the Arabian Sea to the evacuation of Chinese workers in Libya”, commented Cai, P. (2017). This project, however, is putting Pakistan in a debt trap by according to economic analysts but its capabilities of refiguring regional politics cannot be overlooked.

(b) Sagarmala Project

India has a coastline of more than 7000 kilometres and many important international trade routes traverse through its coast (Fig.-2.9). Still, the optimum capacity hasn’t been achieved and modern facilities haven’t been established. This way Indian port takes too much time in export and import of goods and commodities. “The Sagarmala is a series of projects to leverage the country’s coastline and inland waterways to drive industrial development; it was originally mooted by the Vajpayee government in 2003 as the waterways equivalent of the Golden Quadrilateral; Sagarmala, integrated with the development of inland waterways, is expected to reduce cost and time for transporting goods, benefiting industries and export/import trade; the project is mammoth with 150 initiatives with a total outlay of ₹4 lakh crore spread

Figure-2.9: Sagarmala Project



Source: <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Indias-Developing-Logistics-Network.jpg>

across four broad areas”, Siva, M. (2018, January 20). The inland waterways also need a great deal of development to enhance India’s domestic transportation of logistics too. This would also increase employment opportunities by 10 million jobs and help the economy by cutting transportation expenditure that is nearly 18 percent for India while China spends just 10 percent for comparison. “The concept of port led development is central to the Sagarmala vision; Port-led development focuses on logistics intensive industries (where transportation either represents a high proportion of costs, or timely logistics are a critical success factor). These industries can be structurally competitive if developed proximate to coast/waterways; they would be supported by efficient and modern port infrastructure and seamless multi modal connectivity; the population in adjoining areas would be sufficiently skilled to participate in economic opportunities on offer; the synergistic and coordinated development of the above four components, namely, logistics intensive industries, efficient ports, seamless connectivity and requisite skill-base - leads to unlocking of economic value”, Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways, GOI. This project also indicates India’s dedicated steps towards water or maritime connectivity networks both nationally and internationally, of which Chabahar is a good example.

(c) Central Asia-South Asia 1000

Central-Asia South-Asia Power Project also called as CASA 1000 is an ongoing project that is designed to transport surplus hydroelectric power from Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. The total cost of the project is estimated to be 1.16 billion dollars. The idea is to export surplus power from Central Asia to energy deficit South Asia so that these countries may grow and develop through regional cooperation. The project started in May 2016 and it is estimated to be completed by 2023. This project carries a capacity to export hydroelectricity of 1300 MW during warm months during which Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan harness surplus power from its hydroelectric dams. The project aims to build transmission lines capable of transferring 1300 MW of electricity, in which 300MW is allotted to Afghanistan which allows energy passage to Pakistan with 1000MW of hydroelectricity. The project reached 30 percent completion during March, 2021.

(d) Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Project

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India project is a transnational natural gas pipeline project. It is popularly known as Peace Pipeline and Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline. This intergovernmental project was conceived during 1990s and signed in 2010. The construction involves two phases in which the first phase is characterized by a capacity of 11bcm/year with two compressors in Turkmenistan. The second phase comprises additional six compressor stationed in Afghanistan and Pakistan to maximize the deliverance to 33bcm/year. It can supply 90 million mmscm of natural gas per day. ADB is the main financier of this project.

(e) Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor

The IPEC was envisioned by the United States to lay a regional connectivity between South and Southeast Asia in order to foster economic development and regional trade, establishing a space of competitive business for the private sector, and improving economic integration. IPEC extends from India to Korea, and Australia to America. It is also seen as an attempt to rebalance Asia amidst the growing Chinese dominance and its expansionist moves in the region. China's AIIB funding BRI has set ambitions for other powers like Japan and India to match the rate of building large projects or to be threatened by China's alleged economic imperialism. The main agenda of IPEC is to establish links and connections in the form of hard and soft infrastructure, regulatory trade architecture, exchange of human resource, information and strengthening digital infrastructure. However, this region already has a number of bureaucratic organisations such as ASEAN, APEC, SAARC, BIMSTEC but Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor aims to bring all to a common platform and use their master plans and blueprints to understand the development patterns and mechanisms of this region.

2.12: Maritime Security and International Law of Sea

Every kind of maritime navigation like trade and economic navigation or military navigation is guided by some International laws and treaties which are legal obligations for states to adhere to the norms and government principles. The law of the sea is an evolving customary law and in recent years treaties and laws have played an important role to develop a systematic pattern of international maritime affairs. Since the LOSC's inception in 1994, the geopolitical problems confronting the law of the sea have remained largely unchanged in form.

China is modernizing its naval forces and constructing artificial islands. Russia's last aircraft carrier recently conducted operations in the Mediterranean, launching sorties in support of Syria's Assad dictatorship. Somali pirates operating from small fishing boats continue to pose a threat to shipping along the Horn of Africa. Japan asserts a cultural right to whaling, Yemen employs Iranian-made missiles to threaten US ships, and the world continues to rely on the law of the sea to maintain the waterways safe and open. Maritime security and convention on the law of sea incorporate multilateral and bilateral regimes aimed at eliminating maritime crimes across the globe. Other legal apparatus are the Suppression of Unlawful Acts at Sea (SUA convention) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and organisations such as International Maritime Organisation are responsible for governing activities in the high seas to the coastal ports and harbours.

Maritime security aids the international order for maintaining the rule of law and adherence of international customary and formal laws, judicial decisions, protocols, customs, and legal scholarship. It also looks after the issues of state sovereignty and collective global interest. The convention lays down a legal framework on which states arrange their military and law enforcements to ensure safety and security by improvising international networks and collaboration. Most important points in Maritime security and the convention is that “Modern interests are shared interests in terms of maritime security, even if a state has specific needs or interests that coexist with the interests of other states; no single nation has the sovereignty, capacity or control over the assets, resources, or venues from which transnational threats endanger global security” as noted by Natalie Klein. The conventional provides guidelines for the roles of navy and coast guard to prevent transnational crimes in the maritime domain, such as narcotics trafficking, piracy and armed robbery at sea, slavery, human trafficking, and illegal migration, small arms and weapons of mass destruction. The recent clashes in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean region has reasserted the need of such a convention to deter and combat illicit activities and to restrict illegal regimes in the sea. However it is very difficult to maintain surveillance over high seas and constant vigilance over important sealanes. The convention would only be effective if states adhere to the framework and collaborate with each other in patrolling and joint military exercises.

(a) Freedom of Navigation

The freedom of navigation ensures particular rights such as “Right to innocent passage” and “Transit passage” with lawful limitations. The right of innocent passage for international vessels in the territorial waters of a state can be explained as navigation across the territorial waters by single sea without getting into the internal waters or port or any other facility of the coastal state, by crossing across the internal waters or partly sheltered anchorage and port facility. The passage should be continuous and speedy, but it may have stoppage and anchoring in incidental or unusual circumstances. The looser limitations on innocent passage incorporate the safety of navigation and regulation of maritime traffic, protection of navigational aids and facilities, protection of marine resources, following fishing laws and regulations, environmental preservation, scientific research and hydrographic surveys, preventing violations of customs, immigration, fiscal and sanitary regulations of the coastal state, prevention of conflicts and collision at sea, using legal and designated sea lanes, and managing traffic rules at sea. Under the right to innocent passage the coastal state should not impose charges on foreign ships unless the foreign ship has violated the above norms, or have cases like unpaid refuelling or maintenance.

Meanwhile, the law of sea convention does not support the right of innocent passage to warships on an unimpeded and unannounced basis. A coastal state can force any warship to exit its territorial waters immediately if the situation is not clear to the state. There are different interpretations on the right to innocent passage and interpretations can often cause conflicts and problems in maintaining the law of sea. For example many outlier states illegitimately ask for prior information before any foreign warship may ask for an innocent passage past their internal waters, and most of such states do not specify when the foreign warship must provide information or notification of its arrival. For example, Saudi Arabia does not allow innocent passage to its territorial waters as there are availability of suitable alternate routes via high seas or exclusive economic zones. Countries like Romania and Lithuania prohibit the transit of ships having weapons of mass destruction across its territorial waters. For example, China restricts discharging oils and any harmful matter into its harbour and territorial waters, including freshwater areas around river mouths Special protection groans and Maritime natural reserved areas.

It has an agreement with Vietnam over the delimitation of territorial sea and special economic zones and over the continental shelf of the Gulf of Tonkin. Vietnam and Malaysia on 6th May, 2009 requested the UN commission to extend their limits of sovereignty beyond 200 nm in the South China Sea. There are disputes over Spratly and Paracel Islands. On January 12, 2016, two US vessels were ransacked by Iran near Farsi islands in the Arabian Gulf and nine American sailors were detained for operating an innocent passage due to engine problems of their boats. Iran has multiple times denied the freedom of navigation operations during 2015 and 2016 and prohibited the right to transit via the Strait of Hormuz and also tried to restrict foreign military activities in its special economic zone. Since then there have been several events of maritime conflict between the two countries in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. Similarly, in 2016, Yemeni Houthi rebels shot missiles at US naval ships. The US Navy was operationalizing in the Bab El Mandeb which is an international strait. So, the freedom of navigation is not absolute. States behave according to their own interest and security but these regulations play a key role in determining peace and cooperation in a region. Likewise, Chabahar and Gwadar Port projects are subject to the policies of the countries they belong to and their future as trade centres or military bases will depend on the situation of their home countries respectively.

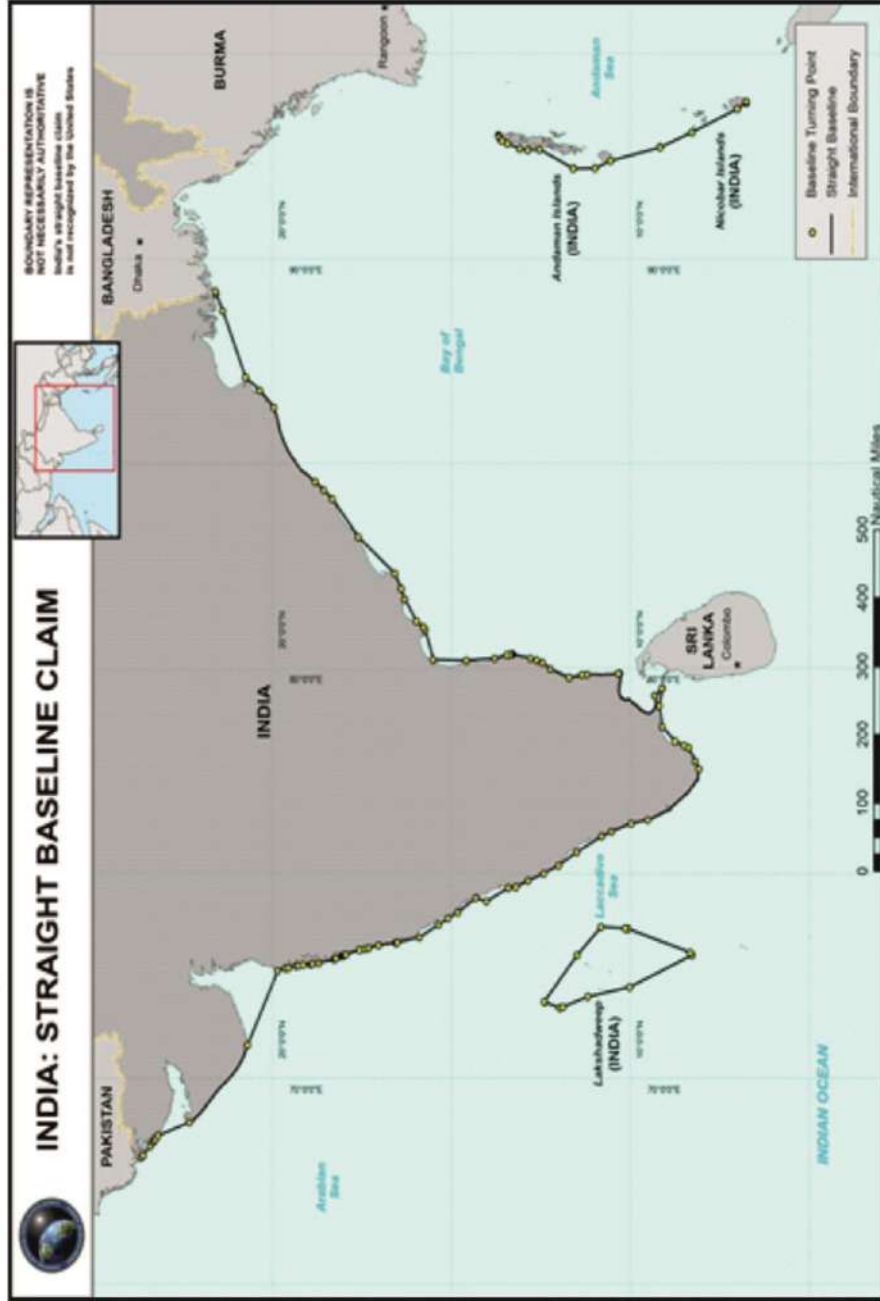
(b) Indian Maritime Doctrine

Indian maritime tradition dates back to 4000 years. The rich tradition of maritime movements made a significant growth in 4th century BC. The term “navigation” comes from “Navagati” a Sanskrit word which means sea travel. The discovery of Lord Ganesha’s old statues in Indonesia provides evidences of maritime migration from India to South East Asia around 1st Century AD. Along with traders, thinkers, and philosophers also migrated to other parts of South East Asia. This is why Indian religions like Buddhism and Hinduism flourished in these countries. Age old history of trade, pilgrimage like the Haj, and naval expeditions prove India’s sound navigational capabilities since olden days. Vasco da Gama in 1498 landed at Calicut through sea route and since then a new component of maritime capacity was introduced to India. It was the military component. The Portuguese, Dutch, British, French and even Turks and Egyptian navies landed in India, some for trade, some to conquer, some to colonize and some to just behold the land of wonders that India is.

Indian Navy Naval Strategic Publication 1.1 (2015) stated that, “the Indian Maritime Doctrine focuses on the application of naval power across the spectrum of conflict, including war, less than war situations and peace. It reflects on the concepts, characteristics and context for employment of combat power at and from the sea; it is aimed at evoking a common understanding amongst all stakeholders in the development and employment of India’s maritime military power, so as to unite their actions in support of India’s national interests and national security objectives; the doctrine primarily addresses the military-strategic level, whilst it also covers the operational level; tactical issues have been deliberately kept outside the purview of this doctrine, as several other naval publications comprehensively address these aspects”. The levels of India’s Maritime doctrine incorporate the National Strategic Level, Military Strategic Level, and Operational and Tactical level (Fig.-2.10). India’s Maritime Doctrine takes an absolute silos approach in the matters of the Indian Ocean. “National strategy is determined by the Union Cabinet and draws upon the National Security Policy; it aims to synergise all components of national power, including political, diplomatic, economic, military, technological, informational, social and cultural, towards safeguarding national interests and achieving national security objectives; the national strategy entails the coordinated employment of all elements of national power; doctrine at this level offers precepts for the development and employment of national power; India’s Nuclear Doctrine is an example of a national strategic level doctrine that guides our nuclear strategy”.

Considering this the Indian Ocean has been divided into sub-regions. India separates Mauritius and Seychelles for the purpose of maintaining strategic collaboration in the IOR. This division allows its sphere of influence in the IOR with respect to the territorial waters of others sovereignty. “Joint military strategy is a subset of the national strategy for exercise of national power; it governs the development and employment of military power, along with the respective land, maritime and air strategies; military doctrine provides the conceptual framework for understanding the role, scope and application of military power and underpins the formulation of military strategy; the military strategic level is the highest level of doctrinal writing in the armed forces of India; it codifies the concepts and principles that guide the application of military power in the pursuit of national interests, including for the planning and conduct of war”.

Figure-2.10: India's Maritime Baseline Claim



Source: https://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_10_mcrm.htm

From all the sub-regions, India prioritises the northern part of IOR, that is the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and also the Eastern part that is the Andaman Sea and the Strait of Malacca. As India maintains special focus on these parts, the western waters and southern waters that refer to Africa's eastern coast continue to form the maritime periphery of Indian maritime doctrine. Therefore India's presence on the African coast is ad hoc. India largely indulges in anti-piracy missions and seldom patrolling rounds as part of its maritime engagements in that region. However China is keen to establish a stronghold in African coast. Its first overseas military base was situated in the Horn of Africa at Djibouti located in the Western Indian Ocean. The region is so significant can geopolitically important that recently Russia secured a base on the coast of the Red Sea at Sudan. It is situated in the middle of the Suez Canal and Bab-el-Mandeb. The strait of Bab-el-Mandeb also known as 'Gate of Tears' is situated in between Yemen and Djibouti and Eritrea located on the Arab Peninsula and Horn of Africa respectively. This region is experiencing China's aggressive assertiveness in the 21st Century. China's mega project of Maritime Silk Road is designed to engage with the littoral and maritime highways of the IOR.

India's joint naval exercises play an important role in the maritime doctrine. "Military doctrine at the operational level guides the employment of military force in the preparation and execution of campaigns and major operations within defined geographical theatres and it describes the concept of operations and the use of Operational Art to attain operational objectives within the broader national and military strategic aims; the Joint Military Doctrine and Maritime Doctrine, however, bridge both the military-strategic and operational levels". Exercise Malabar comprising trilateral naval exercise of three permanent members, India, US and Japan which was later joined by Singapore and Australia as well. Since its beginning in 1992 till date this exercise has been performed on whole IOR including the Persian Gulf and Philippines Sea. Israel, Russia, France, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia are other countries that has performed joint naval exercises with India in the IOR with the recent one being India-France 19th joint naval exercise "Varuna". Tactical level is the most subtle and effective way of being present, having bases, containing, and applying pressure tactics as well as to project power to secure national interest. "The tactical level involves employment of military weapon systems and platforms in physical combat; tactical doctrines comprise a framework of principles, practices and procedures for efficient

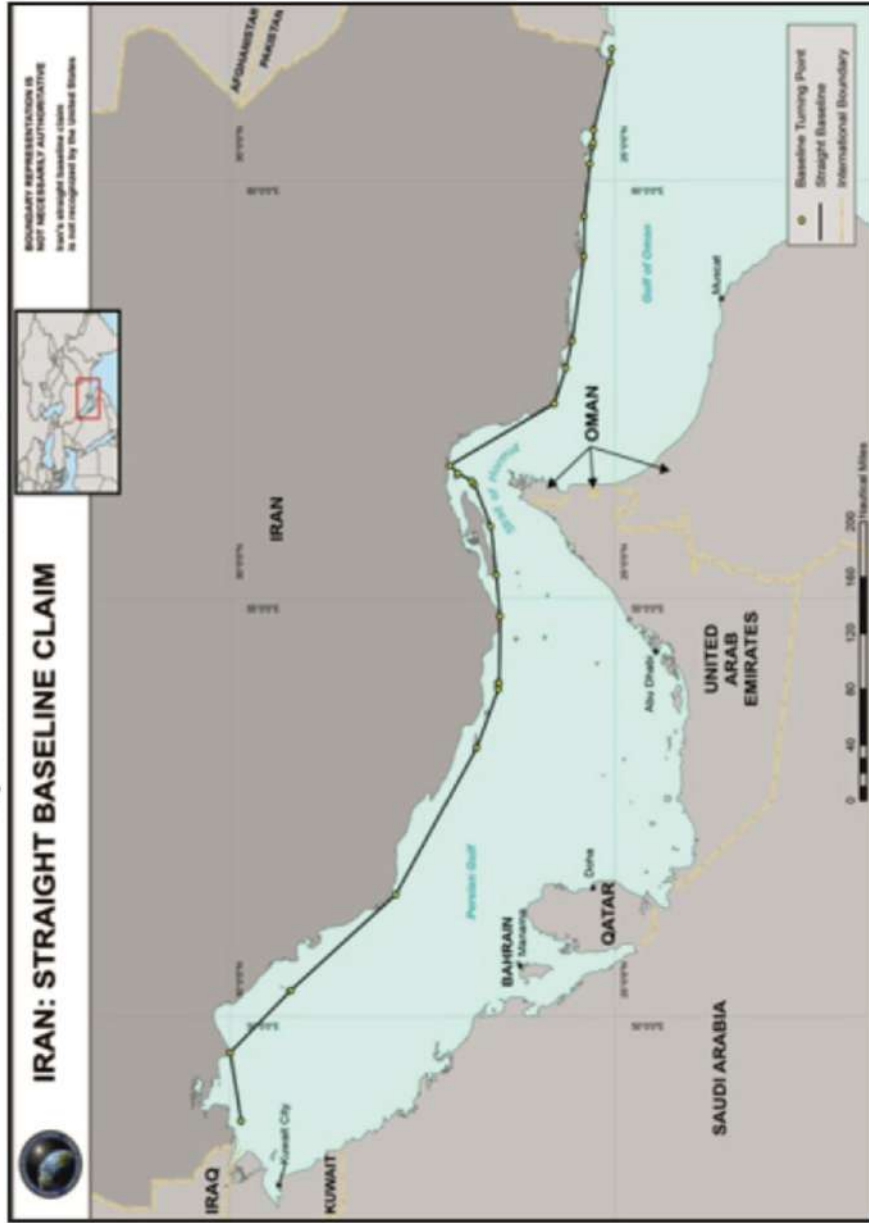
exploitation of military hardware and optimum application of combat force; tactical doctrines are issued as general fighting instructions for various tactical situations, for exploitation of specific naval combat systems and platforms, etc.” India is operationalized nearly a dozen military bases in foreign countries. The US operates highest number of bases in the world followed by UK, Russia, France and India. This tactical requirement pushes India to expand its foreign policy and keep working in pursuing more strategic and military bases in significant areas. Chabahar port is one such economic base that can aid India during times of war and crisis. However, the opening of investment opportunities for other countries in this port projects may burst India’s ambitions with this project.

(c) Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan

The first Maritime doctrine of Pakistan was launched by the president Arif Alwi on 20th December 2018. Navy, like every other country, is the most important line of protection for Pakistan’s Maritime doctrine. Pakistan’s military and like the military of other countries is equal to the Government of the state and it makes sure that the country is in in right full and stable hands by being the first line of defence both internally and externally (Fig.-2.11). Since India and Pakistan are two rival nations situated beside each other where India possesses the world’s fifth largest Navy operationalizing aircraft carrier, the naval power of Pakistan seems comparatively smaller. Due to this rivalry Pakistan’s Maritime doctrine is oriented to contest and counter India. The doctrine conveniently relies on hit and run tactics. The possess French manufactured submarines, American Harpoons and Anti-Ship missiles. As India grows its naval capacities and develops nuclear submarines triggers more deterrence from Pakistan.

Arguably, CPEC has transformed Pakistan’s maritime security. Pakistan has revolutionized its maritime taskforce, patrolling the territorial waters, and protecting trade and supply routes. Gwadar port has emerged as the centre for naval and business power for Pakistan. As it facilitates greater trade for the country, it is the navy that has to continuously provide favourable conditions. Reuters in 2017 reported that “Pakistan has tested its first nuclear missile submarines, as a deterrent against Arch-Foe India”. So, Pakistan’s maritime doctrine is very much influenced by India’s maritime movements.

Figure-2.12: Iran's Maritime Baseline Claim



Source: https://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_10_mcrm.htm

India and Pakistan have fought three wars in 1947-48, 1965, and 1999 where the latter lost every time. The major area of influence of Pakistani naval power is the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. However, they never came up with a draft on their maritime doctrine for a long time even though threats existed in the maritime arena. Saghir (2020) argues, “Pakistan cannot be criticized in not having a doctrine for a very long time as the culture of formulating a maritime doctrine begin in 1996 with Great Britain being the first state to draft a Maritime Doctrine; followed by many others like South Africa, Australia and lately India. India drafted its first doctrine in 2002 and in 2009 and have come up with their 2nd edition to it; this comes to be a challenge for Pakistan, as all defensive lines in Pakistan are Indo centric and respond with their establishments; the draft formulation came forward through different articles in 2016, but tracing it back in time, the work for drafting a maritime doctrine begin way back in 2000 even before than that of India; from the very beginning Pakistan had remained dependent on the modal frameworks that existed by the great powers of the world”. Thus, mostly Pakistan has been following the international systems particularly of British and American documentations despite of having a draft for themselves.

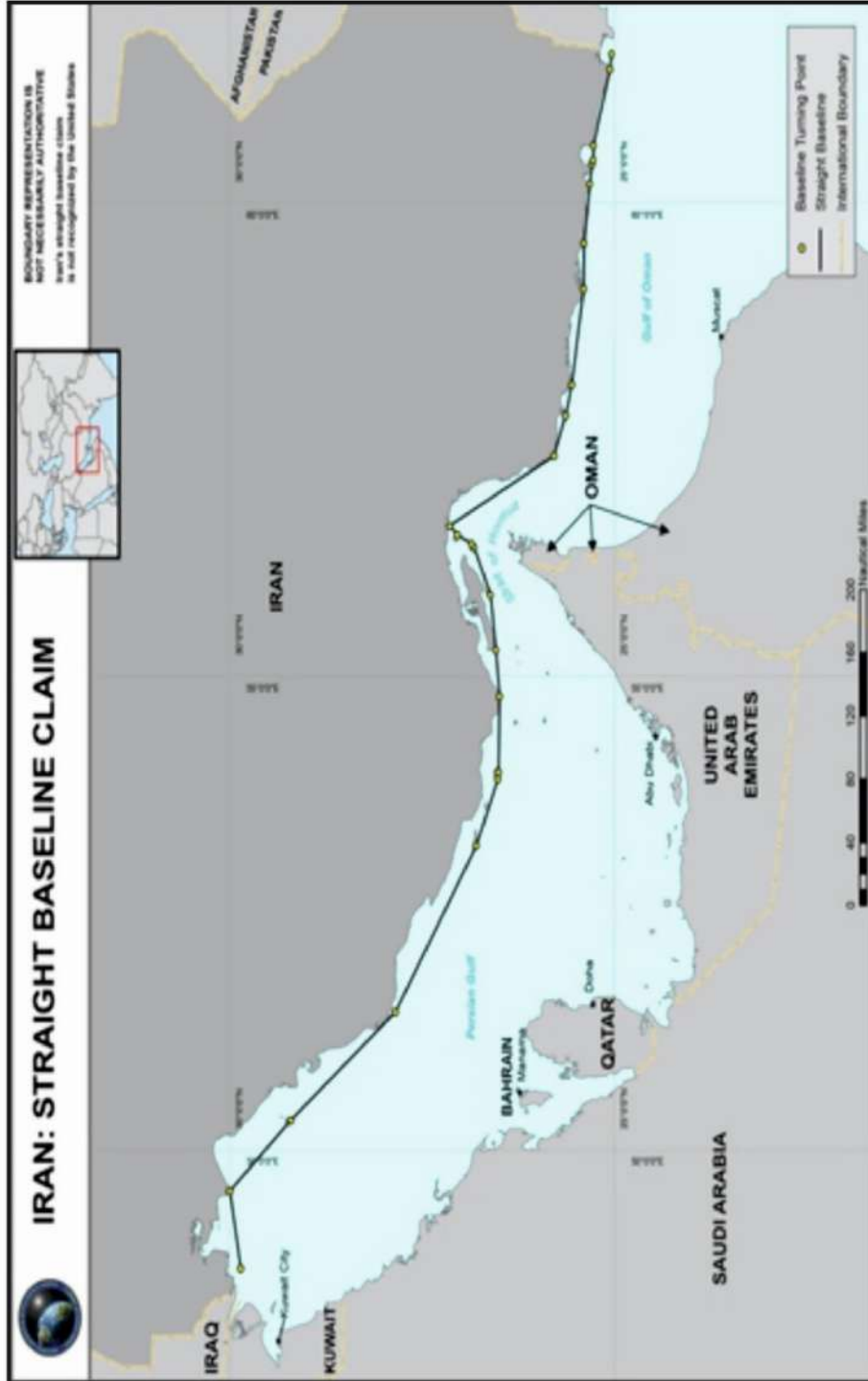
The formal doctrine released in 2018 centres upon economic and military aspect. The economic aspect covers security, protection from trafficking and smuggling and foreign threats, shipping lanes, ports and harbours, trade and commerce, Coastal tourism and saving marine resources. For military aspect is related to naval forces, coast guards, and coastal policing. Commander Azam Khan has been a contributor in the draft of maritime doctrine of Pakistan. He believes that out of three major countries in the region Iran, Oman and India they have fine relations with Iran and Oman and only standing disputes are with India. The development of marine doctrine is currently focused on the future dangers posed by the activation of the Gwadar seaport in conjunction with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Khan emphasized the greatest threat as the formation of powerful blocks in two domains, economic and political. On the one hand, the US Navy is fully supporting and staffing the Indian Navy, while on the other hand, the Pakistan Navy is collaborating with the Chinese Navy (PLAN), and as this trade starts, the Pakistan Navy's task in terms of trade will be magnified. “It will only include protecting and preserving our own imports and exports, but the Navy would also have to ensure that national sea lines are protected and safeguarded; with the drafting of the maritime doctrine, the role and the character

of the Pakistan navy comes out to be a clear vision however Khan stressed that Pakistan navy receives on 10 to 11 percent from the defense budget and with the current ongoing reserves, situation seems to be pretty gloomy as extra care and vigilance will require an update on the naval fleet, resources and infrastructure”, Saghir (2020). Moreover, Pakistan is on speedy infrastructural development on its Makran coast with EEZ laying down of pipelines, exploration and research work is in progress under CPEC. Indo-Pacific continues to be an area of concern for Pakistan. Their collaboration with China has improved their stake in South China Sea and western part of the Indian Ocean. Experts believe that the same areas can witness major friction between International powers over trade and security. Major international powers like the US, China, India, Japan, Australia, UK, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia have begun rebalancing the region for a smooth and non-obstructed control over the sea and Pakistan Navy with its maritime doctrine is following suite.

(d) Iran’s Maritime Doctrine

Iran’s doctrine has been ever evolving since the revolution of 1979. It takes references from the Russian and Chinese ideas of acquiring weapons systems to establish an integrated multiple sea-land-air based attack (Fig.-2.12). Iran focuses on combat expertise as its top most priority in its military doctrine or maritime doctrine. “Tehran views maritime combat operations much the same way as it views land-based operations; Iranian naval doctrine is geared toward confronting a technologically superior adversary often assumed to be the US Navy with a form of guerrilla warfare at sea; the bases of this doctrine were developed during the Tanker War (1984-1988), during which Iran used aircraft, speedboats, sea mines and land-based anti-ship cruise missiles to attack civilian tanker shipping in the Persian Gulf; After a US frigate, the Samuel B. Roberts, was badly damaged by an Iranian mine, the US Navy retaliated with Operation Praying Mantis (1988), destroying two Iranian oil platforms and sinking several Iranian surface vessels, including a corvette, a guided missile patrol craft and smaller gunboats”, Iranian Naval Doctrine. Iran’s doctrine relies on ready to combat navy, securing its territorial waters, and maintain presence in significant areas of interest. Iran has an extremely fierce and non-forgiving approach in the Persian Gulf and against any potential aggressor. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps and Islamic Republic of Iran’s Navy (IRGCN and IRIN) the two line of naval defence play a vital role for Iran’s maritime security.

Figure-2.12: Iran's Maritime Baseline Claim



Source: https://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_10_mcrm.htm

“The IRGC naval strategy is an extension of Iran’s national defence strategy, which seeks to, deter a maritime attack if possible, rapidly escalate if deterrence fails, and wage a protracted war if necessary; fundamental to this strategy is the exploitation of geography and the use of asymmetric doctrine to combat a technologically superior force; specifically, the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf and narrow waters of the Strait of Hormuz afford the IRGCN several warfighting advantages in some of the world’s most important waterways; the IRGCN aims to deter an attack by projecting an image of military strength and signalling that an attack on Iran could have serious global economic repercussions; IRGCN officers often allude to Iran’s ability to impede or attack commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz and the economic crisis that could ensue”, Office of Naval Intelligence (2017). Tehran’s conflicts are extended well beyond their borders hence their military is involved everywhere in the region including Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and adjacent areas (Fig.-2.13 and 2.14). Iranian naval planning is heavily influenced by geography. The Gulf’s congested region, which is frequently less than 100 nautical miles wide, constrains the agility of major surface assets such as aircraft carriers, but it plays to Iran’s naval forces’ capabilities, particularly the IRGCN.

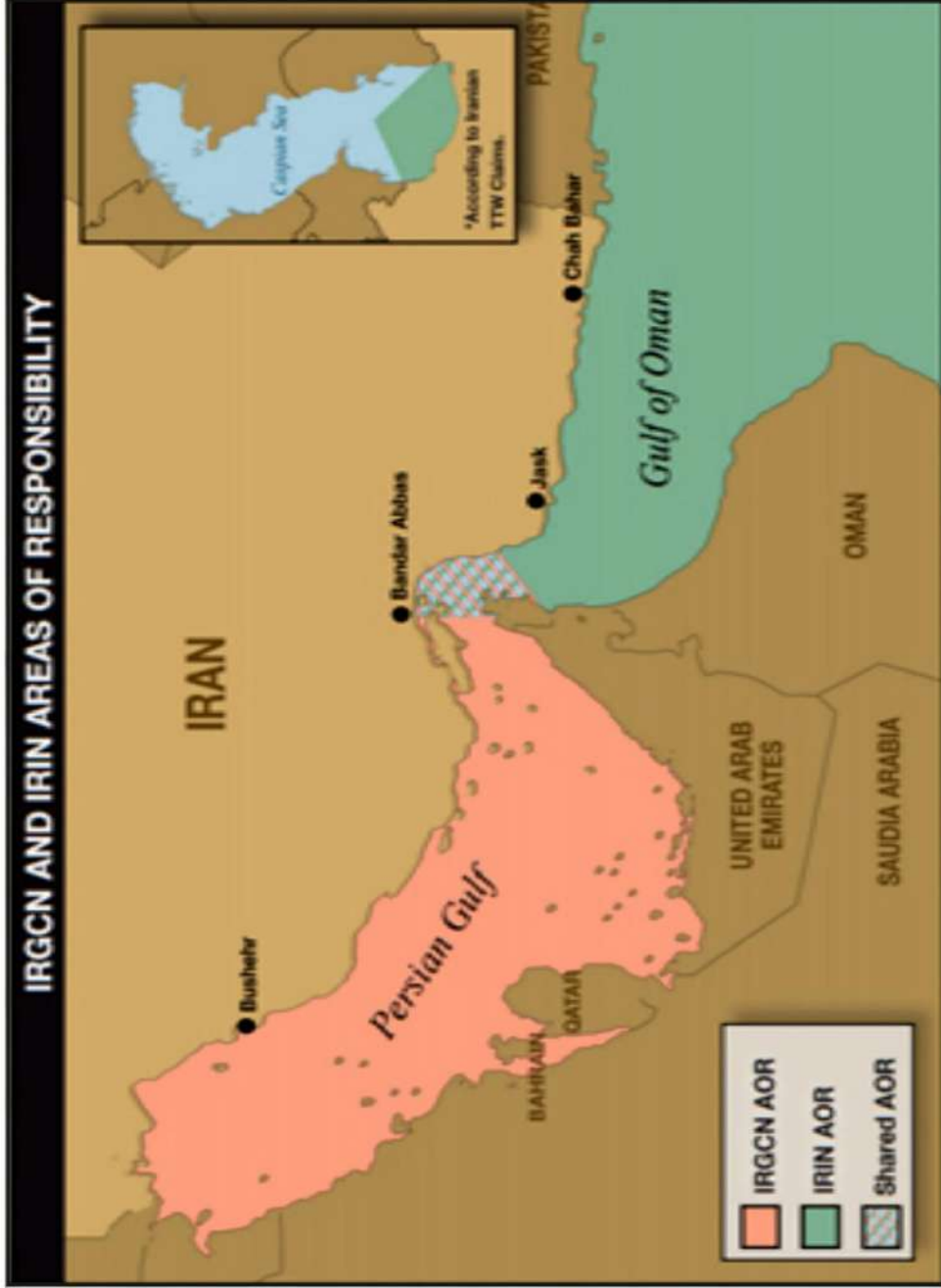
The northern coast of the Gulf is filled with rocky bays that are suitable for terrain concealment and small boat operations. Additionally, the Iranians have fortified various islands in the Gulf that are located adjacent to vital maritime lines. However, Iran is willing to push into the IOR and Gulf of Oman at the moment, as seen by their extended patrols and military drills. Iran is zealous in its defence of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has devised a strategy to prevent foreign navies from accessing the Persian Gulf, focusing on the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz. At its narrowest point, this critical marine chokepoint is only 29 nautical miles wide. Iranian officials have intimated that they may close the strait during a fight, thereby temporarily cutting off up to 30% of the world’s oil supply. However, closing the strait would entail enormous economic costs for Iran, and they are unlikely to take such a step lightly. Given the importance of the strait, however, blocking marine traffic or even threatening to disrupt it would be a powerful instrument for Iran to exert pressure on neighbors and scare adversaries. So, its eagerness to conclude the Chabahar port project along with the railway and pipeline project is a matter of extreme importance for Iran.

