

## **PAKISTAN AND IRAN'S GEOSTRATEGIC RIVALRY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Pakistan is determined to control Afghanistan due to its expanding interests to Central Asia as Pakistan wants to receive full advantage of this area resources for its developing market. But lacking a common boundary with Central Asian states, Pakistan wants secured entrance to central Asian region via Afghanistan, which shares a long border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan a three key nations of that region. After CPEC Pakistan wants to form itself not only as a leading route for their export of gas and oil but also as a transit route for worldwide trade with Central Asia, This regional ambition has met the challenge of other regional contenders. This regional drive has met the task of other regional candidates. Iran is a Pakistan's rival and a chief hindrance to Pakistani drives to seek the same goals in Central Asian region. Iran is in a better position in its competition with Pakistan because Iran has a long common boundary with the central Asian region via Turkmenistan and is also enjoying a shared culture and history with nations of central Asia. One more advantage of Iran over Pakistan is that it has safer, shorter and more economically practical transit routes to the region of Central Asia. Iran also has more advance gas and oil industry and its accessible export services with Persian Gulf as an access point in international waters that make it attractive rival of Pakistan for central Asian region. But all advantages are workable in the absence of international sanctions on Iran.

**KEYWORDS;** Chahbahar, CPEC, Central Asia, Iran, Pakistan, Rivalry

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rivalry between Pakistan and Iran in Central Asia can be said is focusing the exports of regional immense energy resources as they are developing two different land routes of Chahbahar and CPEC, and their geo-strategic position that is important for America, India and most importantly China. After it the impending role of these nations in the war in Afghanistan. Iran role in important that has been evolving Tehran's regional goals that Central Asia can play, and Afghanistan after the fall of Taliban, geo-strategic state of affairs favor its agenda. Whereas Pakistan has woken up to the role in evolving Islamabad's regional goals that Central Asia can play, and the post-USA withdrawal from Afghanistan and Indian withdrawal from Chahbahar project and Chinese entry in very project and geo-strategic state of affairs favor its agenda. India has grieved a thoughtful setback to the aspirations of India in geographical context since the announcement of Iranian

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government to handover Chahbahar to china and declaration of America to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan and negotiations with Taliban with the help of Pakistan in Afghanistan. Regardless of its fresh re-entry Pakistan give the impression to be agreed to mark substantial advantages at Indian's cost in Afghanistan and beyond. Currently, five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the focus of the world's attention. This is because of the natural resources and location of these countries. In the International Politics there are three key factors that are emerged to make the central Asian region very important. One of them is very important and it must be consider at priority list and it is geographical location of Pakistan and Iran. The geographical locations of Pakistan and Iran has made them important being routes to landlocked regions bordering them. The second factor is the closeness of Pakistan and Iran to China, Russia and India and America as foreign power with huge interests in this region. Thirdly Pakistan and Iran are bordering with Afghanistan being center of regional conflicts and Central Asia. Looking at the Central Asian states these states are rich in energy wealth that can be explained as resources of gas and oil. In the initiating and enhancing of rivalry between Pakistan and Iran the role of these three factors is important. Examining these dimensions and factors this research project has become important as it has shed light on the relations between Pakistan and Iran with special reference to central Asian and interests based rivalry. The geostrategic dimension is leading along with the geo-economics and geopolitical dimension with exceptional mention of India and Central Asian region and Afghanistan. According to this study, these dimensions, are interlocked as they has effects on each other.

Hypothesis; central Asian region is rich of natural resources and being a landlocked region needs access to international market, through Iran and Pakistan as both had unique geographical location and are in attempt to cash it for their very interests and their struggle to overcome the hurdles lying in achieving the said goal has created sense of rivalry in their bilateral relations.

