

CHABAHAR PORT: A CHALLENGE FOR PAKISTAN

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Abstract

In recent years, India has shifted its policy to strategically isolate Pakistan at the international level by lobbying against Pakistan on international forums and establishing alliances with countries like Iran and Afghanistan to gain economic benefits and expand its defence and surveillance capabilities by gaining secure access to assets and infrastructure outside its borders. India is also competing with China and Chinese business expansion in the region. A prime example of this rivalry is its funding for the development of Chabahar port against Gwadar port, which is an important element of Pakistan's CPEC project. Through Chabahar port, India has not only initiated a trade war against China and Pakistan but is also contributing to increased terrorism in Pakistan. This paper presents an analysis of how the Chabahar port will create economic, security, and strategic challenges for Pakistan.

Keywords: Chabahar port, CPEC, IOR, RAW, CARs

Introduction

India is setting the stage for a geopolitical hostility and trade competition in South Asia, by assisting Iran in establishing a port in

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Chabahar close to Pakistan's Gwadar port in the Balochistan province. India has always remained averse to the development and building of Gwadar port and its intention to invest in and develop Iran's Chabahar port is in competition with Pakistan.

India is promoting Chabahar as a port of economic importance located on the Makran coast. But it bears immense strategic importance too because it addresses its security needs in the region as well as its trade interests, particularly with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Owing to a longstanding inconsistency in relations with Pakistan, it has been difficult for India to establish a secure shipment route to the markets of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Pakistan forbids land transit of Indian goods across its territory. To address the problem, Iran and India signed a commercial contract to resolve the market access problem, which is also a part of a trilateral concord signed in May 2016 between Iran, India, and Afghanistan. This agreement is based on the development of the port, railway track, and a road network, which will connect Iran to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). The initial phase of the Chabahar port was completed in December 2017 and this project was the first overseas instance of an Indian state-owned port, which was inaugurated on 3 December 2017 by Hassan Rouhani, the President of Iran.¹ India is funding the expansion of the Chabahar port. "This port will connect the International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC) which presently stretches from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf to Russia, Eurasia, and Europe."² This strategic port is a key transportation route to the landlocked CARs, as well as Russia, and also is expected to smoothen the progress of trade between them.³



This port has provided India with an enhanced ability to monitor activities at Gwadar port and even initiate sub-conventional manoeuvring against Pakistan from Iran. In February 2018, a contract was signed between India and Iran to give operational authority of the Chabahar port to India for the next 18 months. Both sides agreed that they will cooperate in the oil sector and enhance their traditional 'buyer-seller' relationship to develop a long-term strategic partnership.⁴ According to one observer, India has launched a massive media campaign on an international forum to portray that "the real port is Chabahar port whereas Gwadar is a total failure in the future."⁵ This anti-Gwadar campaign by India has given rise to a 'war of ports' in the region.⁶ The trends are changing in the world and if we see recent developments, it seems that Chabahar port is an economic confrontation against Pakistan.

Chabahar: A Port of India

The Chabahar port is at a distance of less than 100 nautical miles from the Gwadar port. It consists of two ports: the Shahid Kalantri and the Shahid Beheshti. Each port is based on 5 berths that handle cargo. Iran has bigger plans to manage the Chabahar port with the assistance of India. Zaranj in Afghanistan is about 883 km from the Chabahar port and the existing road network in Iran links to Zaranj. India has constructed a road from Zaranj to Delaram, which can provide an entry into Afghanistan's Garland highway, linking it to other major cities of Afghanistan like Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kandahar. India is also renovating one berth at the Shahid Beheshti port and a 600-meter-long container handling capability at the port. According to the *Economic Times of India*, India has pledged \$500 million for the project.⁷ Besides, India has already pledged \$100 million for a road that will connect western Afghanistan to the Chabahar port.⁸

