



Review Article

# An Insight into Pakistan's Maritime Trade Comparing Maritime Neighborhood

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**Abstract** | Pakistan's economic and development strategy falls short compared to what is considered essential for any nation that multiplies. The federal government did not maximize the utilization of its land, sea, and air assets. The reason for this is the persistent issues with the trade and payments balance and inflation, unemployment, and program inconsistency. This is one area where the maritime sector has been a quarry for years. Contrary to the maritime transportation industry, fisheries are the only coastal resource used nowadays. The maritime sector of Pakistan's economy is becoming less viable as rising maritime vulnerabilities lead to decreased commerce and taxes. Here we look at Pakistan's maritime industry and see how it stacks up to those of its land and maritime neighbors, i.e., India, Iran, and maritime neighbor Oman.

**Novelty Statement** | This study is novel as it examines the present situation of marine commerce with maritime neighbors of Pakistan to assess if the persistent reduction in trade arises from a regional phenomenon or an individual issue.

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## Introduction

The marine sector is essential to Pakistan's economy and security; thus, it is necessary to conduct a rational analysis of the challenges this industry encounters, particularly maritime commerce. The ocean accounts for 80 percent of the entire world's business (Fugazza, 2015), making it imperative for Pakistan's think tanks to actively investigate reforms to economic and trade policies that only include the ocean. Due to the fast depletion of inland resources, states are accumulating marine interests to establish more viable economic footprints for the blue economy (Aljabri, 2012). Pakistan is fortunate to be in a region rich in natural resources, including land and water. Pakistan's

economy relies heavily on the sea. The geographical position of Pakistan along the coast of the Indian Ocean makes it an important port and trading hub. It does all its business through its seaports in Karachi and Gwadar, which handle 95% of all of its business. The marine industry in Pakistan is critically important and must be recognized as such. As a growing nation, Pakistan should be aware that land is a finite resource rapidly being depleted worldwide. Because it has economic potential, a country on the water is in a better position than one on land. The economies of the world's countries have been rethought, considering shifting priorities. Modern political stability is impossible without an economy that is stable and growing. The marine economic or commerce sector plays a critical role in today's globalized world by aiding, transforming, and globalizing the global economy and trade. Water plays a significant role in the manufacturing process of

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many industries. The ever-changing international security environment has influenced the relevance of secure sea routes to fulfil global demand. This effect directly impacts the economic and security significance of maritime and political interests throughout the globe. Positive aspects in this respect include Pakistan's geostrategic position, the fact that the country is permitted to utilize the continental shelf, and the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is necessary to research and analyze the current state of marine commerce with Pakistan's maritime neighbors, specifically Iran, India, and Oman, to determine whether the consistent drop in Pakistan's trade results from a regional phenomenon or an individual problem. Pakistan's maritime neighbors are routinely and continually developing in terms of amenities and improving their trade facilities and capabilities. If Pakistan does not make these efforts, it risks falling far behind. The commercial marine industry's growth relies on enhancing the coastal economy in the immediate area. Trade along Pakistan's coast might benefit from a more cooperative organizational structure.

Pakistan's GDP average growth rate is 1.9%, with an estimated GDP of \$258,323 billion and a population of over 216 million. Compared to its neighbors, Pakistan's November 2020 goods trade total of \$73,683 million was low. Pakistan's entire transport services trade, encompassing marine, is just \$14,723 million US dollars, compared to the United Arab Emirates' \$147,529 million US dollars and Iran's \$110,546 million US dollars (UNCTAD, UNCTADSTAT, 2020). Pakistan loses ground in the maritime trade war even though 95% of its exports and imports go by sea (Nawaz, 2004). Reason suggests that Pakistan's maritime strategy might be at the issue's root.

The link between bilateral trade and economic development is complicated. Trade and economic growth are proportionate, i.e., more business leads to increased financial progress. Pursuing steady and improved development and resolving complicated calculations of market policy are intricately intertwined, albeit representing diverse dynamics. To extract more considerable gains from tiny opportunities requires imagination. In this sense, Pakistan has various distinguishing advantages, such as its geostrategic position, authorization to utilize EEZ and the continental shelf, and the establishment of the CPEC. Economic expansion is possible if these advantages are used correctly and follow the needs of the period. So why is Pakistan's marine commerce experiencing difficulties and snags? In addition to policy and policy implementation concerns, are there other regional connectivity difficulties to address? In this respect, the present situation of marine commerce of marine neighbors of Pakistan must be investigated.