Figure-2.13: The Indian Ocean Region



Source: <https://www.globalresearch.ca/india-pakistan-relations-nuclear-doctrine-militarization-and-security-dynamics-of-the-indian-ocean-region/5659351>

Figure-2.14: The Area of Influence of IRGCN and IRIN



Source: Pike, J. (n.d.). Navy Doctrine - Asymmetric Warfare. (2018) Iranian Navy - Doctrine. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iran/navy-doctrine.htm>.

This can be the probable reasons behind the news about opening up the project for foreign investments other than India. In matters of defence and trade security Iran doesn't seem to value friendship or sentimental ties. If China enters the project it can establish a greater degree of reach in the Gulf and counter US interests in the region. Iran is a regional power in the Middle East. Its naval forces IRIN and IRGCN are strengthening its position. They are working on expanding their weapon inventory and their military capabilities as well. Iranian officials have often expressed that any foreign forces or extra regional forces are not welcomed and are not necessary in the waterways of the Middle East. Iran's naval commander Rear Adm Hossein Khanzadi stated on 13 May, 2019 while commenting on Washington's decision to intensify military presence in the region, he stated that, in the thirty years of Iranian revolution their armed forces have proven that day are enough capable to defend their territory in every condition and United States must leave Middle East as their presence has come to an end.

2.13: Resume

It is imperative to understand various modalities of geographic location, history, politics, society, international policies and organisation influencing the geopolitics of different states. In the 21st Century, every country is trying to exercise their sovereign powers and secure their interests independently. Regional Connectivity and Geostrategy are just few means to secure such interests. As this is the least connected region in the world any infrastructural development project carry immense significance to the stakeholders and immense insecurity to those states left behind. Being landlocked, Central Asia needs to have proper channels of transit to the sea. But due to the same reason, this region is far from development with under-utilized resources. Powerful states see it as a market for their manufactured goods and a source for raw materials. West Asia has the greatest reserve of crude oil to feed the world for a half a century more. Hence, projects like Gwadar and Chabahar bring a lot of geopolitical attention to this region.

Chapter-3

Geopolitical Study of Chabahar Port: Rethinking Strategy and Risks

3.1: Introduction

Chabahar Port is situated in Sistan and Baluchestan region in south-eastern Iran, on the Persian Gulf. India assumed operational control of the Port in December 2018. Indira Port Global Private Limited is running its operation (IPGPL). Chabahar Port transferred India's first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan. Being a part of the North-South Transport Corridor, India has been involved in constructing a railway line connecting Chabahar port and Zahedan. Chabahar port is approximately 170 kilometres from China's backed Gwadar port in Pakistan. The identity of the city Chabahar is comprised of Persian words, implying "Four springs". It means a place where the seasons have spring all year long. It is also an important fishing hub, serving the fishing communities of the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and central Asia. India is engaged in initiatives to construct a rail corridor connecting this location to Afghanistan's mineral-rich Hajigak region. For multiple reasons, this port is necessary for India precisely to increase trade, diplomatic, and military ties with Iran, India gains direct access to Afghanistan by using this route, which avoids Pakistan, it will connect Europe, Central Asia, Iran, and India with Russia via road, rail and maritime routes, the country's unique geographical position means that it can undertake humanitarian operations from its terminal if necessary due to the close proximity to Gwadar port, the India Navy and defence establishment consider this port important for their defence and trade operations. This chapter analyses the Geopolitical setting of this port from a number of aspects by studying the history and geography of Chabahar as well as by scrutinising the political and economic relations between the stakeholders. As this port falls in one of the most important gulfs in the world, the study engages with western involvement, trade routes, and geostrategic challenges therein.

3.2: Chabahar Port: Location

Chabahar Port is located in the southeastern part of Iran on the shores of Oman sea the absolute coordinates are Longitude: 60° 36' 46" East and Latitude: 25° 18' 1" North. It is the only port in Iran and that can potentially allow Iran to use it as an entrance gate to the International North-South Corridor and Iran's eastern development route as well. It serves an area greater than 300 kms of marine border to Iran.

Geo-strategy wise Chabahar port is situated on the Makran coast of Sistan and Baluchestan province that lies adjacent to the gulf of Oman and most importantly on the mouth of Strait of Hormuz. It is the only port of Iran having direct access to the Indian Ocean. Chabahar port it is often being termed as the “Golden Gate” due to its close proximity to Afghanistan and Central Asian landlocked states. Chabahar lies at a distance of 700 kms from the capital city of Sistan and Baluchistan province, Zahedan. Milak is the closest City of Afghanistan from Chabahar port. Its strategic location is pronounced by its close distance from major cities like Dubai 654 km, Karachi 845km, Mumbai 1560 kms considering its distance from the coast of Mumbai it may be compared to an approximate distance between Mumbai and Delhi. (Fig.-3.1) Chabahar Port is broadly made up of two complexes of ports called Shahid Kalantari (named after Mousa Kalantari, an Iranian Politician assassinated in a terror attack on June 28 1981 at a meeting in Tehran where he was present to become the next president of Iran) and Shahid Beshti (named after Mohammad Hossein Beheshti, a philosopher, a politician, and a main figure post Iranian Revolution). The Shahid Kalantari port is referred to be a traffic port while Shahid Beshti Port aims towards transforming it into a fourth generation and multipurpose port that can perform as a regional hub. The development of Shahid Beshti Port includes five major phases that were aimed to be completed by 2024 with an average capacity of 86 million tons. This port is stationed in a country that is not only the fifth largest producer of petroleum and twelfth largest exporter as well but Iran also has fourth largest reserve of crude oil in the world, only following Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. Hence, this port naturally attracts global attention.

3.3: Importance of Chabahar amidst the Geography of Iran

In general if we look at the geography of Iran, it has mountainous terrain, the climate is arid, and it is finely diverse in ethnicity. The central desert plateau covers most part of the country that is further surrounded by mountain ranges from all sides. This is one reason making it difficult to access Iran both advantageous and disadvantageous for the country in different aspects. Majority of the population lives in the west Iran. Tehran is the capital of Iran. A home to the Old Persian Empire. The eastern side of the country is comparatively underdeveloped however with the development of Chabahar this scenario would transform for Iran.

Figure-3.1: Bird's eye view of Chabahar Port



Source:<https://tidesacademy.com/bimstec-a-vision-to-develop-bay-of-bengal/>

Phases of port development plan:

description	Year	Phase
*Approximately 1650 m of breakwater extension, construction of two container berth(640m) and three multi-purpose berth(540m) *17 milion m3 dredging to(-16m) depth *Reclamation of 195 heactares by sediment	2017	1
Construction of a container berth(360m)	2018	2
Construction of an oil berth	2020	3
Construction of a multi-purpose berth	2020	4
Construction of a container berth (360m)	2024	5

The linkages to free trade zone and connectivity networks through railway and roadways to Central Asia will open new opportunities for the regional development (Fig.3.2). Until the Chabahar project is completed the Bandar Abbas port manages nearly 85 percent of the country's maritime trade further to Russia and Europe. Bandar Abbas also occupies a strategic location near to the Strait of Hormuz and it also serves as the Naval Base of Iran however not being a deep water port disqualifies it from handling more than 2.5 million tonnes of cargo shipments. Till now deep water ships use the dock in the UAE after which the cargo is carried on smaller shipments to Iran. Due to this Iran has a greater dependency on the UAE for its maritime trade that also affects the revenue of Iran. On the contrary Chabahar port once completed would be a deep water port reducing Iran's dependency on other countries as well as geopolitically strengthening it the Indian Ocean particularly on the crucial route through Strait of Hormuz.

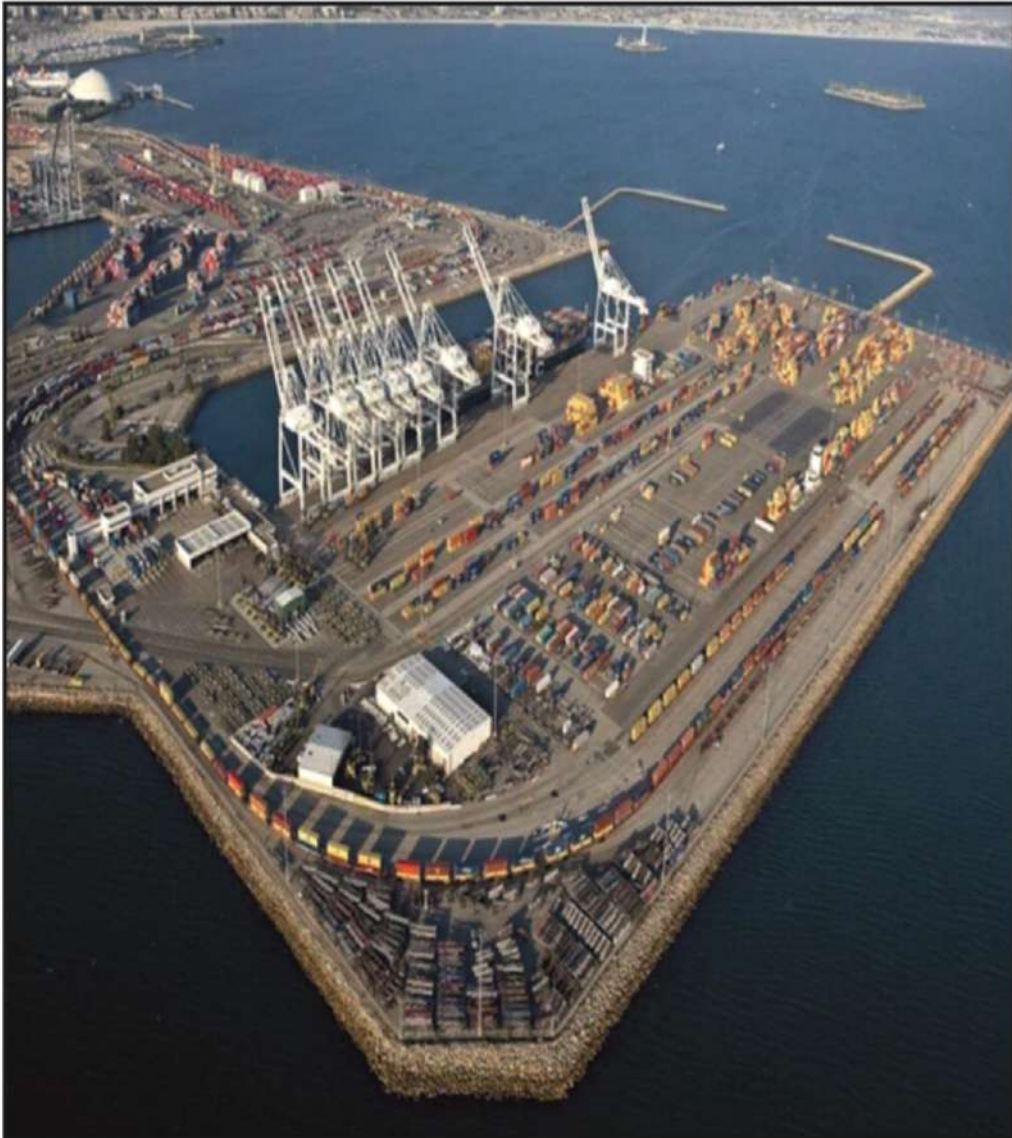
3.4: Connectivity through Chabahar

The most striking feature is that it will provide least transit distance connecting Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Central Asia. It is claimed that it would be the most economical port for commercial trade to these states (Fig.-3.3). It is also said to play a significant role in INSTC (International North-South transit Corridor). The most important characteristic of Chabahar Port that separates it from other ports of Iran in the Persian Gulf happen to be its accessibility to international waters. As it is located in the outer of the Strait of Hormuz it stands geopolitically instrumental, geo-economically beneficial, and geo-strategically crucial. Its location in the North-South Corridors as well as the East-West transit makes it an important gateway leading continental routes to Eurasia.

(a) Linkage with Central Asia

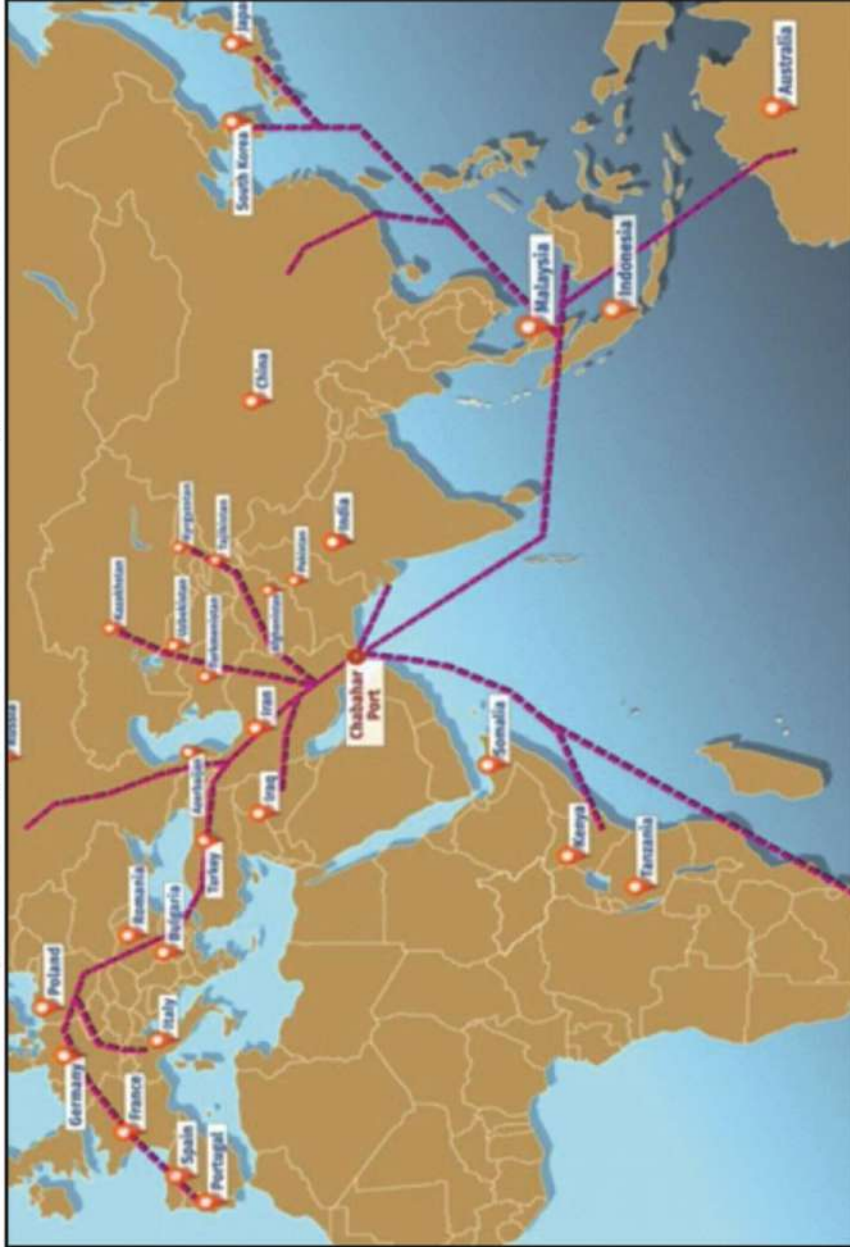
The importance of connecting to CIS countries can be explained by the fact that it consists of nine member states that include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine (Fig.-3.4). They unite 1991 to "To form common economic space grounded on free movement of goods, services, labour force, capital; to elaborate coordinated monetary, tax, price, customs, external economic policy; to bring together methods of regulating economic activity and create favourable conditions for the development of direct production relations" as per the CIS website.

Figure-3.2: Chahabar's Shahid Beheshti complex



Source:<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/459515/India-doubling-down-on-Chahabar-port-project-as-strategic-counter>

Figure-3.3: Regional Connectivity through Chabahar Port



Source: <https://sniwire.com/2019/03/11/how-chabahar-can-be-pivotal-to-the-north-south-transport-corridor/>

Figure-3.4: The Central Asian States



Source: Washington, D.C. : Central Intelligence Agency, 2009

Central Asia in general is an extremely crucial part of the world attracting lot of trade and political attention to itself. Because it is landlocked in nature it is also seen as the heart of Eurasia. Russia a giant state, lies in the north western part whereas China is situated in the East, along with that Central Asia is surrounded by India on the South Eastern part and Iran in South. South Asia, South East Asia, Middle East and Europe are situated in the far East and West respectively.

Historically, it has been home to powerful empires and has witnessed the famous Great Game between the British and Russian Empires. Similarly at present also it lies at a very significant location that makes it geopolitically important and every powerful state wants to have a reach to the region. In addition, it is rich in oil and gas resources. In this regard Mcfarlane expresses that Eurasia's centre of gravity is located in Central Asia, which is situated in the heart of Eurasia and surrounded by several major powers including China, Russia, Iran, and India. Trade routes passing through Central Asia link the countries of Central Asia to various other regions, including South Asia, South-East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The location of the region is beneficial, especially because it gives the region a strategic position as a potential trade corridor connecting Asia and Europe or Asia and the West Asia. According to Mackinder, "Central Asia is the heart of the world, and in order for a great power to control the world, Central Asia must be under its control. From a strategic perspective, Central Asia is significant for the geopolitical interests of any major power, including China, Russia and the United States." The region is also emerging as supplier of energy resources to both regionally and globally. Most of the big markets are at close proximity, India is one such example. For a long time Russia enjoyed the monopoly in the export of energy resources to other countries.

United States and Europe are emerging as big trading partners in the region for gas supplies. Here, a geopolitical tension between European countries and United States with Russia can be seen over the trade and investment. China is also spreading its reach in the Central Asian countries in order to reduce its dependency on traditional suppliers and to broaden its trade partnership other than the US Central Asia is getting attentions from many powerful countries and it's highly likely that it is going to have a great deal of energy cooperation attracting a lot of benefits in the future. Thus the connection with Chabahar port is beneficial to the stakeholders at multiple fronts (Fig.-3.5).

Figure-3.5: Chabahar Port: Accessibility to Central Asia



Source: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-and-china-in-central-asia-understanding-the-new-rivalry-in-the-heart-of-eurasia-61473/>

(b) Significance of Connectivity to International North-South Corridor

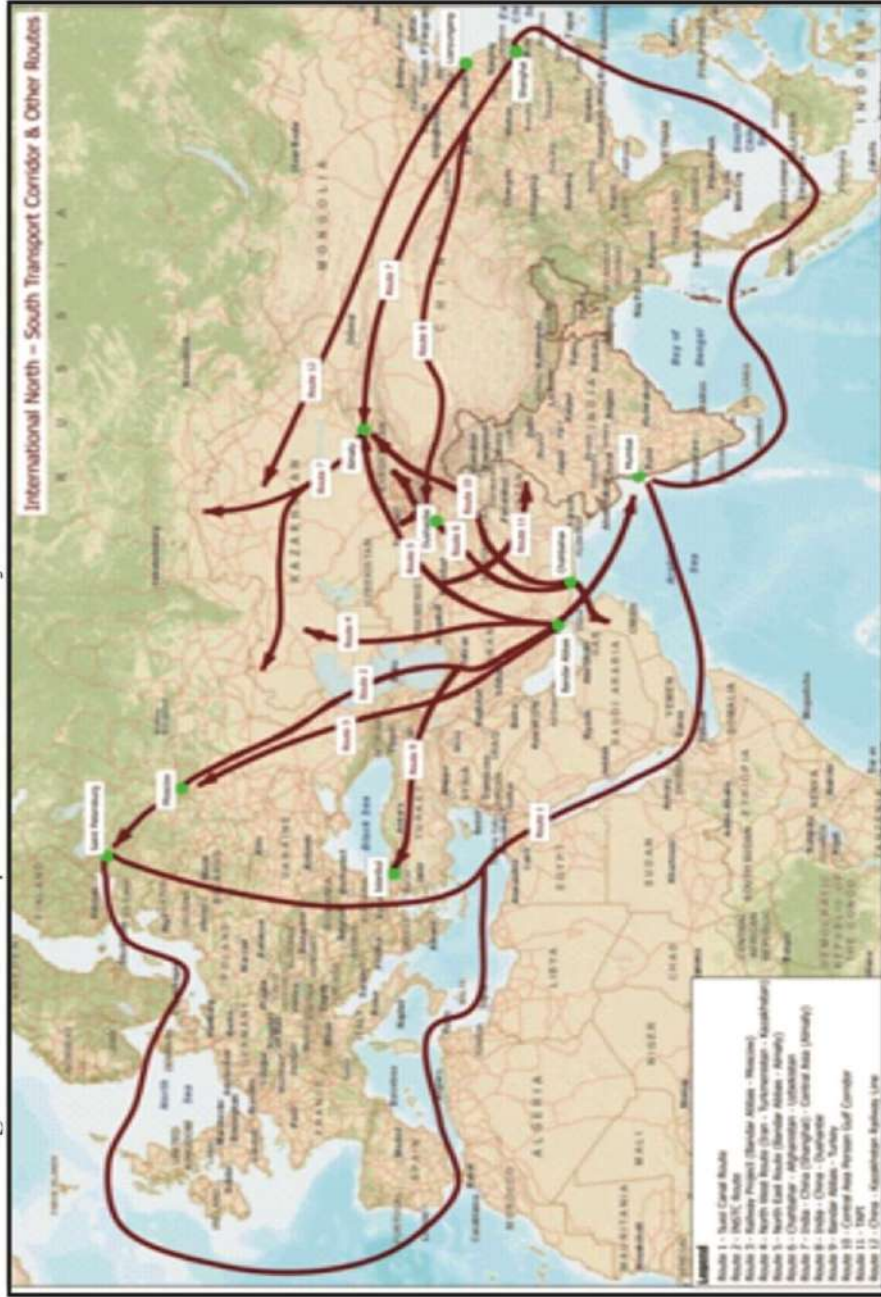
The development of this port aimed to the inclusion of the stakeholders in the free trade zones. This makes it viable in the North-South Corridor and in other words the international trade will be boosted in the region (Fig.-3.6). The INSTC was introduced in September 2000 between Russia, India, and Iran to form transportation networks among member states and link landlocked Central Asia to the rest of the continent. The North-South Transport Corridor has long been an important trade route for centuries. Traders who came from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and many other locations used this route for centuries. The empire under the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722) was home to about 10,000 to 20,000 Indian traders, most of whom were concentrated in different parts of the city points Meena Singh Roy (IDSA). The international North South corridor connect the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea through Iran, further up to Europe through St Petersburg, Russia.

It is a multi-modal transport route. It provides connectivity network for movement of goods and services from India particularly from the ports of Mumbai to the Bandar Abbas port in Iran. From Bandar-e-Anzali the link connects the Caspian Port called Astra Khan in Russia and from there to rest of Russia. The link further extends to Europe through the transcontinental railways of Russia. The agreement on INSTC approved by Russia, India, Iran came in effect since May 2002. There were three main objectives of the agreement to improve the delivery of goods and passengers through increased transport ties along the INST Corridor. One of the overarching goals of this partnership is to promote access to the international market for the participating governments by using land, air, water, and rail transportation. Ensuring travel security and transportation safety in addition to harmonising and implementing transport policies, and to harmonise law and policies pertaining to transport.

3.5: The Strait of Hormuz Factor

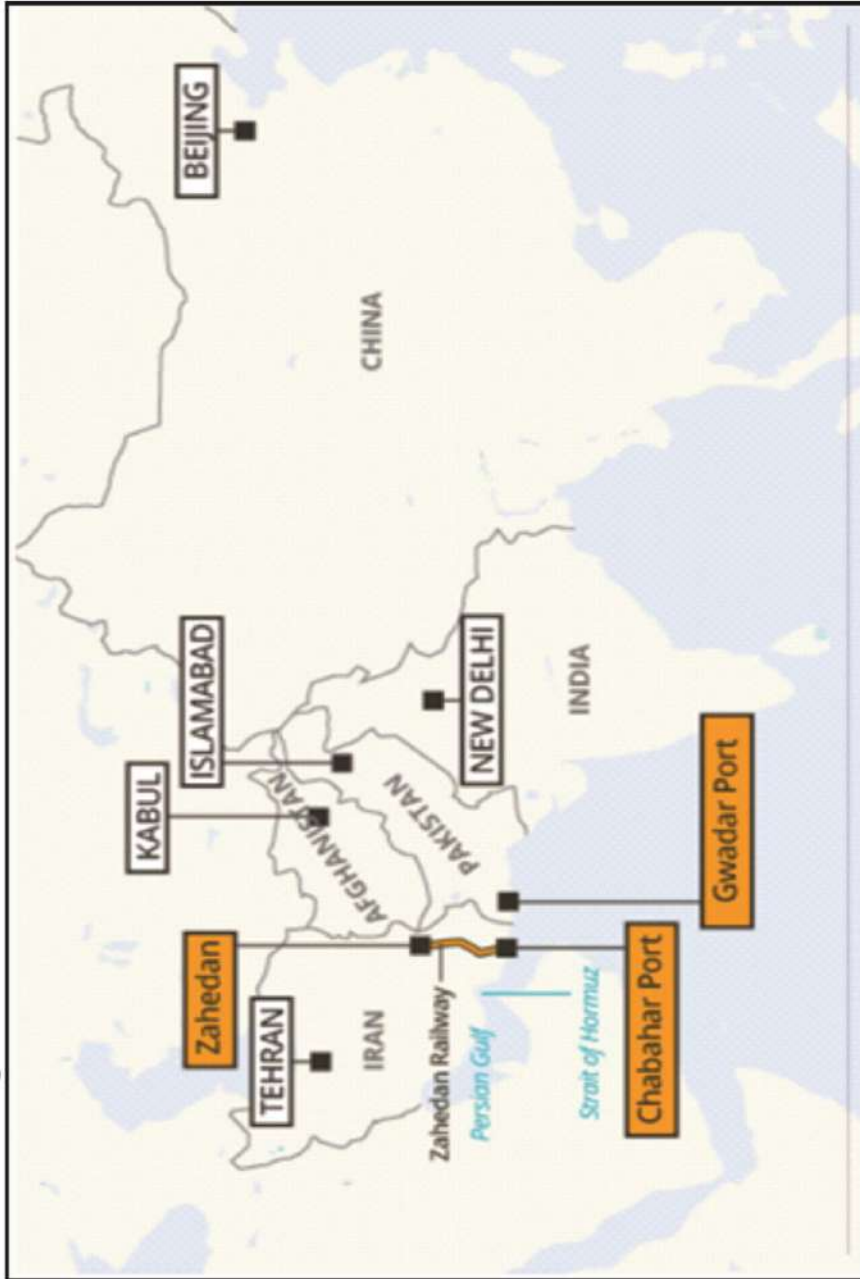
Chabahar Port lies at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz that carries immense significance both in economic terms and in geostrategic terms. According to the US Energy Administration Information (EIA) defines, the Strait of Hormuz, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, is located between Oman and Iran (Fig.-3.7). Because of the large amounts of oil that flow through the Strait of Hormuz, it happens to be the world's most influential oil chokepoint. Of global petroleum liquids consumption, in 2018, the daily oil flow equaled 21 millions barrels per day or the equivalent of 21 percent of consumption worldwide.

Figure-3.6: Chabahar port and its Connectivity to International North-South Corridor



Source: GIS Lab, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

Figure-3.7: Location of Chabahar Port with reference to Strait of Hormuz



Source: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/port-gulf-oman-irans-new-weapon-south-asia>

Choke points are critical narrow channels also referred as points of natural congestion amidst wider navigable passes in global sea routes. Maritime Choke points due to their natural narrow passage experience heavy traffic. They are valuable strategic locations. Even temporary blockade of choke points may delay oil transit causing substantive shipping cost and global prices. However there are alternate ways to circumvent through other routes in most of the cases but there are certain choke points that have no actual alternatives. As per EIA reports (June, 2019), over the last few years, the flow of crude oil, condensate, and petroleum products in the Strait of Hormuz has been relatively steady, as Iran's oil production and exports have been brought back to pre-sanctions levels after international sanctions on Iran were lifted. About one-third of the world's seaborne traded oil moved through the Strait of Hormuz in 2018, and one-quarter of the world's liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade did as well.

The Strait of Hormuz constricts traffic limiting available routes. There are only two countries in the world that have pipelines that can transport crude oil from the Persian Gulf and have the pipeline capacity to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, and those are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Based on data from pipeline companies and government agencies, at the end of 2018, it was estimated that 6.5 million barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil pipeline capacity was available between the two countries; in that year, 2.7 million b/d of crude oil was shipped through the pipelines, leaving about 3.8 million b/d of unused pipeline capacity.

3.6: Chabahar Port and Iran's Looking to the East Policy

Iran has seen adversaries due to the US imposed sanctions. Iran is trying to find ways to out of the sanctions. As a part of its Looking to the East Policy, Iran is looking forward to Japan, as illustrated by Shinzo Abe's Tehran visit in 2019. Iran wants to partner with Japan, a US ally, to avoid the US pressure tactics. Not only the partnership of Japan rather a partnership with the Asian powers may shape the future of Iran from the conflict between Islamic Republic and the western countries. Iran has intensified its diplomatic outreach to Asian countries. The foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reflected Iran's willingness to collaborate with Asian powers during his visits to Central Asia, India, Japan, China and Pakistan in the past few years. Abe concluded his Tehran visit on June 14 while Rouhani visited Bishkek on June 19 to attend the SCO summit. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had meetings with Russian and Chinese leaders in the Kyrgyz capital city. Tehran's strategy in relation to the SCO, in which it has an observer status while it is not a formal member.

Tehran's plan is concentrated on shifting the escalating crisis between the United States and Iran to a larger regional framework that includes the SCO's dominant actors, is contingent on shifting the crisis to the SCO. Also, the Islamic Republic's leadership hopes that other SCO members such as Moscow, Beijing and others will implement measures that lessen the pressure and sanctions on Iran, argue Cafiero & Makhleh (2019). During the SCO summit, Rouhani directly addressed the leaders of Russia, China, India and Pakistan while condemning Trump's approach towards his country where he stated him as "A serious risk to stability in the region and the world". "Looking to East" Iran aims to solidify relations and counteract the West. Provided the present geopolitical status of the Middle East, as well as US-Iran ties in the eventuality of the Washington's unilateral exodus from the JCPOA on May 2018, Iran is perilously taxing to boost relations with other states in the Far East supposes. Iran may seek benefit from the US-China Trade War by intensifying its own ties with China. The American strategy stands threatened by Iran's role in distracting US from focusing on the two emerging superpowers, Russia and China. Rouhani's close meetings with Xi Jinping translates the growing ties between the two. The US-Iran brinkmanship would leverage the Chinese side that proves to be a 'spoiler' in the Trump's "maximum pressure" tactics on Iran. Russia also plays an important role.

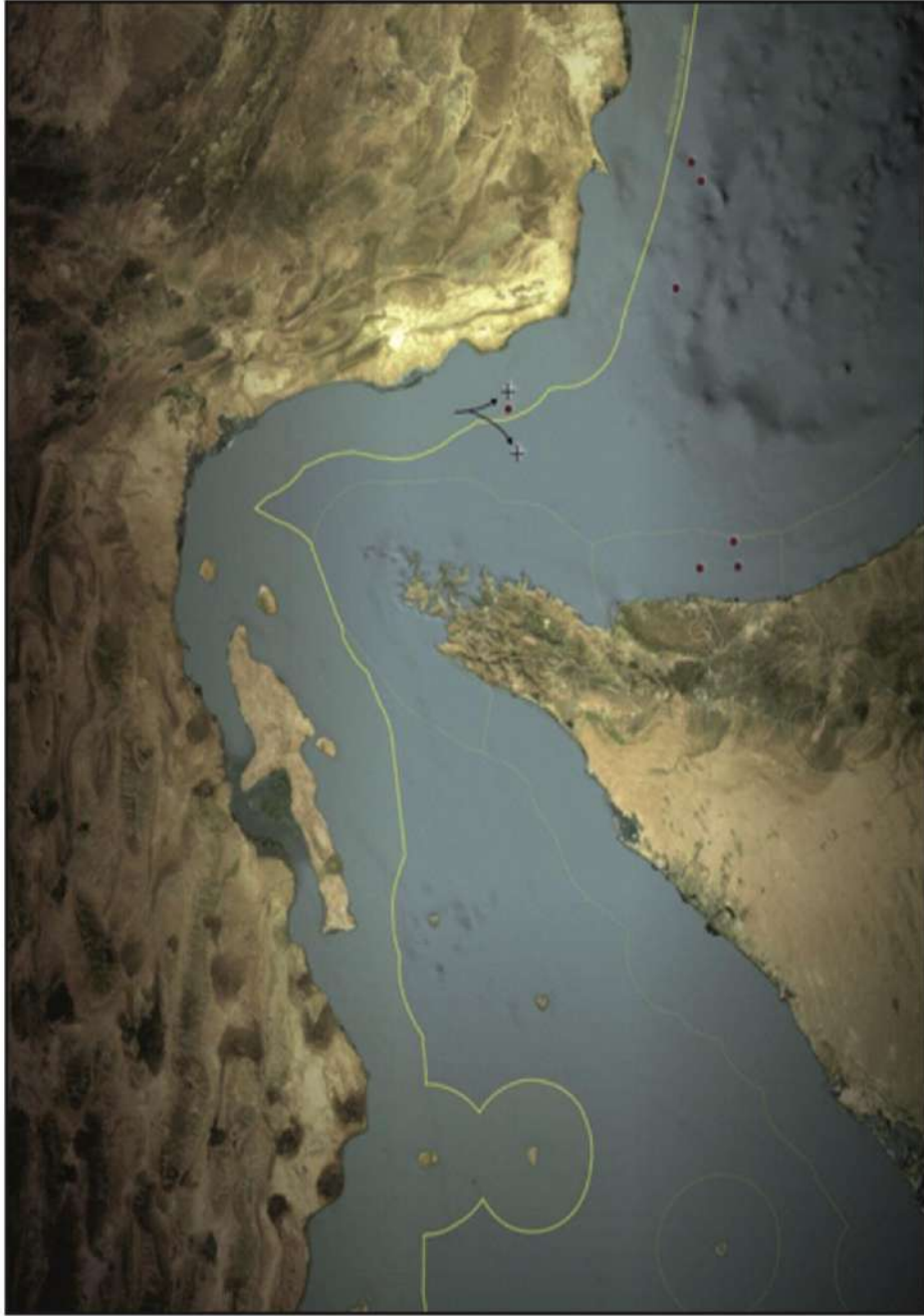
Countering US pressure needs closer ties between Iran and Russia. Russia on the other hand chooses to act as a middle man between the two. However, Putin shows his clear stance in the favour of Iran by stating that "a simple escalation of tension will not be advantageous for anyone including the US". Thus, the Islamist countries remain engaged in the regional conflicts, Iran is seen in struggle with US, UK, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE, Iran's way forward is to integrate with the big Asian economies like China, India, Russia those have substantial autonomy in the region. The Chabahar port has an important role in Iran's "Looking to the East" policy. It is because it has potential to link India to Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the Caucasus. Chabahar port is the only oceanic port in Iran situated on the Makran coast. India has a number of geopolitical interests in Chabahar, however it can also play an important role in taking Afghanistan out of the geographical landlocked disadvantages and allows India a better and inexpensive access to the neighbouring countries. The port is highly significant for India because it has potential to counter the Chinese containment and influence in the region. China through to the one belt one road initiative is trying to limit India's influence in the region.