The Chabahar port is essential for India to avoid Pakistan and open up a trade route to the landlocked Afghanistan with which it has developed close economic and political ties.⁹ India has always been seeking ways to gain access to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan. During the 1990s, India partially built the Chabahar port to reduce transportation costs and freight time to Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ During the government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, an agreement to build the Chabahar port was inked but the deal was delayed during the subsequent years.¹¹ The development process of the project was delayed because of international nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. Iran has constructed a highway from Chabahar to Delaram and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) of India constructed a highway known as Route 606, which was completed in 2009,¹² connecting Delaram to Zaranj, the border city and capital of Nimruz province of Afghanistan, respectively.

The CARs market is dominated by China, Russia, and Europe. Indian policymakers believe that if they can construct a convenient

trade route, it could rapidly increase their trade with the region. "India's trade with the five key Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan—has been a mere \$1.6 billion."¹³ Therefore, in addition to the Chabahar port, India is also looking at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, to advance trade with the West. "In September 2014, India held a trial run of an empty container tagged with a GPS device, from Mumbai by sea to Bandar Abbas and thence by road to Astrakhan in southern Russia, passing through Azerbaijan and found this route substantially reduced transport costs to the region."¹⁴ Plans are to steadily promote it up to the capacity of 86 million tonnes per year, whereas in 2015, the port could handle 2.1 million tonnes of cargo annually. The first phase of development work at the Shahid Beheshti port was completed in December 2017, which has increased the capacity of cargo handling to 8 million tonnes per year.¹⁵

Challenges for Pakistan

A Battleground of Great Powers' Politics

The Indian Ocean, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea are very important transit routes for the world economy. Eight out of ten of the world's busiest container ports are in this region. Mahan, a naval strategist and an author of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, argued that national prosperity and power depended on control of the world's sea lanes. He famously said, "Whoever rules the waves rules the world."¹⁶ China and India continue to struggle for maritime sway, as the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) remains both strategically and commercially advantageous. India is concerned about the increasing Chinese foothold in the IOR. The following factors have motivated India to build a powerful blue-water navy:

- Protecting sea lanes for trade.
- Creating and maintaining challenges for its rivals in the region.

- Safeguarding the vital energy lifeline, especially from the Persian/Arabian Gulf.
- Realising its age-old ambition of becoming a great naval power with nuclear capability.

Since the 1970s, India has been actively seeking dominance in the IOR. India has used its navy to prop up its ambition to achieve a great power status in comparison to other small nations within the South Asian region. India has developed maritime security measures in the Andaman Sea and has conducted joint exercises with the Royal Thai Navy to tackle drugs and human trafficking, piracy, and illegal fishing. India also tried to enhance the scope of the exercises to include other IOR countries and sign agreement to consolidate regional maritime cooperation.¹⁷

India, to a certain extent, overtly acted to curtail the role of Pakistan in the region. India has often spent time and resources to deny Pakistan's lead within and outside the region. India always considered Gwadar port a part of the Chinese 'string of pearls' policy, especially its extension from its eastern coast to the Arabian Sea. China having developed ports in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka could pose a challenge to India in the IOR. India is concerned about the Chinese control of the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs), which could be hampered if Pakistan would become a means of Chinese influence in the SLOCs around the Persian Gulf. It is in this context that India is constructing the Chabahar port near the south-western border of Pakistan, which could pose a serious challenge for Pakistan by asserting Indian maritime dominance both on the east and west of Pakistan. Chabahar port allows India to check Pakistani and Chinese maritime activities in the IOR and the Gulf regions. On the other hand, the US is also inclined to counter China in this region and India is gladly playing the proxy for the US. Indian hegemony in the IOR is also a matter of concern for Pakistan.

