

China-Iran Strategic Partnership: Implications for Pakistan

Mariya Naz¹, Arooba Ahad¹, Marwa Bibi¹, Mairaj ul Hamid²

¹ BS Political Science, University of Malakand, Session (2022-2026)

² Lecturer at department of Political Science, University of Malakand, **Corresponding Author.**
Email: mairajulhamid717@gmail.com.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i2.2327>

Abstract

China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), further opportunities of energy cooperation and as a transit route to connect South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. But Pakistan has to face huge challenges in balancing its diplomacy with Iran and the Gulf countries, as well as in coping with the restrictions imposed by sanctions, and competition in the region has been increasing. The study highlights that Pakistan's foreign policy in the context of the evolving China – Iran nexus needs to be pragmatic with a neutrality based approach and built on institutional resilience and strategic foresight. Pakistan has a strategic geographic location and strong relationships, which can turn regional changes into lasting benefits. The Strategic Partnership between China and Iran, Pakistan Foreign Policy, CPEC, Belt and Road Initiative, Regional Geopolitics, Multipolar Order, Gwadar Port, Pakistan–Iran Relations are the key words of this article. This research aims to highlight the key enablers and aspects of Iran–China strategic partnership and explore its consequences on Pakistan's foreign policy, regional security landscape and economic growth.

Keywords: Pak-China. China-Iran, Pak-Iran, CPEC, OBOR, BRI

Introduction

The international political system is in one of its most crucial and dynamic changes in its history. The world is slowly evolving from the unipolar world, the only central world power of which was the USA, to the multipolar world of emerging powers on the regions and countries. A key feature of this new order is that its alliances are changing, geopolitical interests and the competition between the main powers are increasing. In this context, countries are reviewing their strategic partnerships, and readjusting their foreign policies to seek new means of economic and political influence. Among the most significant developments in this changing world is the China-Iran strategic cooperation, which could change the regional dynamics of Asia and the Middle East and beyond (Emrah Yıldırımçakar, 2023).

China has now become the second largest economy in the world, and is steadily building a strategic presence in various parts of the world via the BRI. But Iran has a strategic position, as it is the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, and it has massive natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Strategically, Iran has been of great importance despite decades of sanctions and political pressure, with its energy reserves, influence in regional affairs and geographic location. The bilateral cooperation between Iran and China has blossomed over decades and, particularly, with the signing of the 25-year cooperation agreement (CSP) in Najafabad in 2021, a new momentum was generated. It includes an undertaking in the shape of

China's huge investment in Iranian energy resources, transport, industrial infrastructure and more. Energy-rich sectors are seeing the greatest growth, especially in technology, and assured long-term energy supplies to China. This cooperation has now gone far beyond trade, to include a multi-dimensional strategic cooperation with trade, security, and regional connectivity implications.

The burgeoning partnership is especially relevant to China's wider geopolitical aspirations: A close bond with Iran will ensure China more energy supplies and greater influence in the Middle East, which has been a traditional arena of U.S. domination. The deal is welcome for Iran as it provides it with much-needed economic assistance in the context of sanctions, new avenues for trade and infrastructure development, and diplomatic support from a key world player. Overall, the China-Iran partnership is establishing a new trend in regional geopolitics and rebalancing the power dynamics along key strategic stretches (Eslami, 2023).

The developments have far-reaching implications for the country, whose geo-strategic and geopolitical significance is beyond doubt. Geopolitically, Pakistan is a unique region as it is in the heart of South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and China which makes Pakistan encounter tremendous geopolitical tensions. To complicate the situation, Pakistan is already facing historical issues, political rivalry and security issues with India on its eastern border. The issue is further complicated by the fact that Pakistan already has its quota of deep-rooted and historical conflicts, political enmity and security concerns with India on its eastern border. Its links with Afghanistan have been marked by decades of instability and political mistrust and problems with militias, cross-border movement. This is a very delicate situation and Pakistan can't afford a third hostile neighbor. Consequently, Iran's contribution in Pakistan's security blueprints has been extremely significant. A peaceful and quiet border with the west can be maintained and Iran can be made to be a cooperative partner in various fields including energy projects, border management, security and trade, which are possible only with a stable and cooperative relationship with Iran (Rana, 2021).

Hence, Pakistan's foreign policy is complementary to it, taking into consideration the country's long-standing and significant ties with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has been one of Pakistan's closest strategic partners in the years to come, and has extended tremendous financial support to Pakistan, supply of oil to Pakistan, military assistance, etc.