#### *Theoretical perspective*

##### *Maritime commerce and linkages*

Connectivity is the missing piece in the puzzle of

enhanced commerce. It favorably increases bilateral trade connections and is proportional to the growth and development of trade. Connectivity refers primarily to establishing physical networks, which may include sea and dry ports, fish harbors, and airports, to facilitate continuous and unified economic activities (Saeed *et al.*, 2020). In addition, Fugazza (2015) emphasizes the importance of relationships to encourage commercial activity. The author investigates the connection to marine and determines that sea trade reduction occurs when connectivity issues arise. Make a substantial contribution to establishing network connections in international maritime trade. They discover a sense of connectivity inside the global trade systems framework through international naval commerce, particularly on a bilateral level between developed and developing countries. Haward provides a concept quite like this one within the scope of marine governance. In his editorial, he gives a brief overview of maritime governance, focusing on connectivity, and he talks about the problems this industry faces.

#### *Indian maritime trade*

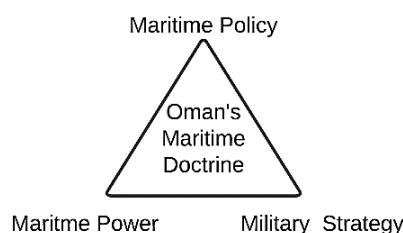
India is a maritime power. Since India's marine fleet started, its capacity has increased due to the technical progress supervised by the erstwhile British empire. But the Western Asia problem has always been a thorn in India's side, requiring special regional policy vigilance and political manipulation. The contemporary circumstances of bilateral and multilateral trade are complicated by a stark divergence in philosophy, strategy, and commerce (Mitra, 2019). Dasgupta (2016) analyses India's massive maritime fleet of over two hundred boats and assesses its effectiveness considering the country's current shipbuilding sector. He elaborates extensively on cyclical and highly captive incentives, constituting essential characteristics of the contemporary marine business. He presents situations of modern maritime commerce as complex sectors for India's success and outlines the future of the Indian shipping industry. From a worldwide viewpoint, (Krishnan, 2007) takes a descriptive approach to detailing the issues facing the Indian shipping sector. In addition to a brief overview of port services, Krishnan discusses the condition of Indian ports and the maritime fleet through a bit of history. Krishnan offers a detailed vision of commodities and commerce, and although some of his opinions appear redundant as a more practical solution would have been preferred, he does highlight key components of maritime transport and their importance to the growth of India's GDP. Maritime operations between India and China are compared by Mukundan. The two main branches of his study are the impact of India on international shipping and the impact of China on international shipping. As a result of his study on China's role in international shipping, when he talks about India's influence in the maritime world, he does not say much about China.

*The maritime trade of Iran*

Panahi *et al.* (2017) provide an outlook for the Iranian container and shipping sector by examining existing trade, development, technical capability, and future demand scenarios. They establish a ten-years plan and use statistical numbers to outline Iran's marine growth prospects. They presented research to build a more precise understanding, including surveys and interviews with individuals affiliated with this business, such as managers of shipping firms, marine sector decision-makers and think tanks, and shippers. Their port-specific interviews provide an accurate picture of the current and potential future.

*The maritime trade of Oman*

Aljabri (2012) researches the Sultanate of Oman's need for a marine philosophy. For this, he conducts interviews with Oman shipping industry experts and professionals. His work shows a mixed-method, qualitative approach. He highlights the necessity for consistency and linkage between the state's political and economic variables and proposes three elements for a practical maritime doctrine: policy, military strategy, and maritime power (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Maritime doctrine of Oman developed from (Aljabri, 2012) Pakistan's maritime trade.**

Kalim and Syed (2020) analyze Pakistan's port system, focusing on Gwadar port and demonstrating exactly how it might boost marine industry of Pakistan. Both Kalim and Syed talk about how important the Gwadar port is from a strategic point of view because it has the potential to control the Sea Communication Lines between the Persian Sea and the Gulf of Oman. However, Nawaz (2004) emphasises the need for creating a strategy to use these ports and their accompanying assets to boost the country's maritime growth. The idea of national security was the cornerstone of the author's case. Humayun and Zafar (2014) concur; however, they examine these variables in the blue economy. Hussain *et al.* (2014) discuss the same topic by including the concepts of growth and security. They explore the contribution of the marine industry to economic and security growth. Yeo and Deng (2019) comprehensively analyze Pakistan's trade policy by evaluating organizational and geographic groupings. From 2014 to 2017, Khan (2017) examines Pakistan's trade performance. She examines export patterns for Pakistan, focusing mainly on European Union countries for her findings. Malik *et al.* (2017) undertake the same research. However, their study is descriptive and longitudinal.