Challenges in Security Domain

Several international and regional powers are viewing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a challenge to their strategic interests in this region. The Indian opposition to CPEC, in particular, has never been a secret. India is undertaking unconcealed and concealed efforts to sabotage it. India is frightened of growing Chinese stakes in the Gwadar port and this is one of the reasons that India is not in favour of the operationalisation of Gwadar port, which would have serious strategic implications for it. Chabahar port is a launching pad of the Indian sabotage activities inside Pakistan. The low-level insurgency in Balochistan is one of the main stumbling blocks for Gwadar to deliver on its promise. India has been actively provoking volatility and instability in Balochistan by helping the insurgents and sponsoring terrorist activities. Leaders of the Baloch insurgencies have publicly listed India as their sponsor. Brahamdagh Bugti, the head of the banned terrorist organisation the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), accepted that his organisation was getting assistance from Afghanistan and India in furthering their cause. He not only thanked Modi but also hoped that he “would raise this issue at international forums.”¹⁸

Growing Indian influence in Afghanistan will also have negative cascading effects on Pakistan, mainly influencing the development of CPEC. In Balochistan, the simmering insurgency can lead to the weakening of trade. This will be in Indian advantage to use a multi-pronged strategy to delay CPEC, which enhances Pakistan’s economic growth through Gwadar port. India is plotting ethnic violence in Pakistan to sabotage CPEC. India’s indirect meddling in Pakistan is manifested in sponsoring various terrorist groups in Pakistan, like Baloch insurgents and other sub-nationalist outfits especially the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), while speaking at an international conference titled *Regional Dynamics*

and Strategic Concerns in South Asia and organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) shared that India had set up a Balochistan operations cell under its spy agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), for subversion and terrorist activities in the province.¹⁹ In 2016, an agent of RAW named Kulbhushan Yadhav was caught in Balochistan. His interrogation revealed that he was involved in giving naval fighting training to Baloch separatists to target Pakistani ports while operating from Chabahar. Further, he confessed that he had been directing various activities in Karachi and Balochistan on the instructions of RAW since 2013. Gen Hayat further revealed that the arrest of Kulbhushan Yadhav from Baluchistan had been the 'proverbial smoking gun' in the matter of CPEC.²⁰

India is supporting a 'free Balochistan' campaign internationally to portray a negative image of Pakistan in front of the international community. Modi government has signalled zero tolerance for CPEC. Indian involvement in Baluchistan is in-line with its aims of dominating the Arabian Sea. Gen Hayat also revealed that India had set aside Rs.55 billion against CPEC.²¹ The amount India had been investing against this project—which has benefits and advantages for all regional states in Asia upon its completion—shows how much India wants to fail it. India is always against trade corporation between Pakistan and China. Whereas India was invited by Pakistan and China to be a part of CPEC, due to its traditional anti-China and anti-Pakistan attitude in the region, it decided to stay away.

RAW is funding, training, and arming Baloch insurgents in their camps located in Afghanistan.²² They also have several camps in India where they gave training to Baloch insurgents, which was later denied by the Indian authorities.²³ In the past two decades, target killing, organised crimes, and frequent shutdowns of the largest metropolis of the country Karachi have resulted in serious consequences for the country's economy.

Indo-Iranian Nexus

Both India and Iran are ambitious about their common interests in the region. The interests are just not limited to dominance in regional politics and the security of energy resources but to gain access to landlocked Central Asian markets and beyond. These common interests have made them close allies. A smooth flow of trade between India and Iran shows a growing relationship of trust among the two nations. Working together in collaboration with CARs will provide them alternate communication routes through the Russian territory, which will provide more effective and efficient ways to allow the countries of Central Asia to trade and open regional market access. Besides the economic interest, Iran has been actively pursuing its interests in Central Asia and establishing its influence against Western dominance. In recent years, India has made a significant investment in Afghanistan and Central Asia within the power and physical infrastructure sectors and taking part in the development and explorations of the region's energy resources. According to the US Department of Energy's figures, "India is already the world's sixth-largest consumer of energy resources. Its energy consumption will rise to 27.1 quadrillion BTUs by 2025, up from 12.7 in 2000, the largest energy consumption state after China."²⁴ India's domestic natural gas supply has significantly increased and the country has rapidly grown its potential in recent years, but the energy requirement is not likely to keep pace with the growing demand. India can access Central Asia through Iran as Iran is strategically located at the crossroads of Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia controlling the transportation lines that pass between landlocked states and high seas. The common interests in economic, security, and energy sectors have provided a rationale for close interaction and cooperation between Iran and India in this region.