(Kavalski, 2010), in his book *The New Central Asia: The Regional Impact of International Actors*, traces the incorporation of Central Asia into the new arena of foreign relations after fall of Soviet Union. The work of different scholars are supported in this set by the uncovering of the international agency in the 'new' Central Asia, which not only reveals previously untaken views of the complexity of regional affairs, but also reveals insights into the underlying or unproblematic layers of knowledge. The argument is that world researchers "must be aware of the mighty cultural forces" that form the international actors' agencies

without "redefining these forces," because cultures, including 'security' cultures, are confusing, complex and unpredictable, and can and can change in their course over time. The international institution of numerous foreign players in Central Asia is uncovered to trace the dynamics and rational thinking of these changes and adjustments to its foreign policymaking. This volume of research problematizes the leading regional actors involved in central Asia's ideologies of the independent factor. In terms of the links between Central Asia and international politics and the way world relations affect Central Asia, the subsequent sections discuss. It also addresses the position of Central Asian region in the learning and research of world politics both today and appropriately. The participants in this book consequently have at the same time summarized and contextualized the "Central Asian perspective" (as well as have reassessed and reexamined its comparative importance). The assertion is that such a methodology is influential in determining the context in which Central Asian questions reflect and affect international correlations and hypotheses. Being a comparative work it has significance for the current study and especially in the context of geographical importance of central Asian nations.

(Vatanka, 2015), has very important work on Iran and Pakistan relations in his work *Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence*, by the regional context of central Asia and Pakistan and Iran relations must be considered for better understanding of new developments in Pakistan and Iran relations. In fact, Pakistan remains largely obsessed with India eastwards and Afghanistan northwards to a lesser extent. Pakistan doesn't want a new front against Iran in the west despite the provocations and Indian engagements in Iranian projects. For their part, the Iranians do not give priority to relationship with their big, nuclear-armed eastern neighbor. Iran remains mainly involved in the management of its strategies to counter Arab and West interests and entanglements. This work also explain that scholars in Iran and Pakistan, have separate reports of events relating to state and state interactions for seven decades. It didn't matter. In times of co-operation or rivalry, Pakistani Iranians have been greatly influenced over the decades by their respective attitudes and preferences in the West. And the British and the Americans were, of course, the much more influential actors in this part of the world amongst these Western countries.

### **Methodology**

It is understood that research methodology in any study has been an important part of the study and is adopted according to the needs and essentials of the study. The quantitative research is

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used in this project and analytical research method is used in this study that is relevant method of research to analyses the variables and after it the descriptive method of research is also used in this project according no needs in different parts of this research work. Political geography is all about the states and their relations with other states keeping in mind their geographical location, so the help of political geography is taken in this research work to understand the importance of geography of Pakistan and Iran in their decision making process regarding their relations with each other.

Objectives; this study has two key objectives; to shed light on the importance of Iranian geographical impact on the Pakistan's approach to central Asian region and also to examine the factor of Pakistan's geographical location for Iranian relations with central Asian states.

### **Results**

#### **Central Asian region**

Central Asian states have vast sources of energy. The main reason for these countries are being considered as the center of the future. The energy resources of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are attracting world attention. The total population of Central Asia is about 92 million. About 99 percent of the population is literate, which is an asset. The combined gross domestic product (GDP) of these countries is close to 412 billion dollars, of which Kazakhstan is a key part, close to 224 billion dollars. Uzbekistan has a national product of about 56 billion dollars. Turkmenistan's GDP 42 billion dollars (World Bank, 2019). The Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea are the main sources of water. The Caspian Sea is home to 4 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves. There are also vast deposits of gold, uranium and zinc. Central Asia is the second largest source of cotton in the world. Production of fruits and vegetables is an important source of livelihood. Despite all these advantages, Central Asian economies are among the poorest or developing countries (Thakur & Sharma, 2008 117). Iran and Pakistan have provided a gorgeous area for economic and diplomatic advances for the five Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Since their independence from USSR. Pakistan and Iran as main competitors see this region as a chance to promote their domestic besides the regional securities. The vacuity left behind following the official withdrawal of USSR from Central Asian region led several participants throughout the area besides others to pursue impact in spaces that the ex-USSR has ejected. Iran and Pakistan

as strong Muslim nations had never been the best effective local performers in Central Asian region, but Pakistan's understanding of Central Asian regional significance for the strategic securities is significantly clearer than Iran (Peimani, 2000). The happenings of 9/11 Incident and the successive deploying of United states forces in Afghanistan seem to have supported the requirement for durable relationships with Central Asian region in particular for Iran. The two Islamic nations and neighbors are sealed in rivalry concluded with routes of Chabahar and CPEC to landlocked central Asian energy resources, power agreements and influence in Central Asia. The rivalry perspective between Iran and Pakistan in central Asian region can be seen on three key areas;

1. Central Asia provides Pakistan and Iran with a geo-strategic advantage over India and China. Each country pursues to expand his global presence not at its own cast with an increasingly strong presence in Central Asia.
2. In Central Asia, Pakistan and Iran would like to utilize their inspiration to keep their own benefits in the mega projects of Chahbahar and CPEC.
3. Central Asian oil and gas reserves pledge Pakistan and Iran's land routes as direct connections to large energy supplies for their own economies and especially for the rapidly developing Chinese and India and Bangladeshi industries.