China is heavily investing in the Gwadar port in Pakistan. Primarily due to the Chinese investment in Gwadar port India as a response measure decided for making lofty investments in Chabahar port owing to its significant location. India ports global limited established an office at Chabahar and joined the construction of the Shahid Beheshti port. Chabahar port will be the first deep water port in Iran. Deep water ports are extremely important in shipping industries. Huge ships full of cargo and goods cannot stand in the shallow waters of the oceans rather they need deep waters to halt. These ships carry cargos in bulk at a low cost and they only need deep waters for proper functioning of transfer goods. Loading and unloading these ships is impossible from any other kind of port and it needs special equipment, operations, and management as well. Smaller ships and boats are used to further transfer the consignments to the mainland. Presently Iran doesn't have any deep water port. Iran has to be dependent on United Arab Emirates for getting access to the international trades. Iranian smaller ships have to load and unload cargos in the deep sea ports of United Arab Emirates through the Persian Gulf. Jebel Ali Port in UAE and Saudi Arabia's Dammam port are the two deep water ports in the Persian Gulf. Chabahar port will eliminate Iran's dependency on UAE. In addition Chabahar, unlike the Bandar Abbas is situated outside the conflict zone of the Persian Gulf. Also it is located somewhat out of reach to Iran rival countries. The Chabahar port will become the only port of Iran having direct access to the Indian Ocean. Iran's ports were vulnerable during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88. The strategic significance of Chabahar was demonstrated back then that formed the basic premise for establishing a deep water port there. The Iran government tried to deescalate and bring peace and normalcy in the region by the end of the war and in 1992 a free trade zone was established. Free trade zones are special economic zones where a country allows export-import, manufacturing, and foreign exchange without levying the normal taxes and regulations.

3.7: India-Iran Relations

Geography plays a crucial role in the identity of any state. This idea is central to the subject matter of Political Geography. Iran's geography has the most important part in the geo-economics and geo-strategy of the country. Iran is on 17th position in terms of land area in the world covering 1,684,000 sq km. It is the 16th most populous country (Fig.-3.8). If compared to its neighbouring country Iraq, Iran is nearly four times larger and three times more populous than Iraq.

Figure-3.8: Strait of Hormuz



Source: <https://graphics.reuters.com/MIDEAST-ATTACKS-HORMUZ/0100B0B50N3/index.html>

The mountain topography is very striking in Iran. It is covered with mountains on all sides. These mountains act as frontiers and protect the country from direct invasion. The main mountains are called the Zagros, they are southern part of the Caucasus mountain range. From the northwest Iran they run roughly 900mi les further adjoining Turkey and Armenia. Extending further it reaches at the mouth of Strait of Hormuz at Bandar Abbas. Iran shares 150 miles of border with Turkey on the western side (Fig.-3.9 and 3.10). The map shows that the Zargos Mountains running south to Turkey on the west stretches to Iran and the topography becomes increasingly flat on the Iraqi side. That further becomes a part the Tigris Euphrates basin. The border with Iraq is predominantly mountainous just like Turkey but the mountain disappear along the border of Iraq and becomes plain. This formed the historical frontier between Persia and Mesopotamia, the two old civilizations. The southern part of Iran however is swampy at the confluence of Tigris and Euphrates. India Iran relations are millennia old. Nabizadeh (2012) points that the first Iranian-Indian connection can be traced back to the Indo-Aryan migration from Iran to India in 1250 or even 2000 BC. The interaction was not only among people at the time but also between governments. These communications are represented in the popular proto-language held in common by Sanskrit and Persian. More recently, the rise of Persian-language newspapers in India, particularly in the beginning of the Indian press, when English had not been extensively spoken, ensured a constant exchange in between two nations.

Additionally, the writings of Iranian authors and scholars on India and likewise had ascertained a constant exchange among the two. Iran, like India, was influenced by British colonialism. India's independence in 1947 and the Iranian Revolution in 1979 has brought a paradigm shift between the two countries. Although they were in opposition during the cold war, the two countries never had sour relations. British had the control over Southern Iran for its oil reserves. The Iranian Revolution was much like India's struggle for independence and the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Imam Khomeini shared same values of non-violence and peace. The links also root from the fact that Persian was one of the official languages of India by the times of Mughals. India has a huge Persian diaspora today. Present time friendship between the two countries is defined by several factors like India is home to Shia Muslims and Iran is also a Shia dominated country, Iran lies at a very strategic location for India as it provides ways to connect with the Central Asia, Russia and Europe through maritime trade, Central Asia particularly Afghanistan offers immense resource potential and

Figure-3.9: The Old Persian Empire



Source: ESRI

Figure- 3.10 : Present day Iran



Source: ESRI

India needs are ever growing, and to counter the Chinese presence is a pressing need. This makes Iran significant to India. There are other things to consider too, like, Iran is particularly significant for India due to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in which India is having serious interests for employing the Chabahar port. Chabahar port will lay access to the Indian goods directly to Afghanistan and beyond, using the Delaram-Zaranj route. As a matter of fact, India dispatched its first consignment of wheat measuring about 1.1 million tonnes to Afghanistan via Chabahar port during October 2017. India anticipates countering Gwadar port in Pakistan with the Chabahar port, as it is doubtful that, using Gwadar port would enable China to watch over the engagements of India's and US's navies. India also anticipates that Gwadar port would someday serve as a military base for China's warships and submarines, therefore impending direct threat to India opines Hafeez (2019). However, in view of India-Pakistan rivalry the history shows that Iran and Pakistan too are natural allies. According to Ahmed (2014) both Pakistan and Iran share a border along with many other similarities like the way that they are linguistically, economically, and culturally connected and also some having significant historical, ethnic, cultural, and religious connections. People of Iran and Pakistan, genetically, belong to the Aryan race. The Pakistani culture, food, costume, music, literature and architecture has been profoundly influenced by the Persian Empire. Muslims of British India demonstrate their political support for the Iranian nation by voicing their support for Muslims elsewhere.

During World War-II, the All-India Muslim League (representing Indian Muslims) adopted a resolution in favour of Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was the ruler of Iran, at the time foreign forces controlled his country. To first accept Pakistan as an independent nation after it was established in 1947, Iran was the first one to follow suit, as per the information obtained from IRAM (2019). Iran-Pakistan trade witnessed constant enhancements even during the era of turmoil of 1960's and 70's when disintegration with East Pakistan. Hence the relations between the two can be called as natural allies on the basis of religion and culture. This fact might act as a cause of apprehension for India but through proper diplomacy India can bridge the difference and establish strategic relations with Iran. Chabahar port was one such means that promised an actual diplomatic and strategic tie for the benefit of both the countries gain plus access to global trade. However, the role of United States has always affected the relationship of the two countries. Due to the increased pressure on Iran, it has become nearly impossible for India and Iran to work together.

The United States, specifically President Trump has exerted significant pressure on Iran after his administration came to power in 2017. That's why the United States left the JCPOA in 2018. That action, along with several other US military deployments in the Persian Gulf, has effectively killed the agreement opines Soami (2019). JCPOA or Iran Nuclear deal was made in July 2015. Iran and China France Russia United Kingdom and the United States, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, along with Germany and the EU were signatories of the JCPOA Agreement. This deal restricts Iran's uranium enrichment program until 2030. It also incorporates surveillance monetary and measures of transparency that will be applied during the whole tenure of the Uranium enrichment program. The international atomic energy agency will monitor the complacency and it will have constant look over all the nuclear facilities in Iran. The United States believes that under the garb of the Uranium enrichment program Iran is preparing nuclear ballistic missiles or weapons of mass destruction. The agreement states that if Iran continues to abide by its commitment and transparency the US, EU and UNSC may relief Iran from multiple sanctions.

The agreement says that Iran will only do the Uranium enrichment for 15 years up to 3.67 percent and no new heavy infrastructure of water facility would be built by Iran. Donald Trump pulled out of JCPOA on May 8th, 2018 the United States argued that there is a major flaw in JCPOA as it is temporary in nature and Iran should be permanently restricted in dealing with nuclear energy. They also argued that the agreement has a lack of control over Iranian ballistic missile programs. In addition, Iran's involvement in Syria and other Middle Eastern conflicts, funding terror groups, and influencing politics indirectly were 'malign behaviour' and thus Iran should be economically restricted. The success of JCPOA would have released the frozen foreign assets of Iran, relaxation on the sanction on oil export from Iran, foreign firms would have been allowed to invest in Iran in a number of sectors including Oil and Gas production, hospitality, automobile sector, and Iranian trade would grow by engaging with different countries with global banking systems such as SWIFT. There is increasing hostility between the US and Iran, as evidenced by the recent assaults on oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz and indeed the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker in Gibraltar. Iran expects India to overrule the US by continuing to purchase its oil. Iran also expects India to refrain from seeking economic benefits from other projects such as the Farzad B gas fields. While the US is seeking to advance its geopolitical interests in the region, carrying on with its own oil industry.

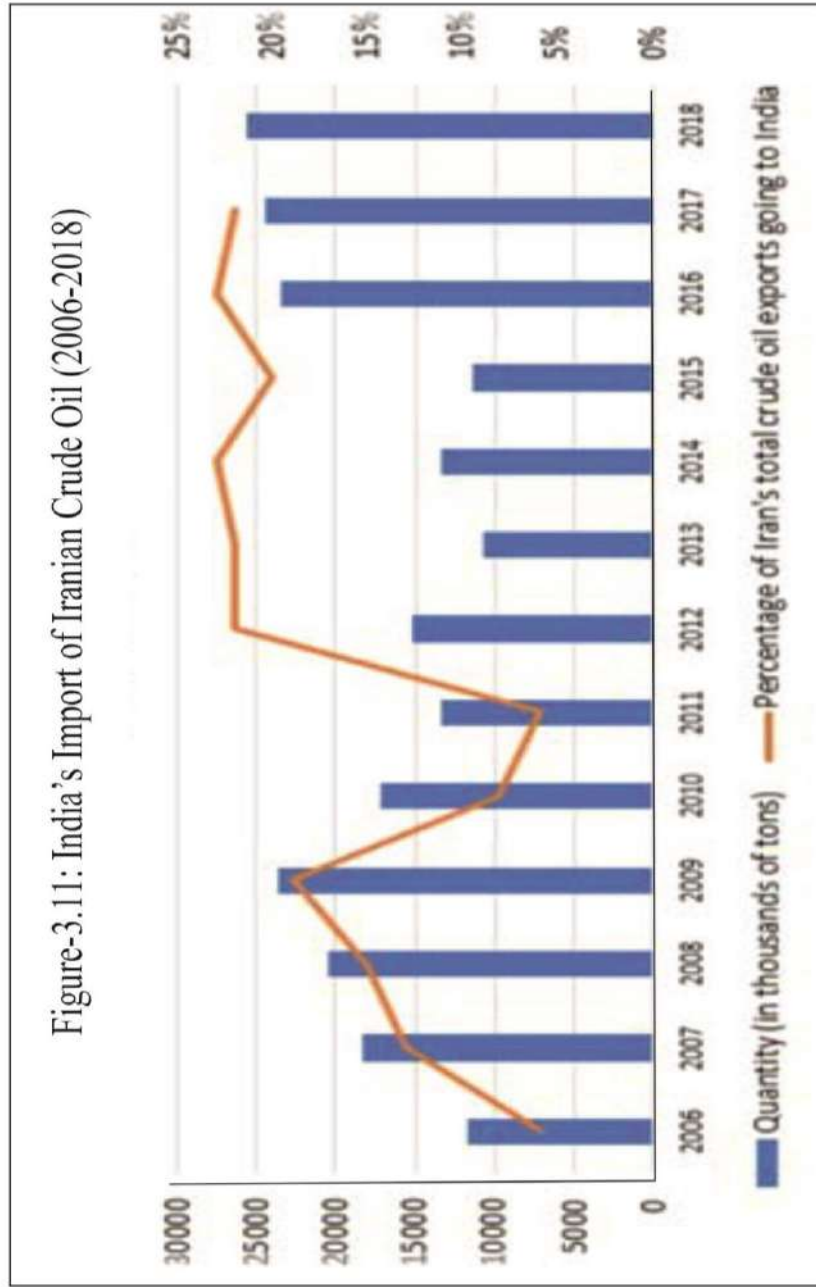
As far as Tehran is concerned, it is a zero-sum game with the Sunni monarchy rulers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It receives hostility from Israel, but it is also hostile to Israel. Iran is wary of offending its neighbours and non-state actors on its eastern border with countries like Pakistan.

3.8: Iran-Afghan Relations

Since Chabahar serves Afghanistan in a number of ways it becomes important to look at the relation between the two. To begin, Tehran desires an administration in Kabul that will not only distance itself from the US but will also be distrustful of the Taliban and its state sponsors, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Today, in light of the above, Iran continues to support the Afghan presidency while also engaging the Shiite population that speaks Dari/Persian but is not Pashtun. According to Iran's third national security priority, protecting its on-the-ground investments and personnel, specifically in western Afghanistan, is of utmost importance. One of the more notable things about the incidents in Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 was the fact that they served as a warning of the risks that Iranian traders faced in Afghanistan, where the Taliban was on the rise. Personnel with this type of experience are now the vanguard of Iran's vision of achieving strategic influence in Afghanistan beyond security and political domains explains Kutty (2017) Iran would always aim towards creating and protecting an economic influence in Afghanistan. For which Poole (2011) writes that so far, \$500 million of the total \$900 million in aid has been disbursed. In terms of trade, Milad (2012) notes that Iran accounts for roughly 35 to 40 percent of exports to Afghanistan, with annual bilateral trade summarising around \$2 billion. Furthermore during February in year 2019, India received Afghanistan's first export container vessel via Chabahar port of Iran.

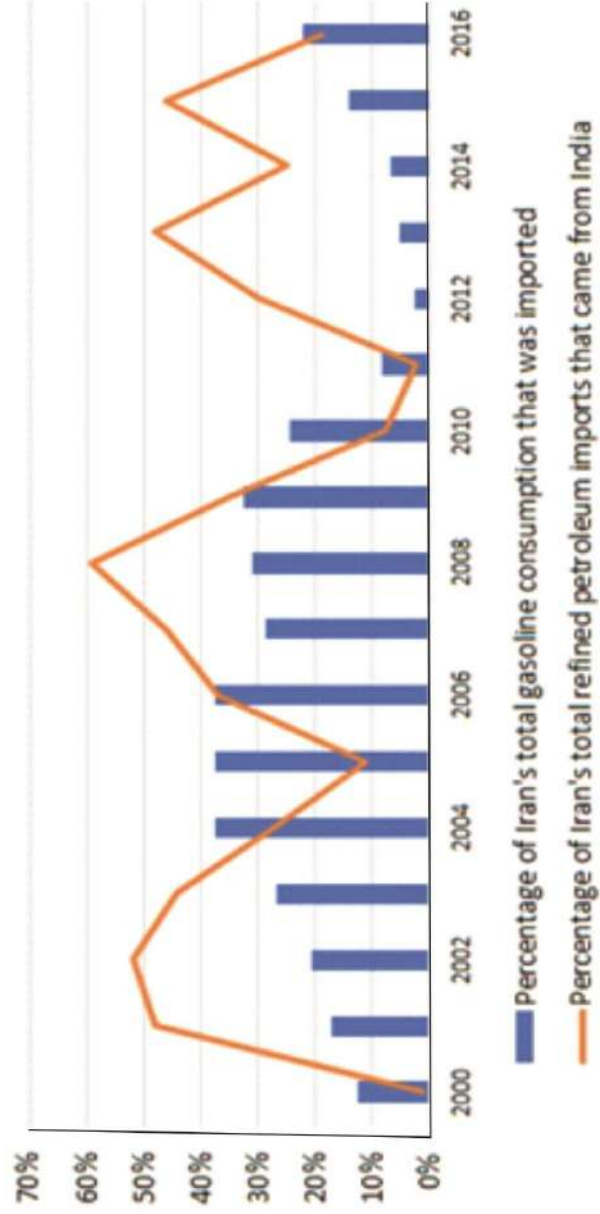
The agreement was signed in May 2016 in which India, Afghanistan, and Iran committed to enhancing connectivity through this port. The agreement also provides an opportunity for both India and Iran to develop industrial projects in and around the Chabahar port, such as an aluminium plant. IRCON a government firm consolidated by the Central Government of India under the Ministry of Railways is also the lead consultant on the Chabahar-Zahedan-Zaranj (Afghanistan) rail line project: it is worth noting here that, despite US sanctions against Iran, the US explicitly excluded Chabahar port from the Iran freedom and counter-proliferation act of 2012 (Fig. 3.11, 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14).

Figure-3.11: India's Import of Iranian Crude Oil (2006-2018)



Source: Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry

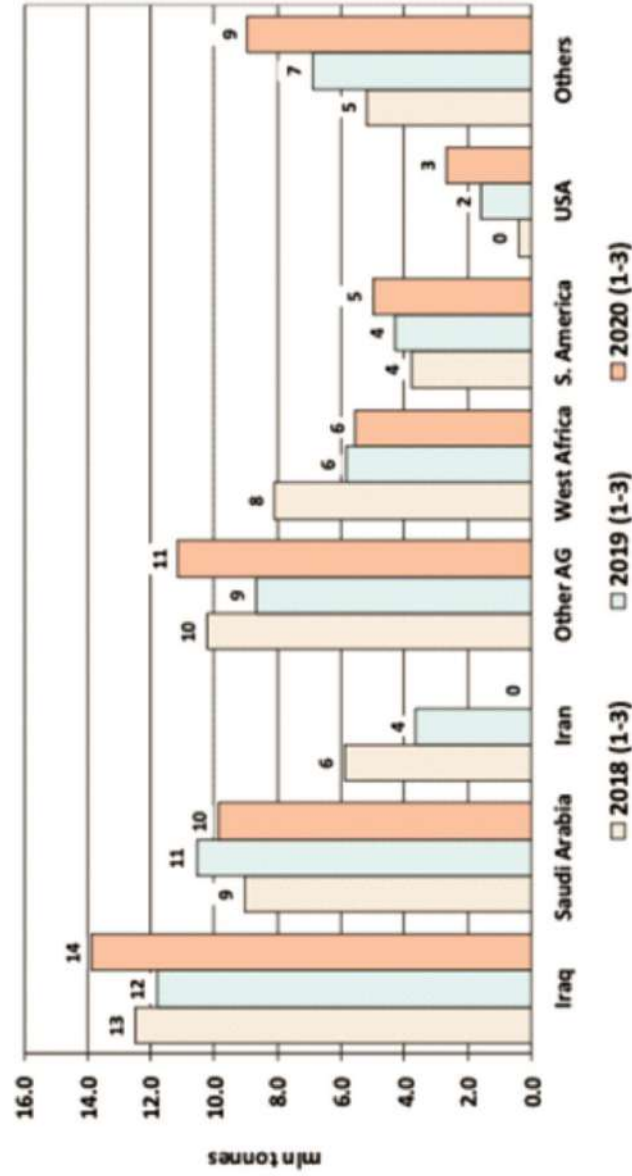
Figure 3.12: Iran's Reliance on Indian Gasoline Imports
(2006-2016)



Source: International Energy Agency and Observatory of Economic Complexity

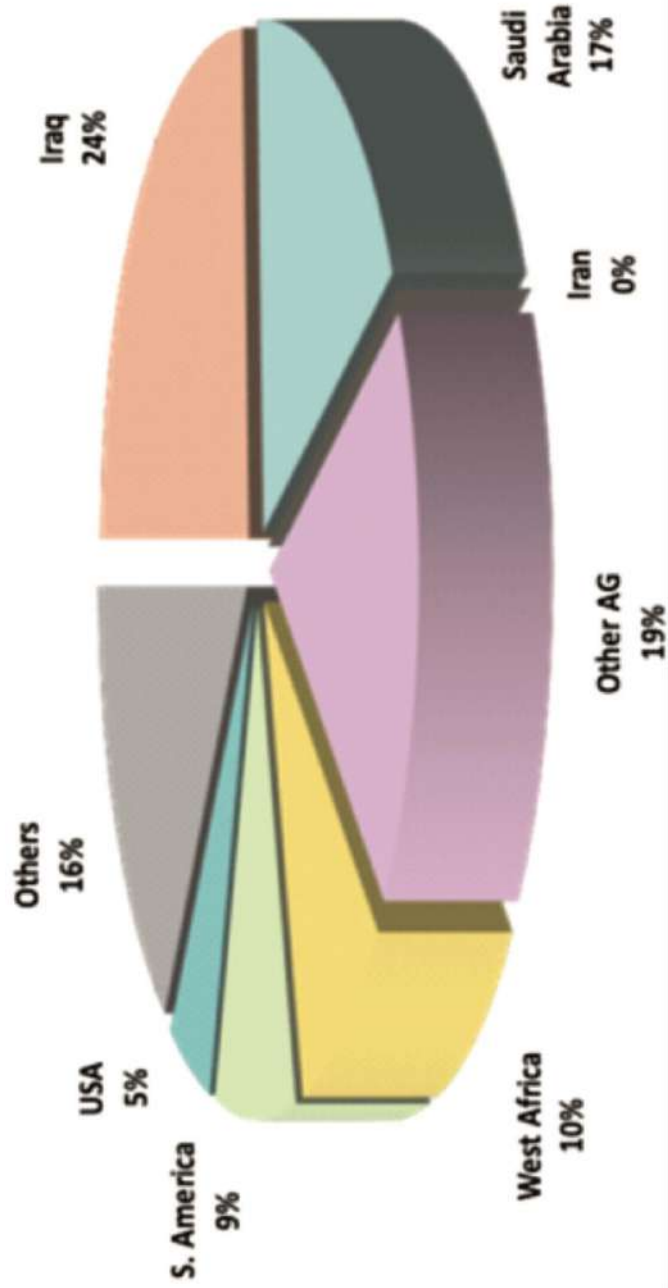
Figure- 3.13: India-Crude Oil Imports by Source in Jan-Mar

(mar 2020; source: refinitiv;seabome only; in min tonnes)



Source: <https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/indias-crude-oil-imports-in-the-first-quarter-of-2020-make-for-an-interesting-reading/>

Figure- 3.14: India Crude Imports by Source in Jan-Mar 2020
(mar 2020; source: refinitiv; % of import volume)



Source: <https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/indias-crude-oil-imports-in-the-first-quarter-of-2020-make-for-an-interesting-reading/>

The port will perform as a strategic South-North corridor which will play a key role in the trade between Iran-Afghanistan-India. Iran is also seen as Afghanistan's leading trading partner. Afghanistan's export capacity is only \$1.5 billion annually, and thus most of the trade flows from Iran to its eastern neighbour. In 2017-2018, the two countries' total trade volume was \$2 billion. This figure accounted for nearly a third of Afghanistan's total annual trade volume of \$7 billion. Iran's exports accounted for 22 percent of the \$11.5 billion consumer market in Afghanistan, Rasanah (2020). Tehran continued being the leading exporter of goods and services to Afghanistan even during the reinstated sanctions by US on Iran in May 2018 confirmed by Afghan Statistics Administration. Experts opine that the actual import from Iran was very high even though there was lack of border control and management and trafficking goods were frequent. Iran and Afghanistan signed a MoU in August 2019 that promises the exchange of electricity between the two neighbours.

A 20 percent rise in export from Dogharoon Customs in Iran to Afghanistan was seen during mid-2019 that was greater than the 2018 data. Afghanistan also imported Iranian Oil in 2019 irrespective of the US sanctions because other Central Asian oils would bear steep cost to Afghanistan hence it remained a buyer from Iran. Iran also exports kerosene, mazut, and other chemical and dissolvent to Afghanistan. During the sanctions the export of cement from Iran also increased due to its better quality. Nearly 30 percent of the export went on through South Khorasan province of Iran. It is also a hub of coal and other minerals for potential trade between the two countries. In 2020 also, the Afghans confirmed an import of goods including oil products, machinery, wheat, edible oils, yarn, metals, and electricity total worth more than 12 billion dollars. This data confirmed that Iran's export was approximately equal Afghan's net export itself. For estimation, Iranian exports to Afghanistan even surpassed China, Pakistan, and other Central Asian countries. The government of Iran aims to increase the nominal capacity to 86 tonnes in less than a span of five years or by 2024. Afghanistan would be a significant stakeholder in these operations.

3.9: Historical Journey of India- Afghan Relations

Afghanistan has an important geostrategic location as it lies surrounded by Iran Pakistan and Central Asian countries it has been under important focus in India's foreign policy. Since the independence of India in 1947 both countries have enjoyed cordial relationship with each other.

“The friendship treaty” in 1950, “Recognising the ancient ties which have existed between the two countries for centuries and their mutual need for cooperation in strengthening and developing these ties and urged by their mutual desire to establish peace between the two countries with a view to the common benefit of their people and the development of their respective countries”, MEA (4 January, 1950). India Afghanistan relations were further strengthened during the 1979 invasion of Soviet Union in Afghanistan during which Indian investments in in Afghanistan development activities were increased particularly in the field of industrial cooperation, agriculture and irrigation, and infrastructural projects like hydroelectric projects. As a response to the invasion of USSR, Afghanistan witnessed the rise of Mujahideen allegedly backed by United States and Pakistan, after which the Soviet troops withdrew followed by the disintegration of Soviet union later in 1991, again followed by the formation of Afghan government by Mujahideen overthrowing Soviet backed Najibullah government of Afghanistan.

These were the events that reduced the diplomatic relations and influence of India in Afghanistan because India had good relations with USSR backed government of Najibullah. However India gained its proactive role in Afghanistan later in 1992 under a non-pashtun government established by Burhanuddin Rabbani. In 1996 September Afghanistan witnessed the rise of Taliban with the overthrowing of Rabbani government it. Due to this India again lost its influence in Afghanistan because the Taliban were predominantly supported by Pakistan. This was the time when the non-pashtuons in opposition to the Taliban government constituted the Northern Alliance and established control over the northern part of Afghanistan that shared borders with the central Asian countries including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India found it important to counter Pakistan backed Taliban rule and it does India started supporting the Northern Alliance. India provided high altitude warfare ammunitions to strengthen the defence system of the Northern Alliance that cost around ten million dollars. India also extended its intelligence services and defence advisory with technical assistance to the Northern Alliance. India also made hospitals and provided medical staff and doctors to assist the alliance in border areas. Notably India also acted against the Taliban from it's based in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. According to Dixit (2004), Afghan Hindus and Sikhs did not try to enter into a relationship with the Taliban as a result of the harsh treatment they received from the Taliban.

The Taliban's statements about Kashmir, training of Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and foreign militants in Afghanistan camps, these touches on India's core interests, and these elements cause New Delhi to help bolster Rabbani's forces that are mainly composed of non-Pashtun personnels, said Ambassador M.H. Ansari from India. Hence, India has always aimed to counter the Talibani forces in Afghanistan and having cordial relations. After that the 9/11 terror attacks in the US in 2001 influenced the relations between India and Afghanistan. As a result of the attacks the United States launched an international war on terror including "Operation Enduring Freedom" to fight the Taliban rule. India got a chance to attain a dominant position in in Central Asia as a regional power balancer and a rising global power as well. After the terror attacks of 2001 India always focused to fix its role in the development of Afghanistan and establishment of better trade and commerce from the country.

In the wake of recent diplomatic coordination between the leadership of the two countries, India has offered Afghanistan diplomatic support at both the regional and multilateral levels. Even after Pakistan's diplomatic refusal, India assisted Afghanistan in becoming the SAARC's latest member in New Delhi in 2007. The 2011 strategic alliance among both India and Afghanistan is historic as it was the first time Afghanistan had signed such an accord since the USSR invasion in 1979, which served as the initial catalyst for the outbreak of political violent conflicts, Kaura (2017). Post the Uri attack led by Pakistani terror groups Afghanistan supported India and stood in favour of boycotting the SAARC summit in Islamabad.

3.10: Significance of Chabahar in trilateral relation of India-Iran-Central Asia

Chabahar port has added a new impetus to the connectivity projects India is running with the value addition of Central Asia through a trilateral agreement between India Iran Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is a double landlocked country which means it is surrounded by other landlocked countries from all sides in the case of Uzbekistan it is surrounded by Afghanistan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Hence its dependency on the connectivity networks through neighbouring countries can be clearly understood. On the other hand, Iran at an international level due to the opposition from western countries is facing isolation in the region. The significance of Chabahar Port access point of convergence for these countries. However there are other connectivity projects India China and other countries are initiating to connect the Central Asia.

India is also a part of the Ashgabat agreement, “Ashgabat Agreement envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf; accession to the Agreement would diversify India’s connectivity options with Central Asia and have a positive influence on India’s trade and commercial ties with the region” (MEA, 2018). Similarly, India is also invested in the maritime connectivity project connecting Siberia through the Indo-Pacific corridor, and the North-South Corridor. These projects can be further linked to Kazakhstan and beyond within India’s ‘Look North Policy’. New Delhi-Tehran-Tashkent trilateral cooperation are based on the growing connectivity of India with Central Asian countries that it will contribute to the development of trade and commerce in the region, other Central Asian countries will join these networks in near future as they are opening for the multilateral initiative for Chabahar port, and Chabahar port offers an entrepôt to the Indo-Pacific hence Central Asian countries would be able to reap geopolitical and geo-economic benefits from the emerging regional connectivity projects. The Joint Statement of the India-Central Asia Dialogue’s second meeting, which was conducted via virtual mode on October 28, 2020. The meeting addressed the issue of connectivity in detail.

At the said meeting, the Joint Statement lauded India’s endeavours to modernise Iran’s Chabahar port infrastructural project which is potent enough to emerge as a vital link in trade and transportation communications between Central Asian and South Asian markets. India also made a one-billion-dollar offer during the same meeting. Afghanistan will act as an important platform for India’s outreach to rest of the Central Asia. Trade and commerce business of Afghanistan can use Chabahar port due to its geographical proximity and connectivity. India can also have a greater chance with Turkmenistan and other oil producing players. During a virtual meeting on December 11, 2020, Uzbekistan’s prime minister expressed its interest in joining the Chabahar port which was welcomed by Narendra Modi. The primary step in this trilateral cooperation was taken when Indian officials, Iranian leaders, and Uzbekistan’s administrators discussed about the modalities of their cooperation and collaboration at Chabahar. Iran-Afghanistan rail line opened recently, the Khaf-Herat rail line, which was intended to subsequently be linked to Chabahar as proposed, if connected with the planned Uzbekistan-Iran rail links will further enhance the regional connectivity with Central Asia. As a matter of fact, during 2019, Uzbekistan opined that India should participate in the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan rail link project.

The Chabahar initiative will emerge Afghanistan as a connectivity hub that may trigger further economic development and reduce the conflict and trouble of this country. Uzbekistan would also get an efficient transit for its exports of gas particular that would again bring other developmental opportunities to Uzbeks as well, as it is the largest populated Central Asian country having a significant geopolitical position in the region. Chabahar offers liberation of Central Asian countries from the dependency on Russia and China by providing better opportunities in the world market particularly in the Indo-Pacific market, but for this establishing connectivity networks to Iran that are important and challenging at the same time. Chabahar may also contribute to establish a new geopolitical cooperation in the region. On one hand Russia and China has always been together in their Central Asian goal but recently they too have started showing mutual competition over strategic matters do much so that a third round of Great Game is expected between Russia and China. For instance, China has been influencing the current Kyrgyz regime and Russia wouldn't allow this activity of China as it poses threat to the Russian own influence in Central Asia. India on the other hand, not in a position to finance mega infrastructural projects like China, tries to engage in collective and cooperative development. Hence the partnership with Chabahar port will prove to be helpful for Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and India respectively as well as collectively. It is expected that rest of the Central Asian countries will join the Chabahar project in the future.

3.11: Chabahar-Zahedan -Zaranj (Afghanistan) Rail Line Project

As the MEA on it press note released on Feb 10, 2021, stated that, “the Chabahar-Zahedan Railway project, a joint collaboration between the Governments of India and Iran, is to provide faster connectivity from the Chabahar Port in Iran to Afghanistan and further to Central Asia, it will bolster the existing connectivity by road from the Chabahar port to Afghanistan; India and Iran remain engaged on the modalities of the implementation of the Chabahar-Zahedan Railway Project, as well as other developmental projects in Iran”. Chabahar Zahedan line is a 628 km long that will connect Zaranj across the Afghanistan border. The completion of the rail line was aimed by March 2022. It is a part of the trilateral agreement between India-Iran- Afghanistan to build an alternate route to Afghanistan and further to Central Asia. It would allow Indian goods to Afghanistan via Iran bypassing Pakistan. It would complement the Zaranj-Delaram highway that was built by India in Afghanistan in 2009.

Therefore, the vision was to use the Chabahar port for maritime transit, and then the railway would help transfer it to Afghanistan and then the Zaranj-Delaram highway could assist in the whole distribution of commodities to the interior most parts of Afghanistan. It was supposed to be a collaborative effort of Iran and India both but in July, 2020 Iran government officials expressed their decision of proceeding with the construction of the railway line on their own. Iran has only signed two agreements with Indians for investment in Chabahar: The first is about port machinery and equipment, and the second is about India's \$150 million investment in Chabahar port. "We had a list of Indian investments in Chabahar port which also included the issue of Chabahar railway infrastructure and the railway, but it was not agreed during the negotiations," explained Farhad Montaser, deputy diplomat at Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization. This was speculated because of the delay in funding, assistance and starting from India. Experts opine that despite of Iran's preparation for initiating the rail line, India never started the process primarily due to its apprehensions from US sanctions. Because of these sanctions, India already zeroes out its oil imports from Iran worsening its bilateral terms with Iran. The Chinese closure to Iran was also seen as a reason for India's omission from the project.

Bureaucratic and diplomatic hurdles in India and a lack of effective communication and coordination between the two countries were to blame. For instance, Iran is also developing Farsad-B gas block without India. The 2003 Delhi Declaration said that the two countries would work on the Chabahar Port complex and Chabahar-Fahranj-Bam railway link in order to strengthen ties between the West Asian nations and India. The recent trilateral agreement signed by the Indian, Iranian and Afghan governments to develop the Chabahar routing path via Melak, Zaranj, and Delaram will contribute to the overall regional economic prosperity by facilitating international trade and trans-shipment, and notably, aid in transporting cargo and passengers to Afghanistan and Central Asia as reported by Business Standard. However, this agreement was signed in 2003 but a formal contract on the matter was signed and finalized in 2016. Sidhant Sibal (DNA) highlights that the project has two components, first is the substructure, it is the concrete base on which train-tracks are affixed. The two countries have signed an agreement that stipulates that Iran is responsible for laying the infrastructure that has been held up due to lack of funding. India will supply the stock after completion of the substructure, and implementation will be done together.

India supplied Iran with steel while the country was also importing steel from Indian companies. As a result of US sanctions, this has been suspended. Political thinkers believe it is a factor in the Iranian presidential elections and domestic politics. However, owing to such problems the fragile relations over strategic projects and diplomatic ties between India and Iran surfaced. Thus, the ties between China and Iran are seen to be strengthening. The growing Chinese influence in Iran indicates towards Iranian future collaboration with China-Iran 25 year deal in which both of them will be potential investors for each other. The Belt and Road initiative of China is pressing on stronger ties between China and Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Middle East countries. China proposes heavy investment in Infrastructural development like construction of stadiums, railways, industries, energy projects and 5G highways. Iran agreed on 400 billion dollars agreement of 25 years comprehensive strategic cooperation with China. Such mega projects have clearly appeased Iran more and it brings greater Chinese involvement, investment and presence in Iran. The most striking point of this connectivity networking of Iran and China is its vision to connect Gwadar and Chabahar that would not be good news for India if translated into reality. The Bandar-e-Jask port just 350km from Chabahar, close to Strait of Hormuz, has been offered by Iran to China for developing. This may establish China's control in the area and along the coast of Pakistan- Iran. Nevertheless, Iran invited India for a final review on the cooperation where the countries resolved to continue the project in collaboration.

3.12: The American Factor

The new Biden administration is also expected to continue the Trump administration's policy of exempting Chabahar from sanctions. If India acquires a strategic advantage in the Chabahar port, it can checkmate China's aggressive moves, too. As has been seen when the Gwadar port was converted into a naval base to support China's "One Belt, One Road" strategy, China is presenting a significant challenge to both South and Central Asia's peace and security. Even Iran has in the past resisted China's efforts to extend its territory. The US Iran relation has a whole history of engagements. In 1953 Iran democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq was overthrown by the Iranian military who was being supported by the CIA of United States and MI 6 of the British intelligence. The conflict was around the angle of Persian Oil Company over which Britain wanted its own authority. Mossadeq wanted to nationalize the bowl company due to which the British imposed an embargo on Iranian oil supply 2012.

After Mossadeq's removal a new monarch named Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi came to power and had friendly relations with the west. Shah wanted the Western support to remain in power. He was overthrown in 1979. In 1954 on August 29th due to the Western pressure particularly from US and UK the Shah signed a Consortium agreement which give 40 percent ownership of Iran's nationalised oil companies to the US British and French for 25 years. In 1957 a atoms for peace program was signed between the United States and Iran. It laid Iran foundation in the field of nuclear program where II the United States offered nuclear education and technological transfer. Later on the US also so give nuclear reactors and "weapons grade and raised uranium fuel" to Iran. This collaboration goes well until 1979 when Iranian revolution began. The year 1960 marked the birth of OPEC. As a response to the Western exploitative nature towards the Middle Eastern oil reserves, countries like Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela came together to form the organisation of the petroleum exporting countries OPEC. This organisation very soon took over the global oil supplies and soon their profits skyrocketed. Iran's growing market value raised its value for the US as an important ally. In 1972 President Richard Nixon paid a visit to Iran asking the monarch Shah to assist and collaborate with us security interest in the Middle East.