UNCTAD has evolved into a hub for sharing data on trade and national capacities around the globe. It supplies data for UNCTADSTAT to disseminate. UNCTAD's data is given in a consistent, up-to-date, and straightforward style. This data system, which accepts standard numerical input and displays the numerical data graphically, has been regularly updated to incorporate the four nations studied in this investigation.

Pakistan has a long maritime history and depends significantly on maritime trade. Therefore, it's important to look at imports and exports, maritime trade balance, assess the condition of economic expansion in the maritime zone and evaluate reasons behind this outcome. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MOFA) administers the Pakistan Shipping Corporation (PNSC). PNSC is responsible for transporting cargo and managing flag carriers. PNSC must have a long-term view of Pakistan's shipping business, age of boats, fleet, sizes, and fleet expansion to adapt to present and future needs and eventualities. Therefore, PNSC would continue to be the subject of an in-depth examination.

Ports and their capability to accommodate huge boats are advantageous in that they generate income for the national treasury and enhance the economic sustainability of ports. Observe and compare the operational seaports of Pakistan, their ability to accommodate boats, number of port calls, container port throughput, and, of course, the seafarers who contribute to local and global marine industries of Pakistan's maritime neighbors. Comparing fuel prices and port fees could impact Pakistan's declining marine commerce. Enhancing and reinforcing bilateral trade connectedness, which influences political-economic ties between nations, would aid in evaluating internal and foreign policy perspectives.

Pakistan's economic and naval capabilities are lagging behind. Quantitative information was culled from reliable resources like government surveys and documents from Pakistan, regional and international companies that publish data annually, UN-affiliated institutions, naval organizations and supervisory bodies, monetary and security institutions, conference papers, reports, academic articles, theses, and scholarly journals. The major objective of collecting this information was to evaluate Pakistan's maritime standing in relation to its neighbors. This research combines quantitative and qualitative data for more robust conclusions and a more solid examination of similar works. This longitudinal study looks at different time periods to create continuity, make the data clearer, and improve the ways of comparing them.

*India's maritime trade potential*

The population of India is estimated at 1,366,418 people, and the country spans around 2,973,190 square kilometres. India's current gross domestic product is



3,059,962,000,000 USD, expanding 5.3% annually. Overall exports are worth \$810,308.8 m. India has more than 7,500 kilometres of coastline, making it the South Asian country with the greatest impact on maritime trade and safety (UNCTAD, 2019).

India's marine industry and fleet have grown substantially over the last four decades, largely thanks to the country's increased access to technological and scientific resources. In the next 2020–21 fiscal year, the naval industry was allocated RS 1,800 crores, or about \$257 million (IBEF, 2021). India ranked seventeen with its 1.4% DWT contribution of 1200 ships and 17.5 million DWT (Dasgupta, 2016). Between 2011 and 2020, there was a 19% rise in the size of Indian oil tankers, a 14% decline in the number of bulk carriers, a 62% increase in the number of cargo ships, a 35% increase in the number of container vessels, and a 26% increase in the number of other ship categories. That's according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (2020). According to Mukundan (2007), India has started making significant changes to its marine policies and building various land-based and coastal facilities to expand its maritime industry and the development infrastructure linked with this area. Around 33% of all Indian shipping tonnage passes through here. Although it ranks just 21<sup>st</sup> in shipbuilding, India is second in the world when it comes to recycling ships (MIS, 2021).

Indian exports as a whole increased from US\$ 99,616 million in 2005 to US\$ 324,250 million in 2019. 2019 saw a sharp rise in imports, to the tune of US\$ 486,059 million, resulting in a trade deficit of \$ 161,809 m (-0.2 percent). The United States was India's biggest export market in 2016, contributing US\$ 54,288 million. UAE was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest market for Indian exports, contributing US\$ 29,558 million. The value of India's exports of transportation services to other countries rose by 11.2% in 2019. India is one of the top 10 countries in the marine labour force, with more than 86,000 seafarers contributing to the global maritime economy. Each year, more than 11,000 mariners graduate from the nation's 150 maritime academies (Krishnan, 2007), placing India among the top five countries in terms of skilled labour production.