India and Iran are both motivated by their economic interests. India is primarily benefitting from Iranian alliance as it is providing

financial assistance to Iran whose economy is crippled with US economic sanctions. Iran has been under sanctions for many years before, and this is an economic development opportunity for it to have a free trade zone near Gwadar. On the other hand, India is benefitting by competing to be a regional leader along with China. The development of Chabahar helps India boost its regional status and establish new markets for its goods exports and energy imports. However, India not only looks forward to importing Iranian oil; it also wishes to invest in Iranian gas fields so that it can utilise that energy in the future with its industrial and economic needs. India is using Iran's territory for its economic interest to establish dominance in the Central Asian region and to sabotage Pakistan's territory and economy. Since 9/11, cooperation between India and Iran has increased with mutual benefits in Afghanistan. Iran sees India as a strong partner to evade strategic isolation, particularly when Iran is under increased financial stress and had been nominated as a member of the 'Axis of Evil' by former US President George Bush. Indian interests in Central Asia and beyond can only be achieved when it partners with Iran and both of them align their actions to achieve common goals. Iran provides transit for natural gas from Central Asia to India and in gaining access to the markets, energy reserves, and potential client states.²⁵

Pakistan is concerned with the growing economic ties between India and Iran, even though Iran has assured Pakistan that its collaboration with India is not in opposition to Pak-China partnership. Commercial trade through Chabahar port has increased and a high volume of the goods and trade activity has been diverted from Karachi to Chabahar port.²⁶ This trade route offers a strategic pathway to India, effortlessly bypassing Pakistan and allows access to Afghanistan. Since Afghanistan is a landlocked country, this route reduces the transport costs and freight time to approximately one third to the Gulf States as well as Central Asia for India. The Chabahar port presents a golden opportunity for India to access Iranian, Afghan, and CARs markets,

which will, in turn, lead to establishing political influence on the Afghan government. All of these actions will pave the way for India to get access to Turkmenistan gas and look for future opportunities to develop gas transport infrastructure and pipeline or shipment facilities through LNG/LPG tankers.

Strengthening of Indo-Iranian ties has not only economic but far-reaching security implications for Pakistan. The presence of Indian military personnel on Iranian military bases, even if it is solely to train the Iranians, would allow India a more subtle 'operational' use of an early warning, intelligence gathering against Pakistan.²⁷ Security ties between India and Iran can be determined from the reported existence of an Indian consulate with presumed intelligence duties on the Pakistani border and also at Zahedan in Iran. India had established a new consulate at Bandar Abbas in 2002 to monitor ship movements in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.²⁸ The military presence in Central Asia with or without strike capability would enable India in the event of a war with Pakistan to create a 'holding challenge' along its western borders. Indeed, Indian leverage with Iran has steadily grown with the souring of ties between Pakistan and Iran.²⁹

Challenges in Economic Domain

India's absolute cooperation with Iran towards making the Chabahar port competes with Pakistan's Gwadar port. Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has decreased by about 80 per cent in recent years, the bulk of which is snapped up India and Iran, it does seem to indicate that trade with Afghanistan is going to present more challenges with the inauguration of the Chabahar port.³⁰ Political instability in the country is resulting in frequent closure of Torkham, and because of this, the trade diverted through this route is welcomed by the Chabahar port. As a result of this situation, Pakistan's current account deficit increased to an all-time high 37% and the government is facing Rupee devaluation as well.³¹ Resultantly, Pakistan's current \$1.1 billion exports to Afghanistan dwindle further at a time when the

ballooning current deficit does not afford a drop in trade. Pakistan's bilateral trade with Afghanistan stood at over \$2 billion in 2017-18.³²

Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoost, while speaking on Pakistan-Iran relations at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad (ISSI), said, "Chabahar would not turn out to be an enemy port to Gwadar but work as a 'friend' port."³³ He further said the recent trilateral agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan on Chabahar port was 'not finished' and that both China and Pakistan were welcome to join it. Both Pakistan and Iran are wooing Afghanistan to give trade and fee incentives to support their respective ports.

The objective of India behind the development of the strategically located Chabahar port, road, and rail network is intended to counter Pakistan and Chinese alliance in the South West Asian region. Pakistan through the CPEC is increasingly getting bracketed with China and as a consequence, it has become a softer target for the Indo-US-Afghan geopolitical games against Beijing. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, during his recent Kabul and New Delhi visits, alluded to deeper cooperation with India in the context of growing Chinese influence in Asia.³⁴

For Pakistan, the country's defence is interlinked with the country's economy. In the last decade, Pakistan's economy and infrastructure was badly hit by terrorism. Pakistan is in the rehabilitation phase and looking towards the CPEC as being the Game Changer for this region, especially for Pakistan. China invested around \$57 billion in Pakistan under CPEC and is looking towards additional investments in the country, which will boost Pakistan's GDP and economy. India is looking to counter CPEC, as the Indian government realises that it would be a great transformative factor in their region and the presence of the Chabahar port surely presents a challenge to the Gwadar port.

Indian Presence in CARs

CARs have huge natural reserves (gas and oil) that attract regional states. India has also shown its interest in the natural gas reserves of CARs and is investing a lot in Uzbekistan's oil and natural gas and energy sector as well as in the military sector. Uzbekistan repairs and produces 11-78 MAR transport aircraft for the Indian military. In the security sector, India has signed an Inter-governmental agreement with Kazakhstan for fighting with terrorism³⁵. For membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), India lobbied for Russian support. India is interested in developing lasting relations with CARs and for that India will not leave a single stone unturned to pursue a proactive strategy/policy with Iran.³⁶

A new Indo-Iranian alliance based on the convergence interests in Central Asia can robustly influence the interest of Pakistan at both regional and international levels. Not only India, Iran as a neighbour of CARs is also carving for a crucial role in the economic development of the region. Until now, India has been more successful than Pakistan in improving its political and diplomatic relations with CARs. In Central Asia, it is evident that Indian heavy investment with the collaboration of Iran determines its presence and intended dominance in the region. On Ayni Airbase in Tajikistan, India has invested US\$70 million to refurbish the airbase, including 3,200-meter extended runway and installation of navigational and air defence equipment.³⁷ Just because of Indian interests, to gain a strategic foothold in CARs is a serious challenge for Pakistan. This rising coalition of these two leading players in the region in both economic and security fields can pose a serious challenge for Pakistan in the future, particularly if it is not countered well on time.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chabahar port is the focal point for increasing collaboration between India and Iran in the fields of defence and regional security. Its development presents a serious challenge to trade and commerce

of the Gwadar port as well as to the security of Pakistan. Iran has maintained its stand that the Chabahar port will remain under Iran's management and will not turn into a military port for India. However, providing any sort of logistic support to India by Iran in the Chabahar port will enable the Indian navy to increase its intelligence activities close to Pakistan's borders. This presents a serious security threat to Pakistan. Pakistan must continue to maintain diplomatic pressure on Iran to limit Indian presence and surveillance activities not too far from the Balochistan's border and ensure Pakistan's national interest is protected.