It was the time of the cold war where the United States expected Iran support in opposing the Soviet Union and its ally Iraq. They offer Non-Nuclear weapon systems to Iran. Meanwhile in 1973 the war between Arab and Israel started due to which oil prices skyrocketed again following which an oil embargo was levied on Arabs against the US. Benefitted from this conflict the Shah of Iran started purchasing more non-nuclear hi tech weapon systems from the US that unnerved the US officials. One of the greatest revolutions in the Middle East took place in 1979 as the Iranian Revolution. Due to extreme opposition and civil unrest the Shah flees Iran and goes to the United States for alleged cancer treatment. A Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was in exile for 14 years came back to unite his countrymen against the Shah's westernization of Iran. He assumes the position of a supreme leader and turned the brew West monarchy to an anti-west theocracy. Khomeini was very influential in the region and his is vision was to spread the revolution to the neighbouring countries. His ideals gave birth to the militant group known as Hezbollah in Lebanon who pledged their allegiance to Khomeini.

The next most significant event happened during the 1979 to 1981 Iran hostage crisis where group of radical college students of Iran took 52 Americans as hostages in Tehran at the US embassy. The group demanded Shah's extradition from the United States. At this point of time the Iran and US relations became hostile. Washington cut ties with Tehran, imposes sanctions on the import of oil from Iran, and seized Iranian assets. Under the Algiers Accord the radical group released the American hostages. The Accord primarily promised that the United States would not interfere in Iranian politics. Very soon during 1980 the Iraq invaded Iran fearing a revolt from the Shiite Muslims in Iraq due to Khomeini's influence and also for capturing the oil wells of Iran. Iraq received support from the United States including economic assistance, training, and technology till the war ended in 1988. The alleged supporter of human rights and democracy in the world, the United States, extended the assistance to Iraq even when the CIA found the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqis against Iranian. More than 1 million Iranian and half million Iraqis died in the war.

A subset of Hezbollah in Lebanon names as Islamic Jihad (Allegiance to Khomeini) attacked the barracks of American and French service personnel. 241 military personnel died which was the biggest death toll of US military post Vietnam War. After the attack the US hastily withdrew the US marines and declared Iran as a "State sponsor of terrorism in 1984". After that in 1985 Hezbollah again killed to American hostages. By this time the US Iran relationship was completely ruined. In 1988 an American warship was badly damaged due to Iranian mines in the Strait of Hormuz. In counter action the US Navy started the campaign named Operation Praying Mantis. The Americans destroyed two oil platforms and sank an Iranian warship. In the most unfortunate event the US Navy shot down a passenger aircraft mistaking it for Iranian fighter jet. All 290 people on board were killed. 1991 marked the year of Persian Gulf War. During this time Iraq had occupied vast oil reserves and territories in Kuwait. Here the United States with a coalition of 35 countries expelled Iraq from Kuwait. Iraq was charged guilty for using weapons of mass destruction. Comprehensive sanctions were levied on Iraq. Along with that because of corruption and cheating by the government pushed the Iraqi public in complete devastation for more than a decade. However, Saddam Hussain couldn't be dislodged. Meanwhile Iran demonstrated its neutral position during the conflict but the United States suspected that Iran seeks to take the position of Iraq and would try to gain dominance in the region. By 1996 the United States for the intensified sanctions against Iran.

The US Congress passed the Iran Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act due to which sanctions were imposed on the possible materials that could be used to make advanced weapons. By the Year 2000 a first high level meeting after 1979 was called by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright where she met the deputy foreign minister of Iran and accepted the US interference in overthrowing Mossadeq. She states the previous US policies towards Iran a “Regrettably short-sighted”. However, no official apology from the United States were given but few of the sanctions were lifted from Iran. It was after 2000s when the relationship between the two began to take a constructive shape. In 2001 the US invaded Afghanistan to defeat the Taliban which offered a safe haven to the Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Post the 9/11 terror attacks the United States collaborated with Iran on the Bonn agreement. But in 2002 to President George Bush along with Iraq and North Korea labelled Iran as a party in the “axis of evil”.

As a response the Iran government also so cut off of its intelligence meetings with the US that earlier were working in collaboration on capturing the Al Qaeda members and defeating Taliban. The fragile relation again broke. While in 2003, the US military to and Saddam Hussein and the alleged weapons of mass destruction program he was running. In the meantime irritated Iran supported local Shia militants in in Iraq and among which some attacked the US forces also. Saddam Husain was executed in December putting an end to his dictatorship in Iraq and in the adjoining regions. However in 2019 study done by the US army stated that it by the end of the Iraq war Iran was the only beneficiary and winner in the hole conflict. Then again in 2006 the Iran President, Ahmadinejad, took a chance to ease relationship with US by writing an 18 page letter to President Bush where he requested to ease US-Iran nuclear tensions and clarified Iran’s position on its Uranium Enrichment Program stating it was only for domestic energy production purpose.

The US Congress also responded well by approving Iran Freedom Support Act that was for funding of Iran’s Civil Society and to promote democracy in the country. A little bit of tension was seen during the United Nations meeting in 2007 when the Iran President Ahmadinejad stated that Iran’s Nuclear Program and the dispute over that is closed and hence any halt on Uranium Enrichment Program directed by UN Security Council would not be accepted. In 2013, Barack Obama contacted the new President of Iran Hasaan Rouhani to talk over the Iranian Nuclear Program and within two months along with the permanent five members of the UN Security Council and Germany, Iran signed a Nuclear Deal.

Obama saw it as a measure that released Iran from becoming destructive nature and Iran saw it as their “political victory”. In 2015, the five permanent members of UN Security Council and the European Union agreed on an official agreement on Iran’s nuclear program. It was named as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran bargained for some relaxation in the sanctions and then agreed to dismantle and redesign its Arak’s nuclear reactor. Iran also allowed for more open verification mechanism along with reducing its uranium enrichment program. This deal however received a lot of criticism from the republicans and some democrats’ lawmakers as they doubted that lifting sanctions from Iran will strengthen the government of Iran and subsequently again try to destabilize Middle East. This opposition was clearly reflected in 2018 when President Donald Trump pulled out from JCPOA and asserted the “Maximum pressure” campaign on Iran. Again in response to this withdrawal Iran increased its uranium enrichment demonstrating its defiance of the terms of JCPOA agreement. After this withdrawal started, a new military escalation with Iran during Trump’s regime.

Situation worsened when Trump labelled the Iran military called the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation. It was the first time in the history that the United States termed a military of another sovereign country as a terrorist organisation. This rhetoric was further spread when the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that he “Personally requested the move” as a response to which Rouhani stated “the action will only increase the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps popularity at home and abroad”. The Strait of Hormuz became a focal point of attacks and distress. During May 2019, near the Strait of Hormuz, two oil tankers were attacked. On one hand the United States blamed that on Iran for being a “nation of terror” and threatened for deployment of additional thousand troops to the Middle Eastern region. Iran on the other hand shot down the US surveillance drones just two days after Trump’s threatening as a response to which US also tried to capture an Iranian oil vessel at Gibraltar. In September 2019 oil fields in Saudi Arabia attacked and Iran backed Houthi rebels in Yemen took responsibility for the attack. Saudi Arabia is a close ally to the United States and hence tensions between the two remained on an all-time high. During December 2019 United States faced Iraqi demonstrations and Iran band militant group attempted to cease the US embassy in Baghdad as part of retaliation for or the US air strike in which members of the militia were killed.

Slogans of “Death to America” were chanted with a demand to withdraw US troops from Iraq deepened. President Trump threatened Iran to “pay a very big price” if any American life was lost or damaged during the demonstration. In 2020 the US was allegedly involved in the killing of Qasem Soleimani by a drone strikes. He was the commander in chief of IRGC’s Elite Quds Force. After Khomeini, Soleimani was considered as the second most powerful person in Iran. Other Irani and Iraqi civilians along with an Iraqi militant leader named Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were also killed by the US drone strike. Soon after the incident as the Iranian forces ware on high alert for or other possible attacks from the US mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian passenger aircraft. As a response Iran later attacked several basis of the United States in Iraq. During April 2020 Iran prompted the US tensions over its “Long range missile capabilities”, Iran launched its first military satellite.

US secretary of the state stated that “United States is still party to the JCPOA and will seek to snap back multilateral sanctions against Iran through a Security Council Resolution”. Russia who was also one of the signatories argued that the Trump administration broke the agreement when it re-imposed sanctions against Iran. The tensions between the two countries are so high that retaliations and responses are getting more unpredictable through the whole course of their history. During the same time, in the Persian Gulf, Iran boats tried to endanger US Navy vessels but no military response came from the US side. Later on in May 2020, when Venezuela experienced a shortage of oil, Iran helped by delivering oil irrespective of the sanctions as a result of which in June, 2020, the US sanctioned five captains of Iranian Ships who delivered the oil tankers. This was done with the motive to discourage trade between Venezuela and Iran. In October 2020, the United States had to renew to a decade old UN arms embargo on Iran. The US blames that Iran violated the JCPOA deal and backed the resolution to renew the embargo at the UN Security Council.

However there was a lack of international support in favour of this embargo that also indicated towards the diminishing influence of United States in the region. However during October 2002 to December 2020 Trump pressed his maximum pressure campaign and targeted Iran with the new set of sanctions particularly in the oil and financial sectors. Lastly by the end of the year 2020 news on Iran boosting its uranium enrichment program far beyond the permissible limits of JCPOA surfaced. This was triggered due to the assassination of a top nuclear scientist of Iran namely e Mohen Fakhrizadeh.

The Iranian parliament approved the bill to strengthen the UEP by 20 percent. The bill also says that if the sanctions aren't lifted in two months they will expel International atomic energy agency inspectors. Iran holds Israel responsible for Fakhrizadeh's assassination and because US-Israel closer ties the involvement of United States is also being doubted. The Iran and United States relations are expected to stay a heavier during the Biden administration too. Hence, it's clear that in the matters related to the transnational flows, trade, and business from Chabahar would have significant surveillance from the US "India has secured a written assurance from the US to exempt this port from sanctions during the second 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between India and US in December 2019; in fact, soon after the dialogue in Washington, Jaishankar visited Teheran and informed Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javed Zarif that it had got written assurance from the US exempting the Shahid Baheshti Port at Chabahar from sanctions", wrote Kumar. India assuming the role of a power balancer and mediator in the region has been trying to protect its interest and save Chabahar port from the US-Iran clashes in order to re-establish peace and security in the region (Fig.-3.15).

3.13: The Russian Stand

After the cold war, Russia had a difficult transition to remain as a significant country in the world politics. After the cold war Russia's foreign policy was visibly shifting towards achieving its economic goals. In this course Russia shifted its attention to the Persian Gulf. The trade and commerce of Russia with the Gulf countries were slowly increasing. This suggested that the economic development of Russia was intertwined with the Gulf States and also its own position in the Gulf region. Russia demonstrated its inclination more towards the improvement in trade and commerce than asserting strategic interest in the region or acting as a power balancer against America. Russia does not have a particular affinity for Iranian interests. Thus, the current radical leadership cannot be held responsible. It turned down numerous offers of a "Strategic relationship" with Iran. Russia views Iran as an example of the way Westerners perceive Russia. Unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Iran previously rejected a 2006 proposal by the Kremlin to process Iran's uranium at Russian facilities, which Tehran uncovered following the discovery of a previously unknown enrichment facility in Qom, a city in Iran, explains Nixey. On a brief account of Russian diplomatic relations in the region it could be seen clearly that it was working on the greater liberalisation in its foreign policy.

Fig. -3.15: U.S-Iran Tensions



While over 50,000 people in Iraq marched to mourn the deaths of the Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and an Iraqi militia leader, Trump threatened to retaliate by attacking 52 Iranian locations “very hard” if Iran killed Americans or US assets.
Source: Reuters

Tens of thousands of teenagers walked around with Iranian flags and banners in Tehran on 4th Nov, 2015 in protest of the United States' embassy, in Tehran.

Source:

<https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/11/04/anniversary-of-hostage-crisis-sees-complicated-us-iran-relationship>



In his role as commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani served in the Iranian military's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Until his assassination in 2020, he was the commander of the Quds Force, a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with primary responsibility for covert and extraterritorial military operations.

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/a-timeline-of-u-s-iran-relations>

Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini or Ayatollah Khomeini as called by westerners, a prominent Iranian political and religious leader.

Source:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/6/25/timeline-iran-us-relations>



They started out as a result of the more liberal policies implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev and were also supported by the Soviet disengagement in Afghanistan by the year 1989. The resistance of Moscow against the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990. Mostly with collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and communism became a discredited ideology. Russia did not have good diplomatic relations during the Cold War with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. Before the outbreak of the Cold War, only one Arab state, Kuwait, since 1963, maintained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, many other countries had followed suit and in 1999, Saudi Arabia had followed suit as well, opines Buckley. Later on, Russia dramatically intensified its link with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait. Despite the close relationship at the working level, trust and annoyance go hand in hand. Russia frequently, and on several occasions, is disgruntled and furious with Iran. But it is still not willing to participate in America's point of view. One way or another, Russia's policy is defined by the interests of the United States, rather than those of Iran. A post-imperial comedown rules out any element of partnership which might benefit the United States.

Neither Russia nor Iran would like to see the Caspian Basin or global energy markets become more dominated by the West. Russia has its own share of interest in Iran and it is important for keeping a check on US politics in the region however Russia also has to protect its good relations with the GCC and other Middle Eastern states which don't want Iran to become a nuclear state. "Iran itself has had a consistent policy of not aiding Islam-influenced separatism in Russia: partly out of good-neighbourliness, partly from fear of Russia retaliating by interfering with its minorities; helping to promote disorder to the north by funding dissidents, as it does Hamas or Iraq's Sadris would be a bad strategic move. Moreover, Russian Muslims are largely Sunni and are not that susceptible to Iran's Shia revolution", Nixey. Thus, balancing the region along with the contrasting relations of the Gulf countries among each other is not easy for Russia. Russia has serious problems with Iran's Nuclear aspirations and also has other differences with Iran hence it can only be inferred that their relations are highly fragile and dynamic and meanwhile Russia hasn't given much reactions to the establishment of Chabahar port but being a part of INSTC it may be concluded that it will cooperate with the regional connectivity networks laid down to facilitate trade, security and peace.

3.14: The Chinese Influence

The 21st Century belongs to China. The massive developmental projects and infrastructural expansion is unprecedented and virtually unbeatable in the present times. Likewise its presence in the Gulf States is also noticeable. In terms of its relations with Iran, they have made mighty progress in their diplomatic and bilateral ties. Trade and Military Partnership Agreement has been drawn up between China and Iran. According to a report in The New York Times, the alliance is outlined in an 18-page contractual transaction. Chinese influence in Iran would be considerably increased as a result of this agreement. A total of \$400 billion will be invested in Iran over the next quarter-century if the Chinese are involved. China would be able to purchase heavily discounted Iranian oil on a regular basis for another 25 years in exchange. Military cooperation was also proposed as part of the agreement. Bilateral training and exercises, collaborative research and weapons innovation and intelligence sharing are all required to execute the agreement points Chatterji .D (2020). The geopolitical realities of the Middle Eastern and Asian region are experiencing a rapid change due to the US-Iran tensions and the US-China trade war as well. New alliances are formed over old partnerships.

As US found imposed heavy sanctions on Iran, old partners like India too narrowed down Iranian oil imports which also started reflecting in the Chabahar project. Iran turned to China for balancing its trade and despite of the US sanctions the trade between Tehran and Beijing rose. Iran's interest in building LNG pipeline along the CPEC which is a part of the flagship project of China, OBOR. Meanwhile, Chabahar stands extremely important for India strategically, Iran on the other hand is officially a part of the OBOR now. China has promised a \$400 billion investment in the oil and gas sector, infrastructural development and transportation networks of Iran. These huge investments maybe seen as a challenge to the long-time western monopoly on the Gulf countries but they are creating many points of conflict since China is expanding aggressively in the region. The overall China's investment promises includes more than hundreds of projects having potential to influence extensively to Eurasian region. New Ports along the Gulf of Oman, 5G telecommunications, establishing Chinese Global Positioning Systems and cyberspace control by Chinese Great Firewall will have tremendous impact both in terms of the Geo-economics and Geopolitics. The Djibouti base, the Gwadar Port, the dominance in maritime routes, the ever rising number of

naval bases across the globe are few of the many points of Chinese expansion. The reports on selling of Kish Islands to China, a strategically significant location at the mouth of Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf is giving serious apprehensions to India and the US. Further, to maintain its status as a significant player in the energy market, Iran must increase oil production to 8.5 million barrels a day. It is in Iran's best interest to invest in an oil deal. As per a proposed deal, a Chinese strategic base will be established near Jask, which is situated just outside the Strait of Hormuz which acts as the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and would allow the Chinese to dominate the world's supply of oil. The passage is critical to the United States because it is home to the Fifth Fleet, which is the centre of United States naval power in the Middle East. Al-Dhafra is an American military base in Abu Dhabi, and Al-Udeid is an American air-base in Qatar. Iran has opened Chabahar port project for China. China backed Gwadar port is already in operation and if China gets involved in Chabahar or it's presence in Chabahar as an investor or even as a developer would mean India's significant strategic loss. On the other hand it doesn't seem so simple in the Gulf region because the US doesn't seem to let China grow easily here. In September 2019 a consortium of United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Albz Azania, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Lithuania was formed for maintaining peace and security in the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. US has been launching Maritime operations and patrolling to protect the international shipping lanes in the region. This geopolitical attention is primarily because the 60 percent of the oil imports come from the Middle East. Whereas, for China to exercise power in this region would need a significant military presence particularly in the Arabian Sea. China has been trying to mark its presence in this region, the reflections of which can be clearly seen in its projects like CPEC and BRI.

3.15: Resume

In this chapter the Chabahar Port project was discussed in detail. The geography and history of the home country Iran made it significantly easier to understand the position and value of Chabahar Port in the region. Because ports act as a converging point of sovereignties via trade and commerce it naturally attracts international attention and Chabahar port happens to be one of the most significant deep water port and a part of a further mega connectivity project. Due to this a number of stakeholders and influencers in the region are present.

The beneficiaries of this port and their inter-relations are highly important, therefore, bilateral ties between Iran and India, Iran and Afghanistan, India and Afghanistan, Iran and China and trilateral relations between India-Iran-Central Asia were discussed in great detail. As a matter of fact, the United States of America is the biggest superpower of world, this region of the Middle East has always been highly affected by its policies and exercise of power. Its role is significance in making and breaking the trade, order and security in the region hence considering the US factor, and, related geopolitical contestations is imperative for understanding the present and future of this region.

Chapter-4

Gwadar Port Project: Revisiting Strategy and Politics in Arabian Sea

4.1: Introduction

For global architecture, the dynamics of the shifting balance of power in the global sea is complicated, with greater emphasis on commercial activity and economic success. The warm water and deep sea port of Pakistan is Gwadar Port. It is located on the coast of the Persian Gulf, between the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman, and contains 2/3 of the world's oil reserves. Small port was built during the building period, from 1988 to 1992. The port was officially opened in 2007 by General Musharraf. The Gwadar port, which is located in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, had been under the control of Port Singapore Authority (PSA) since 2007, however, owing to its sombre presentation, the port was transferred to China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) in 2013. Pakistan's strategic and economic security is vested in the control of the port. Karachi and Qasim are Pakistan's third and second most significant deep sea ports, respectively. It is situated at the intersection of major maritime commerce routes and oil-shipping routes. As an international commercial centre, Gwadar may serve as a bridge between Pakistan and the rest of the world. Through, Gwadar Port, three areas of central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East will be connected. The opening of this new business may provide new employment possibilities while helping the economic growth of Baluchistan.

The addition of the CARs will allow Pakistan to exploit its rich mineral, hydrocarbon, oil and gas resources. Attracting foreign investments and tourism will contribute to the economic development of Baluchistan and Pakistan by serving as foreign reserves and free trade zones and special economic zones (SEZs). When Gwadar will enable, then Pakistan keep an eye on the SLOCs that begin in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. With Gwadar's control of the commerce routes and maritime routes for oil, the area of South Asia, Africa, Central Asia, the Gulf and the Middle East will all be linked together. Pakistan may benefit from this port's strategic location relative to India, since it is distant from Indian Territory as opposed to the other two Pakistani ports. Gwadar will provide employment possibilities for Pakistani citizens, support national economic growth by boosting trade and foreign currency reserves, and promote transit trade fee use. The collaboration between Pakistan and other nations in the oil and energy industry would improve with the arrival of Gwadar.

Pakistan's economy may grow due to an increase in the hotel sector, commerce, and tourism. The huge number of international investors who are attracted to Gwadar by the presence of tax-free investment and trade is helping to launch new development projects and economic plans in the country. As Asia is the most populous continent, there are a significant number of landlocked nations with little access to the sea because of the high costs of using their own land routes. For the sake of international commerce, nations seek out for the quickest routes. China serves as an excellent example, since the western portion of the country is located thousands of kilometres distant from the eastern ports. This would benefit China because of its next-door Gwadar port, which is the central link in the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC). Gwadar is 2800 kilometres from the Port of Shanghai, while Kashgar is 4500 kms providing access to China to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics would be made possible via the port (CARs). Gwadar may function as an alternative maritime route if the Strait of Malacca could be closed by India.

There is the possibility that Gwadar might be an alternate route to the Indian Ocean or the South China Sea. Pak-China relations would strengthen. There are currently a number of obstacles to port operations, including lack of connection, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the absence of supporting services. Addressing security issues is critical. India aspires to prevent Gwadar Port's growth. They have committed to pouring a large amount of resources into the Chahbahar port in Iran. India's decision to remove economic sanctions on Iran has made it more eager to participate in Chabahar. This plan is known as Strings of Pearl, is intended at encircling India and includes the port of Gwadar. As a means of curbing Chinese dominance in the area, India seeks to counter Chinese influence. Gwadar may see a deteriorating economic significance due to projects like, the Zaranj-Delaram route that connects with Chahbahar was constructed in Afghanistan. India aims to delay or impede the building of the Silk Route linking Pakistan. The issues about the building of CPEC is a matter of concern for India. That chapter intends to address all these issue in detail.

4.2: Geopolitical Location of Gwadar

Gwadar port's strategic location plays a key role owing to its growing prominence in the world, particularly in South Asia. Globalisation has made the world smaller and regional integration through connectivity networks has played a key role. Central Asia and South Asia are two of the world's most important regions.

Central Asia is rich with natural resources, particularly oil and gas, whereas South Asia is rapidly developing but have insufficient internal energy resources. Physical infrastructure development and increased trade volume among Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, and West China will be mutually advantageous. In this regard, Pakistan's Gwadar deep sea port has strong potential to become a regional trade and energy transport hub. With its unique geographic location situated midway between three major regions: Western Asia, heavily populated South Asia, and economically-emerging and resource-rich Central Asia, Gwadar has the potential to be a major trade and transit hub, argued by Anwar (2011). It links the Chinese city of Kashgar, a city in western Xinjiang province that borders with Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Traditionally a fishing village, Gwadar is located in Balochistan province of Pakistan located on the shores of Arabian Sea. It lies 533km away from Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, from Quetta its 970 Km, from Gabd its 120 Km, from Ratodero its 892 Km. Pakistan shares nearly 959 km border with Iran, hence the proximity of the port from Iran's border is around 120 km. From Oman, Gwadar port is 380 km away. "Gwadar Port is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, just outside the Straits of Hormuz, near the key shipping routes in and out of the Persian Gulf", GPA (2014). It is thus at a fairly close proximity to the major shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf. The region is extremely important from geo-economical point of view as it accounts for two third of the oil reserves in the world. For Central Asian countries, this port is immensely significant because it is the closest warm water port. It is significant because most of the closer Russian and Eurasian ports freeze during winter months and Gwadar serves as an alternate.

It is controlled and managed by the Maritime Secretary of Pakistan. The operational control however is under "China Overseas Port Holding Company". It is situated 120 kilometres to the southwest to Turbat. The distance between Chabahar port and Gwadar port is merely 170 kms. Gwadar was under the territory of Oman until 1958. The government of Pakistan purchased for 3 million dollars from Iran after a survey that reported its potential to become a deep sea port. Pakistan began with the development of the port in 2002. The first phase became operation-able by March 2007. Parvez Musharaf inaugurated the port. The cost of the port by then was estimated to be 248 billion dollars.

It was solely the geographical situation of Gwadar that made it extremely important in terms of geo-strategy, geo-economics, and powered its development. As per the website of Gwadar Port Authority, Pakistan currently operates two major international deep-sea ports: Karachi Port and Port Qasim. Their capacity expansion programmes are difficult to keep pace with the anticipated growth in demand in the coming years, necessitating the addition of a third port to fill the void. Karachi Port, in particular, has significant physical constraints and will be unable to grow at the same rate as national demand growth in the coming decades. Gwadar Port authority also explains that, while Karachi has seen significant growth in recent years, this is largely due to the fact that it is located within the city itself the geographical space for development of Port Qasim has enabled it to grow speedily but because of its location on the upstream at a distance of 40 kms from the high seas, management of traffic becomes problematic as the ships suffer long turnaround times and delay in delivery. Industries that are located near the port do not suffer much due to long waiting time because they get their consignments directly, but there is a cost-disadvantage for the industries which are situated far off from the port city due to prolonged hours of transportation.

Gwadar port has a key role in the Chinese OBOR project. It serves as a part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It links the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) and the Projects of the Maritime Silk Road. After the first operationalization in 2007, the work of the port city and the port itself progressed under CPEC. The estimate cost grew to 1.62 billion dollars. The main objective was to connect North Pakistan to the Western China. The objective also incorporates the building of a “floating liquified natural gas facility”. But this would be a part of further development of Gwadar-Nawabshah segment covered under gas pipeline project of Iran and Pakistan. The estimated cost is 2.5 billion dollars. This humongous project has been leased to China officially for a period of 43 years after 2015 till 2059. Officially, as a whole, this port started operating from 14th November 2016 and on 14th January, 2020 operationalization from Pakistan to Afghanistan began.

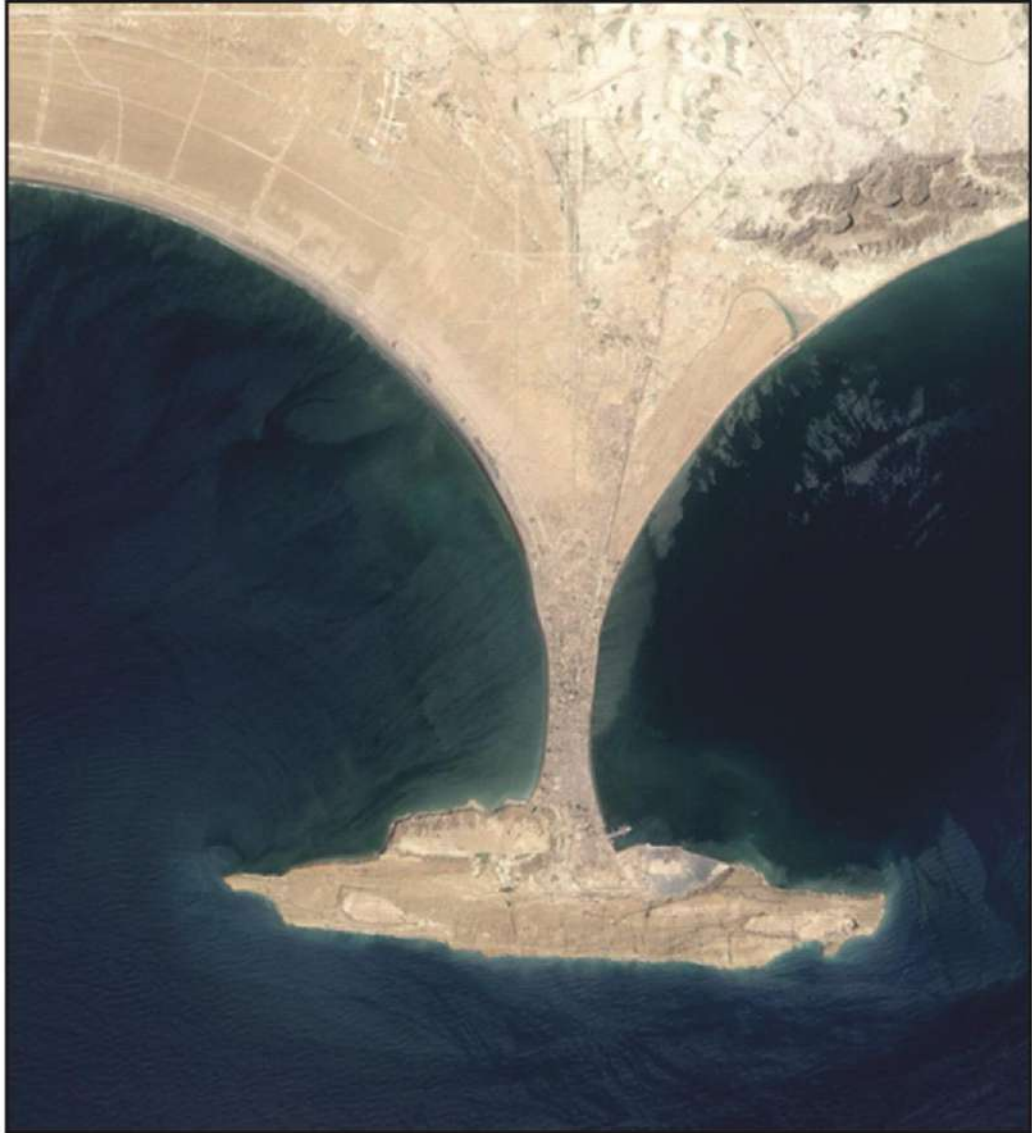
4.3: Geographical Significance of Gwadar

The topography of Gwadar points at its significance as “Gwadar is situated on the southwestern Arabian Sea coast of Pakistan in Gwadar district of Balochistan province; like Ormara further east, Gwadar is situated on a natural hammerhead shaped tombolo peninsula forming two almost perfect, but naturally curved,

semicircular bays on either side; the city is situated on a narrow and sandy 12 km long isthmus which connects the Pakistani coast to rocky outcroppings in the Arabian sea known as the Gwadar Promontory, or Koh-e-Batil, which reach an elevation of 150 m and extend 11 km east to west with a breadth of 1.5 km; the 240 m wide isthmus upon which Gwadar is located separates the two almost perfect semicircular bays from one another; the western bay is known as the Paddi Zirr, and is generally shallow with an average depth of 3.7 meter and a maximum depth of 9.1 meter; to the east of the isthmus is the deepwater Demi Zirr harbor, where the Gwadar Port was built”, as described by Persian Gulf Pilot (1920). Here, isthmus as described by National Geographic Society (2012) is “a narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses and separates two bodies of water; a type of isthmus is called tombolo, and is formed as waves and tides slowly build up a sand bar to create a permanent link between a coastal island (called a tied island) and the mainland; isthmuses have been strategic locations for trade and communications for thousands of years” (Fig.-4.1).

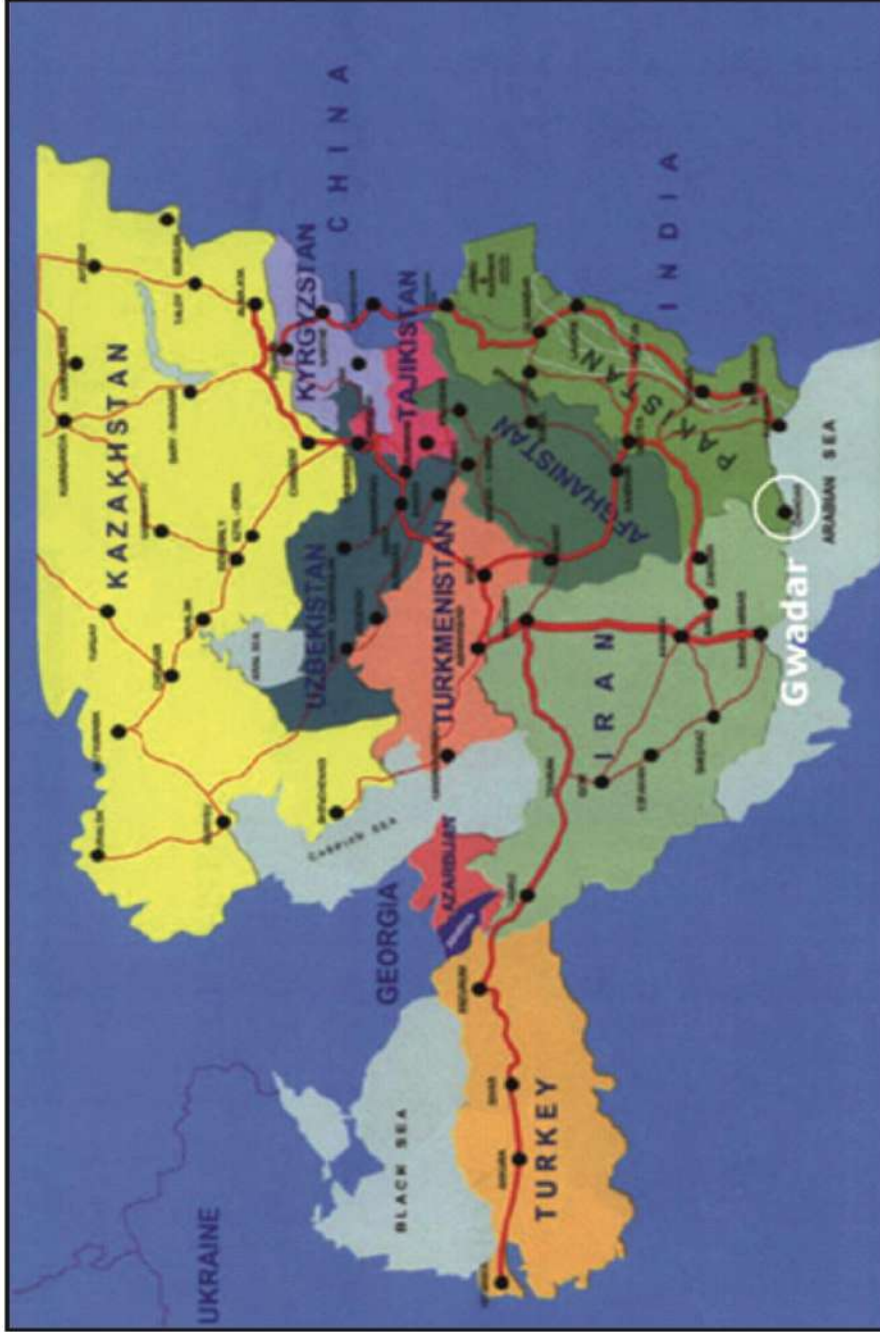
The significance of isthmuses may be illustrated by the fact that Suez Canal nicks through the Isthmus of Suez and its significance is famous in the world. The landscape to the north of the city, including Gwadar Promontory, is plain and mostly deserted. The whitish clay Koh-e-Mehdi as sometimes referred as Jabal-e-Mehdi and rises abruptly from the plains to the northeast of Gwadar and is a remarkable outlier. The Koh-e-Mehdi is about 6 km broad and has steep cliffs that descend abruptly into the Arabian Sea. It has two distinct peaks with elevations of 415m and 419 m. A tiny little island named Zalzala Jazeera (also named as “Earthquake Island”) developed about 2 km off the shore after an earthquake that occurred in September, 2013. Geography is considered to be the prime deterministic factor to estimate the scope of any kind of development in a region. In the context of Pakistan’s Gwadar Port, “if we see this whole region, it is like a funnel; the top of the funnel is this wide area of Central Asia and also China’s western region; and this funnel gets narrowed on through Afghanistan and Pakistan and the end of this funnel is Gwadar port; so this funnel, futuristically, is the economic funnel of this whole region” as stated by Pakistan’s former president Parvez Musharraf (2002) (Fig.-4.2). In the study of regional connectivity through ports, the sea becomes the most important geographic element. Water occupies 71 percent of the earth’s surface and it plays an important role in the world geopolitics.