The British, starting with the East India Company, instituted reforms in the Indian maritime sector that inevitably led to India's ascendance as a maritime power. Because of its size and location, the Indian subcontinent has always been an influential player in the area, but the British, who ruled there for three centuries, also brought a progressive mindset that helped propel it to the forefront of international politics. As a result of the addition of the "S. S. Loyalty" to the Indian fleet in 1919, the Indian government's commerce soon earned faith in the East India Company's commerce. Indian shipyards

constructed the S.S. Loyalty. The vessel was a critical stepping stone in the development of the corresponding industrial infrastructure that is now present in the Indian maritime industry. To the British, modern India owes the technological superiority of its maritime industry, which they naturally transferred to the country as dowery when they left the Indian subcontinent, leaving the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh to tend to mundane tasks left behind by the British. The Moorish Zeevarenden (Muslim sailors) helped the firm in various ways, both at sea and at the port of Batavia, helping it expand its operations across the Indian Ocean (Nadri, 2014). When the East India Company was founded, India benefited not only from the company's preexisting nautical resources but also from its extensive and expertise, market strength, dependability, functioning competence, and national and international connections. India broke away from the United Kingdom and started making a lot of things that it used to buy from other countries (Mukundan, 2007).

India has approximately 205 intermediate and minor ports, all of which are under the purview of the Indian Ports Act of 1908. The eastern coast is home to half of the major ports, while the western coast is home to the other half (Table 1, Figure 2). India's maritime sector is crucial to the country's total trade (MIS, 2021). 95 percent of all commerce and 65 percent of all trade value in India are carried out by maritime transport. From 885 million tons per annum, the overall traffic handled by Indian ports has grown year over year. In FY 2019–20, the major ports in India handled 54% of all cargo in the nation, growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 4% over the previous five years (MIS, 2021).

**Table 1: Major Indian ports.**

S.	Port/State	Coast
1	Chennai/Tamil Nādu	East
2	Kochi/Kerala	West
3	Ennore/Tamil Nadu	East
4	Kandla/Gujarat	West
5	Kolkata/West Bengal	East
6	Mangaluru (Mangalore)/Karnataka	West
7	Paradip/Odisha	East
8	Mormugao/Goa	West
9	Tuticorin/Tamil Nadu	East
10	Mumbai/Maharashtra	West
11	Visakhapatnam/Andhra Pradesh	East
12	Jawaharlal Nehru/Maharashtra	West

The major ports in India are overseen by the Port Trust Boards and are regulated by the Tariff Authority for Maritime Ports (TAMP). Minor ports are overseen by the state governments (Mukundan, 2007).



**Figure 2: Major Indian ports location (UPSC Success 2021).**

*The prospects for Iran's maritime trade*

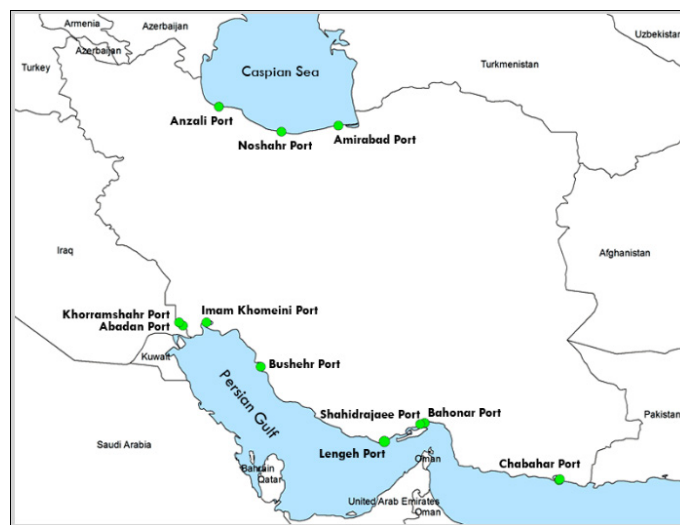
The Islamic Republic of Iran is among the most amazing maritime nations with its population of 82,914 million, land area of 1,628,760 km<sup>2</sup>, coastline of 3,000 kilometers, and coast/area ratio of 3.6 meters per square kilometer. Iran's GDP (by 2019) was US\$ 574,732 million, while its goods trade was US\$ 107,546 million, for a GDP growth rate of -8 percent. All maritime concerns are managed by the Iranian Ports and Marine Organization, which is part of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (Table 2). With a land border of 959 kilometers and a sizable naval presence in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, Iran is Pakistan's maritime next-door neighbor (Figure 3).