The leadership of the Muslim nations of Central Asia are likely to be subjective with approach of Pakistan since the prevalent trust of Pakistan and recent rumors of Pakistani military presence in Karabakh region of Azerbaijan against Armenia and close working relationship between Pakistan and Turkey as turkey has special influence in the central Asian region in historical context (Fahim, 2020, 5).

### **Chahbahar and CPEC**

CPEC project is very important being a corridor to Central Asia and central Asian region is very important for America and its regional interests. It is bring into line the Central Asia with Russia, Pakistan and China instead of the America because CPEC project is auspicious strategic and economic prospects for Central Asia. In the beautiful location of this port, Gwadar's strategic significance in both China and Pakistan is embedded. Nearly 33 percent of the globe's trade is from the Malacca Strait. There is no second idea that Beijing oil imports from this Strait are made up to 80 percent of this. In the incident of conflict between nations, the Strait is always likely to be threatened. Through CPEC, China will have a simple route of geopolitically and efficiently

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supporting and monitoring its remote areas of Xijiang Province. It will ensure that India's supported insurgency in Balochistan is curbed for Pakistan. The American regional strategic domination, which has always been dependent on India in south Asian region, has vanished its strongholds. Iran had planned to develop the Chahbahar port in the 1970s, but the plan was not completed. In 1984, plans to develop Chahbahar and use it for commercial purposes were abandoned, but since Pakistan began its efforts to develop the Gwadar port, Iran has begun to focus on developing its eastern port of Chahbahar. India offered to invest in Iran port and road project to connect Iran with central Asia through Afghanistan (Dyal, 2018). Earlier, India and Iran were connected to Afghanistan and the Central Asian states via a North-South corridor, but the route was a long one. This route entered in Turkmenistan from Iranian city of Mashhad and in Turkmenistan city Marro went straight to Uzbekistan city of Bukhara and then Tashkent. Although this route connects the Iranian port of Chahbahar with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan does not directly benefit from this route, and Tajik traders have to pass through Kyrgyzstan or pass through Uzbekistan. So the new route was to reduce the distance and other hurdles (Rao and Aalm, 2005, 197). India, Iran and Afghanistan had decided to establish an international corridor for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia by land routes from the port of Chahbahar. Afghanistan and the Central Asian states are landlocked countries. They do not have access to any sea for their trade. Through the port of Chahbahar, India tried to develop a land access to Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asian states, Russia, and Turkey and Europe other than Pakistan. It was decided to develop new route for containers of commercial goods so that they can be delivered to the markets of these countries. India had joined hands with Iran to make Chahbahar functional to thwart Gwadar port. To reduce the usefulness of CPEC, India has decided to build a new corridor with Afghanistan and Iran. Shortly after Pakistan and China launched CPEC, India announced work with Iran on the Chahbahar port. The port of Chahbahar is located about 100 miles west of the Pakistani port of Gwadar. Compared to CPEC, the Central Asian states were going to be commercially connected to the rest of the world through the Iranian port of Chahbahar. By limiting Pakistan's geographical advantage and depriving it of the benefits of the CPEC project. The current era of a free economy is in line with Chinese aspirations for global domination based on soft power. The long-forgotten fabric of the Silk Road revival also meets this desire. To ensure this, the 8 trillion dollars project of "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) aims to connect 4 billion people worldwide and 60 countries. The Pak-China Economic Corridor is the most important component of OBOR's