Figure-4.1: Satellite View of Gwadar (Tombolo)



Source: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/82146/earthquake-births-new-island-off-pakistan>

Figure-4.2: Pakistan's Geostrategic Location



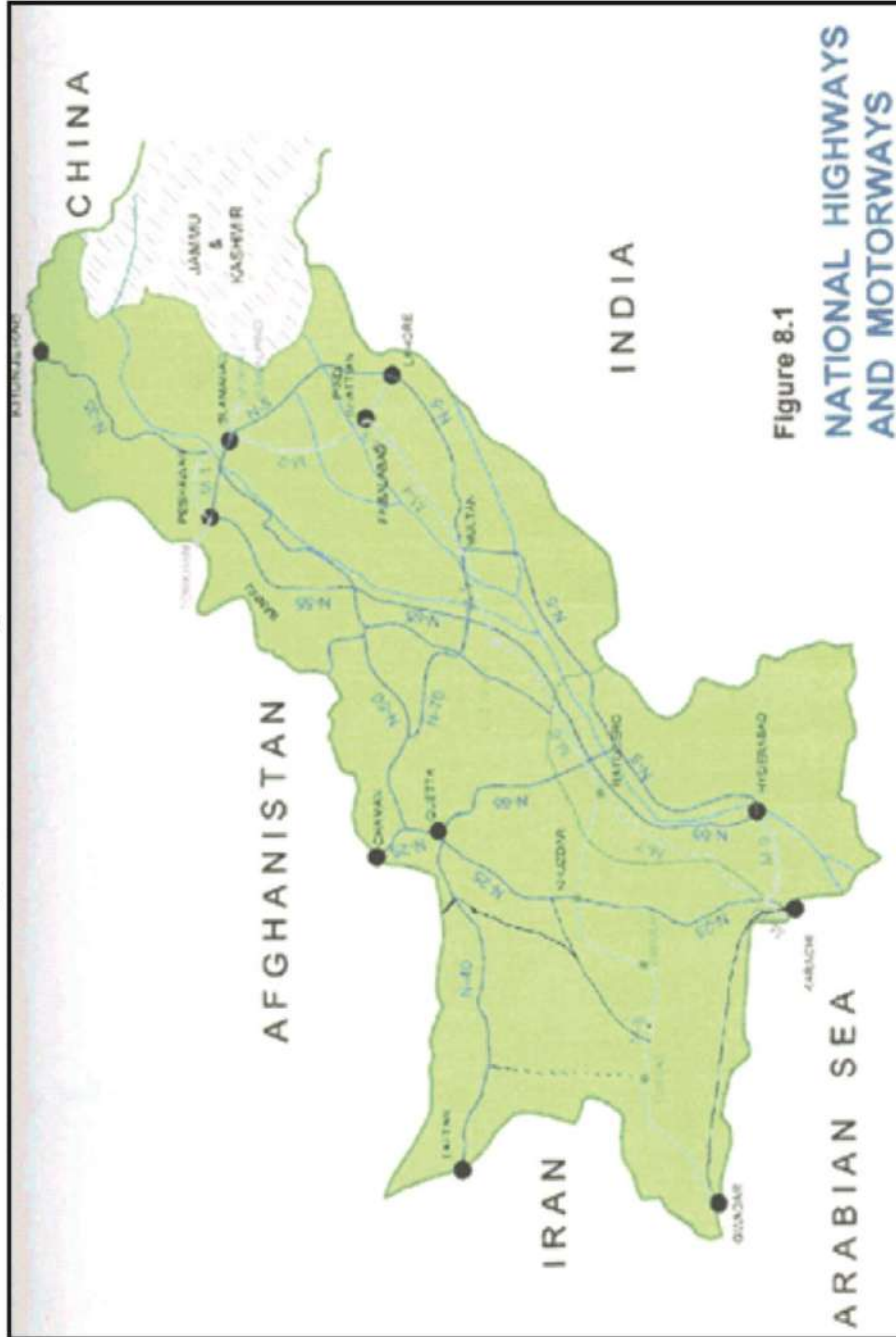
Source: Gwadar Development Authority, Retrieved from: <http://www.gda.gov.pk/maps/>

The sea power is one of the most significant power influencing the global economy and strategy. If we look at Pakistan it has nearly 1100 kms of coast extending from its west to south east and approximately 95 percent of Pakistan's trade happens via the Arabian Sea. With the rise in population and consumerism, the shipping business will rise only. Here, ports play a significant role in connecting a country to other parts of the world along with being a commercial hub and important Infrastructure in driving the economy. "Pakistan has very little strategic depth from east to west; Gwadar will increase this strategic depth considerably, as a strategic port being further away from India; the additional distance of 460 kms away from India will decrease the vulnerability of Pakistan; Gwadar will help Pakistan to monitor the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) originating from the Persian Gulf and bottle neck at Strait of Hormuz; strategically, considering the establishment of Naval Bases at Gwadar and Ormara by Pakistan, presence of Chinese Naval assets, domination of Arabian Sea at Persian Gulf by US 5th Naval Fleet and Indian aspiration to emerge as a Blue Water Navy will be checked; this will also establish Pak-China naval nexus to deny manoeuvre space to Indian Navy in Indian Ocean", Malik in 2012 (Fig.-4.3 and 4.4).

4.4: Capacity of Gwadar Port

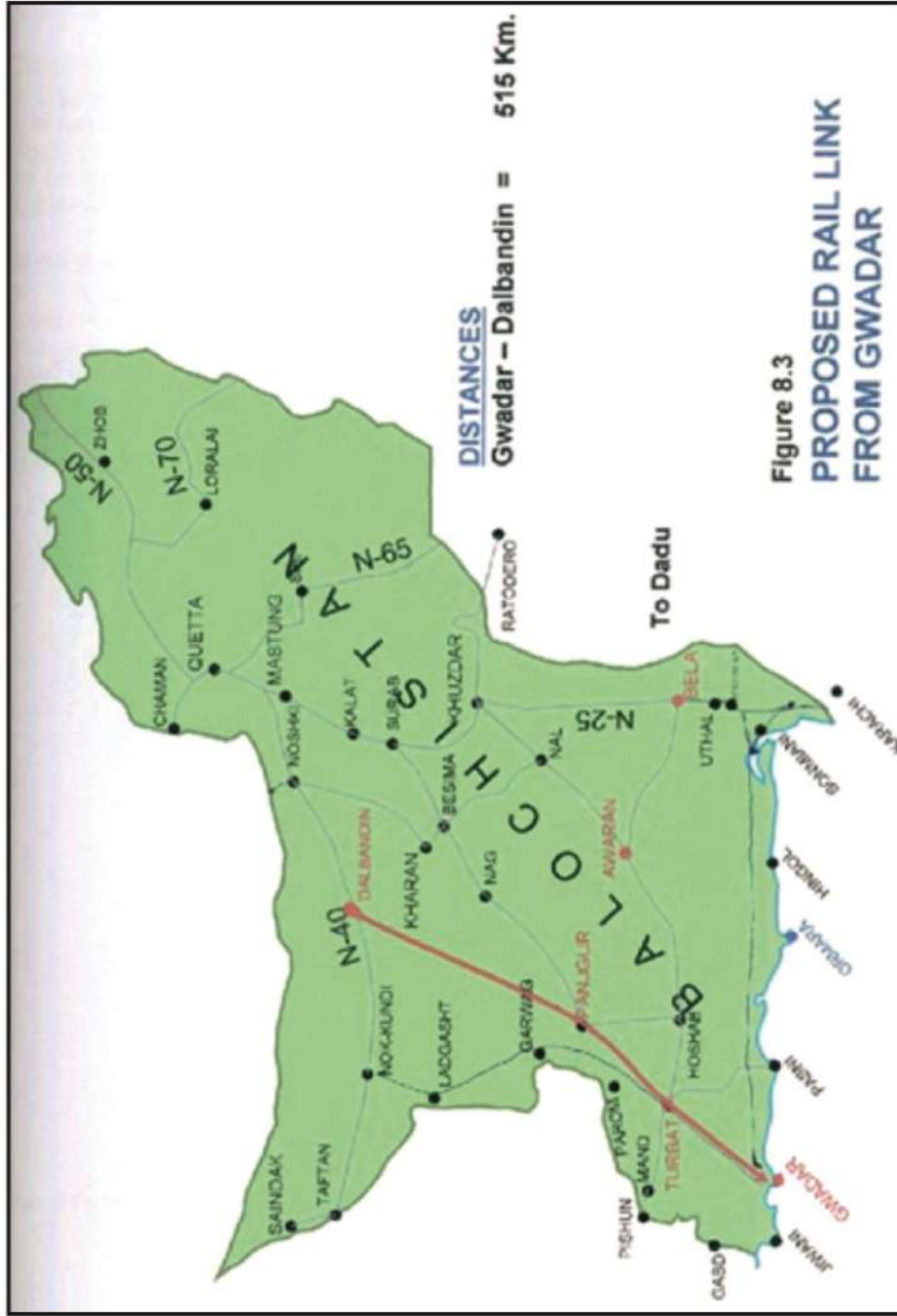
Gwadar port has been formally functional in 2018 and it became completely operational by March 2021 (Fig.-4.5). It has a humongous capacity that can also be compared to India's aggregate tonnage. A research brief of Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, Islamabad states that "first phase of the port has been accomplished by public sector with Chinese assistance at cost of \$298 million; it includes 3 multi-purpose berths (602m quay length), one 100m service berth, navigable channel of 4.35 km (11.6/12.5 meter deep), roads, plinths and transit shed, operational craft and equipment together with navigational aids and shore-based port buildings and associated services; the phase-2 would be executed by private sector to accommodate 50,000 DWT (Dead Weight Tonnage) container ships, 100,000 DWT dry bulk carriers and up to 200,000 DWT oil tankers, three container terminals (201 m quay length), one bulk cargo terminal (305m length), one grain handling terminal (305m length), one twin pier oil terminal (688m length), breakwater (600m length), approach channel (16/20m deep), back up areas, craft and equipment and building etc.; it has a capacity to have 88 berths and to anchor mother ship of 100,000 to 200,000 DWT". As China already exports huge consignments to the African countries, this humongous facility is potent in increasing the capacity to a next level (Fig.-4.6).

Figure-4.3: Map of Pakistan



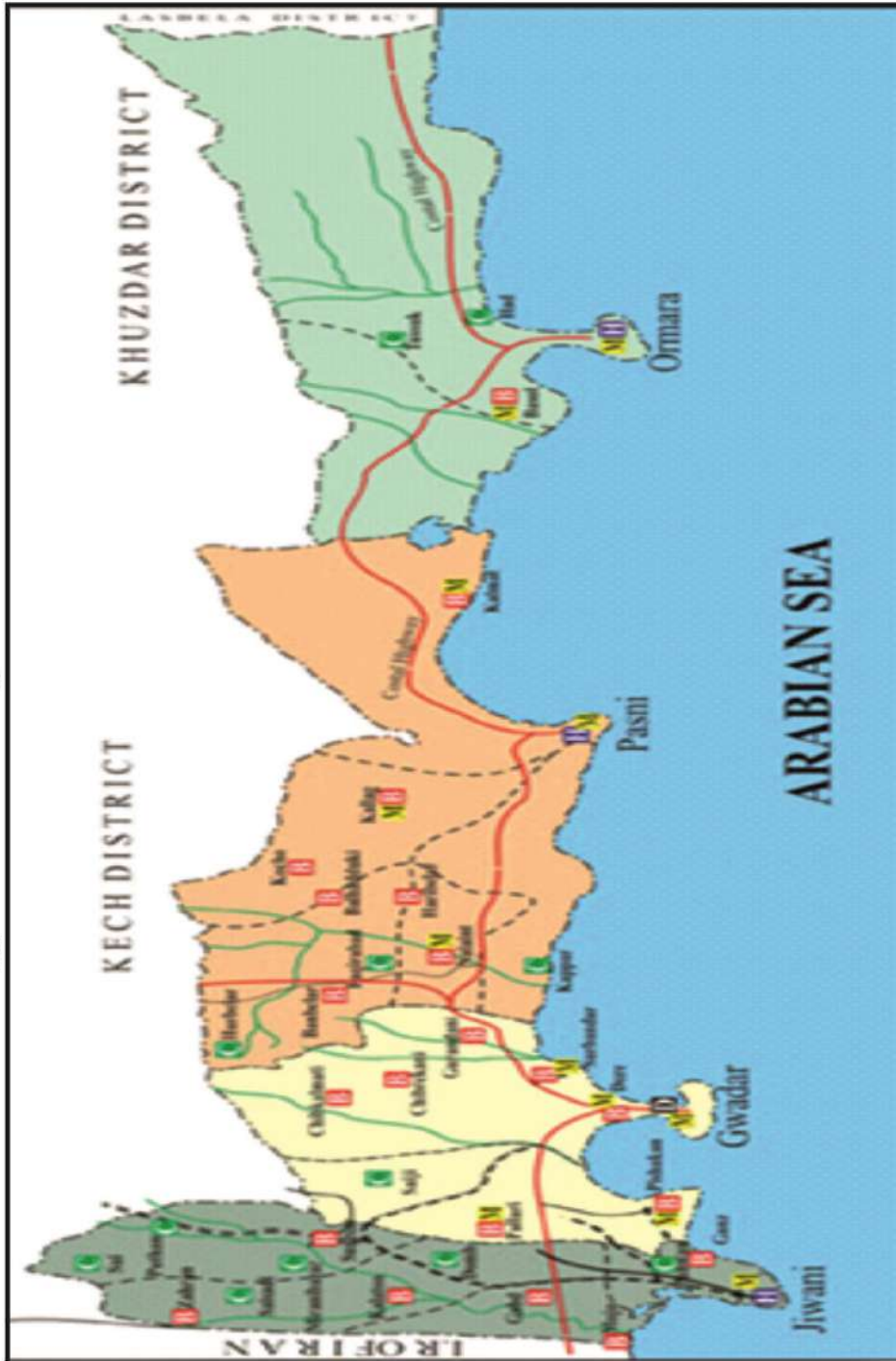
Source: Gwadar Development Authority, <http://www.gda.gov.pk/maps/>

Figure- 4.4: Balochistan: Proposed Railway Link from Gwadar



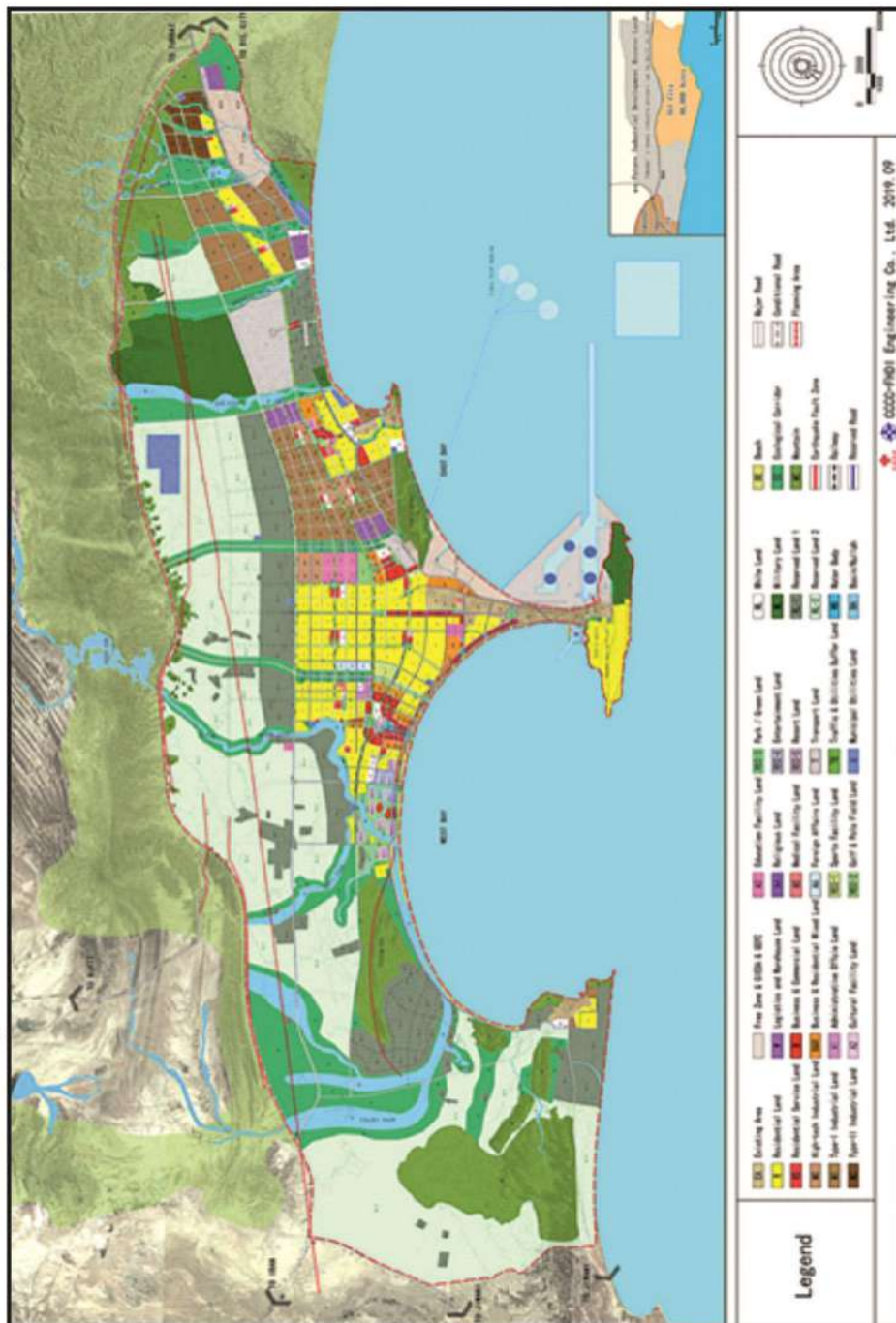
Source: Gwadar Development Authority, Retrieved from: <http://www.gda.gov.pk/maps/>

Figure 4.5: Map of Gwadar District



Source: Gwadar Development Authority, Retrieved from: <http://www.gda.gov.pk/maps/>

Figure 4.6: Master Plan of Gwadar Smart City Port

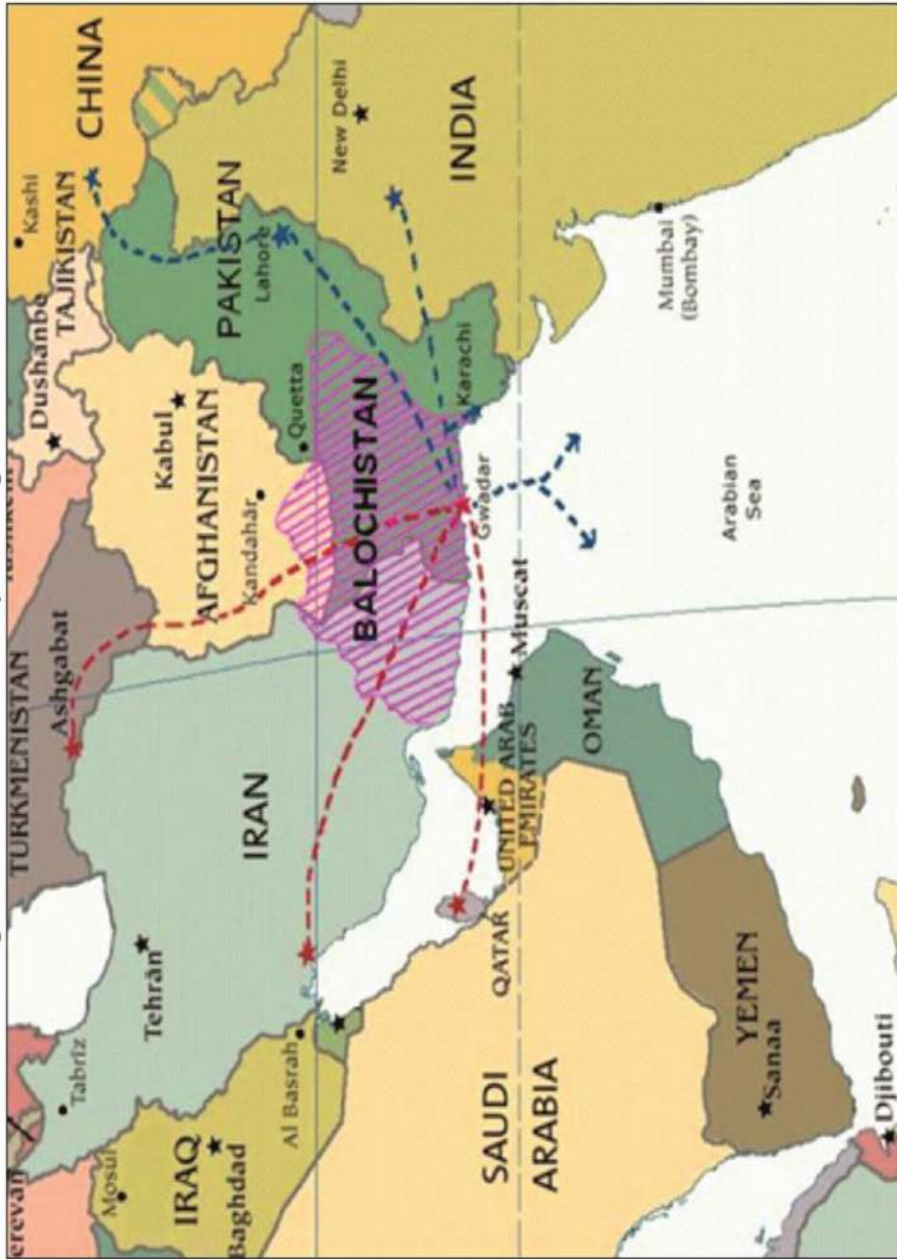


Being a part of China's Maritime Silk Route, enabling its entry in the Arabian Sea, Gwadar is designed to have large tonnage. The port is supposed to give an annual output of 11 lakh TUE containers from three multipurpose berths, general cargo of 270,000 tons and bulk cargo of around 450,000 tons. Gwadar International Airport is being built over 3000 acres allocated by their Civil Aviation Authority. The mega project has multiple infrastructures and sub-projects which include highways, railways, and power plants. The yearly capacity of the port is almost 300-400 million tons of cargo. The capacity of Gwadar alone is about half of the volumes held by all ports of India put together.

4.5: Geostrategic Significance of Gwadar Port

Geographical settings determine the primary significance of any point of the earth's surface. In case of Gwadar the maritime setting is the most crucial element. It is predicted by many scholars that the struggle for securing maritime routes for the exchange of resources will intensify in the future. Presently, the Indian Ocean is having the world's geopolitical attention due to its massive resource base and its place in the most crucial trade routes. All the countries sharing maritime border with Indian Ocean are trying to optimise their power potential in the region (Fig.-4.7). Gwadar is located in the Northern part of Arabian Sea. Its geographical location is immensely significant. Gwadar connects its home country Pakistan to China, Central Asia, South Asia, Iran, Russia and even Mongolia. The Gulf States have a very dynamic relationship with Pakistan. Gwadar port was once considered as a rival to Iran's Chabahar port. The major apprehensions were over the distribution of trade and economic activities that were before facilitating UAE and Iran through the deep sea ports. The potential of Gwadar is also huge, it is expected to match the potential of Hong Kong and Singapore. Therefore, there is a conflict of interest here. The countries directly influenced are highly unstable and poles apart in nature. Meanwhile, the United States and India happen to be a major investor in the region and they worry about Chinese presence along the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf region. Central Asia has vast energy resources and the countries like US, China and India are competing for it. As Gwadar port is a China backed project, China will be the largest beneficiary. If we look at the map of China, its western side happens to have a substantial distance from the sea. The regional imbalance in China is one of the most bothersome factors to the Chinese government.

Figure-4.7: Connectivity through Gwadar Port



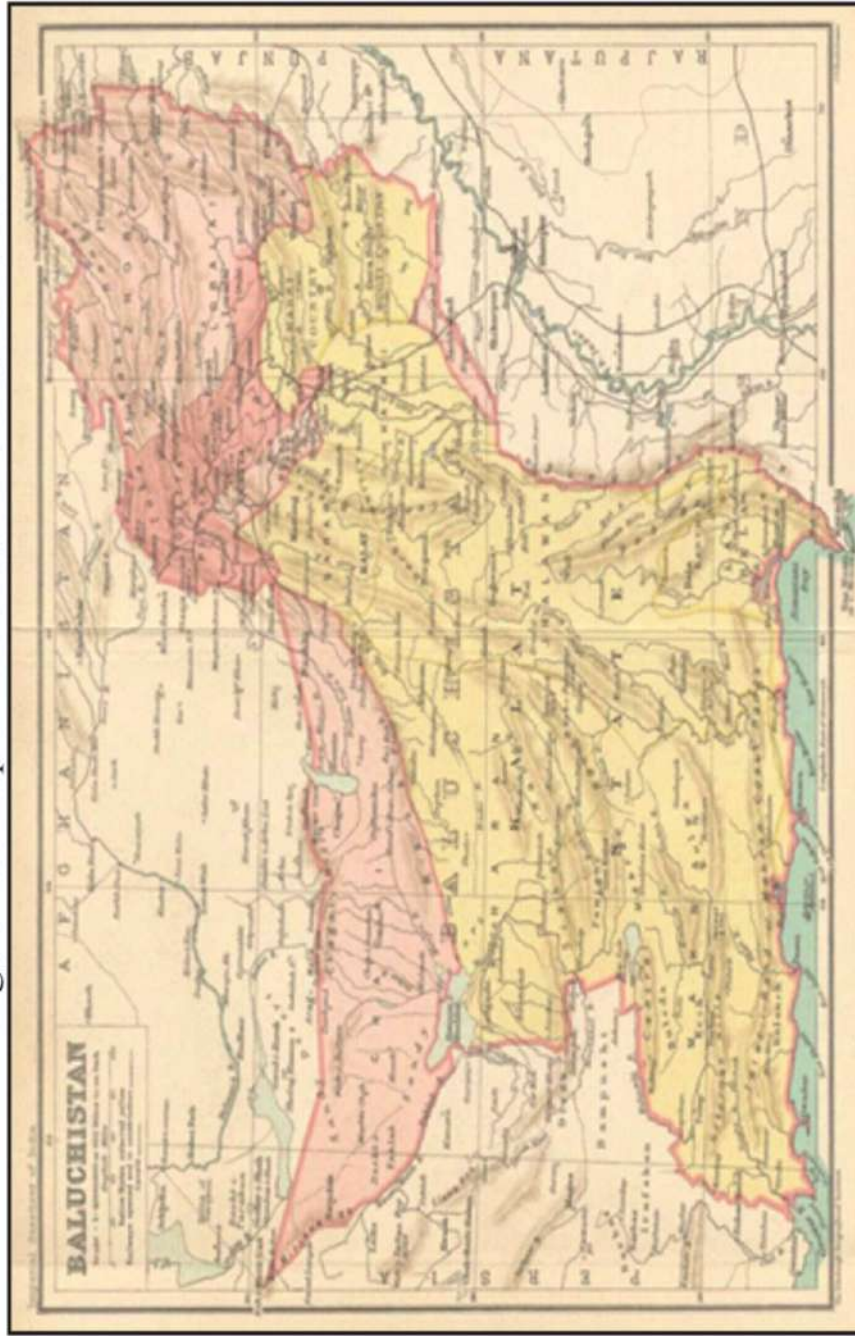
Source: <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/all-eyes-on-gwadar.380496/>

However, they are extremely ambitious in patrolling and securing its territory from all side that why a significant rise in Chinese military and its aggression has been seen. But it is important for China to maintain harmony, peace, and stability within its territory. This makes it important for China to look west. The efforts of Chinese western attention are clearly illustrated in its investment projects. Rise in trade and tourism in the Xinjiang is part of the larger goal. As Xinjiang has 56 percent of Chinese land area and 23 percent of China's population, it is mineral rich but way behind in terms of development that other Chinese cities, hence China is heavily investing here in order to extract the natural resources, distribute it to other economic centres of the country and also to maintain constant presence in the west.

4.6: Geopolitics of Balochistan

The name Balochistan has been derived from the ethnic identity of Baloch community. Having 44 percent of the total area Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province (Fig.-4.8). It has a coastline of 770km. Unlike the size of the province, Balochistan is sparsely populated. It makes borders with Iran and Afghanistan. The major attraction of Balochistan is its resource base. According to the official website of the Office of Chief Minister Secretariat, Balochistan is rich in untapped metallic and non-metallic mineral resources. At the moment, one of the important minerals being explored is coal. Balochistan's coal can meet Pakistan's current and future energy demand to a considerable extent. Over 90 percent of coal is transported to different regions and used in construction business. Its deposits are discovered in large concentrations in Muslimbagh and the district of Killa Saifullah. Chromite reserves are also found in Lasbela, Khuzdar, Kharan, and Chaghi regions. These mineral reserves have been mined by the private sector. Barytes, composed of Barium Sulphates is water insoluble, non-metallic mineral having wide use in industrial, medical, and manufacturing sector. As reported by Chief Minister Secretariat, Balochistan, Near Khuzdar, the largest concentration of barytes is found, with a cumulative potential of over 2.00 million metric tons. Around Koh-e-Sultan in Province Chaghi, sulphur reserves are present. Three major deposits are concentrated along the southern rim of Koh-e-Sultan, an extincted volcano. The minerals are fumaroles, and indigenous sulphur is found in fissures and present in volcanic tuffs. Sulphur is mostly used in the production of sulfuric acid and other sulfur-containing compounds.

Figure-4.8: Map of British administered Balochistan



Source: Khan, M. (2012). Balochistan: The forgotten frontier. *Strategic Studies*, 32/33, 200-223.
doi:10.2307/48527633

For Marbles, significant economically exploitable resources are located across district Chaghi from Dalbandin to the Iranian border. Several deposits are found in regions adjacent to the Pakistan-Afghan border, including Zardkan, Zeh, Siah-Chang, Jhulli, Patkok, Maskichah, Chilgazi, and Buttak. In Chaghi, a dark greenish stone, called Onyx, of exceptional grade is mined. Superior grade Onyx is discovered in the regions of Bolan, Lasbela, and Khuzdar. A huge deposit of Iron Ore is found in Changi. Chaghi, a mineral-rich region, is estimated to have Iron ore approximately worth 30 million tonnes. According to a report by the Geological Survey of Pakistan, there is a 1 to 7 metre width sedimentary ironstone or hematite bed dating back to Jurassic age accounting for 150 million years old. The deposits have been estimated to be in excess of 200 million tonnes, as mentioned by the official website of Pakistan government. Further, from the same source, there are deposits of Quartzite found in Balochistan. Quartzite is a relatively new mineral discovered in the Lasbela area. Limestone is found in abundance across Balochistan. Several hundred metres thick strata of limestone. At times dolomitic, exist in Quetta and Kalat's Jurassic Chiltan Formation. Balochistan is mostly composed of Cretaceous limestone ranging in thickness from 300 to 50 metres. The Sor Range, Harnai, and Spintangi regions all contain limestone deposits. Apart from this Balochistan has tremendous potential of renewable resources.

Natural Gas is also found therein. Due to such vast reserves Balochistan has come under great geopolitical turmoil. Malik, H.Y (2013) argued that, geotragically situated as an entryway to the 34-kilometer-wide, energy-rich Strait of Hurmoz, Pakistan's Balochistan Province has traditionally served as a focal point for the regional, extraregional and local population. The province's significance stems from its geographic position and mineral riches. Apart from giving access to Central Asian and Caspian resources for the United Nations, China, Europe, and Indo-Pacific littoral states, its enormous deposits of copper, gold, chromites, and energy have long served the interests of all important parties. From the nineteenth century's Great Game between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to the United States and China in the twenty-first century. Its security issues are more or less dependent on the geographical/ environmental determinism. There is rising sense of frustration among the Baloch entho-lingual community who consider themselves as stateless community being controlled by Pakistan State that is exploiting the natural resources of Balochistan.

Pakistan has seen the Baloch resistance on many occasions, particularly during the development of Gwadar port, roads and railways under CPEC. The tensions between the ethnic group of Balochs and the government of Pakistan dates back to the independence of Pakistan. Actual cause of the problem is growing socioeconomic insecurity. The people believe that have been facing systemic discrimination and oppression by the state, where the centre is dominated by other populous provinces of Pakistan, where the Balochs are underrepresented. Balochistan's topography has an effect on regional and global powers' power politics, their domains of influence, territorial expansion attempts, and transmission of ideologies and doctrines via armed actions, coercion, and economic assistance to generate dependence, confusion and instability. Balochistan, for the most part, was under the rule of the British Empire from 1839 until the formation of Pakistan, the major purpose of which was to ensure and defend the province of the north-western frontier province from Afghans and Iranians both. At one point during this venture, the British established official international boundaries with Iran and Afghanistan by indulging the Baloch tribes' lands, essentially according to the khan of Kalat's effective sovereign sphere of control, although with some consideration for the interests of community leaders argues Khan. M (2012). After this ordeal the British understood the significance of Balochistan as a gateway to Russia and India. The British begin using it as their strategic military base. By 1838 they befriended the Khan of Kalat and signed an agreement that permitted an unobstructed passage of the British-Indian troops from Balochistan.

In 1871, west part of Balochistan was given away to Persia, legalised by drawing the Gold Smith line in 1896. However, the greater part of the east Balochistan was retained. In 1984, the Durand line divided Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the British negotiated with Iran and gave away numerous villages belonging to the Khan of Kalat to Iran, under the Anglo-Persian joint boundary commission of 1896 revised in 1905. On similar negotiations, the Durand line was conceived in 1893 between Soviet and British, and reinstated in 1984. Hence, Balochistan was divided and the powers of Kalat rulers were diluted. During the start of 19th century, Britishers opted 'close border Policy' and 'forward policy' for Balochistan in order to establish stronger control in Baluchistan and adjacent areas. 'Close border Policy' meant that the Baloch people would have collective responsibility under which the entire tribe could be implicated for any mistake of one.

Punishments included blocking off important passes, rounding off and imprisoning tribes, seizing cattle and property, and levying compensations for loss to the British Empire. It simply meant that there would be no room for the rise of any counterforces. 'Forward policy' meant that the British due to the strategic location of Balochistan, would establish connectivity networks and expands the frontiers to India. The strategic location is deeply debated by academicians and think tanks, Balochistan reminds of Tibet, China's biggest and most remote region. Both Balochistan and Tibet are plateaus bordered by varying-altitude mountain ranges. Both have a wide geographic range and low population densities. Both have established deposits of numerous critical minerals. Both benefit from an advantageous geostrategic position. Tibet, on the other hand, is totally landlocked and secluded, while Balochistan has a 600-kilometer-long coastline with direct sea access. This specific element of direct reach to the open sea through a half-dozen ports, particularly Gwadar port, is Balochistan's biggest advantage. Once Gwadar's deep harbour is completely operational, Balochistan will surge in activity as a consequence of the passing of an endless line of trucks, trailers, buses and other modes of transport on newly constructed roads linking Central Asia to Gwadar in the south through Afghanistan, argues Ahmad, Q. (2005).

Superpowers like the United States and China are involved with many regional players making it a geopolitical hotspot. The establishment of Gwadar Port by the help of China's aid has alarmed all major parties, including phoney politicians and dwindling feudal groups that are attempting to exploit innocent Baloch people for their own gain. India is also taking advantage of the crisis in order to deflect attention away from the Kashmir conflict. The problem is being exacerbated by the immature media campaign. Sincere efforts are already being undertaken to emphasise this critical element at different national platforms by communicating and exhibiting the genuine understanding into this paradox in order to counteract the situation's politically driven features via national level publications, said Malik, H.Y (2013). The United States would want to use Balochistan to keep an eye on China, Russia and CAR along of the crucial oil and gas supply lines. The US is also concerned, since Gwadar provides China with access to the Indian Ocean's warm waters. According to Pakistani sources, the Chinese Navy's ships would be stationed in Gwadar alongside Pakistani Navy warships to protect the port and ensure the safety and security of the sea lanes.

Pakistani and Chinese navies have also sought to limit the Indian Navy's (IN) increasing influence and the US naval station at Diego Garcia, situated south of Gwadar. Chinese naval forces will be present all over the Indian Ocean Region, stated Singh, M. G. (2016). US has apprehensions over Chinese military base in Gwadar. Iran is perturbed of insurgency from Iranian Baloch groups due to US's involvement with Sunni dominant Balochistan. Balochs show a greater inclination to the US United States war on terror has much influence in the region. Also, the US cannot leave a hegemonic vacuum in the region for China to fill in, plus it needs to mark its presence on the busiest Strait of Hormuz and the on-going maritime Silk Road activity. Experts speculate about a new great game in the region.