**Table 2: Major ports of Iran.**

S.No.	Port	Location
1	Shahid Rajae	Persian Gulf
2	Chabahar	Gulf of Oman
3	Imam Khomeini	Persian Gulf
4	Khorramshahr	Persian Gulf
5	Amir Abad	Caspian Sea
6	Lengeh	Persian Gulf
7	Bushehr	Persian Gulf
8	Bahounar	Persian Gulf
9	Noshahr	Caspian Sea
10	Abadan	Persian Gulf
11	Anzali	Caspian Sea

Iran has three hundred ocean-going boats and is among the top twenty nations in the world in terms of its maritime fleet (Hellenic Shipping, 2021). Most of these three hundred commercial boats are owned by Iranian citizens and Iranian-registered corporations. Port authorities in Iran have been focusing on better traffic forecasting because of the fast expansion of marine container shipping during the last two decades. This has required them to plan for the necessary software and technology. From now until 2025, the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) will be responsible for

charting shipping routes at sea. This was recently shown (Panahi et al., 2017). In 2020, a total of 126,437,005 metric tons of freight passed through Iranian ports, with 55,395,467 metric tons of incoming cargo and 71,041,38 metric tons of outgoing freight (Table 3).



**Figure 3: Mapping the major ports of Iran (Searates, 2020).**

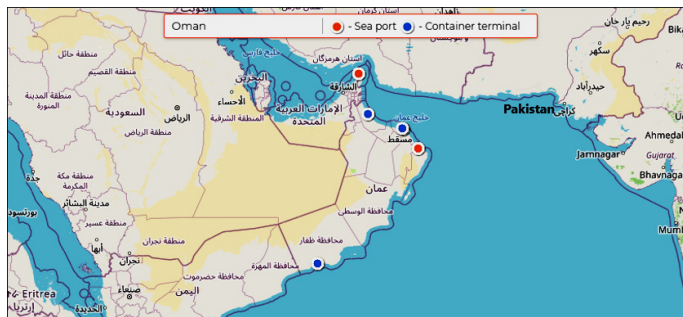
**Table 3: Statistics of Iran's shipping operations (PMO, 2020).**

Operation	2018	2019	2020
Cargo throughput	143,571,936	150,642,177	126,437,005
Container throughput	2,253,390	2,004,914	1,535,732

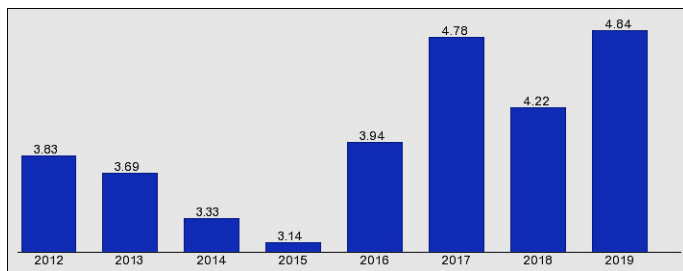
The maritime industry in Iran has far-reaching effects. Yet, the United States sanctions and other international embargoes have devastated Iran's marine economy. Recent sanctions by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and the US State Department target seventeen firms with significant links to Iran's metal industry. Therefore, the maritime industry has felt the effects. Sanctions were placed on the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States. The US targeted seventeen firms with significant links to Iran's metal industry. Consequently, the maritime industry has felt the effects. These companies have been the focus of recent fines (The Maritime Executive, 2021). The United States has warned commercial and maritime companies conducting trade with Iran to avoid being subject to penalties by switching from using IRISL and E-Sail to another carrier or shipping method (The Maritime Executive, 2021). Because of these restrictions, the maritime industry, maritime potential, and growth of the Islamic Republic of Iran have all suffered a lot. The Iranian government has, however, made efforts to expand the capabilities of Iranian ports a point of emphasis. To offset the expanding regional dominance of Pakistan's Gwadar port, the nation aims to build a new port on the Makran coastline (Hellenic Shipping, 2021). This port would be able to accommodate large cargo ships.