Maritime Silk Road. CPEC investment is helping to Pakistan's weak economy as well as bring the remote areas of Pakistan and China into the national mainstream (Gill, 2019). Apart from South Asia's strategic alliances, CPEC has also changed the political and economic landscape. This project has once again provided a golden opportunity for Pakistan to move on the path of economic development based on its political and geographical location. After ensuring Pakistan's internal connectivity, the corridor will connect manpower-rich South Asia to the energy resources rich Central Asian. In addition, it will connect Chinese products to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. However, it is a tragic fact that the United States, India and their allies in the Persian Gulf especially Iran has being pursuing a campaign to stop Pakistan from expanding the benefits of CPEC to regional and global levels , especially enhance its importance in central Asian region (Khetran, 2018). To give Afghanistan a trade route to hot water, Iran wanted to upgrade the port of Chahbahar and make it a deep sea port compared to Gwadar, making Afghanistan a trading hub for East and South Asia. As this port can provide Afghanistan access to sea and trade corridor through Iranian ports instead of Pakistan has created rivalry in Pakistan for Iran especially the involvement of India in the project.

India's real intention was to get base in Iran and promote proxy war in Pakistan to destabilize Pakistan. An example of this is the arrest of Kalbhushan Yadav and his revelations. When the agreement between Iran and India on the Chahbahar port project was announced in 2016, there were lot of concerns in various quarters of Pakistan. (Zaheer, M.A. et al., 2019) The plan was seen by India as a potential siege strategy, not only as a potential rival to Gwadar, but also as a sign of growing Indian influence in the region and a potential outpost in Pakistan's western border region. Iran went in the anti-Pakistan camp because of Indian presence on Iranian territory and Iran soil was also used against Pakistan. India's sole purpose in this whole affair was to use Chahbahar to harm Pakistan and counter CPEC as Chahbahar route to central Asia can become a substitute for CPEC in the context of central Asian region. A closer look at the project reveals that it had the potential to separate Pakistan from Afghan trade, as it was part of the Afghan transit trade process from Chahbahar to Zahedan and then from there to Zaranj in Afghanistan by rail. This route doesn't take up trade space completely, but at least it does. (Roche, 2016) A year later, when the arrest of Indian spy Kulbhushan Yadav, who also operated from Chahbahar, raised concerns, it was likely that the Iranian authorities were aware of his anti-Pakistan activities and they tolerated them. India, an open enemy of Pakistan in its east, Afghanistan, which is considered to be a prey of Indian influence in the west, and when Iran

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had joined India, it seemed in Pakistan as if the Indian siege was getting slighter and narrower for Pakistan in the region. This situation created rivalry between Pakistan and Iran as this project was unacceptable for Pakistan as India was key promoter of this project. It became also unacceptable for China and that is why after a few years of hard work and backdoor diplomacy, Iran has now shaken hands with China and on the other hand India has failed in its plans for utilizing Chahbahar to reduce the importance of CPEC and Pakistan and sidelined it in the context of central Asian region. According to Iran, India's plan was schmooze verbally while Iran was spending money. Investment is a difficult task for Iran, which is mired in global sanctions. Therefore, keeping in view the situation, Iran has sidelined India and preferred friendship with China (Haider, 2020). It is also clear that a new alliance is being formed in the region comprising China, Turkey and Russia, which will include key countries in the region, including Malaysia. Pakistan is naturally present in this alliance because of Turkey and China and now Iran's participation will further strengthen this alliance. However, due to US conspiracies, relations between Pakistan and Iran have not been good for a long time. Pakistan and Iran have been in separate camps since the Soviet war. Pakistan's relations with Arab countries have also played a role in spoiling relations with its neighbors and on the other hand the proxy war has left no stone unturned. The two countries have a long history of suffering.

### **Importance of Central Asian region**

Geographically, Tajikistan is the closest Central Asian country to Pakistan. Pakistan wants to meet Tajikistan through a tunnel, and the same route could be through links with other Central Asian countries. This area is known as Wakhan and it is part of Afghanistan. In addition to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan shares borders with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and China. Nature has endowed this country with water resources. This country has the capacity to generate 60,000 MW of electricity which is hampered by technical and economic constraints. In September 2014, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan signed a resolve on a power supply project. This project is called Kasa 1000 under which electricity will be delivered to Pakistan. The Central Asian leadership is most urgently concerned about finding a land route for their natural gas and oil and keeping an eye on this demand Pakistan and Iran are working on the Project of CPEC and Chahbahar. Central Asian reserves are estimated to be unpredictable, but some prudent estimates put oil reserves seven percent and gas as eight percent of world reserves of oil and gas (EIA, 2016). Although productivity continued to suffer as a consequence of the Collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent unpredictability,