Chinese interest in Iran is also alarming for India. The US has recently imposed sanctions on Iran, which have had serious economic implications for Iran. India and the US are on the same page about the exemption of the Chabahar port because of their mutual interests in this region and both countries do not want Chinese dominance in the South Asian region. Despite serious opposition of the US Senate on India's investment in the Chabahar port, former US president Barack Obama supported New Delhi's investment in the Iranian port. The US coalition with India is also seen from the perspective of the recent agreement between the US and India that validates the reality that emerging China is a challenge to the regional balance of power. They are also concerned about the rise of Chinese economic power in the region. As strategic rivalry escalates between China and the United States, the presence of China in Gwadar will create new conditions in the energy hub. To reduce the importance of Gwadar port, Americans have set their sight on Oman's port of Duqm, an oil dock in the United Arab Emirates' Fujairah port, and Iran's Chabahar port, therefore; they are supporting India's effort. The Duqm port allows India to carry out maintenance on its military vessels opens endless opportunities for the Indian navy. The Indian navy can freely operate in the Persian Gulf without the hassle of going back to its shipyards for maintenance and overhauling. As a result, without establishing a naval base in Oman,

India will be able to hold a strong military presence in the region. The existence of India in the two strategic ports means that India will be able to fortify its maritime presence in the region.

Another apprehension is that India will use its amplified influence in Afghanistan to destabilise Pakistan. India is using the Chabahar port as a base for espionage operations against Pakistan, especially for destabilising measures in Baluchistan province. Kulbhushan was one bead of espionage chain and his arrest does not mean that the chain is broken. In this regard, the provocative statements by the Indian Home Minister Raj Nath Singh and the Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj cautioning Pakistan government about the consequences of Yadhav's conviction for bilateral are quite alarming.³⁸

Afghanistan has already nudged nearly 80 per cent of the Afghan's transit and bilateral trade away from Karachi. The trade switch to the Chabahar port badly impacts the Pakistan economy. Afghanistan now considers the Chabahar port as a more secure and shorter route for Afghanistan than the current transit trade route that crosses through Pakistan. Indian influence in CARS can isolate Pakistan in the region and through Chabahar port, India will use the Iranian route which provides easy access to the markets of Afghanistan and Central Asian Republican states. The ability of India to access the CARS and gain influence in Afghanistan depends upon how speedy the projected expansion of the Chabahar port can be completed. As a result, Pakistan's dominance over strategic transit routes in the region will be reduced, thereby giving a significant blow to the national economy resulting in millions of dollars in lost revenue.

South Asia is witnessing the rise of new powers and their strategic, economic, and security interests in the region. India's geopolitical posturing masked in geo-economics exposes several risks/challenges to the national security of Pakistan. To counter these challenges below are some recommendations:

- Pakistan needs to expedite the development process of CPEC. The success and execution of CPEC largely depend on the restoration of peace in Balochistan to assist in the development of essential infrastructure. The central government and the military leadership have been working resolutely on a two-pronged strategy: to restore the writ of the state in the province and end the decades-old insurgency.
- In 2015, a National Action plan was announced by the Government of Pakistan to crack down on terrorism and to supplement the ongoing anti-terrorist offensive in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Under the National Action Plan, the army has carried out operations against insurgents and terrorist groups, resulting in a substantial decline in sabotage activities and terrorist attacks in the Balochistan province to suppress the foreign-supported insurgency.
- *Pur Aman* Balochistan (Peaceful Balochistan) plan, which is in progress, has produced results. Several *fararis* (fugitives) and armed men have surrendered before the authorities. This programme has helped them to start new lives. As a result, the province is now more peaceful as compared to four years ago.
- The Pakistan Army has also established initiatives in the education sector. Providing education and training to the youth and unemployed has resulted in employment opportunities for Baloch youth in different fields. Many of them have been recruited in the Army.
- Pakistan Civil Government also put some serious efforts for the rehabilitation of Balochistan and issued various funds for the development and reserved special quota for Balochistan students in Pakistan universities.