*Potential for maritime trade in Oman*

Oman is a maritime nation, having access to the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman thanks to its position on the southeast and northeast shores of the Arabian Peninsula, respectively. Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates comprise its land borders, while Pakistan and Iran border it at sea. Out of the six countries that make up the Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan is closest to Oman. In the early twentieth century, almost one-third of Oman's Baloch population migrated from Pakistan's Balochistan province (UNESCO, 2020). It is impossible to overestimate the strategic significance of Oman's position, given that it occupies a key maritime chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-third of the world's oil passes. Records show that about 3000 B.C., ships departed from the Dhofar area of the southern Arabian Peninsula enroute to Egypt. During the time of the Egyptian pharaohs, goods from Dhofar were taken to Egypt by ships from the Arabian Peninsula. Omani ships left the Arabian Peninsula for South China about the middle of the ninth century (UNESCO, 2020).



**Figure 4: Ports and Terminals in Oman (Searates, 2020).**



**Figure 5: TEUs (in millions) pass by Omani ports and terminals 2012-2019.**

Around 4,975,000,000 people are living in the Sultanate of Oman. The country's GDP is at \$93,065 million right now, growing at a pace of 0.90 percent. The coastline of Oman is exceptionally long at 3,165 kilometers, giving it a coastline to land area ratio of 9.1 meters per square kilometer. Oman has an EEZ that spans 533,180 square kilometers (Figure 4). These figures cement Oman's position as a major player in the maritime arena (UNCTAD, 2019). Established in 2003, Oman Shipping Company (OSC) oversees the maritime shipping operations of the Omani government with a fleet of more than fifty vessels totaling eight million deadweight tons

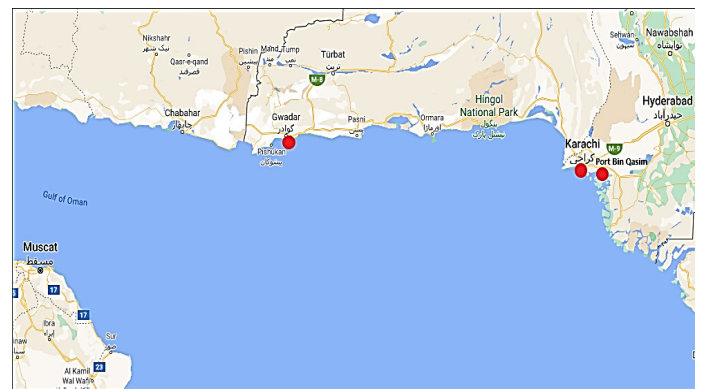
(DWT). Oman Shipping Company (OSC) can reach its goals with the help of Oman Ship Management Company (OSMC), an independent ship management company that helps OSC provide comprehensive marine transportation services (Figure 5).

*Pakistan's maritime trade*

Pakistan has a coast/area ratio of 3.4 m/km<sup>2</sup> (UNCTAD, 2020), with a coastline of over 1000 km that includes the Sindh and Balochistan provinces (Shahzad, 2020). The marine area surpasses 30 percent of the total land area (290,000 square kilometers), which comprises 240,000 square kilometers of Pakistan's EEZ and fifty thousand square kilometers of the continental shelf (NIOP, 2021). In contrast to most of its maritime neighbors, Pakistan can utilize resources outside its EEZ in the form of a continental shelf, which is a positive development. In this sense, Pakistan only needs planning to establish futuristic corridors to advance its economy, improve regional connectivity, and simultaneously expand bilateral sea-based commerce. Table 4 and Figure 6 depicts three main ports along the coast of Pakistan.

**Table 4: Major Pakistani ports.**

S.	Port	Location
1	Karachi Port Trust (KPT)	Sindh Coast
2	Port Bin Qasim (PQA)	Sindh Coast
3	Gwadar Port	Makran Coast



**Figure 6: Mapping the major Pakistani ports.**

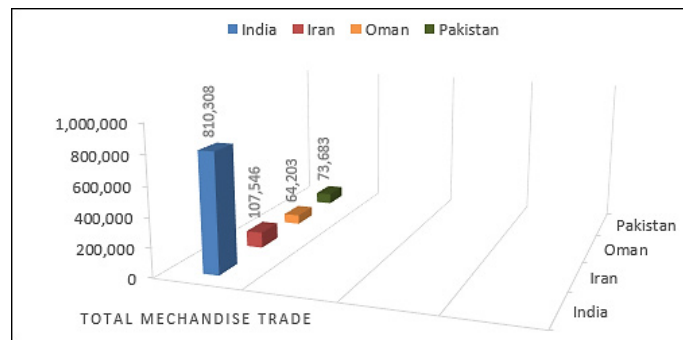
The marine commerce of any nation relies mostly on maritime transit, and Pakistan's numbers in this respect are not promising (Figure 7). As shown in the Table 5, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation's current fleet consists of just eleven ships (Including two oil tankers acquired in 2019).