On deferred payment and investment opportunity and employment of millions of Pakistani workers, who deposit huge amount in the economy of Pakistan. The connection between the two states was also consolidated by religious, cultural and diplomatic ties. Saudi Arabia also plays a leading role in the defense and security layout of Pakistan via training programs, military cooperation, and strategic coordination. Therefore, Pakistan should watch carefully any development in the region in this regard and that is the growing Pakistan-Iran relationship with China so that it can keep its relations with Saudi Arabia intact. Balancing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia always has been a critical challenge for Pakistan, but now more than ever in the light of the current global transformation. China is enhancing ties with Iran and good relations with Pakistan and thus is opening up new opportunities in the region, especially CPEC. China's growing footprint in Iran could well see the connectivity networks extended, which will give fresh scope to Pakistan to become a node point for trade between China and Iran and the rest of the Middle East and Central Asia, further enhancing its economic prospects and opening up new trade routes and consequently growing its economic power in the region. In the era of soothing geopolitical tensions, projects such as Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline could get a boost that would enable Pakistan to work towards better energy security. These opportunities are accompanied by challenges, though. Iran is building up Chabahar Port with investment from India, thus posing a challenge to CPEC's central component, Pakistan's Gwadar Port. Hence, Pakistan must seek solutions that would be most advantageous for the connectivity of the region without

compromising its interests. Iran becoming more involved in the security and defence aspects of China, for example, might result in new regional security dynamics that Pakistan would have to play with careful diplomacy while adhering to its traditional policy of strategic balance. Pakistan's foreign policy should be flexible, pragmatic and should be based on the principle of protecting national interests in this ever changing geopolitical context. This will highlight cooperation with Iran without adversely affecting relations with Saudi Arabia, regional connectivity through CPEC and Chinese influence in the world. The China-Iran strategic partnership is more than just a bilateral relationship; it's a trilateral partnership that brings Iran into the fold. The China-Iran strategic partnership is not just a bilateral one, it's a trilateral partnership that includes Iran. It is a key element of a greater multipolar change which strongly influences Pakistan's regional equation, its economic prospects and security environment. In this rapidly evolving world, fostering balanced relationships, opportunities, and addressing emerging challenges will be crucial to Pakistan's ability to contribute and remain relevant in the regional and international landscape (Anwar, 2025).

Iran–China Strategic Partnership: Drivers and Dimensions

Geopolitical Drivers

Geopolitical drivers are the factors that determine the foreign policy and international behavior of a country, including political, economic, strategic and environmental factors. They identify the reasons why countries form partnerships, or seek alliances or undertake activities in the region or internationally. Geopolitics is an instrument that helps understand the reasons behind the increased cooperation between the two countries in the context of the China-Iran strategic partnership.

Key Drivers:

Energy Security

The government has indicated that it will continue to invest in the economy and in infrastructure.

- Strategic Counterbalance to U.S. influence
- Regional Power Expansion

The first category was technology and defense cooperation. The first was technology and defense cooperation.

Explanation of Drivers:

Energy Security: Iran's oil and gas reserves are of a strategic importance for China, due to its growing energy requirements. Iran's access to international markets and the Chinese investment guarantees regular supply of funds for Iran under international sanctions.

Economic and Infrastructure Investment: Iran is an important node on the Belt and Road and it helps China to improve connectivity between Central Asia, Middle East and Europe. Trade facilitation, infrastructure and regional benefit both countries.

Strategic Counterbalance to U.S. Influence: As both China and Iran are under Western sanctions and pressure, China's relations with Iran provide them with autonomy against the U.S. and a means to counterbalance the U.S. influence in regional and global affairs.

Regional Power Expansion: China continues to consolidate its strategic footprint in West Asia and Iran continues to strengthen its regional influence, challenges to its rivals, and the influence on regional power dynamics.

Technology and Defense Cooperation: Iran will benefit from the cooperation in technology, infrastructure and defense, while China's presence in the region will be expanded.

Economic Dimension

The most powerful and solid footing of Iran-China cooperation is the economic cooperation. Iran has the world's second largest oil and natural gas reserves. The world's largest energy consumer and importer, China needs stable and long-term energy supplies. Iran offers China energy at competitive price and on a long term basis.

China has not abided by the international sanction and still has been trading with Iran. It relies on other banking systems, local currencies and barter trade. These mechanisms do not only help both sides to avoid the US controlled financial systems but also to avoid the danger of money laundering. This is an important trade to Iran's economic survival. It is the energy security and market access for China.

China has a large variety of export products to Iran. These encompass industrial machinery, consumer products, technology and construction materials. Chinese firms are very significant in Iran's industrial and manufacturing industries. This is a reciprocating trade which increases the economic dependency of Iran on China.