- These measures have helped in eliminating the sense of deprivation in the Baluchistan and denying the insurgents of a legitimate cause to mislead the Balouch youth. To sustain continuous peace and stability in Baluchistan, these efforts must be continued, strengthened and supplemented through other steps without any political expediency. Meanwhile, a careful military action based on intelligence must continue against the insurgents to maintain peace and stability as well as sustainable economic growth resulting from the CPEC project and other development initiatives.
- Pakistan will have to establish a strong lobby to confront India's propaganda and strengthen its case in front of the international community about Indian interference in Baluchistan. The recent government efforts to launch a diplomatic offensive and raise the issue at the international forums and the UN is a good start but this needs to be supplemented with the Pakistani foreign office as well as the diplomatic missions abroad to continuously present Pakistan's position in front of the foreign government leaders. This will help to put pressure on India to put off from supporting the insurgency. India's vigorous effort to damaging Pakistan at the international level by projecting its image as a state sponsoring terrorist activity in the neighbouring countries is not hidden. This impression also needs to be erased through effective countermeasures at the international level and Pakistan establishment must come up with a strong counter approach to lobby its position and clarify any misunderstands created by India. Without an aggressive approach and a dedicated team of professionals, this goal cannot be achieved

- The media in Pakistan should also adopt a national image-building strategy and look out for any misleading stories that are either published in Indian publications or presented through written or visual media, such as Television, Internet or Social Media forums, and counter them with facts and figures. Unfortunately, there is no strategy in place to boost the nation's image through effective media cell.
- Actions must be taken to identify the chain which was running under the supervision of an Indian agent Yadhav for terrorist activities. An effective intelligence gathering system should be in place to ensure tighter control over any possible rise of revolt or acts of terrorism. The development of Gwadar is only possible when there will be peace and stability in Baluchistan.
- Actions must be taken to protect the workforce from China and Pakistan on the CPEC projects and the infrastructure being created under CPEC. This has been partially achieved by the creation of a special force comprising of around 15,000 security personnel. Pakistan should be more obvious in its loom and make a strategy that can limit Indian influence in CARS by considering this region (CARS) as an area of strategic importance. Pakistan should also go for an energetic diplomatic and political interface with CARS on a matter of collective concerns that will make sure their presences at all levels in this region.
- Pakistan's economy is interlinked with the defence of a country. Quick completion of CPEC would result in bilateral trade and economic growth that would provide the country much-needed cash to fund not only its defence and development but also to invest in the social sector and human resource development.

- The rapidly increasing cooperation between Iran and India, particularly in the defence field, does have certain impacts on Pakistan. Based on India-Iran Defence Cooperation Agreement, the presence of India's forces in military bases of Iran may not only be for military training/exercise. India may use this opportunity to spy and gather information about Pakistan and its strategic interests. Pakistan should see this factor with deep concern.
- Pakistan ministerial-level delegation attended the inauguration ceremony of the Chabahar port; where the president of Iran said this port will be a sister to the Gwadar port. In Feb 2018; operational control of the Chabahar port is given to India for the next 18 months. In this perspective; Pakistan should ensure from Iran that; the Indian control over the Chabahar port shall not be used against the interests of Pakistan, which is seen obvious in the context of the Indo-Pak relationship.
- Focusing on the importance of the Gwadar port, Pakistan needs to develop a strategic information plan by utilising all mediums on CARS which shall be based on the government's economic, planning, development and trade policy. Because of the geo-strategic location of the Gwadar port, it is a historic and cultural connection between Pakistan and CARS and can serve as an advance contributor in the national growth.
- Lastly, Pakistan can use the case study of Dubai and Singapore which have used their ports as a key strategy to establish trade by establishing tax-free zones and set up megacities to attract foreign investment in real estate and industry by providing key incentives to foreign investors and giving tax breaks. The port of Gwadar can be a source of economic independence for Pakistan.

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