Furthermore, in 2011, the country owned five general cargo boats, although it does not own any now (UNCTAD, 2020). Pakistan's annual proportion of the global commercial fleet by flag of registration fell from 0.001 percent in 2019 to 0.002 percent in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2019). Fascinatingly, Bangladesh contributes just 0.10

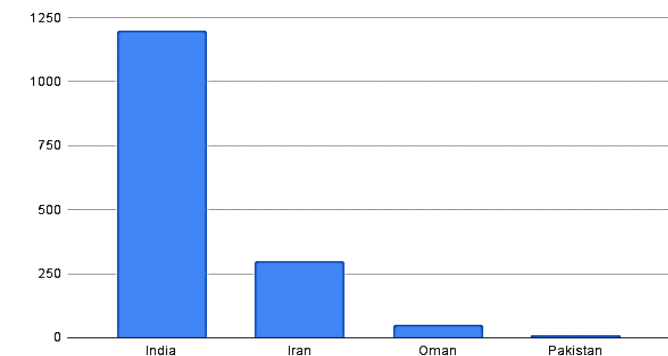


percent of the world’s commercial fleet. For a maritime nation, the UNCTAD’s statistics section indicates that Pakistan’s fleet growth rate is zero percent. The budget for PMAD was 2,683 million (US\$ 16 million) in total, down 46% from the prior (revised) allocation of 4,324 million for the fiscal year 2019–20 (UNCTAD, 2020). As a result, Pakistan’s falling financial capacity has had a detrimental impact on the country’s total goods trade, which is bigger than Oman’s but still lags Iran (Figure 8).

development. In 2014, Bangladesh’s shipbuilding sector constructed vessels with a gross tonnage of 15,220 GT; in 2019, this figure increased to 56,798 GT, a stunning 273 percent rise (UNCTADSTAT, 2020).



**Figure 8: Comparison of Pakistan’s merchandise trade with maritime neighbors (in US\$ million).**



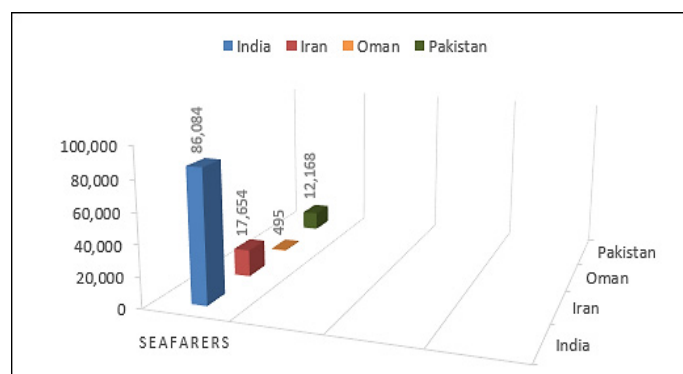
**Figure 7: Comparison of Pakistani Shipping with its maritime neighbors.**

**Table 5: Tankers/Bulk carriers owned by PNSC (PNSC, 2020).**

Name	IMO #	Gross tonnage	In service	Year built
<b>Tankers</b>				
M.T. Khairpur	9594872	42,411	2019	2012
M.T. Bolan	95994884	42,411	2019	2013
MT Quetta	9270555	58,118	2008	2003
MT Lahore	9277541	58,157	2010	2003
MT Karachi	9257814	58,127	2010	2003
MT Shalamar	9336842	55,894	2014	2006
<b>Bulk carriers</b>				
MV Chitral	9272876	26,395	2010	2003
MV Malakand	9304198	40,040	2010	2004
MV Hyderabad	9278789	29,365	2011	2004
MV Sibi	9519224	17,018	2011	2009
MV Multan	9241671	27,986	2012	2002

Pakistan’s ability to recycle its commercial fleet has deteriorated. In only three years, the nation’s recycling capacity decreased by 175 percent, from 4,136,530 in 2017 to 272,674 in 2018. Between 2007 and 2014, Pakistan built 306 gross tons of commercial seagoing vessels. Pakistan could not even meet the essential criterion (100 GT and above) of the Clarkson Research Center for the statistics to be computed and documented annually from 2015 through 2020. In comparison to Pakistan, Bangladesh’s shipbuilding sector is prospering and advancing, which is a fascinating

The worldwide maritime industry relied heavily on Pakistani sailors before 2015. At 0.74 percent of the global economy, the 12,168 sailors who are employed by the world’s marine trade are certainly doing their part (Figure 9). But Pakistan has a great chance to progress in this area if it chooses to increase the number of its sailors (UNCTAD, Maritime Profile, Pakistan, 2019).