during the 1990s international energy consortia's participation has enhanced production. The driving force behind oil and gas production and export was need for hard currency, which also has overall doubled since first year of statehood in 1992. Examining the case of Turkmenistan in this context Turkmenistan has the globe's largest gas resources with documented gas reserves of 101 trillion cubic feet, as per American Energy Information Agency(EIA, 2016) it delivered 1.64 billion trillion cubic meters of natural gas and only consumed 0.26 trillion Cubic feet of gas in 2001. The other revenues were expected to generate profit in Turkmenistan by means of exports. But two important factors impacted Turkmenistan's capacity to fully realize its action plan. First important factor was, being a landlocked country Turkmenistan in past has to rely on Russian pipelines as these were traditionally developed to transport gas and oil of Central Asian gas to Eastern Europe and Russia itself. Second important in this regard was a trade embargo of America with Iran that efficiently revoked a well-publicized Turkmen gas pipeline that was supply-line for Turkey, as Turkmenistan and Iran has gas pipeline that became operational in 1998. The TAPI project is based on projects by international oil companies in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which began in 1990. When Russia interfered in the plans of all these countries. On this basis, it did not allow all these companies to work on the pipeline. These companies needed an authoritative route that did not include both Iran and Russia. The project was formally launched on March 15, 1995, after an agreement was reached between Pakistan and Turkmenistan According to the TAPI project, the gas pipeline will run from Daulatabad, Turkmenistan's gas hub, to Quetta and Multan via Afghanistan's Herat and Kandahar provinces. And from here it will end at Fazilka in India. The gas pipeline will be 1,800 km long and will meet the energy needs of these countries. Due to international politics, this plan, which was in the past, could not be implemented. The four countries, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, have signed some aspects of the plan so that the plan can be completed soon (Rajpoot and Naeem, 2020). The Asharaf Ghani government in Afghanistan is expected to help bring the project to fruition. Afghanistan can benefit from this project through immense economic corridors and make its economy prosperous. Pakistan and India are suffering from energy shortage. Pakistan has been looking for any workable project to utilize its unique geography to provide a land route and pipeline route that can be castoff to export gas and oil reserves of central Asia to international market. CPEC project has potential to become a workable project with land, railway and pipeline route through Pakistan soil to connect China and the world with central Asian

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resources of energy. Iran started its own project of Chahbahar to compete Pakistan in its agendas and strategies for central Asia and intact Iranian influence in central Asian region that has been take as rivalry among the analysts of international relations (Khetran, 2018). It has proven a darling task to access the global market, and Turkmenistan compelled, to shift its oil and its gas to meager republics around it due to landlocked situation. Ukraine, for instance, is a big retailer of Turkmenistan's gas, but unfortunately, without cash to pay for oil and gas and has offered Turkmenistan to build a barter deal.

### **Rivalry Perception**

Looking at the historical background of Pak-Iran relations, it is clear that Pakistan and Iran are not only neighbors but also have deep foundations of ideological, religious, historical and cultural ties and friendship. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan as an independent state after the formation of Pakistan, and the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 was the first to be recognized by the Pakistani government. Despite minor ups and downs, Pak-Iran relations as a whole have always been very good under different governments of Pakistan. Both countries want to make effective rail and road links with each other and increase in trade volume. In the field of culture, Iran wants large-scale exhibitions of Iranian products and books, scientific seminars and film exchanges with Pakistan (imtiaaz, 2019). Rivalry started to dominate the brotherly relations between Pakistan and India when the situation in the region changed so rapidly that Iran and India became increasingly close to each other. In the Iran-Iraq war, Pakistan, as an Islamic country, made strenuous efforts to reconcile the two sides, but India openly supported Iran as the reconciliation in the Muslim Ummah was not benefiting Indian leadership. During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, Iran and India once again sidelined that the Taliban's professional affiliations with Pakistan were not tolerated by Iran. The support of the opposing forces united Iran on the basis of sectarianism and India on the basis of enmity with Pakistan. The friendship between Delhi and Tehran continued to grow and in November 2002, India and Iran signed the first defense agreement. On December, 2002, another agreement was signed between Iran and India, under which the two countries would fully cooperate in the field of science and technology. On January 19, 2003, The Hindu, a popular Indian newspaper, commented on the successive agreements, saying that although relations between Pakistan and Iran had been very good in the past, now Iran's relations seem to be clearly leaning towards India. Iran and India disagree on many issues. Iran has always supported Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue. Similarly, India has