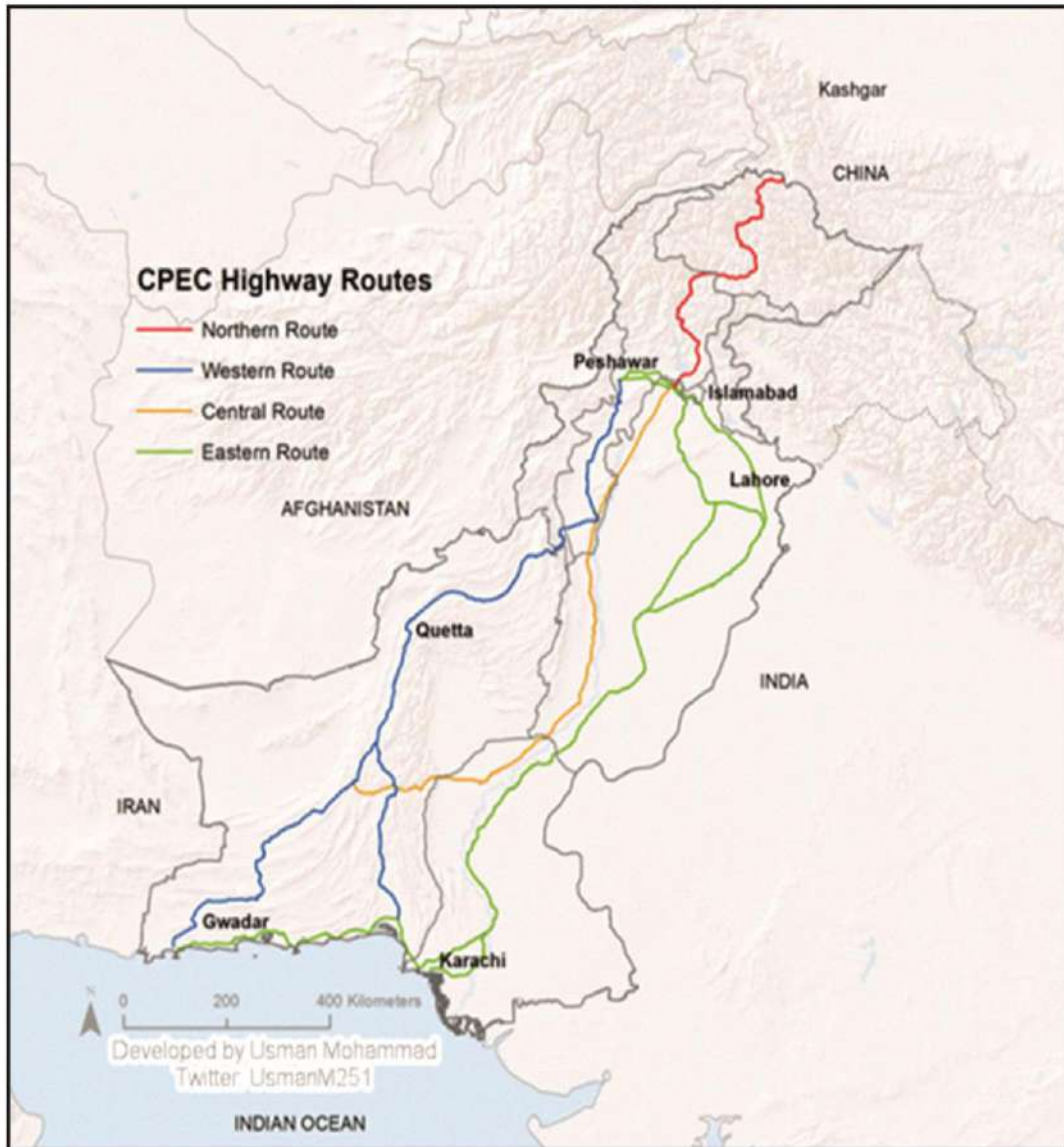
4.7: Connectivity through Gwadar

Gwadar is close to the Strait of Hormuz. It provides an alternate link to the Caspian Sea and its adjacent regions providing significant sea routes for trade and commerce to the landlocked countries of the region. It fairly competes with the deep sea ports of UAE. However, it added more value through regional integration through several infrastructural projects involving roads, highways, railway and pipeline networks. As it is part of CPEC that comes under China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative this port attracts a lot of geopolitical attention and geostrategic complications.

(a) China Pakistan Economic Corridor

Gwadar port is a part of the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative particularly of CPEC i.e. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (Fig.-4.9). The whole CPEC by 2020 has crossed \$62 billion. It is the largest project under BRI. China has spent decades to build connectivity roads from Xinjiang to Gwadar in Pakistan. Gwadar port hence is the most crucial part of CPEC. A report in South China Morning Post stated that China Overseas Port Holding Company intends to develop Gwadar Port by building nine additional multifunctional berths east of the current berths along 3.2 kilometres of beachfront. In 2013, Pakistan granted China the contract for building and operation. Gwadar Port will offer a viable alternative to the Strait of Malacca and is regularly monitored by the US. The maritime route between the Middle East and China through the strait is about 12,000 kilometres long. As Gwadar is an important part of CPEC, it offers a wide spectrum of opportunities for the Central Asia. It will help the countries to maximize their trade, commerce, communication and connectivity to the outer world.

Figure-4.9: CPEC Highway Routes



Source: <https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/analysis/entries/mapping-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>

The landlocked nature of Central Asia limits its access to sea which makes it dependent on surrounding countries. High cost of transportation is the biggest setback in terms of international trade in Central Asian countries. It is estimated that landlocked countries bear 10 percent higher shipping cost and are nearly 57 percent of the neighbouring coastal/maritime countries. Maritime trade provides linkages to the global supply chains at comparatively lower cost. It also helps a country achieve a stable economy as it can participate in the regular flow of global trade. Therefore the Central Asian countries are fairly vulnerable to external crisis, Central Asian region was severely hit by the oil crisis in 2014, and the recent pandemic of COVID-19. Uzbekistan is a double landlocked country. Kazakhstan being landlocked also remains largely frozen. Afghanistan is suffering political and economic distress for a long time. CPEC being a flagship project of BRI offers a marine outlet to Central Asia along with the access to open sea via Gwadar port. Gwadar port connects Kashgar in China on one end.

(b) Linkages with Central Asia

Kashgar lies in the west province of Xinjiang. It shares territorial borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, three important countries of Central Asia. Kashgar which is situated in western Kazakhstan and is surrounded by CARs, is also linked to Kazakhstan's Khorgos Dryport; Khorgos is a 450-hectare special economic zone that is being built into the world's biggest dry port. Additionally owing to the gauge mismatch between China and Kazakhstan, a railway track shifting facility is located there. That enables rail freight between China and Europe. The China-Europe Express Train has been operating effectively since 2011 and connects 48 cities in China with over 40 cities in fourteen European nations through Khorgos. Thus, Central Asian nations may maximise commerce with South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific area by using the Khorgos-Gowadar Axis. Certain Pakistani businesses have already signed with Khorgos Dryport, demonstrating their anticipation of potential trade and commerce, Daily Times (May 5, 2020). The Central Asian countries depend largely on some specific trade items. Kazakhstan trades in oil and its products, steel, copper, ores of different minerals, coal, chemicals, wheat and wool for export and it imports mechanical and electronic machinery, automobile, metals and chemicals. While, Uzbekistan deals in the export of fruits and vegetables, cotton and other fibres, petrochemical, energy resources, metals, gold, and different machinery and equipment.

Uzbekistan mainly imports Industrial heavy machinery, electronics, vehicles and automobiles, spare parts, plastics, pharmaceuticals, sugar etcetera. Turkmenistan is a good exporter of Oil and Natural gas, electricity, plastics, cotton and textiles, precious stones and gems, raisins, sulphur and salt. Turkmenistan imports machinery, agricultural equipment, auto parts, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. Tajikistan is an exporter of ore, slag, ash, aluminium, electricity, sulphur, cement, salt, mineral fuels, cotton and textiles. It also imports natural gas, petroleum, alumina, and grains. Kirghizstan exports electricity, metals, clothes, wool, precious stones, tobacco, and dairy products while it imports oil and petroleum, industrial machinery, iron and steel, automobile and its parts, pharmaceuticals, and plastics. Khetran (2015) opines that with the construction of the Port of Gwadar. Thus, commerce with Central Asian Region (CARs) would undoubtedly use the shortest possible path through Gwadar, multiplying Pakistan's economic advantages. The estimated reserves and production levels will effects on Gwadar Port. To begin, dry cargo output is projected to be greater than liquid cargo production implying that bigger ships and deepwater ports would perform better. Second, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan generate more dry freight than that of other CARs, and Gwadar Port will provide them with the quickest route to warm seas. Thirdly, European countries are attempting to access this mineral-rich area sooner than other major powers through the Caspian Sea, Gwadar, and Afghanistan. The export and import through Gwadar port would offers the Central Asia to deal with multiple trading partners in West Asia, South Asia, Africa, and the larger pacific countries. "For example, year-long supply of trout fish available in the mountain waters of Almaty and Bishkek can be exported to Pakistan in refrigerated containers; similarly, agricultural implements of Pakistan can have good market in Central Asia; extension of trade links is naturally accompanied by the growth of tourism", writes Daily Times (5th May, 2020). All central Asian countries intend to gain from CPEC and diversify their reaches to the world market along with join the regional integration program that CPEC offers. However there are a few significant links that needs special mention in this discussion.

(c) The Khorgos Gwadar Axis

Gwadar port joins Kashgar in China's Xinjiang to the Central Asian countries. Khorgos is situated in Kazakastan's special economic zone with an area of 450 hectare. Additionally owing to the difference in gauge between China and Kazakhstan, it includes a railway track shifting facility to enable rail freight in China and Europe.

Certain Pakistani businesses have already engaged with Khorgos Dryport, indicating their anticipation of potential trade and commerce. Khorgos is also connected to Kashgar. This axis would be significant to Central Asian states to optimize their trade.

(d) The Quadilateral Traffic and Transit Agreement

This is an agreement that includes China, Pakistan, Kazakastan, and Kirghizstan. The aim of this agreement is to facilitate the traffic and provide transit for the trade and commerce under CPEC that would ultimately provide access to the Gwadar Port. Recently Uzbekistan also joined the agreement. Afghanistan owing to its own instability has been surpassed and an alternative route totally circumventing Afghanistan has been provided by QTTA. Therefore, through Karakoram Highway Central Asia would be linked to Xinjiang on one end and to Gwadar port on another end.

(e) Transit and Trade Through Afghanistan

The shortest route from Central Asia to Gwadar is given by Afghanistan, however the never ending conflict and instability has kept Afghanistan from harnessing the real benefits from the megaprojects like the CPEC. Now, with the US-Taliban Peace Accords on NATO troop departure from Afghanistan in place, the chances for a lasting peace have improved. The Pakistan-Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement has started activity, with the arrival of the first bulk cargo, the ship MV Manet bringing wheat and urea from Afghanistan. This would increase transit and commerce volumes via Afghanistan. Therefore, even though Afghanistan has been left out by QTTA but it can find its share of interest through this alternate way. It can be observed that CPEC is offering a transformed future to Central Asian region. It is expected that regional peace, order, and security would followed the regional development and the distressed countries may progress with time, assistance, and improved regional connectivity.

4.8: History of Gwadar

In the local language of Pakistan, Gwadar stands for “the gate of air”. Gwadar has fulfilled Pakistan’s long awaited requirement for a deep sea port. In 1954, a US official named Worth Condrick surveyed the Balochistan coast and recommended the setting up of a deep sea port. The apt location and geographical settings of Gwadar were recognised by Pakistan and the country decided to buy it back from Oman. Gwadar was under the control of Oman for more than 200 years.

The deal was a positive result of the negotiations between Feroz Khan Noon, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan and Viqar-un-Nisa his wife with the Sultan of Oman. By September of 1958 Pakistan paid a sum of money around 3 billion dollars (that is still unclear and debated) to Oman and by 1964 the site was identified as a part of Pakistan's Gwadar port. However, it remained underdeveloped till 2001 when actual moves were made to construct the port. China also joined hands with Pakistan for establishing the port with a greater agenda that was yet to be unfurled. Pakistan also ran study projects before constructing the port. In 1993 major deep sea study projects started to study the feasibility conditions of the site. The construction of the port started on 22nd March of 2002. The construction of the first phase was done by December 2005. This port being so potent gave birth to other important infrastructural development projects in Pakistan like the Makran Coastal Highway that is 700 km in length. The connectivity networks expanded as the port demanded for link roads from Karachi to Omara, to Pasni and Gwadar that had to be in future extended to Iran. The Makran Coastal highway shortened the time to reach Karachi to 7 hours that took 48 hours before. Gwadar- Quetta-Chaman highway and links to East Baluchistan in Khuzdar were some other important road Infrastructural development projects. Pakistan wished to lay railway tracks connecting Havelian- Kashgar also known as Taxila-Khunjerab Railway Line or Karakoram Railway line under Pakistani Railways. Linking Taxila in Rawalpindi to Havelian in Pakhtunkhwa and furthering it to Kashgar, Xinjiang via Khunjerab pass connecting it to the non-electrified and single track Kashgar Hotal Railway is also known as Kahe Railway.

China entered with a massive investment aim, since then Pakistan has initiated several infrastructure projects. Gwadar would help in enabling large volume of cargo transit to and fro the Central Asian countries. The port is also having conversion facilities for the distribution and movement of pipelines. It is under TAPI i.e. the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline. This is the primary objective. The secondary objective is to construct a coastal highway to link Gwadar with Karachi. The full investment of nearly 200 million dollars would be done by China. Acting as a gateway for natural gas and oil supplies straight to be transported to Xinjiang, China, Gwadar port becomes extremely important for China. Beijing aim is to get cargo from Gwadar via the shortest route possible i.e from Karachi to Peshawar. The Pakistan railways in addition to the Gwadar Port will facilitate the export and import of goods from Persian Gulf to Kashgar.

Gwadar port is a Special Economic Zone as given by United Nations Industrial Development Organisation or UNIDO (2015), “The SEZ is a designated estate where trade laws such as tariffs, quotas, or duties differ from the rest of the country”. Balochistan has also got a promise of 100 million dollars aid from Oman to develop the infrastructure and social facilities. Oman also want a proper access to Gwadar for which it has additionally offered 7 million dollars to strach runway at Gwadar Airport, jetties, Gwadar hospital upgradation, assisting fishermen by providing hundreds of engine, and also for building of power house. Gwadar- Hoshab road or also known as M-8 is a 193 km highway also has some financing from Oman. Oman has also been investing in building irrigation dams and water supply Infrastructure. In Gwadar, REAP also aims to create a Rice Zone to attract new opportunities through the port. Previously, Pakistan's rice exports were handled by the Rice Export Corporation of Pakistan. Following the privatization of rice exports, a new organization of individuals arose in the character of the Pakistan Rice Exporters Association (REAP). The Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) was founded in 1988-89 and immediately began dealing with the Pakistani Ministries of Commerce, Food, Agriculture, and Livestock, as well as the Planning Division. In 1992, REAP hosted the Arabian Gulf Cooperative Council, which included government buyers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar. The Arabian Gulf Cooperative Council sold 36,000 tonnes of rice for the very first time since the private sector was allowed to export rice. As a result, Gwadar, in conjunction with the port, serves as a conduit for numerous developmental sectors in the region. Several significant pipelines and networks, on the other hand, deserve special note.

4.9: Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline

On 11 December 2010, TAPI was signed for a \$7 billion gas pipeline project. President Asif Ali Zardari, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, and Indian Petroleum Minister Murli Deora signed the inter-governmental agreement (IGA) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The 1680-kilometer-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, financed by the Asian Development Bank, will transport 3.2 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day, argued Anwar (2011). It is a trans-country gas pipeline running 1814 km across the four countries. The origin will be in Turkmenistan and it will cut across Afghanistan to pass into Pakistan then India (Fig.-4.10).

Figure-4.10: Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline



Source: <http://isgs.com.pk/projects/tapi/>

The idea of TAPI was conceived during 1990s for the purpose of Turkmenistan's economic development and revenue generation by exploiting the its good reserves of natural gas. The agreement between the four countries was signed in 2010. In 2013, each country nominated their shareholders for the establishment of the pipeline. Terkmengaz from Turkmenistan, Afghan Gas Enterprise from Afghanistan, Inter State Gas Systems from Pakistan, and GAIL from India are the respective shareholders. Pakistan and India via their state owned companies aim to by 42 percent of the net volume of natural gas produced that is estimated to be 14 billion cubic metres. Afghanistan will be a major beneficiary as it will receive transit fee that's an estimated amount of 400 million dollars, while purchasing 16 percent or nearly 5.11 billion cubic metres of natural gas. The project was expected to be complete by 2021.

Asian Development Bank is funding TAPI project. The Islamic Development Bank loaned a sum of 700 million dollars to Turkmenistan as assistance for smooth establishment of the pipeline and related infrastructure in December 2016. Rest of the three countries made an investment of 200 million dollars in the initial phase. By the end of the first decade Pakistan had already declared the construction of a large defence complex in the city to ensure the region's security as well as the establishment of a new shipbuilding plant in collaboration with foreign partner. The first stage will consist of the construction of three multi-purpose ship berths, the second stage will consist of the development of nine additional berths, an approach channel, and storage terminals, as well as comprehensive warehouse, transshipment, and industrial plants. Pakistan is developing Gwadar as an industrial port, warehousing, and processing facility, but it must overcome security issues, as Anwar explains (2011). The project will elevate regional trade cooperation and connectivity, and the economic prosperity brought about by the pipeline would contribute to the maintenance of peace and security among these countries. Energy resources have a worldwide demand, developing countries like these need more energy to feed their dense population and enhance their economies. All four countries are expected to reap benefits of the project.

4.10: Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline

IPI gas pipeline is also known as Peace Pipeline. This project has been designed to transport gas from Iran to Pakistan and further to India. The three countries have a dynamic relationship with ever growing political differences from a trilateral perspective (Fig.-4.11). However the project is considered to be economically viable so much so that it may outweigh the political scenario. Both Pakistan and India need enormous amount of energy resources.

Figure-4.11: Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline



Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/the-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-dream/article20694307.ece1>

Economic Times (2017) explained, “the total length of the pipeline up to Indian border (near Barmer) was about 2,135 km (1,100 kms within Iran and the rest within the territory of Pakistan); as per past estimates, investments required for this pipeline were in excess of USD 7 billion”. However, there has been no substantial progress in the project since 2008. It was earlier limited from Iran to Pakistan but later on India was invited to join the project. India nearly quitted from the building project of the IPI by 2008 due to the sanctions imposed by United States on Iran. The US was sceptical if the Iranian nuclear enrichment program. So, to counteract US began pursuing the TAPI pipeline project extending from Turkmenistan cutting through Afghanistan and reaching Pakistan. Economic Times (2017). Such establishment of the mega infrastructural facilities around Gwadar is merely a part of a larger plan. Taking IPI under consideration, Gwadar Development Authority along with the port would build a grid of road connectivity to link Gwadar, Karachi, Pasni, Omara and Turbat.

This network would ultimately connect with China under CPEC via the Indus Highway. Gwadar aims to emerge as a main shipping hotspot in the region capable of providing mass trade across Central, parts of West, South and Southeast and Asia. The IPI cuts across a troubled region and India’s rival country Pakistan when looked from India’s perspective. On the contrary even TAPI cuts across Pakistan but the involvement of Afghanistan presents a comfortable deal for India as India has greater presence in Afghanistan. India has run great assistance programs in Afghanistan that includes constructing schools, hospitals, electricity Infrastructure, roads, etc.

The parliament building of Afghanistan has been built by the help of India. TAPI is also supported by the United States to facilitate the natural gas supply barring Iran from the oil business. “According to former Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, the US never pressured India to drop the IPI; yet, New Delhi decided to back-pedal on the project as it saw a stumbling block in the Iran Libya Sanctions Act though the law has never been invoked; due to Iran’s isolation, the IPI lost its appeal”, mentioned Ramesh. M (2018). If one looks at the ground realities, IPI is not happening. IPI covers a longer passage via Pakistan than TAPI does. Its passage from Balochistan concerns both India and Pakistan as it is a troubled region effected by insurgency. Pakistan blames India for supporting the insurgent groups of Balochistan. On the other hand, the dilemma of Pakistan is that the first section of IPI with a pipeline more than 900 km has been laid down in Iran but the 780 km section on Pakistani territory has not been started yet.

If failed, Pakistan should owe 3 million dollars per day to Iran as penalty if the project wouldn't complete by December 2014 and clearly that hasn't happened yet. Pakistan has several other issues to deal with like the funding of the pipeline project and Saudi Arabia's discomfort with Iran- Pakistan ties. Funding maybe dealt with however Saudi Arabia's displeasure on Iran's nuclear program therefore Pakistan if tries to become a close ally would annoy Riyadh. TAPI is not that muddled. The pipelines has Talibani protection in Afghanistan and also to some extent in Balochistan. In addition two counterweights are involved so the situation is expected to be under control.

4.11: Chinese Ambitions in Gwadar Port

Although CPEC is presenting a great deal of regional integration and development in trade and connectivity it is also argued that Chinese interests are too intense here. CPEC is a part of China's "String of Pearls" agenda. The Gulf countries for a very long time are dependent on the United States for or their economic development. However, the present time has shown a paradigm shift in the geopolitics of the Gulf region. China through its mighty belt and Road initiative has managed to mark its constant presence in the gulf region as well as the CAR. The presence of Chinese Navy around the Strait of Hormuz is growing. China will use Gwadar Port to monitor the critical choke points in the Gulf. By this, it will be able to counter or at least keep track of the Indo-Pacific or the Quad politics. China is working aggressively on its sea power. By utilising the Gwadar Port China aims to penetrate deeper in Central Asia, Middle East, and also Africa since the connectivity networks would reduce the travel time and distance to these vast and secluded parts of the world. The distance is expected to reduce from 10000 km to 2500 km.

(a) Countering the US Hegemony in Persian Gulf

The larger politics indicates that with declining involvement of U.S with the Gulf, China wishes to fill the vacancy and swipe away the U.S. strongholds in the region. United States is now less dependent on the UAE for energy resources since they discovered their own shale gas. This decreasing dependency has opened ways for China to enter the Gulf region. The present dependency of China on Gulf States for oil and natural gas is nearly 35 percent which is expected to grow to 60 percent by the end of the decade. In addition, Gwadar offers a diplomatic position to China in the Caspian Region that is rich in energy resources.

China, via Gwadar deep sea port, may offer an alternate route for trade from the Caspian Region to Xinjiang province without much obstruction. Experts believe that Chinese economy is expanding at a fast rate of 9 percent per annum. "Bouncing back from a pandemic stricken 2020 with official interest rates likely to be held steady, China's economy is expected to grow 8.4 percent in 2021, before slowing to 5.5 percent in 2022" according to Economic Times (Jan 13, 2021). Therefore, with its rising bars of GDP, China has great opportunities to facilitate its access points and ensure evergreen supply of energy resources and control on vantage points.

(b) Economic Dominance

The economic development of China is ever-growing it is said that, because of the pandemic of coronavirus, China is on track to surpass the United States in being the world's biggest economy a couple of years sooner than expected. According to a preliminary government projection, the United States' gross domestic product would shrink by 2.3 percent to \$20.93 trillion in present value of dollar during 2020. In comparison, China reported that it's GDP increased by 2.3 percent up to 101.6 trillion yuan last year. This equates to about \$14.7 trillion at a mean of 6.9 yuan exchange rate to the US dollar, Cheng, E (2021). Foreign exchange reserve of China is around 3.4 trillion dollars after a decline due to coronavirus pandemic. It was also the only country which showed appositve growth in economy during the pandemic. With such economic potential China is expected to become the world superpower surpassing the United States by 2030.

(c) Monitoring the Indian Ocean

For the Chinese, Indian operations within the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden have long been a source of embarrassment. "Zhao Nanqi, director of the Chinese Navy's General Staff Logistics Department, issued a top-secret memorandum outlining the People Liberation Army's strategic plans to increase control over the Pacific and Indian Oceans in compliance with the high-sea defence policy through the implementation of the string of pearl strategy; Zhao said that we can no longer consider the Indian Ocean Region as just an Indian ocean." A navy base close to the area's entry point will assist China in containing India's hegemonic ambitions in the region. By establishing a presence in Gwadar, China would be able to monitor oil traffic in the Persian Gulf. Gwadar Port provides an alternative path for China to Asia, Europe, and Africa if the Malacca Strait is closed to her, Malik, H. Y (2013).

India always had a strategic hold on the Strait of Malacca, China had also experienced threat of India's blockade of the Malacca Strait. After which, it started mulling to assist Pakistan during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Therefore, there has already been a history full of geopolitical, strategic and economic turmoil associated with the Strait of Malacca.

(d) The Malaccan Dilemma

Gwadar is expected to save China from the Malacca dilemma as well (Fig.-4.12). The Strait of Malacca is a narrow strip of water, generally congested, that separates the island states of Indonesia and Malaysia. Singapore is located at its southernmost point. It is used as the shortest transit route between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. This strait lets the transit of more than 60,000 vessels every-year, nearly 25 percent of the global trade is carried out through this strait. There is another "Lombok/Makassar Strait" cuts across the Indonesian archipelago which facilitates the passage of very large crude carriers. Owing to the volume of oil shipped through this strait makes this route equally important as Malacca Strait. If choked, being the largest Oil importer, China may suffer million dollars loss hampering its economic growth badly. The geostrategic position of the Strait of Malacca lies between the Sumatra Islands and the Malay Peninsula and is bordered on the east by Singapore. Such small strip of water might potentially be closed by China's competitor countries wreaking havoc on the great China machine, given that about 80 percent of the country's exports travel via the Malaccan Strait

(e) Using Soft and Hard Power

China is heavily investing in strategic and economic development. Gwadar as part of CPEC would open the scope of China's Uighur muslims. Also, China would be able to use this muslim soft power to improve relations with the gulf, west and Central Asian countries that are predominantly muslim states. China sees Gwadar port as a base as well through which it can have constant surveillance over the U.S naval activities particularly in the Persian Gulf that lies approximately 460 km west to Karachi (Fig.-4.13). These spots are also fairly distant from India's naval bases in Gujarat and Mumbai. Therefore, in aspects of defence and geostrategy deep sea Gwadar port assists China to have surveillance on the Sea lanes of communication in the Persian Gulf which accounts for 60 percent of Chinese energy requirements.

Figure-4.12: The oil flow via Malaccan Dillema



Source: <https://diplomatist.com/2020/07/07/the-malacca-dilemma-and-chinese-ambitions-two-sides-of-a-coin/>

Figure-4.13: Development of Energy Plants via CPEC



Source: South China Morning Post <https://multimedia.scmp.com/news/china/article/One-Belt-One-Road/pakistan.html>

Additionally, Singapore is unavoidably significant, since it is a close American ally and India and may be affected by both. China has worried that this might materialise in the immediate future due to the dynamic character of geopolitics. In the pursuit for alternative options, the majority of them, such as the Sunda Strait, Lombok Strait and Makassar Strait, have been found to be unsatisfactory, as the aforementioned are shallow, whereas the others are quite stretched routes that could impose a significant economic strain with the anticipated cost of shipping that is approximately \$220 billion per year argues Mudunuri (2020). Finding alternative transit routes through land was considered as a better option by China. The Kra isthmus Canal in Thailand was under Chinese consideration that can serve as an alternate maritime transit but later it was found that the isthmus lied at a farther distance for which China would have to control Thailand. Controlling the Thai would raise other geopolitical tensions for China hence the idea of building Kra isthmus Canal was put on halt. China wasn't satisfied with other such proposals. In order to reduce its dependency on the Strait of Malacca, China began with the development of Gwadar port linking Xinjiang as part CPEC focusing particularly on oil imports and establishing further trade links.

4.12: The United State Factor

The resources of Balochistan attract the United States as well. The region provides tactical position for US to monitor Chinese movements, Russian activities, and the Central Asian countries. United States is uncomfortable with Gwadar as it opens an entrance to China in the warm waters of Indian Ocean. Deep sea ports lying in warm oceanic waters are extremely significant as they provide yearlong service, even in the freezing seasons also these ports function without any problem. Many news reports say that there would be Chinese Navy and Pakistani Naval warships at Gwadar port to protect the port and the SLOC. In this way, they would also be able to contain the rising Indian hold in the region. Diego Garcia, an island in the British Indian Territory, a US naval base is situated to the south of Gwadar in the central part of Indian Ocean. U.S apprehends that Gwadar port will now enable the Chinese military to be present in this region. It's contemplated by many strategic thinkers that China may also build a military base in Gwadar. After the end of World War II, the United States, by one or the other way has been present in the Afghanistan, for its socio-economic development. Both countries enjoyed good relations but after the United States war on terror in Afghanistan, Pakistan and adjacent areas, there has been great friction between the

CAR and the United States. The US reach in CAR is decreasing and the Central Asian countries are also finding shorter routes to access the warm waters for the sake of their economic development. China's humongous investments are another tension for the United States and India. The involvement of U.S. is so much so that it has invested its finances as well as intelligence in Balochistan. "While talking to the Asian News International (ANI), ex-ISI official, Brigadier (Retd.) Mohammad Aslam Ghuman, allegedly said that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), RAW and Mossad (Ha Mossad le Modi) are behind the Baloch insurgency; he further added that the CIA in connivance with RAW and Blackwater, is operating in Balochistan and other parts of the country, they cannot digest the reality of any Muslim country becoming an atomic power; they wish to have a complete control over the Gwadar port and seize the nuclear assets of Pakistan; as the insurgency in Balochistan continues despite government of Pakistan's efforts to reach out to the dissidents and offer of financial package to the Baloch youth, the US is also suspected of providing financial support to the insurgents to incite them on subversive activities", Shah, A. (2017).

The 21st century is witnessing a shift in global geopolitics to this region. Experts call it the Great Game as explained in the second chapter of this thesis. Post 9/11, the United States secured an airbase situated in Balochistan for operating areal bombings on the Taliban and other terror groups. This resulted in intensifying the insurgency movements in Balochistan. The US cannot let go of its hegemony in the CAR and Middle East. Gwadar seaport poses a threat to this ambition. The formation of Asia Pacific, its transformation to Indo-Pacific, and the increasing ties of Quad group is an example of United States relentless efforts in the region to counter Chinese penetrations. It will maintain banking on Balochistan resources and fueling the local issues in order to play along with different actors. The potential growth of this region of Pakistan and particularly in Balochistan is a top priority for the US since so many foreign players have been vying for their interest and their portion in the geostrategic pie of the Asian New Great Game.

United States, the Britain, as well as other NATO countries continue to compete with Russia, China and other members of SCO for dominance, power, hegemony, and riches across Central Asia and Transcaucasian region. As a result, United States must confront the possible threat from China which may destabilise Pakistan's domestic stability.

Pakistan's geostrategic position as an entryway to Central Asian oil and gas resources ensures that the country will continue to be a battlefield for contrasting interests and agendas in foreseeable future, argues Shah, A. (2017). While, Pakistan dives deeper under Chinese influence swaying away from the U.S, the US continues to advocate for India's presence in the region in terms of military, security, financing, technology and shared partnerships on multiple forums.

4.13: Concerns for India

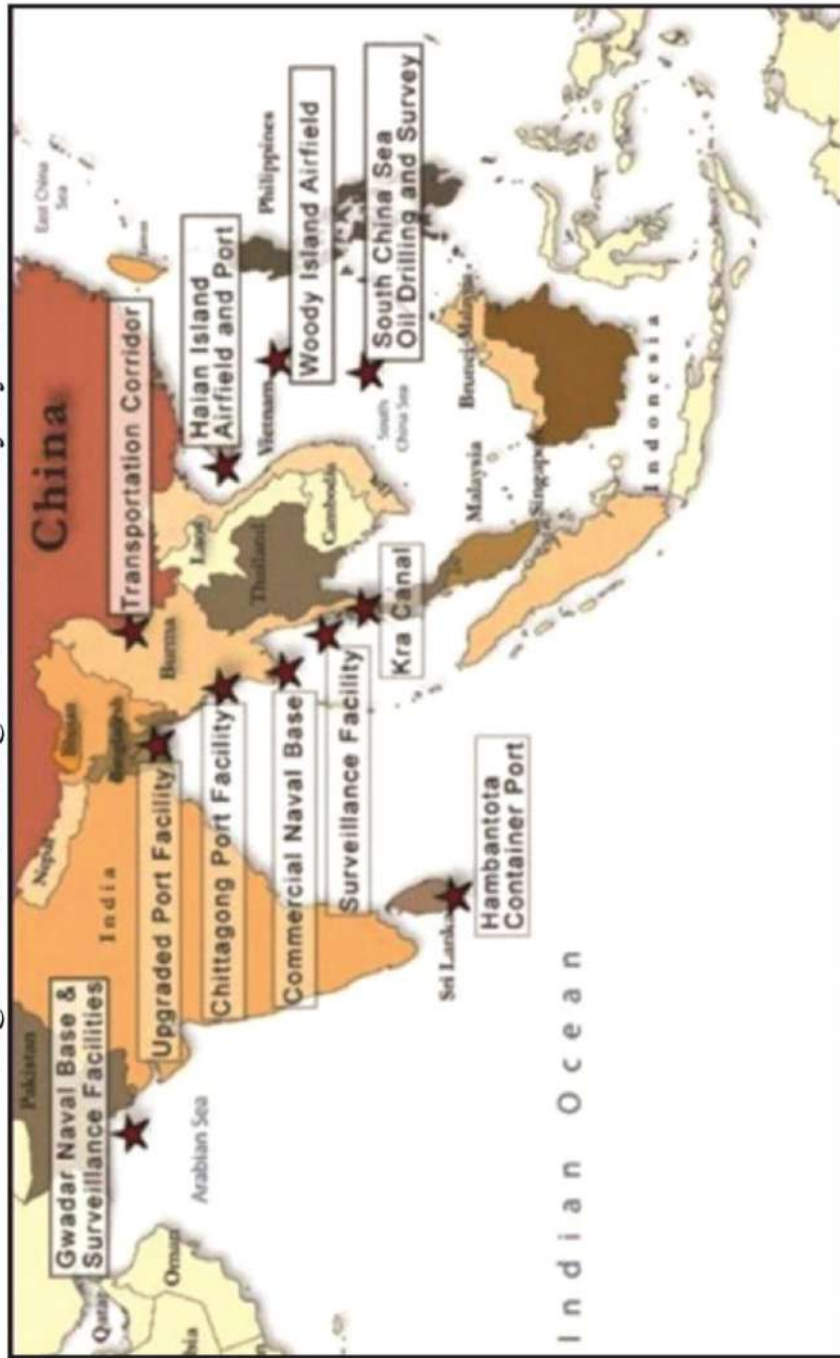
Post its own Independence, India has been making constant efforts in developing its infrastructure and investing in better networks facilitating regional integration and strategic networks. However, experts believe that there have been certain failures in decision making by India whose impacts are seen in the contemporary time. As a part of such historical blunder a former director at the Centre for Land Warfare Studied (CLAWS), New Delhi, writes that, for nearly 200 years, Gwadar had been a principality under the control of the Sultan of Oman. Khan of Kalat gave the principality of Gwadar to Oman in 1783 as a present. The governance Gwadar fell in the hands of the britishers from 1863 until the independence of the Indian subcontinent from colonialism in 1947. The enclave had been a collection of fishermen settlements. A diplomatic community that were primarily producing grapevine tells of an Indian administrator who handled the issue of administering Gwadar as a representative of the Sultan of Oman. During that time, the Khan of Kalat (a Pakistani prince) requested the Sultan to give the city back, and, the Sultan agreed to give it to Indian leadership, but India refused to acknowledge the present, Kanwal, G. (2016, June, 18). It is believed that the offer was made verbally, the authenticity of which cannot be guaranteed or verified independently. The Eurasian times writes that the Khan of Kalat held talks with India during 1946 in order to hand over the territory of Gwadar to India. Another of the officials of Khan had met the senior Congress leader named Abul Kalam Azad, the then he met the then Congress president, a report of Sunday Guardian reflected. According to the Foreign Policy Centre, a research tank headquartered in the United Kingdom, former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru returned the accession documents signed by the Khan of Kalat in 1947. According to media reports, at a news conference on March 27, 1948, held in New Delhi, the Secretary to the Government of India, V.P. Menon, declared that the Khan of Kalat was trying to push Kalat's accession on India, but the government of India had no intention of engaging in this.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel the very next day published a statement stating that no such petition had been made, Chaudhary (2020, September 25). Afterwards, Oman sold it to Pakistan and since 1958 Gwadar/Balochistan is an integral territory of Pakistan. India may have declined this offer for staying away from imperial inheritance or due to lack of judgement of Balochistan's potential or due to its own inability to defend Balochistan during that point of time, India apparently lost a chance to gain an enclave in Pakistani territory of the Makran Coast having, warm water, and tremendous strategic potential.