**Figure 9: Pakistan and its maritime neighbors’ Seafarers comparison (in thousands).**

Transport and trade on the seas rely on a network of communication and transport links. Pakistan’s LSCI index rating for the first quarter of 2021 is 41.95, up from the LSCI index rating of 41.77 in the fourth quarter of 2020. Pakistan’s direct and indirect maritime transportation linkages are growing, as seen by this figure that is greater than several littorals in the Indian Ocean area. Expanding maritime trade requires a stable and strengthening bilateral link, which is good news for Pakistan. The number of containers that may be transported via Pakistani ports has increased by 44% in the last decade. Twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) increased from 2,149,000 in 2010 to 3,367,850 in 2019 (UNCTADSTAT, 2020). Despite Oman’s increased capacity for container handling, Pakistan’s port calls continue to lag those of its other maritime neighbors (Table 6).

**Table 6: Pakistan and its maritime neighbors' global share in port calls comparison.**

Type	India	Iran	Oman	Pakistan
Container ships	1.73	0.13	0.36	0.25
Liquid bulk carriers	1.89	00.9	0.23	0.16
Dry breakbulk carriers	2.19	0.41	0.05	0.03
Dry bulk carriers	3.85	0.19	0.36	0.21
LPG carriers	2.67	-	0.12	0.12
LNG carriers	3.13	-	1	0.97

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the significance of the marine industry to Pakistan's economy and security, the challenges this sector must confront be thoroughly investigated. Because the ocean is responsible for eighty percent of world commerce, it is essential that Pakistan's think tanks study modifications to economic and trade laws that exclusively include the ocean. The decline in the PNSC's fleet's size reflects the country's lack of progress in the marine commerce sector. Oman is expanding at a quick rate and has already surpassed Pakistan in terms of the size of its navy, which numbers more than fifty ships. Pakistan runs the risk of falling far behind its maritime neighbors if it does not make extraordinary efforts to handle marine trade concerns in a sustainable manner. It is of the utmost importance that the governments of Sindh and Balochistan, two of Pakistan's coastal provinces, collaborate on the development of plans and policies. The Pakistani authorities responsible for marine affairs are not communicating with one another or coordinating their activities in any way. The key to making the marine sector better and more effective, which would lead to more commerce, is establishing a maritime governance model, ideally under a single canopy. Consequently, the reliability of the maritime industry's operations has been undermined. It is because Pakistan has not yet been successful in making full use of its geographical advantage as a maritime nation that its capacity to administer this region has worsened. However, if Pakistan adopts global notions of a blue economy, it may significantly and favorably impact the growth and competence of Pakistan's maritime commerce. This is because a "blue economy" is an economy that relies heavily on ocean resources.

Since the local insurgency has created some security concerns along the coastal roadway connecting Ormara, Pasni, and Gaddani, we need to give it our full attention. The highway's potential is great, but it is also incredibly dangerous, and we may not be able to use it until we do anything to fix the problem of securitization. Allah has blessed our land with easy access to the sea. We must pay close attention to marine issues since the sea is the foundation of national economic activity. Our current economy also suggests that we should teach our citizens more about the ocean. It is time to start thinking about

things from a maritime perspective instead of a terrestrial one. Increasing our profits requires making full use of our Exclusive Economic Zone. The ocean has the potential to bring about the necessary economic development with far less outlay of resources. Ports, commercial ships, harbors, and supporting infrastructure contribute to a country's maritime might. This necessitates our immediate focus to effect positive change. Any additional delay in this respect would result in stifled economic growth and a weakened defense of the country's maritime boundary. If the nation's economy and navy are to remain secure, they must quickly establish a foothold in the current climate. There will undoubtedly be many difficulties, but the economy will multiply once it gets going.

### Conflict of interest

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

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