close ties with Israel, which is of great concern to Iran. Despite this, the two countries have made significant progress in their relations (Wesley, 2012,8). A trilateral agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran on the development of Chahbahar was signed and Indian involvement in the project was in the context of India rivalry with Pakistan. India needs Pakistan to go to Afghanistan by land, India will have access to Afghanistan through Chahbahar port in which it will not need Pakistan. Was this agreement a sign of Iranian friendship and cooperation with Pakistan? If the Iranians are asked for an answer, they may have more reservations about Pakistan than it do. But even if they have these reservations, they will be counted under Pak-Iran mutual reservations. It has never happened that Pakistan has increased its cooperation with any third country at the cost of Iran's friendship. Iranians should realize that when the Saudis asked for Pakistani boots to come to Yemen, how did Pakistan has responded to the Saudis? The coverage of the Pak-India tensions that has been published and broadcast in the aftermath of the October 1, 2016, attack on the Iranian media shows a tendency towards neutrality, but the impression given to the reader between the lines is that of against Pakistan. Meanwhile Chahbahar project created four key apprehensions for Pakistan looking in the Indian involvement of Chahbahar. As a result of the Iran-India joint venture in Chahbahar, India can reap many benefits. The biggest benefit would be that it would render the port of Gwadar in Pakistan ineffective. The sea trade route that Pakistan is dreaming of through Gwadar, the Indian Occupation would not have allowed this dream to be embarrassed. Another benefit of domination of Chahbahar would be that India would get very short distance trade to the Middle East, which would greatly boost India's economy through trade relations with Arab countries as before in these countries Pakistan has special position. The third benefit of this initiative for India would be that it would have access to naval, air and land route toward central Asian and total freight between Pakistan and the Middle East. The fourth benefit for India would be that it would have been able to work with ASEAN and the Far East and its Trade relations would have accelerated and all these developments are not in favor of Pakistan and Iranian support in this regard must has created a sense of rivalry (Khan and Khan, 2021,62). Will the Chahbahar project help meet India's energy needs and its access to Central Asia and Europe? Will the Chahbahar project also allow Central Asian countries' natural resources to sell their gas to Iran? Is India a rival to China? And can India, with the help of the US, impede China's development? Can Chahbahar project be considered an alternative to Pakistan for Afghanistan? To what extent will Iran be able to expand its energy market? And most importantly, is Chahbahar project an

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alternative to CPEC?, are such questions in Pakistan that created a sense of rivalry in Pakistan.

### **China Entry in Chahbahar**

The China and Iran agreement will help China strengthen its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and help it gain a foothold in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. A closer look at the proposed agreement suggests that it could have far-reaching implications for the central Asia and global politics. This is not good news for the United States, as it could undermine its foreign and defense policy of isolating Iran globally and treating Saudi Arabia preferentially. And, ultimately, the end result could be a shattering of US ambitions in the Near East and the Far East Asia. It is in fact an attempt to create a new economic and security structure in Asia. European and even American analysts seem to agree that the deal is a major blow to US diplomacy, interests and its position in Asia. Time magazine wrote in its commentary that the deal would change the relationship between the US global rival (China) and its longtime rival in the Middle East (Iran) and could thwart US efforts to isolate Iran globally. The US-Iran squabbles and the strategic linkages between India and the US are contrary to their foreign policy objectives. From a strategic standpoint, the CPEC benefits Iran since it is the path towards regional economic integration. (Arham, 2020) . The imperialistic strategies of America and India to control Central Asia are threatening all regional stakeholder in Asian region. India is strategically, economically and geopolitically under threat from Pakistan and China since the beginning of CPEC. This new developed situation has compelled Indian leadership to join hands of America (Shah, 2021). As far as Pakistan is concerned, this agreement is also very important for Pakistan in the region. It is possible that the Sino-Iranian agreement will ultimately increase Chinese economic interests along the Pakistan-Iran border, as the proposed agreement allegedly includes ports, railways. And investments in infrastructure such as telecommunications, which will also increase the need for peacekeeping and stabilization to safeguard infrastructure projects in the region. The Pak-Iran border between the two countries is becoming a fresh cause. Occasional cross-border shootings with accusations and counter-accusations have long strained relations between the two neighbors. It could play a key role in encouraging Beijing, Islamabad and Tehran to improve relations in order to achieve stability in the border areas. There are two elements that can persuade China to move forward to help breathe new life into bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan (Safdar and Zabin, 2020). First, both China and Pakistan have revived the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). A series of