The other way, the contemporary geopolitical setting of Arabian Sea would have been entirely different. Gwadar port is a part of China's 'string of pearls' policy for containing India from all sides. The term "String of Pearls" pertains to a geopolitical hypothesis describing China's chain of objectives in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). It consists of a network of China's military and economic installations and connectivities that stretch from the mainland of China up to the Port of Sudan situated at the Horn of Africa. The sea lines pass across numerous key maritime choke points, including the Straits of Mandeb, Malacca, Hormuz, and Lombok, as well as other maritime geostrategic locations in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Somalia, argues Dabas. M. (India times 2017). Experts believe that 'String of Pearls' is designed to encircle India from all sides. It may pose threat to India's maritime security. This containment may threaten India in terms of military movements, trade routes, and territorial integrity.

The string of pearls incorporates naval bases of China in Hainan Island, where China has established underwater submarine base. China is pursuing the Paracel and Spratly Island, where air strips are being developed. China's quest of developing the Kra Isthmus in Thailand may improve its dominance on vital trade routes through bypassing the Malaccan Strait. In addition China's growing assertions in the South China Sea by developing greater presence and firepower through submarines, destroyers, vessels, ships, and air power. China has growing terms with Malaysia and Singapore that would further intensify its presence. Further, the Chinese possession of several strategic spots in the Indian Ocean is also a matter of concern for India. China is ever present in Kyaukpyu port of Myanmar which gives way to the Bay of Bengal. The facility is capable of providing military base during war like situations.

Figure-4.14: String of Pearls Policy by China



Source: <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/here-is-all-you-should-know-about-string-of-pearls-china-s-policy-to-encircle-india-324315.html>

China is investing to develop 2400 km long gas pipeline project linking Kyaukyu to Kunming. At a close proximity to Indian coast, China has found a military base in the Coco Island which lies north of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In Bangladesh, Chittagong port, giving access to the heart of Bay of Bengal, lies Chinese station. As Myanmar and Bangladesh have crucial points in one of the sub-projects of OBOR's, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM), it's most likely that China would succeed in establishing a naval base around the Chittagong port. The Hambantota port of Srilanka, on a 99 years lease agreement to China forms the southern tip of the string of pearls, where China also wished to have nuclear submarines as per several news reports. The Gwadar port concludes the end point of this mighty string of pearls (Fig.-4.14), where China would establish a full-fledged navy base capable of launching full-fledged attack in times of war. China also has a powerful presence on the African coast, the Middle East and adjacent areas.

There is a recent development of a military base at Djibouti as a response to American presence in Diego Garcia. Look East Policy is said to be a counter action for Chinese string of pearls. Under this India is trying to intensify ties with the south and south-eastern neighbourhood of China. Countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Philippines etcetera. By providing foreign aids and humanitarian assistance to Myanmar and Bangladesh, India aims to improvise its bilateral relations. There has been news on India-Bangladesh joint development of a military deep sea port Infrastructure at Sonadia. The Chabahar port is considered to have the capacity to counter the Gwadar Port during times of crisis.

4.14: Resume

The Gwadar post is a highly significant port in terms of improving the regional connectivity. Beyond regional connectivity and integration through trade flows and supply chains lies the geostrategic and geopolitical realm where is designed to stir the geopolitical realities. These geopolitical realities have to do with resource transfer, and commanding the choke points. These setting are followed by the development of military bases that are capable of changing the face of this most unstable yet resourceful part of the world. History says that during the 1999 Kargil war, India effectively cut off supplies to Pakistan by closing the Karachi port with its navy. That's why developing

better linkages are crucial. Pakistan has been involved in cease fire violations, terror activities, and constant territorial tensions with India. In addition, the growing economic instability of Pakistan gave China a smooth chance of benefitting from the situation by aggressively developing CPEC. Economic analysts believe Pakistan has fallen in Chinese debt crisis that may impact its domestic and international situation in near future. However, there are many angles from which this scenario maybe be analysed.

Chapter-5

Comparative Analysis of Chabahar and Gwadar Port Projects

5.1: Introduction

This chapter has attempted to make comparative study of Chabahar and Gwadar ports on certain bases. The comparative analysis is a principle method in political geography which aims to present a justifiable difference between elements. As disciplines like political geography, geopolitics and international relations, at large, can seldom be experimental and empirical in nature therefore by comparative analysis they tend to bring out differentials and commonalities that are capable of highlighting the underlying geostrategic significance and challenges. It helps understand the underlying causes of why economic giants like China and India would supply massive funding to build infrastructural projects in distressed states like Pakistan and Iran respectively. The states tend to acquire greater power for one of these reasons: in order to preserve themselves, because they control resources, or in order to dominate.

In the case of Sino-Indian relations, both the bordering nations show great intensity in promoting their strategic interests. China and India are both near- and long-term neighbours as well as long-term competitors. India and China both go back to early civilizations when they enjoyed environments of peace and non-interference, long before their formation as modern nation states. As a result, they are both huge nations, with vast populations and economies that are booming. After the conflict over their territorial claims, the fighting between India and China over the contested border that became known as the Sino-Indian border war of 1962 had planted the seeds of distrust, mutual suspicion, and geo-strategic rivalry between the two countries. What this statement tells us is that while China is largely enthusiastic in developing the Gwadar Port of Pakistan, which will only serve to strengthen the country's strategic and economic interests, India is actively investing in the Chabahar Port of Iran, which will be used to counter China's designs and quench India's own strategic longing. By implementing this balancing act, both the main regional powers are aggravating the existing tension, which is having a ripple effect on neighboring nations. This chapter aims to present a comparison of both the ports in order to understand their geostrategic relevance and competition respectively.

5.2: Theoretical Basis and contemporary relevance of Heartland and Rimland Theory

Geostrategy primarily has to do with significant geographical location. The idea is more inclined towards the determinist school of thought. Here, the importance of geographical location and regional connectivity of the study area is particularly focusing on the Central Asia, Middle East, South East Asia and the maritime regions of IOR. Overall, it constitutes the Eurasian region. The significance of geography in determining the center of world power has been successfully illustrated by numerous strategists.

(a) The Heartland Theory

The Heartland Theory by Halford John Mackinder was among the most renowned theories explaining the interrelationships between geography, political power, and warfare strategy. It is popularly known that the world geopolitics in the 21st Century is shifting from the west towards east. If one has to locate the pivot in the 21st Century, it would be Eurasia. Vast resource base, the presence of land and sea altogether, states in political turmoil and the never-ending conflict has made this region a hotspot for geopolitical leverage (Fig.-5.1). The theory was revised three times; firstly, Mackinder conceptualized a geographical pivot of the world in 1904 conceptualizing the landlocked central Eurasia in his book “Geographical Pivot of History”, secondly in 1919 in his work “Democratic Ideals and Reality”, and then in 1943 in his article “The Round World and Winning of the Peace”, he transformed the theory and laid down the idea of Midland Basin. In 1919, Mackinder modified his earlier two versions of the Geographical Pivot and stated that “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the world island commands the World”, H.J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality, pg. 150. Mackinder termed the geographically connected landmass, positioned in the centre of the world, Europe, Asia, and Africa as the world island. For determining the strategic position he stressed on the united force the region can project in power dynamics, global supremacy and security from external invasion. The external powers were termed as the offshore islands that consist of China, India, Germany, Austria and Turkey. Whereas the further outlying Islands includes Western Europe, North America, South America, South Africa, and Australia.

Figure-5.1: Geographical Pivot or Heartland of Mackinder's Theory (1904)



Source: The Geographical Pivot of History. Pg 435

According to Mackinder, the three power systems keep contesting for power and the world island occupies the central geopolitical significance. Mackinder believed that the balance of world power is latched to the world island. If we look at the geographical conditions the world island, there is vast resource base, social capital, distribution channels or supply chain for obtaining, exploiting, and influencing these advantages and access to land. He conceptualized this region as a continuous stretch throughout Europe and Asia which can be used a geostrategic and military privilege through technological advancements, expansion of connectivity networks and human resource as it possess two third of the global population. He opined that other countries can only advance through the sea but it is the vast land power of the world island that gives it a comparatively upper hand. Mackinder also surmised that with the improvement in mobility there would be tremendous growth in trade and commerce. This world island fortifies the Heartland.

The Heartland is so important that it can stir the geopolitics of many superpowers like the US, China, Russia and India to name a few. During the past few decades the competition among these countries have intensified, they have either been trying to maintain, expand and adjust their foreign policy to have a strong hold in the region. Depending on their aspiration to become a superpower or to influence the status of superpowers these countries are maintaining their constant presence here. The advancing great game and struggle to have a greater control over the Heartland is a reflection of the geostrategic significance of the region. Russia, CAR and the Caspian basin forms the present day Heartland. After the disintegration of USSR in 1991. The CAR gained Independence one after the other. These newly formed states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are the present day pivot. Hence, they are important in the geostrategic, geo-economical, and geopolitical analysis. Russian dominance on the Heartland is historic however in contemporary times the hegemonic dynamics are constantly changing. The United States is playing a critical role while Chinese activities are having a great influence on the region. The whole idea behind reviving the Silk Road is centred towards having control or access to the present day Heartland. The aim of establishing regional connectivity networks in this region through Maritime Silk Road viz-a-viz sea or Belt and Road Initiative on land is the same.

The region is considered to be a natural fortress hence regional integration becomes the need of the hour. The region is characterized by international competition and geopolitical tensions.

(b) The Rimland Theory

One of the followers of Mackinder, Nicholas. J. Spykman established the Rimland Theory where he extended Mackinder's version and put more emphasis on the outer crescent that he called the Rimland. For Spykman, "Whoever controls Rimland, controls Heartland, whoever controls the Heartland controls the world". He believed that in order to control the globe, it is important to separate the far East from Russian part, the power center should be focused on China via the maritime connectivity, establish control over the Middle East, Northern part of Africa, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, India, and whole of Europe, and minimize the Heartland's influence (Fig.-5.2). Pakistan plays a significant position in the present day situation of Spykman's Rimland. It provides an effective transit to CAR and further. The Rimland Theory came as a response to Heartland Theory however before that Alfred Thayer Mahan propounded the idea of sea power in his work in 1890 "The Influence of Sea Power in History" where he stated that "Whoever rules the waves, rules the world". Mahan talks about a zone of conflict, which he titled "Debatable and Debated Grounds". Here he established a zone between the forty degree latitude and thirty degree latitude in Asia, basically land-power on the north and sea power on the south. The present day region encompasses not only parts of the CAR but also of Tibet, Xinjiang, Pakistan, and Kashmir as the zone of conflict.

In addition Afghanistan, Iran and parts of Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Georgia also constitute the zone. Mahan exclusively mentioned the strategic importance of Indian Ocean. He simplified that control on the Indian Ocean mean a control on the World's trade route. According to him "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia; this ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters". In Rimland Theory, Spykman did not emphasise on mastering the waters but he focused more on the areas adjacent to the oceans. The theory although a response to Heartland, kept the supremacy of Eurasia in the centre of global geopolitics. The geographical location of China incorporates both prototypes of the Heartland and the Rimland Theory. and vast stretch of land towards Asia, Europe, and Africa. Therefore when one compares the Gwadar Port, a part of CPEC and

Figure-5.2: The Rimland



Source: Saul B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a Divided World*. Methuen, London, 1964, p. 47.

However, Chinese peripheral areas obstruct it from gaining strategic significance on its own due to difficult terrain, difficult mobility Chabahar port one may note that Gwadar port provides a shorter route for China by 3000kms. In order to rule the Heartland one needs to have control over the important passage and choke points. Gwadar port allows China to beat the “Malaccan Dilemma” and ensure the energy security of China in war and peace. CPEC is also considered as China’s energy corridor as it has further linkages with Iran Pakistan gas pipeline from which China replaced India and now it is Iran Pakistan China pipeline project worth 7.4 billion dollars. Gwadar port also releases Chinese dependency on Hambantota, Sittwe and Chittagong ports in Srilanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh respectively. It will connect Xinjiang to the Heartland by bringing political and socioeconomic development to vulnerable ethnic groups like Uyghurs in China. China’s military and strategic hold would further intensify the quest for power in this region. The country that connects Central Asia and South Asia entirely maybe be able to rule the destiny of the world.

On a similar note the countries of Rimland countries including the US, UK are trying to gain a significant control in the region. India is seen as a power balancer, and China is perceived as a threat. Khan (2018) argues that as key allies, the United States and India see China’s growth as a major challenge to their economic and geostrategic interests. President Trump listed China and Russia as competitors and “Revisionist states” presenting a danger to American interests in his National Security Strategy. India is apprehensive over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a high-profile component of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As a result of serious fear of encirclement, India has shown itself to be particularly disconcerted by the presence of Chinese port installations located along several important Eurasian Rimland coasts. Here, establishment of Chabahar port helps India maintain its presence in the Heartland viz-a-viz having access to the Rimland.

The idea of promoting regional connectivity for integrated development carries an inherent interest of linking Eurasia and even further for trade, energy security, and political stability. “France, Germany, Russia, China and India have been playing a significant role as the key geostrategic players; Azerbaijan, Ukraine, South Korea, Turkey and Iran constitute geopolitical pivots; the sensitive locations and geographies of geopolitical pivots provide geostrategic players with accessing gateway to connect important areas of the region.

In addition, political and cultural affinities with active geostrategic players determine their pivotal position in the regional geopolitical settings”, Singh, S., and Singh, B. (2019). The perspective of Iran’s Chabahar port it will also facilitate the entrance of its stakeholders to the Heartland. India needs to have a strong diplomatic position in Chabahar port project and other related projects in order to combat the insecurities of energy, access to supply chains, expanding military presence, and having a say in resource politics. For India, Iran is Eurasia’s pivot. Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi’s had visited Russia in July 2015, the visit also included Central Asian Republics (CARs), the visit was intended to bolster India’s venture to Connect Central Asia Policy (CCAP). Prime Minister Modi had inked the Chabahar agreement in this regard on his May 2016 visit to Iran. These measures are indicative of India’s Eurasian tilt. Eurasia, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA India), comprises of Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Georgia and Ukraine. Through mercantile immigrant community, India has had age old relations in civilizational, geo-cultural, and commercial aspects with these nations. India is attempting to actualize these similarities in the current environment via geopolitical and geo-strategic issues (Mohanty, 2015). India’s soft power and its humanitarian assistance in the CAR, South and South East Asia would help India to defend itself from counterforces and containment from China. Not only in terms of resources, connectivity, trade and commerce but also in terms of warfare and disarmament the strategic control becomes imperative.

5.3: Comparison on basis of Port Capacity

Port capacity refers to the measure of optimum output of the port in terms of tonnage, and the volume of those shipments its terminals can bear. With the development of Chabahar port efforts to upgrade its capacity has been made. In January, 2021, “India has supplied a consignment of two Mobile Harbour Cranes (MHC) to Iran’s Chabahar port with a total contract value of over USD 25 Million under a contract agreement for supply of 6 MHC; the consignment of cranes arrived from Marghera port, Italy has been unloaded successfully on 18th January, 2021 at Chabahar port and presently undergoing trials run with 140 metric tons lifting capacity, multipurpose equipment and accessories like Mobile Harbour Cranes (MHC) will enable India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) to provide seamless services for Container, Bulk and General Cargo at Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar”, DD News (08th Jan 2021).

India is trying to expand its infrastructural development in Iran's Makran coast and Shahid Beshti Port development is instrumental as it part of phase-I operationalization of Chabahar (Fig.-5.3). The Iranian Ministry of Roads and Urban Development's Port and Maritime Organisation also states that "the operationalizing of the second phase of Chabahar port development plan will increase the capacity of this port to 30 million tons on the subject of Chabahar port and the development process that this port is going through, Mohammad Eslami stated that he sees a bright future for the Makran coast, which certainly has far more economic potential than the southern part of the Persian Gulf, given the region's access to many parts of the world through oceans and open water. It has far more economic potential than the southern part of the Persian Gulf; stating that investment in Chabahar port has a growing trend, Eslami highlighted we are planning to start the second phase of Chabahar port development in the coming months to increase the capacity of Chabahar port to 30 million tons". The capacity of Chabahar is massive owing to the objective for which it has been constructed. However, the comparatively it happens to be smaller than the CPEC southernmost port of Gwadar.

As Gwadar port is an integral part of CPEC that envisions linking over 70 countries for trade across Eurasia. "Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) floated international tenders for the up-gradation of berthing facilities, supply and installation of a floating jetty and cranes at the port; the bids were from firms for supply and installation of equipment for safety of navigation; Gwadar port has an existing capacity to handle 50,000 deadweight tonnage bulk carriers at the rate of 12.5 metre maximum depth; the port has three multipurpose berths and each is 200 metres long". GPA officials report that "given the expected rapid growth in demand for port capacity, the authority continues expanding the capacity of Gwadar port; Gwadar port is being developed at the cost of about \$600 million; additional three berths will be constructed in two years, according to the document; traffic at Gwadar port is expected to increase after government allowed transit trade imports both containerized and bulk for onward transportation to Afghanistan", CPEC website. Gwadar's traffic is expected to grow since the government opened it for transit for containers and bulk cargo to and fro Afghanistan. The port may also grow in capacity with the government smoothening the regulatory framework of widening the connectivity across the landlocked states of Central Asia. Along with the recently developed Gwadar port, Pakistan has two other deep sea ports of Karachi and Qasim. Their capacity wasn't able to meet the growing demand hence

Figure-5.3: Aerial Image of Chabahar Port



Source: Retrieved from: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/india-iran-cooperation-chabahar-port-choppy-waters>

Gwadar is expected to fill the gap. Gwadar port has been in operation since 2018, March. It was opened for Afghanistan's transit in October 2020. Gwadar's first container ship docked on 14th January, 2021 for transit to Afghanistan. The shipment business will gain momentum as it has already been declared as a special economic zone. Reportedly, nine industries have already been set up in the Gwadar SEZ.

5.4: Comparison on the basis of Regional Connectivity and Economic viability in the Region

Gwadar is part of the mighty silk road of the 21st century China's One Belt One Road project. Clearly, the extension of nodal points in this OBOR network would be one the greatest in the world. It aims to revive the ancient silk routes across the Eurasian continent it is often hailed as a great development plan involving mega infrastructural facilities like rails, roads and highways, deep sea ports and gas pipelines. This economic corridor further involves two systems of land power development and sea power development. The first part is Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The SREB will extend from China to Western Europe via Central Asia and Russia (Fig.-5.4). China aspires to have access to Arabian Sea in order to establish its maritime silk route. They have designed the Gwadar port for greater capacity of cargo tonnage via CPEC. However, China already has a stronghold stronghold in exports to Central Asian countries trade and commerce. On the other hand Chabahar port give access to Afghanistan through Iran. Due to the age of rivalry between India and Pakistan the latter never allowed passage for trade to Afghanistan and India. An alternative strategy India has contributed in establishing Chabahar port that can bypass Pakistan for operating smooth trade to and fro Central Asia. Chabahar port may provide access to the international North South Corridor with the help of this port India may deepen its presence in Central Asia and for Europe (Fig.-5.5).

The Iranian leadership has always viewed the two ports of Chabahar and Gwadar as sister ports and not as strategic competitors. However the ongoing development by China and India suggest otherwise. Experts believe these ports as Chinese and Indian 'look west' Policy under which both the countries are trying to insert their economic interventions in the resource rich and politically turbulent Middle East. In terms of economic capacity the comparison of the financing countries China and India cannot be equated. China is a giant economic superpower. It has secured its presence in every significant nodal points in the world, particularly in in Eurasia.

Figure-5.4: Aerial view of Gwadar Port



Source: <http://www.gwadarport.gov.pk>

Figure-5.5: Regional Connectivity via Chabahar Port Project



Source: <https://southasianvoices.org/chabahar-background/>

For China Gwadar port serves as a means for maintaining its foothold in the Arabian Sea. Meanwhile for India, Chabahar port facilitates the mode of economic and diplomatic survival in the region. On October 29th, 2017 there was exultation at Kandla port, now named as Deen Dayal Port Trust. It was because one of the first from six consignments loaded with wheat was being sent to Afghanistan via Chabahar port. It was also the first time when any big consignment travelled to Afghanistan from India totally bypassing Pakistan. The consignment reached Chabahar port located 1200 km from the Indian shores. After which the consignment traverse to Zahedan situated on the Western border of Afghanistan by a 635 km long road. The success of this consignment was so crucial that the then external Minister of Afghanistan Salahuddin Rabbani and India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj monitored the departure of the shipment by video conferencing. Unless India started building to berths of the port, leased for 10 years by Iran, any transportation from India to Afghanistan was not possible without Pakistan's passage.

Along with granting access to Afghanistan the two berths of ports also makes the markets of Central Asia available for trade with India negating to join China's OBOR. India hasn't been experiencing trustable relations with China in the past few years due to which India refers to stay away from OBOR projects. Although OBOR has participants and stakeholders from across Asia and Europe, the ministry of external affairs of India believes in fulfilling India's objectives by alternate means. At the same time, OBOR constitutes CPEC which stands in opposition to India's sovereignty as it traverses through the disputed territory of Gilgit, better known as POK (Pakistan occupied Kashmir). This is one of the biggest reason India cannot endorse OBOR. A former Indian diplomat, TCA Rangachari states that India needs to look for ways to enhance the economy and locate own targetted markets and the ways to access them. According to Pakistan, its Gwadar port will be able to provide efficient connectivity to Western China and to other Central Asian republics. Along with providing alternative route for shipping, Pakistan beliefs Gwadar has the capacity to intensify Chinese trade with Western Asia surpassing the Malaccan dilemma. However, these speculations are highly debatable because firstly, the region surrounding Gwadar port suffers immense water shortage in dry seasons making it difficult to carry out economic activities in this special economic zone. It receives around 11 to 12 mm of annual rainfall which makes it difficult to harness drinking water source for Gwadar.

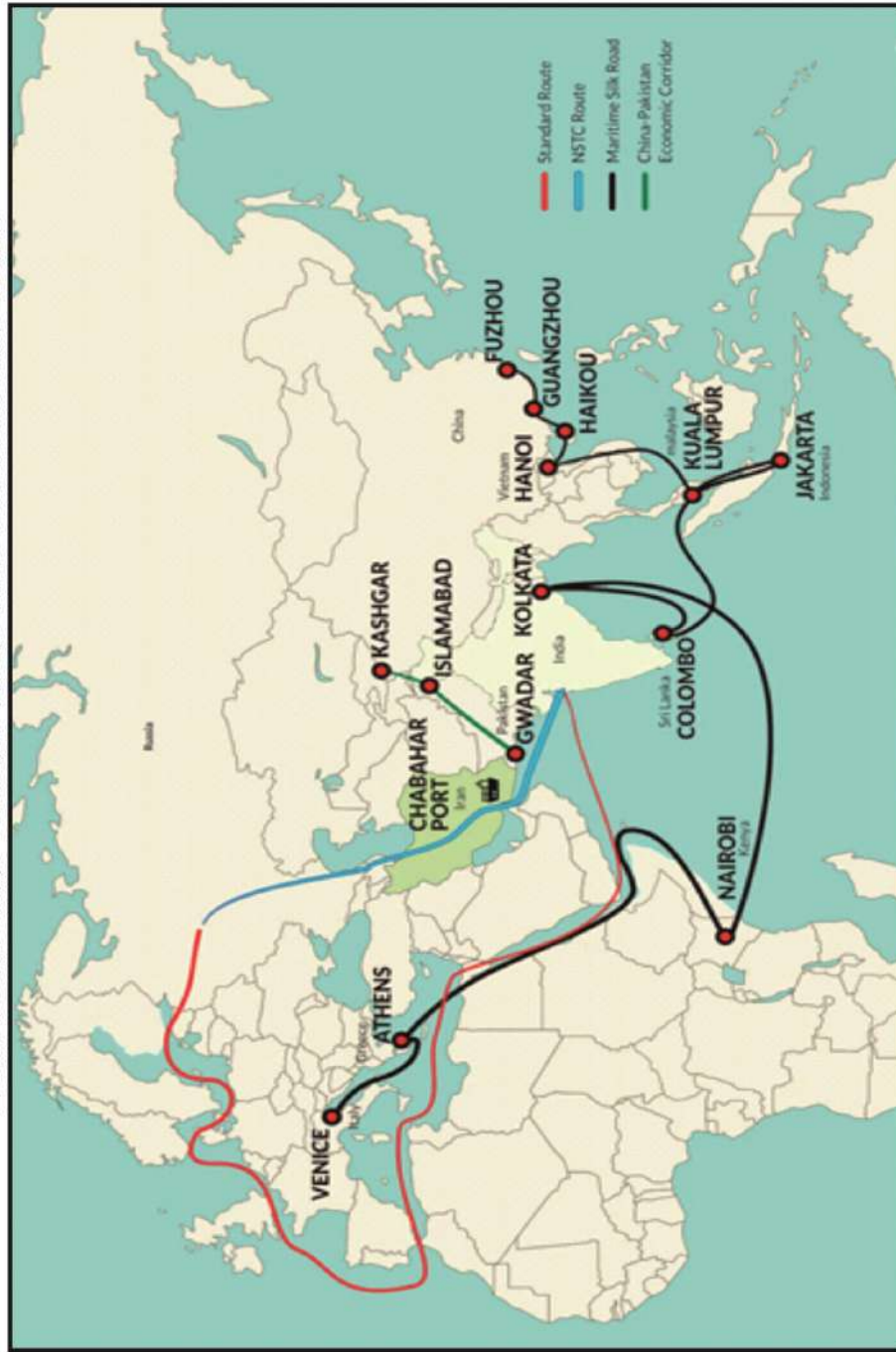
Most of the time during shortage of drinking water, it has to be transported to Gwadar by naval tankers. Secondly, this region has a long history of insurgency against the Pakistani military. There have been many Baloch movements which make the whole movement of goods in adjacent areas extremely risky to handle. Thirdly, experts argue that Gwadar is unsuitable to perform as a base for transporting oil and other commodities to and fro Xinjiang. The least expensive mode of transporting oil is by pipeline. Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan is a similar pipeline which transports a quantity of one million barrels of oil per day for 1800 km at the rate of 4 dollars per barrel. However, in the case of Gwadar to China, the distance is twice the length of Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the intermittent terrain is difficult. Thus, carrying crude oil to such a distance by a pipeline will raise the cost to more than 8 dollar per barrel. Fourthly, as Pakistan does not let passage for India into Afghanistan, India has to use the Chabahar port instead which lies 172 kilometres from the shores of Gwadar.

Chabahar manages eight to ten ships every month and Gwadar gets one ship a month. It indicates that some targetted markets for Gwadar have shifted elsewhere already. Fifthly, Khunjerab pass connects Pakistan with West China with an elevation of 4733 meter. This pass remains blocked for a period of 3 to 4 months every year during winter seasons. Hence, this pass makes the connectivity unreliable and seasonal in nature. Sixthly, Gansu, Quinhai, and Tibet are three states that borders Xinjiang province. This region is very sparsely populated and is counted among the least wealthy regions of China. Therefore, the cargo transportation between Gwadar to China would need to cover nearly 2000 additional kilometres to cross this region and reach the populated ones. And lastly, richer provinces like Sichuan and Yunan lie closer to east side of seaports of China like the Shanghai, Ningbo, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Qingdao and Guangzhou. These would be more beneficial than the Pakistani port of Gwadar. Hence, the claim saying Gwadar is too beneficial for Chinese economic corridor sounds incorrect as China has many alternate and cost effective options to work (Fig.-5.6). It further indicates towards Chinese other ambitions with the mega project of CPEC.

5.5: Comparison on the Basis of Geostrategic influence

Gwadar is a component of China's 'String of Pearls' strategy. This is a doctrine aimed at containing India on all fronts. It is a geopolitical idea that China intends to encircle India in the Indian Ocean.

Figure-5.6: Connectivity network through Chabahar port and Gwadar Port International North-South Trade Corridor versus other traditional trade routes



Source: <https://www.steel-360.com/stories/economy/chabahar-port-indias-gateway-central-asia>

It refers to a network of military and commercial infrastructure facilities built by China along the coasts of the Indian Ocean, mainland China, and Sudan. India's policy of looking east has been interpreted as a response to this ideology. China, on the other hand, has much too grandiose initiatives to be thwarted by India's Look East Policy. The CPEC and OBOR identify a number of critical points for China to develop. India is viewed as already ringed by China in this situation. Gwadar is the culmination of this String of Pearls. According to Pehrson (2006), each 'pearl' in the 'String of Pearls' is a point of connection for Chinese geopolitical nodes in the form of military presence. Hainan Island is a pearl, boasting fully renovated military facilities. Woody Island's restored airstrip, located 300 nautical miles east of Vietnam in the Paracel archipelago, is a pearl. The container transportation facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh is a pearl. Both the construction of a deep-water port in Myanmar's Sittwe and the establishment of a naval station in Pakistan's Gwadar are pearls. (Fig.-5.7). The String of Pearls is defined by port and airport development projects, diplomatic contacts, and military modernization in China. From mainland China's coast to the littorals of the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf, the pearls are plentiful.

China is developing strategic relationships and capabilities in order to establish a forward presence along the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) connecting China and the Middle East. J. Ashraf (2017) argued Alfred Thayer Mahan, a twentieth-century navy flag commander, strategist, and historian, predicted that the Indian Ocean's waters will determine the twenty-first century's destiny, declaring that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean controls Asia." This ocean is the twenty-first century's entrance to the seven seas; it is in these waters that the planet's fate will be decided.' The Indian Ocean covers approximately one-fifth of the world's total ocean surface area and is connected to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (named the western Indian Ocean), India's coastal waters (called the central Indian Ocean), and the Bay of Bengal, which lies between Myanmar and Indonesia (the eastern Indian Ocean). This region is crossed by the world's most critical commercial routes; they connect the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia to the broader Asian continent to the east and Europe to the west. Over half of the world's marine oil commerce occurs in the IOR, which is believed to have significant energy reserves.

Figure-5.7: Containment Policy of China



Source: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com>

The IOR serves as the focus point for the globe's most vital strategic chokepoints in seaborne trade, emphasizing the importance of maritime security and access to open waters to a state's power and prosperity. The Strait of Hormuz and the Malaccan strait are other examples of such chokepoints, with 32.2 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum moved daily via them. Nature of the string of pearls depends on the idea of strategic thinking one may apply. The experts believe that it's non-confrontational in nature as they find no signs of Neo-colonial or imperialist ambition of China. It may also be viewed that the "pearls" may not be explicitly made to form a string. Chinese thinkers believe that the concept of the string of pearls is purely a conspiracy theory established by the United States in order to define Chinese foreign policy in international relations. China doesn't support this theory. However, the central role behind establishing this string of pearls is for economic and diplomatic advantages. Perhaps that's why countries including closest allies of India has been a participant in the formation of the "pearls". The Gwadar Port for instance, is seen as a win-win situation for Pakistan and China both. Since, the port of Karachi handles the majority of maritime trade for Pakistan, it lies at a close proximity of 385 km from India which makes it vulnerable to blockade during times of crisis. This has already happened in history during 1971 war between India and Pakistan and similar threatening situation was seen during the Kargil war of 1999.

The Chinese motivation behind weaving the string of pearls can be associated with its hunger for energy resources, military might, and global influence. China is in quest to become the biggest economy of the world. However all this investment is heavily dependent on the survival of the regime of China, it's territorial integrity and internal stability. Regime survival is supposedly the most important concern as opting a government in China is highly dynamic. Their government is based on Meritocracy which means 'selection plus election' as described by Zhang Weiwei, director, China Institute, Fudan University. The success of Chinese government depends upon good governance, job creation, local economic growth, and protection of China's national interest. Communism began to be addressed as a flawed ideology and economic system with the fall of Soviet Union by the end of Cold War. China remains to be a communist state but it has been going through its own share of internal and international struggle to avoid the fate of Soviet Union and other Marxist-leninist-Maoist traditions.

In anyway, the rise of China has attracted global attention no matter how flawed the regime is considered to be for the benefit of the region. For territorial integrity China has made significant progress since the post-cold war era. China is ferociously pursuing Taiwan and Hong Kong. Diaoyutai/Senkaku Island is still a subject to dispute between China and Japan. China has many disputed territorial claims with India. It has successfully solved and demilitarized territorial border disputes with Central Asia. It has a strong say in the Central Asia via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the member countries being China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and also Mongolia, India, Pakistan, and Iran as observer members. China has control over some parts of Kashmir and the North East India. In recent years many military standoff has happened as serious as the Doklam standoff. Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003 gave recognition to Chinese claim over Tibet while China exchanged the diplomacy by acknowledging Indian sovereignty over Sikkim. With Taiwan China opts for a stick and carrot approach by an overarching diplomatic and military tactic while offering advantage vis-a-vis economic ties. The territorial game is for enhancing the economic development for which China needs to improvise its relations with its neighbours.

For a long time Asia has been dominated by American policies of navigation in open seas. The string of pearls policy poses questions on the American interests and opens the option for China to rule the destiny of the open sea in the region. The present times are witnessing an era of competition between the United States and China in the form of trade war and maintaining strongholds in Asian continent as well as Asian waters. Chinese call the string of pearls policy as part of their “peaceful development”. Pehrson writes, “the United States can formulate an appropriate response to the geopolitical and military aspects of China’s String of Pearls only by understanding China’s grand strategy in the context of the global security environment; China’s increasing economic, diplomatic, and military power has attracted attention in recent years and begs the question, ‘how should the world, and especially the United States respond to this emerging great power?; the Chinese government has identified three stages of planned development with a time horizon of 50 years; in the first stage, from 2000 to 2010, China hopes to double GDP; the PRC is on track to meet this goal; in the second stage, ending in 2020, total GDP is to be doubled again such that GDP on a per capita basis is expected to be approximately \$3,000; in the final stage, from 2020

to 2050, China expects to join the middle rung of advanced nations as a prosperous, democratic, and modernized socialist country; China will then claim to have succeeded in achieving a peaceful development”, argued Pehrson, C. (2006). China has also been avictim of late development hence this peaceful development was required during mid-1990s to achieve economic growth and having military bases along with working on its international identity in order to appear harmless to the immediate neighbours. Goldstein presents four points to understand China’s approach. He states that, “first was the realization by Chinese policymakers that a multipolar world was not going to emerge at the end of the Cold War; Beijing assumed that the United States would remain preeminent as the global hegemon in a unipolar world and China would be forced to operate in an environment where the United States could frustrate China’s ambitions; the second factor was acknowledgement of China’s weakness relative to the leading nations of the world; despite China’s rapidly growing economic and military capabilities, it still lagged far behind in industrial capacity, modernization and technology; this weakness was especially poignant as China witnessed American military dominance in Operation Desert Storm and Kosovo, highlighting to the PLA how inferior its military capabilities were in relation to the United States and its allies; third was nervousness about adverse international reaction to a rising China and the possibility of the United States adopting a Cold War-style containment policy toward China; and fourth, ongoing tension over Taiwan clarified for Beijing that the United States was committed to Taiwan’s security, and that a strong likelihood of US intervention existed if China used force to press its sovereignty claim over the island; in the event of war over Taiwan, China would engage the United States with an outclassed military amid worldwide condemnation”.

These elements posed broad influence on the evolution of the foreign policy and military strategy of China in the 21st Century. Chinese foreign policy aims toward portraying China as an accountable and cooperative actor on the international platform. China is heavily investing in humanitarian assistance. It has broadened its multilateral participations by actively engaging with ASEAN, SCO, APEC and other organisations. Furthermore, Chinese rise is also determined by its improvisation on bilateral relations with major economies and powerful states. This has helped China in reducing the risk of countries joining together to form a counterforce against Chinese rise.