agreements in the energy and transport sectors have rekindled the project, while China and Pakistan are considering accelerating the completion of the mega project. Therefore, both the countries would not want to see such sabotage on the Pak-Iran border which could harm the progress related to CPEC. However, as Iran has reportedly separated India from one of Chabahar's most important projects, it is hoped that one of the biggest obstacles to Pakistan-Iran relations will be removed. Given the Indo-China rivalry in the region, the establishment of a link between China's infrastructure projects in Gwadar and Chabahar in Iran could be a way to prevent Indian interference in the region. It may be recalled that both Iran and Pakistan have discussed communication between the ports. This could lead to the inevitable stabilization of the region and benefit all parties in Iran, China and Pakistan. If the projects allegedly included in the outline of the Sino-Iranian agreement are implemented, China's role in the region and on Pakistan's western border will increase in the coming years. If Beijing focuses on infrastructure projects in both Iran and Pakistan, it could encourage it to play a more significant role in supporting Pak-Iran relations (Ramay, 2021). In addition, Pakistan, as China's central partner in the region, is at a critical juncture in supporting economic ties in the region. Therefore, Pakistan should take cautious steps along with enhancing Sino-Iranian relations so that it can continue to play a balanced and positive role in the region.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pakistan's rivalry with Iran is understandable in the context of its relations with India. The natural resources of central Asian states and the geostrategic location of these Muslim nation, where China, Russia and America meet, are also meaningful. The requirements for fossil fuel for India and prospects for beyond the border commercial revenue for Pakistan are critical factors to develop strategies. Pakistan is pursuing for local supports and partners and India is committed to dispossess Pakistan of his regional strategic allies (i.e., Iran, Afghanistan) also have an impression on approach of Pakistan to Central Asian region. Exports of central Asian region via Iran are limited due to American opposition to Iran and also the low production of this region but in fact, Iran is a key player in Central Asian region trade due to its geographical location and hence Pakistan despite of its own geographical important location is facing a major rival. Pakistan is very important due to its population size and strong military and economic potential and Iran is also strong regional nation because of its own energy resource, economic capabilities, internal stability and rich mineral, further to its far superior geostrategic Iranian government is throwing its weight the unitary

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government of Afghanistan that has been a chief hindrance to Pakistan's supremacy in Afghanistan. To counter CPEC, Iranian government has started Chahbahar project and American sanctions on Iran, American pull out of Afghanistan and chances of return of Taliban in power again are positive indicators for Pakistan. The prospects for an Iran-China deal have been there since 2016, but it is clear that the US's hostile attitude towards Iran has pushed it into Chinese orbit more than ever, so it is now likely that Iran gets closer to China. Indian influence in this country will diminish. If that happens then obviously the pressure on Pakistan will be less because even if the big statements are put aside, the Chinese intervention in Iran is purely beneficial for Pakistan. Indian influence will diminish, and thus personal interests in Pakistan's security will make Iran a stronger partner and allay Tehran's fears of potential rivalry. Following the agreement with China, Iran has issued a number of statements in support of the Belt and Road and C-Pac projects. They are also talking about making golden ring route of Pakistan, Iran Turkey. On the one hand, Pakistan can benefit from Chahbahar, while Iran can also benefit from Gwadar and CPEC. India's influence is also disappearing from Iran, so now Pakistan will also deal with Iran in different ways. As far as Saudi-Iranian relations are concerned, this ideological cold war began after the Iranian revolution, and will probably continue in the future. Therefore, the two countries must accept each other, respect each other's geographical views and, most importantly, get out of the abyss. China is a strategic partner for Pakistan but on the other hand it needs to be made with the United States as well. Iran is Pakistan's neighbor and on the other hand Pakistan has to maintain relations with Saudi Arabia. It is a double-edged sword in diplomacy that is extremely difficult to wield. But if Pakistan learns to use this sword successfully and if it learn to balance relations, it will be a great achievement not only for Pakistan but for the central Asian region.

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