If looked from this perspective, the present day developments don't really appear as a threat; rather it is a part of their traditional strategic plan being formulated for decades to unfold with time. Thus, the String of pearls policy is a multi-faceted strategic plan. The major concern for US and its allies is that China may outgrow them in regional influence. Chinese terms with rogue states and its growing military capabilities are virtually threatening. The string of pearls is allowing China to assert its claim in the South China Sea, the IOR and the Arabian Sea. All these developments are backed by a giant economy and also by ambitious strategic planning along with a "Sense of historical grievances". Post-cold war situations and withdrawal of Soviet military from Mongolia reduced duress on Chinese borders on the north and west fronts. Vietnam lost Russian support post-cold war and retreated from Cambodia that further relieved China. China having a love-hate relation with India went on to provide Pakistan with Infrastructural investments, and technological support for missiles and nuclear warheads. So, with pressure released on the territorial borders, China feels free to assert claims on East Asia and South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Region. While the United States provides security to Taiwan, China cannot assert its ambitions on Taiwan. Therefore, via the string of pearls strategy China may advance its power and influence in the region. This strategy also places China in the competition for regional hegemony. Chinese diplomatic and economic objectives is to target world markets for its manufactured exports, extraction of raw materials/natural resources and energy resources to meet its ever-growing demand, and ultimately to raise its International image as a superpower. String of pearls happens to serve it on all fronts. Hence, the overall idea of the nature and scope of the string of pearls is bifurcated by these two schools of thoughts, where one aspect says that China has no intention of containing India from all sides, and the other school of thought supports its highly ambitious plans to outgrow its competitors in the region.

5.6: India's Necklace of Diamonds Policy

The Indian armed forces have opted for a new strategy by laying bases at Changi, Duqm, the Assumption Islands, Sabang, and Chabahar. Experts believe that this series of military bases has the potential to counter Chinese containment policy or the "string of pearls". Just before 2018 it looked unrealistic, however the changing geopolitical realities has made this shift in India's strategic policies.

The emerging pattern of strategic bases shows the following “diamonds” in India’s necklace of diamonds strategy also known as string of flowers strategy (Fig.- 5.8). Changi Naval Base in Singapore- New Delhi and Singapore signed a bilateral agreement in 2018. This agreement allows a direct access of Indian Navy to the Changi Naval Base. India can use this base for refuelling its naval ships and get logistical support like rearming during war like situations. This base lies near the South China Sea hence it plays a pivotal role for India in accessing the South China Sea. South China Sea has seen great military assertion from China. China is extremely sensitive on the matters related to the South China Sea in order to protect its interest in the region. At the same time, India is improving its defence ties with neighbouring country Vietnam. Vietnam is a close ally with the United States. India joins Vietnam in naval exercises in the South China Sea. Considering the South China Sea as its natural zone of influence, there has been stark responses China upon these developments.

Sabang Port in Indonesia- After getting access to the strategic port of Sabang in 2018 India gained ingress to Malacca Strait. Malacca Strait is among the most crucial and famous choke points in the world. This Sabang agreement is considered to be one of India’s most significant strategic agreement because it has placed India in an advantageous position in the Indian Ocean particularly at the choke point from where a huge chunk of energy transport to China takes place. Indian warships like INS Sumitra in 2018 also visit this port from time to time. Duqm port in Oman- In 2018 India gained access to this port on Oman’s south eastern seaboard. This port is capable of protecting India’s interest in the western most flank of IOR. This port may assist India in facilitating its energy resources imports via the Persian Gulf. Moreover, Duqm port acts as an Indian facility situated right in the middle of China’s two significant “pearls” in the horn of Africa called Djibouti base and Pakistan’s Gwadar port. Oman is one of the oldest defence allies of India in West Asia and it proves its significance by opening access for India to the African market. Meanwhile this strategic location can be instrumental during any military confrontation with China in the Persian Gulf. Assumption Islands in Seychelles- The first agreement to build this base was made in 2015. However, Chinese interference in the domestic politics raised local opposition to this agreement but this agreement came into effect after Seychelles was provided with a hundred million dollars credit line for the purpose of defence purchases. Terms were strengthened when President Dany Faure came on a six days visit to India in 2018.

Figure-5.8: String of Flowers/Diamonds Policy of India



Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/special-report/story/20150406-indian-ocean-narendra-modi-significant-toeholds-817904-2015-03-27>

Both states have been developing the base which allowed military presence to India not only in the IOR but also in the continent of Africa which offers a lot of economic opportunities. China is reportedly investing a mighty sum to penetrate Africa via the ambitious maritime silk route project. So India is also estimated to be investing nearly 550 million dollars for establishing this strategic base. Chabahar port in Iran- This port offers an unprecedented success to India's aim in penetrating the Western and Central Asian countries via INSTC. This port is alleged to be capable of countering Pakistan's Gwadar port, a CPEC establishment. The diamond necklace or string of flowers strategy is also boosted by India's strategic cooperation in the IOR. The multi-modal transport Ashgabat agreement was joined by India in 2018 that assures it's access to the Western neighbourhood of China or the Central Asia. India's growing engagement with Central Asia is evident by a remarkable rise of 750 million dollars trade during 2013 to nearly 1.5 billion dollars by 2017. A hundred percent growth in a span of five years easily reflects India's ambitions in Central Asia. Since the formation of Central Asian states, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the five countries of Central Asia at once. The Ashgabat agreement also points toward India's hurry for a speedy development of connectivity networks to Russia, the Central Asia, and further to Europe.

India's strategic cooperation with East and South East Asia includes its growing relations particularly with Mongolia, Japan and Vietnam. Mongolia was previously a buffer state sandwiched between the USSR and China till 1991 and now a buffer state between Russia and China. Mongolia as a state is reportedly trying to improve relationship with international actors, popularly called as "Third Neighbour Foreign Policy". PM Modi was first Indian PM to visit Mongolia ever. China for a long time has treated Mongolia as its backyard. So, economic and strategic ties between Mongolia and India opens new aspects of diplomacy in the neighbourhood. One billion dollars of credit line was announced by PM Modi. Using this credit line Mongolia has kick-started working on its first oil refinery. An oil refinery of its own can end of at least reduce its dependency on Russia and China for purchasing fuel. Shushma Swaraj visited Mongolia in 2018 which was a visit by any Indian External affairs minister after a gap of 42 years. India and Mongolia are also working on an air corridor that may end Mongolian dependence on its powerful neighbours. Instances of Chinese land blockade have been reported which affects Mongolia in economic and strategic terms.

This corridor has the potential to leverage Mongolia in negotiating with China. Therefore, this strategic cooperation on one hand has made the two countries come close for the first time in history and on the hand it can also be counted as an emerging “diamond” for India. Japan is a powerful neighbour of China. At the same time Japan has been a close ally with USA since cold war. Chinese military and naval movements in the South China Sea have been a matter of grave concern for Japan. India is a growing partner of Japan. The two countries have advanced their ties as “Special Strategic and Global Partnership”. A long due deal of “Civil Nuclear Agreement” was signed between the two countries in 2016. This is considered as a huge achievement of Indian government because India is not a signatory of Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty yet Japan has signed this CNC with India. Asia-Africa Growth Corridor is another project developed by the cooperation of India and Japan which can counter the Chinese OBOR project in future. Chinese media termed AAGC as a “division plan” which indicates China’s opposition to AAGC altogether. Such joint strategic moves are capable of influencing “the ever-evolving grand chessboard of Asia and Africa”. Japan in this way can be considered as India’s “diamond”. After a span of 15 years any Indian leadership visited Vietnam. The visit of Prime Minister Modi to Vietnam added a boost to the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” between the two countries. Vietnam is known for its deterrence against Chinese movements in the South China Sea.

The joint naval exercises of 2018 in Vietnamese waters was reported as “a futile attempt to flex muscle” by China’s state run media. The “Brahmos Missile Deal” between the two countries has also reached its advance stage. India also assists Vietnam coast guards by providing high speed boats for patrolling. India has opted for intensifying its activity in South China Sea by establishing its “satellite monitoring station” in Vietnam. The relation between the two countries can establish a power balance in South East Asia. Hence, Vietnam also acts as a “diamond” for India’s diamond necklace strategy. India’s shift to a multi-alignment policy has resulted in building a resilient system of strategic networks. India’s friendship with Chinese periphery can be helpful in deterring any containment or encirclement by China. Along with strategic advantages such ties also assist in improving a much needed economic development of India through trade and commerce.

5.7: International Attention, the US pressure, and Contrasting Interests

In past few decades Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and UAE, the littoral countries of Persian Gulf have seen a number of minor and major conflicts, mostly involving the United States as an actor. It can be said that in the Persian Gulf, power balance relationships can be categorised, namely, first dyad is America-Iran, the second dyad is America-Saudi Arabia, the third dyad is America-Israel, and the fourth dyad represents America's balance of power to control the region's hydrocarbon resources in order to keep China from accessing them. (Koushki, M., and Moslehi, S. 2019). Economic championship happens to be an issue of soft security with respect to the international order. Considering geo-economics in foreign policy is of utmost importance for any country striving for world power. For United States too should opt for an integration of geo-economics with foreign policy. At present day, China and Russia, but China in particular using its geo-economics might against the United States to sabotage its power and influence globally. Persian Gulf holds immense significance for the United States. The quest for having dominance over the gulf's resources rich in hydrocarbon and tactically keeping the Chinese at bay is evident.

“Looking in the future, America may be self-sufficient and a net exporter of oil by 2030 due to energy efficiency and increased oil production because of improved drilling techniques; although America might not depend on Arab oil anymore in the long term, and it is wise to pursue that, it is still linked with a globalized world economy; the flow of Arab oil dictates the oil price and that is why free and secure oil export of the Persian Gulf continues to be important; altogether, defending the Persian Gulf including the Strait of Hormuz is a necessary interest of the United States” King, C. (2013). The strategic location of the Persian Gulf and its geological structure on top has kept the gulf on forefront of global energy industry. During 1908 vast oil reserves were found in Mesjid-e-Suleiman in South West of Iran. In the following years Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later renamed as British Petroleum took charge of pumping and commercialising Iran's crude oil. The development of oil facilities in Iran took a greater speed during the start of WW I for developing machinery and war automobiles. Soon after, oil started to be discovered in other gulf countries like Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The discoveries were so vast that by WW-II the whole region began to be seen as potent to fulfil world energy requirements. By the end of WW II, the gulf oil producers emerged as commanding actors in the global oil supplies.

After the devastation made by the two world wars, accelerated oil exploration and extraction became extremely necessary for West European countries and Japan to recover. "With approximately 62 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, the Persian Gulf region is the world's leading oil producer and exporter; the world's largest onshore oil field, Ghawar, and the world's largest offshore oil field, Safaniya, are both in Saudi territory; in addition to these substantial proven reserves, the Persian Gulf region enjoys several advantages; first, the cost of production is one of the lowest in the world: less than \$1.50 per barrel, compared to the global average of about \$5 per barrel second, Persian Gulf oil producers consume only a small portion of their production" Bahgat, G. (2007). Till now other major producers of crude oil like the United States and Russia consume major portion of their oil extraction.

Due to this the Persian Gulf still has major influence in in global crude oil market. As the Persian Gulf has uninterrupted access to open sea, the supply chain infrastructure is very well established that has linkages with different crude oil fields, export terminals, and also with uploading platforms facilities across the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia produces the sparest crude oil in the whole world. This capacity is considered as an asset for super powers like the US and UK. United Kingdom is most dependent on this region for its oil supplies so much so that even a small interaction can create a major deficiency. Therefore the UK has managed to build instant access to the Persian Gulf via Suez Canal. Along with oil resources the Persian Gulf also has proven deposits of natural gas which is estimated to be about 40 percent of global deposits. The production of this natural gas is on constant rise and expected to grow triple in the upcoming decades. Other interest of the United States also incorporates counter-terrorism, securing Israel, countering Iran, and having a stable GCC, also discussed in historical perspective chapter two of this thesis. "All Persian Gulf countries except Iran and Iraq are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); the United States is successfully cooperating with the GCC members built on mutual respect and shared interests; the GCC countries have proven to be reliable allies in the region in terms of energy security and balancing Iran; the GCC countries are ruled by Sunni leaders and worry about the growing assertiveness and hostility of Shiite ruled Iran; that's why Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman allow US bases at their national territory and Bahrain even houses the headquarter of the US fifth fleet, a crucial element of regional security in the Persian Gulf; continued support to the allies in the region is in

the US interest, because of the demand in working relationships with Persian Gulf countries that enable a US military presence in the region; moreover functioning governments in the Persian Gulf are a stronghold against the breed of terrorism and America cannot allow more safe havens for terrorists in the region, as Yemen is evolving to become one” King, C. (2013). The stable GCC ensured a stable interest derivation for the states in Persian Gulf. This region controls the geo-economics of oil in across the globe therefore instability of GCC accounts for greater risk for the whole world in oil and natural gas supplies. However, hosting half of global oil deposits and third of natural gas reserves makes the stability factor more complex. That’s the probability of why the states for half the century, depict their national security interests in maintaining a free flow of crude oil and smooth supply lines with stable prices. “The Carter Doctrine was about preventing USSR from accessing the Persian Gulf hydrocarbon resources; in other words, America used countering USSR as a justification for its dominance over the region; although America continues to imply that there is a threat to the region, currently, a foreign force like the USSR which could be identified as a threat does not exist anymore; the point is that during the time period under study (2000-2017).

The White House National Security Strategies have repeatedly emphasized on the security of free flow of energy from the region (Persian Gulf) to the world (The National Security Strategy, 2015: 26). Presumably America is trying to introduce itself as the provider of security against any probable threats; at the same time, American officials have claimed that will stop Iran from closing Hormuz Strait; in fact, preventing America’s rivals from accessing region’s hydrocarbon resources is Washington’s real motivation for its military presence” Koushki, M., and Moslehi, S. (2019). Crude oil is another avenue for which the United States has maintained long presence in the Persian Gulf. The 21st Century is fuelled by crude oil and till date no other technology has been innovated that can prove to be an alternate for oil as well as accessible to 7.8 billion people. It is indispensable for manufacturing sector that includes clothing, electrical and electronic items, medical equipment, plastic manufacturing, aviation, appliances and much more. Followed by the European Union, China is the largest importer of oil. As per BP statistical review of world energy, 2015, United States has big reserves of oil and it stood as the biggest producer of oil in 2014.

By the time, the dependency on Persian Gulf for oil subsided for the United States as the Shale oil and gas production proved to be more promising and cleaner, sustainable and reliant energy source for America. This oil power enabled USA to levy sanctions on other big oil producers as it no longer affected USA directly. Due to the withdrawal of imports from America the surge in demand of Persian Gulf oil came from countries like the EU, China, India, and Japan. Even though American dependency of the Gulf oil had a declining trend it never withdrew immediately. Althunayyan (2014) said that “The US shifting production in energy just gives this country the opportunity to tighten its defence budget and change its economic relations”. Oil is only needed to fulfil 40 percent of American energy demands. Imports provide just half of the energy demand. America only takes 15 percent of its crude oil from the Gulf and 80 percent is directed to its allies. So, even though America doesn’t need much its military presence remains intact because it values the hydrocarbon of the Persian Gulf and wants to keep an eye on the export and import of oil in the region. In the contemporary the military presence of USA contains Chinese advancements in the Gulf. The CPEC and OBOR as a whole is something that America is analysing for a long time. The establishment of Chabahar port in Iran, however, has a different nature.

Modi led Indian government showing greater inclination to the US during the trump administration. India needed Chabahar for expanding trade with Afghanistan, to counter Pakistan’s Gwadar port, and also to safeguard its own trade security in the Persian Gulf. Even though America has spoiler relations with Iran, it loosened some sanctions for India to import Iranian oil. A very important reason being most of India’s oil refineries are designed to use Iranian crude oil as Indo-Persian relations are from time immemorial. The cutting off trade ties from Iran on oil is not possible from economic point of view for India. Chabahar port is also seen as a point of strategic convergence of US and India. Strategically, it lies at the mouth of Strait of Hormuz at such a position that even if the Strait of Hormuz is blocked, Chabahar’s activities shall remain unaffected. As India operationalized Shahid Beshti terminal in 2018 December it promised strategic links to the energy rich lands of Central Asia for both India and Iran. “Both India and the US are also wary of an assertive China that has been increasing its strategic footprints in the Indian Ocean; by emphasising the importance of the development of the Chabahar Port, both Washington and New Delhi will be able to both pursue their collective interest of safeguarding the stability of Afghanistan, and

check China's increasing assertion and expansionist interests in the region; at a time when Beijing seeks to boost its strategic presence in Iran and Afghanistan, the US and India must collaborate to protect a rules-based international order that guarantees peace, stability, and development" (Gill, 2020). Although India has obtained a waiver on Chabahar port from America, it has not really carried out overwhelming progress on the port. The Government of India, however, seems optimistic about the development of this port project. Due to the US sanctions, many companies have been reluctant to make optimum investments in the infrastructural development of Chabahar Port therefore it is important that the two countries should agree on some middle path for the development of Chabahar in order to safeguard the economic interests of India and Iran. India as its close ally and by providing it proper convenience on the matters of Chabahar port development, America will also be able to secure its strategic interests in the region without totally compromising its stance on its bilateral relations with Iran. The relaxations given by the United States can also encourage Indian companies to invest in this area. Given the shared history, such developments look challenging, however, its long-term benefits will be enjoyed by all the stakeholders.

A different approach from India was noted in a recent interview with the Tehran Times, Gaddam Dharmendra, India's ambassador to Tehran said that the United State cannot direct India on what it has to do with the development of Chabahar Port. He further added that New Delhi is purchasing heavy pieces of equipment for the development of the facility from countries like Italy, Finland, Germany and China. The Hindustan Times quotes, "The envoy referred to pressures and said India is the only country which continues to have a rupee-rial trade arrangement where we are financing bilateral trade between our countries. The fact is that we are working in Chabahar, we are buying equipment for Chabahar, preparing for Chabahar, and we have told the Americans they cannot tell us what to do on Chabahar". Chabahar port development is being done under a tripartite agreement between India Iran and Afghanistan. It also has the sanctions waiver from America. The new Joe Biden administration has indicated to cooperate in the region hence the chances of a pressure-less or minimum-pressure can be hoped for the progress of Chabahar port development. Zakaria (2008) stated that "China's rise is ubiquitous but India is a story for the future". India and China are entirely different entities for America as one of them are supposed to be friend and another one as a rival.

For trade and politics in South Asia India is important to the United States. On global terms India it is a huge economy and it has complex ties with American economy too. India is allegedly the eleventh largest trade partner with America. The relations between the two are ever evolving and most importantly growing in a positive trend. This type is also significant for the United States to assert its dominance over the geoeconomics of Persian Gulf and its hydrocarbon resources. However, India is not solely dedicated to the United States as it has its own engagement with the BRICS countries. This complicates the situation. Both of them appear to be united over matters of the Middle-east to create a fair and just world order that should predominantly be run by democracy and on the other hand India has to play bigger roles with the BRICS. Experts believe that India will not be allowed by the United States to achieve similar levels of economic strengths as itself but it needs India to be on its side on the matters of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean region. India also needs America for it's the strategic and economic development internationally.

India has a high requirement of energy resources. To meet its demand it is heavily dependent on West Asian countries. As the United States commits for maintenance of security and freedom of navigation on the high seas, it becomes important for India as it has to do with supply chains and transportation networks in the high seas of the Persian Gulf. It is a General notion that America critically organises its allies or like-minded countries for addressing complex issues, security challenges, and instability in the West Asia. As United States remains unchallenged in the Global system India finds this reality in favour of its national interest advancements. So these two countries have vital interests tied together in ensuring smooth trade of energy from the Persian Gulf. India has worked a lot in the field of humanitarian assistance in Central Asia and also has added stake in in the stability of Middle Eastern countries, because unlike the United States it is more dependent on the oils from the Persian Gulf. This goodwill of India with the Persian Gulf countries indirectly assists United States in the region. India has a growing military profile and its advanced naval power is evident in the maritime domain. India's naval doctrine of 2004 defines the legitimate areas of Indian interest from the Gulf to the Strait of Malacca. There is no clash between the doctrines of India and America as such. India has been noticed to maintain a balance of energy relations with the Gulf countries as the Trump administration exerted a maximum pressure policy on Iran.

It came as an economic setback to India but India has shown commitments to diversify its energy supplies while not losing its balance with anti-American countries like Iran. China is also a major reason for American military presence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. With its high energy demand and great economic might China is capable of investing anywhere and extracting its interests from any country possible. However, this cannot be entirely true as post-cold war notions persist; many countries like-minded as the US find Chinese interventions to be imperialist in nature. As Zakaria (2008) said that “Rise of the rest is the consequence of American ideas and actions about free market”. Before entering the trade war the US and China shared a win-win game in trade and commerce. “China’s rise could pose a threat to the world system through transfer of power and this creates a gigantic problem for US interests; US policy makers are working hard to maintain America’s superiority and the current world system; it is quite a challenging task because the Chinese economy is deeply integrated with the global economy; ironically this includes America itself; this implicitly indicates that containment policy which was successfully used against USSR, now is unlikely to work successfully against China; containment policy against China may fail; in other words, any US attempt to isolate China from its neighbours and the world in order to quell its economic growth will fail; as a result, for America, striking a balance is more important than containment policy” (Tellis, 2013).

5.8: The New Great Game of 21st Century

In the 19th Century, two giant and well-flourished empires of Britain and Tsarist Russia were in competition for power over Central Asia. Russia bit by bit was procuring territory around itself and would have reached India in no time. However, as India was the greatest asset to British Empire it fought to contain this expansionism. As the Central Asia acted as a buffer zone between the two empires, they constantly worked to limit each other’s influence in the region. The routes to Central Asia, particularly between the Caspian and Kabul were full of spies, traders, smugglers, officers, wheelers-dealers and diplomats. The whole plot altogether was categorised under the Great Game. The term was coined by a secret agent of East India Company, Arthur Conolly and popularised by Rudyard Kipling. With the passage of time, old empires died and new democracies were born. Central Asia, however, remained a theatre of war games in the 21st century. Geopolitical thinkers called it the New Great Game.

The present day leading players are the present day leading powers China, Russia, and United States. Five “Stan’s” of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan moderate the great game as they are born from the ashes of USSR. Earlier these states along with Azerbaijan constituted the USSR. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran are at the core of this game. They are influenced, pressurised, and manipulated by the superpowers attempting to insistently drag them to their side. This is because these lands happen to be the main juncture, the centre of gravity, and the centroid of their enormous interest at risk in Central Asia. The most important quest is to domination over the energy resources. The fields pump thousands of barrels of excellent quality crude oil each day yielding billions of litres of “blue gold” per year. The objective of the Great Game is to master the lands that are crossed by vast pipelines, moderating multilateral agreements, and ever growing infrastructure of trade and communication networks. And, if not energy resources, the lands are the centre of global geopolitics with the sharp rise of China, its economic and military expansion in the region. Therefore, this Russian backyard has great potential to grab the central role in International politics. However, this region is also defined by terrorism, ethnic conflict, Islamist revolutions, and constant tussle between governments. So containing this land is as difficult as restraining Al-Qaeda and countering its activities. Post 9/11 the New Great Game took a new turn and with the progress of the decade the diplomacy by United States, Russia and China has intensified only. The whole idea of establishing alternative connectivity networks, building strategic nodal points, securing trade and supply lines indicate towards the new insecurities. Although the greater be the establishment of connectivity the greater complexity and vulnerability would be seen in the twenty first century, however such infrastructural developments are inevitable as well.

5.9: Resume

The Chabahar and Gwadar ports are product of long term ambitions of two Asian giants– India and China. India-China also have numerous disputes of their own which is apparently contributing to unstable situations in South Asia and South East Asia. As the Central Asian Region still presents itself as geographical pivot, such developments of ports and maritime facilities go beyond the identity of being nodal points for export and import to being geostrategic infrastructures altogether. Both the ports exhibit fair capacity and tremendous possibility in the region.

The potential for exchange of resources across South-Central Asia is ever growing amidst the innate political instability in this region. However, the leadership perception of host countries alter and challenge the hardcore geostrategic understanding because they don't perceive the two ports as threats to one another. The ports are latched in the core of geopolitical conspiracy theories like the String of Pearls and the Necklace of Diamonds validating a degree of competition in the region also intensifying international politics in Persian Gulf. Role of the United States has been historically waxing and waning in the region, however, the 21st century has observed targeted focus of the US on the Gulf countries and the Central Asia. Finally, all the aspects converge towards the New Great Game of the 21st century where Central Asia becomes a playground for powerful countries and these two ports also have a role to play therein.

Chapter-6

Conclusion

The 21st century is characterized by a rapid infrastructural developments, resource exploitation, and politics over continental and maritime networks that translates the geopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-economic situation of different countries. Mega infrastructure projects like the BRI and the INSTC are indeed needed for development but at the same time geopolitical contestations, and strategic and economic rivalry between countries can alter the future of the world. Chabahar Port and Gwadar Port important nodal points of such giant projects. They are situated at close proximity at Iran and Pakistan, and funded by close rivals, India and China respectively. Speculations over their comparative efficiency, strategic capabilities, and geopolitical significance have been done since the beginning of these port projects. This chapter tends to cut through the comparative analysis and draw conclusions with a deductive approach on the basis of the discussions made in previous chapters of this thesis.

Chabahar port includes Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti terminals at the fishing village of Chabahar in Sistan-Balochistan province. Both these terminals consist of five berths. India has almost finished the construction of two terminals at the Shahid Beheshti complex of Chabahar. The first phase was inaugurated in December 2017. Whereas, Gwadar port has become fully operational since 31st March 2021. The geographical conditions associated with Pakistan's Gwadar port and Iran Chabahar port has gained tremendous geopolitical significance in Asia. Gwadar port is a part of the CPEC project of China having great economic investment behind it while Chabahar port in Iran is backed by India which is keen to establish a permanent route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Chabahar port is very important for India because Pakistan denied passage to India from its territory to reach Afghanistan. India has been very much interested in Afghanistan and Central Asia for trade and commerce. The Central Asia is full of resources but is unstable in nature. India has managed to build a humanitarian image in the Central Asia hence to continue with the diplomacy a safe access is very important and Chabahar Port is a promising project in that direction. To maintain a strong position in the present-day geopolitics of South Asia India needs to have excess over important choke points and maritime highways. Chabahar port is called as golden gate because of its close distance from Afghanistan and Central Asian landlocked countries.

If we look particularly at the geographical situation Chabahar port, Chabahar lies in a deserted Central plateau, making it difficult to access for different countries and this is both advantages and disadvantages for Iran. Chabahar port when completed would be a deep water port that would enable Iran to decrease its dependency for docks on countries like UAE. Iran would gain greater independence and a strategic stand in the Persian Gulf. The greatest advantage is that being on the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz Iran would be able to assert greater degree of control on the crucial choke point. India on the other hand, finds it important to maintain presence in the Persian Gulf in order to look after its oil imports, and safeguard the passage to INSTC and Afghanistan via Chabahar. Whereas, Gwadar port links Pakistan's southern deep water port straight to Kashgar, Xinjiang via CPEC. Being a warm water port it stays functional all year round unlike other Russian or Eurasian deep sea ports. In addition, Gwadar is an isthmus, a funnel like geography, predicted to function as an economic funnel in the region just like the Suez Canal which notches out of Suez Isthmus.

In terms of regional connectivity, Chabahar port facilitates access to the International North-South Corridor and Central Asia, and further to Europe via Russia transcontinental railways. It separates Iran from other Iranian ports and keeps its accessibility intact in the international waters even during chances of blockades. Central Asia can be considered as the Heartland of the present-day world where other international powers are interested. The Strait of Hormuz is the most critical point that enhances Chabahar's significance as volumes of crude oil, petrochemical products, and other shipments pass without having an alternate route. Its instrumental role in Iran's Look East Policy may help it counter U.S pressure by befriending countries like India and most importantly a true regional superpower, China. Xinjiang has 56% of Chinese land area and 23 percent of China's population, it is mineral rich but way behind in terms of development than other Chinese cities, hence China is heavily investing here in order to extract the natural resources, distribute it to other economic centres of the country and also to maintain constant presence in the west. While Gwadar port connects Pakistan through CPEC, and further to BRI. Being a part of the BRI it has far and wide networking. Through CPEC it lights up China's western and least functional region. It equips China to look and act west with greater efficiency securing its economic and strategic interests by repopulating Xinjiang province by creating employment and reinforcing its military presence.

This militarization can be associated with the recent standoff in the Galwan valley, particularly in Chushul Valley which is one of five meeting points of Indian and Chinese military personnel. At 13000 feet, Chushul Valley has a crucial airstrip that also proved its significance during the 1962 Sino-Indian war. As the LAC remains undefined, China keeps on expanding its control over the sovereign territory of India using its military might. India's opposition to CPEC for using the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan PoK region has intensified geopolitical risks in the region. Now that China can receive a constant supply of oil, logistics, and reinforcements in the region using Gwadar port, new interferences by China can again stir old Indo-Pak rivalry over PoK/IoK. Overcoming the Malaccan Dilemma would only enable China focus its attention to the west.

The geopolitical realities of both the Chabahar and Gwadar Port projects converge at oil politics. For India, Chabahar port will serve as a foothold in the Persian Gulf from where it can ensure the constant flow of crude oil to India or at least to have some degree of surveillance over the Persian Gulf. While Gwadar port, solves the Malaccan Dilemma for China. So China has now enabled itself to receive a constant supply of crude oil from the Arab Nations via the CPEC route even when the Eastern supply side is cut off during war crisis. China has most of its development in the Eastern part of the country and the western areas were far off and lacking in contemporary infrastructural development. By Chabahar India wants to extend its influence in Central Asia as well as to stay connected with Moscow and Europe by accessing the INSTC. INSTC is a multi-modal transport corridor that can be considered as potent as the CPEC. But China, being an economic superpower, has much more to harness from the region. Crude oil from Arabs, interventions in Indo-Pak disputed territory, growing presence in insurgency-prone Baluchistan and its resources, developing relations with Russia to combat U.S pressure, and targeting new markets via land routes are some major objectives for Xi Jinping.

The two ports stand incomparable in terms of capacity. Chabahar port has an annual cargo tonnage of 2.1 million tons in 2015 that was to reach 8.5 million tons by 2016 and finally to 86 million tons on completion while Gwadar port is capable of handling 300 to 400 million tons of cargo annually. The capacity difference is unmatched. The most striking fact is Gwadar port equals to half of India's overall cargo tonnage annually. In 2019, India managed 672.61 million tons of cargo in 2019.

As Gwadar is a natural deep sea port it requires lesser expenditure on maintenance than Chabahar port. The total cost of Gwadar port is nearly \$1.02 billion whereas overall Chabahar project including Chabahar-Zahedan Rail link costs \$1.6 billion to India. China through the Maritime Silk Route, aims to intensify its investments in Arabian Sea, Europe as well as in Africa, hence such capacity of Gwadar has been designed to target these regions. However, African coast is geographically way closer to India than China. India, on other hand, aims access to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and INSTC, therefore the purpose and ambitions of the two ports also remain incomparable.

Iranian adversaries from U.S economic sanctions have limited solutions. Looking to the East is one of them. Having a strong relationship with oil-importing U.S allies like Japan may help Iran survive by proper channels of international diplomacy. Looking to the East also incorporates strengthening terms with India, Russia, China, and Central Asia. Chabahar port project being the only deep-sea port on the Makran coast provides maritime and continental transit to these Asian countries. It is the only port in Iran having direct access to the Indian Ocean. During the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 other Iranian ports were vulnerable and trade was affected to a great extent. Now, even if western ports are restricted and the Strait of Hormuz choked, Chabahar port shall be functional. Gwadar, in a similar manner, acts as artillery of Pakistan's economy. Both the ports are capable of generating employment and tourism hub as well. Since, Gwadar is a bigger project the employment generation, trade and commerce, the hospitality industry will have wider growth than Chabahar but with all such privileges, Gwadar and CPEC pose a great threat to Pakistan. Experts predict a major debt crisis in Pakistan. Pakistan owes \$10 billion debt for building Gwadar port including the sub-projects. China is often accused of using "predatory economics" and "financial imperialism" on weaker countries to obtain its interest.

Funding is becoming an important disturbance of the India-Iran pact over Chabahar. Recent reports have revealed that Iran may continue to construct Chabahar-Zahedan Rail Link by itself, as the supply of funds from India deteriorates due to India's economic slowdown since 2018. Iran says its doors are open for India to invest but the bilateral relations are under the shadow. As Iran begins to observe India's inclination towards Washington it can open itself to other major investors in the region like China.

Notably, on the inauguration day of Shahid Beshti Port in December 2017, Iran invited Late Sushma Swaraj, India's minister of external affairs along with dignitaries from 17 countries including Pakistan's minister of Maritime Affairs where President Rouhani talked about "more engagement and unity" and "positive competition" in the region. Iran has never compared Chabahar Port and Gwadar Port as rivals rather they prefer to call it "sister ports". Hence, India's dream of containing China and having a military presence stands defeated. Gwadar surely becomes a military base of China but it can't be same with Chabahar. Although India has Farkhor Air base nearby in Tajikistan and Chabahar would provide surface access to the air base. China is an economic giant and it is capable of supplying great funding to Iran but as it is trying to maintain a balance between the Arabs and Iranians in the region, it seems like China may choose to stay out of Chabahar for a while because it already has Gwadar under its control. Comparison on the basis of financial supply shows that China is a clear giant in this aspect owing to its huge economy and aggressive infrastructural diplomacy. Whereas, India slashed its budget for external affairs in 2020 amidst the coronavirus pandemic but recent reports suggest that India has doubled its work in 2021.

China began its overseas investments to bolster its own economic power in a range of sectors and also benefit from increasing its influence abroad. During the decade of 2000s, China started its FDIs in North American and European countries including Mexico driven by its own energy demand. After which China started taking interest in innovative techniques for oil extraction and natural gas extraction which China wanted to apply to harness its own untapped reserves of shale gas but with time Chinese investment in this sector tapered off by the middle of the 2nd decade. China's investment then turned towards maintaining overseas relationships on trade and commerce with Asia and Oceania. Chinese firms began investing in finance, technology, tourism, real estate, automobile, and hospitality sector in Japan and South Korea. Finding big markets for its manufacturing sector was imperative for Chinese economic development. Hence, the intensive investments in Eurasia and Africa, and also in the Americas aimed to secure markets on a priority basis. In present times Chinese products are available ubiquitously from Asia to America with a range of items to choose from. Meanwhile, Chinese demand for energy resources grew sharply due to which a major share of Chinese investment goes to the oil rich Central Asia and Western Asian countries.

A fair share was also dedicated to the security sector in which China joined hands with big and small Asian powers to secure bases in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. China also became wary of its LAC areas and hence the BRI projected the significance of regional connectivity for China to stabilize its position as a regional power. India and China are situated in world's least integrated region. Division, social and economic differences, and geostrategic divergences. This is what the Indian subcontinent remained deeply divided with very low levels of regional integration and connectivity networks. It can also be observed that no other superpower is as disconnected from its immediate neighbours as India is. Since the Indian government realized this disconnect as a concern for India's economic and security interests' significant measures have been taken to bridge the gap. Hence both countries are trying to establish regional connectivity that would affect the economic and political future of this Eastern hemisphere. The given situation of conflicts and disputes in the region between power centres like the Indo Pak rivalry, the Sino Indian disputes, the resource war in Africa, and the conflicts in Central Asia it cannot be generalized that regional connectivity can ensure peace and cooperation across the region.

However, there is a greater probability of improvement in bilateral and multilateral ties between countries on trade and security-related matters, as there is immense scope of development of untapped resources scattered in the region, by the developing proper networks of connectivity. Hence, there are greater chances that the growing regional connectivity through Chabahar and Gwadar port projects establish peace and cooperation across the region. BRI is one of the biggest projects in the world which is capable of altering the political realities of international affairs in Eurasia. China is aggressively securing strategic and military bases across the world. The most important factor is that there are two superpowers in front of each other, China and India. Since the India-Pakistan rivalry is as historic as their existence any strategic development in Pakistan can result in a greater confrontation. It has been time and again speculated that the third world war may takes place over the rivalry between these two nations. Since Gwadar port serves CPEC, which extends up to the disputed zone of Kashmir, it is hampering Indian interests and its territorial sovereignty. On the other hand, Gwadar port allows China and Pakistan to access the Arabian Sea which can act as a strategic threat to India.

In addition in the post-cold war era and the era of a trade war between the U.S. and China, such developments carry geopolitical and strategic value. Therefore, it is positive that Gwadar port has intensified Chinese geostrategy in the Arabian Sea. While the Chabahar project is capable of helping India develop the INSTC and access Central Asia, yet it wouldn't be accurate to state that this project can help India in countering containment by China through trade and naval presence because the Chabahar port project is fairly smaller and it is open for investments from other countries, which doesn't make India its sole authority. It is not free from Iran's multiple geopolitical modalities as well. But this project may become tremendously significant by constant growth and development in the future as Central Asia is Heartland, or in other words, the new playground for superpowers in the 21st century.

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