It is a comprehensive 25-year cooperation agreement which is a long term strategic plan. It includes energy, infrastructure, telecom, ports, railways and industrial development. Chinese investment assists the Iran's transport system and logistics capabilities. These projects also bolster China's Belt and Road initiative which links East Asia with the Middle East and Europe.

Security and Defense Cooperation

Since 1951, Pakistan has enjoyed a robust strategic partnership with China, which has included collaboration in defence, infrastructure and nuclear energy. China was supplying Pakistan with fighter jets, tanks and other military equipment from 1964 onwards and, following India-Pak war of 1965 and U.S. arms embargo, military cooperation started. Ever since, China has emerged as the biggest and most reliable arms supplier of Pakistan, the extent of joint development, license production and technology transfer.

Chinese tanks and artillery (Type-85-IIAP, Al-Khalid, VT-4), rocket launchers and missile systems (Baktar-Shikan, Anza) are used by the Pakistan Army. The Pakistan Air Force is equipped with Chinese fighter aircraft like F-6, A-5C, JF-17 and J-10CE, some of which are co-developed and upgraded. The Pakistan Navy has procured and indigenously developed fast attack craft – Azmat class, Frigates – Zulfiqar class and Tughra class, and Submarines – Hangar class, some of which were manufactured locally under the technology transfer agreements.

China's readiness to sell and co-develop weapons has boosted Pakistan's defence capabilities and continued to be a significant strategic partnership for the nation.

Historically there has been pragmatic and issue-oriented security and defense cooperation between Pakistan and Iran along their 900+ km border in Balochistan, mostly to deal with cross-border militancy, smuggling and insurgency. Pre-2023, collaboration was mainly reactive, namely for shared border fencing, joint border patrolling, and sharing of intelligence on border groups like Jaish al-Adl and Baloch separatists. Deeper defense integration was constrained by regional politics, such as those between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Cooperation has increasingly taken on a multi-dimensional and structured character since 2023. Joint border security exercises were held to improve the operational readiness and MoUs on maritime security were signed to reduce smuggling and illegal fishing. From high level military meetings to national security talks, counter-terrorism coordination, joint operational procedures and intelligence was reinforced and regular meetings were established under the High Border Commission to formalize bilateral engagement. The areas of cooperation are now focusing on border security, counterterrorism.

Limitations of the Partnership

While there are more examples of cooperation, the Iran-China strategic partnership is beset by limitations. These limits make it impossible to function as an alliance. The partnership remains based on interests and precautionary.

Firstly, China does not face confrontation with the U.S. USA is still China's key economic partner. China does not want to be in a situation that will negatively affect its trade with the west due to ties with Iran. Consequently, the Chinese government is not very active in providing assistance to Iran in sensitive scenarios. This lessens Iran's hopes of Chinese support.

Second, the Middle East policy pursued by China is a balanced one. China has good ties with Iran's neighbours. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel are among these. China values Economic relations with all regional actors. It is not interested in intervening in the regional conflicts. This approach is neutral and thus reduces strategic depth vis-à-vis Iran.

Third, there is little Chinese security involvement. China does not get involved in the Middle East military issues. Does not offer Iran high-tech arms or security assurances. The military exercises are merely symbolic joint exercises. This is an indication of China's inclination to stability rather than confrontation.

Fourth, there are limits on economic cooperation due to the sanctions. China also trades with Iran, but the U.S. sanctions pose significant challenges. But many Chinese companies have been deterred from investing in Iran for fear of secondary sanctions. This is a hinderance to the speed of implementation of big projects that are committed in long term agreements.

Fifth, there is still restricted trust between the two parties. China is considered as an opportunist partner by Iran. China is concerned about economic gain and not political loyalty. Iran would like to see more diplomatic support, particularly in the nuclear arena. Sometimes Iran is disappointed by the Chinese's desire for dialogue and compromise.

Sixth, China has the economic advantage. Iran mainly exports raw materials such as oil. China is an exporter of manufactured products and technology. This results in dependency and not a partnership. Iran will be in danger of turning into a supplier of resources, and not an industrial partner.

Seventh, cooperation is impacted by domestic problems in Iran. Foreign investment is retarded by political uncertainty and economic instability. Chinese projects are also bogged down by bureaucratic red tape. These internal factors help to weaken long term planning.

These restrictions indicate that Iran-China relations are strategic and limited. Shaped by realism and not alliance politics. Both nations work together if this is in their interest, but do not enter into mutual obligations that entail future risks.

The Iran-China strategic partnership is a pragmatic and interest-based relationship that was influenced by common geopolitical, economic and regional interests. Geopolitically, both states are interested in challenging US dominance and fostering a multipolar world order, which fosters a solid basis for mutually trustful diplomatic cooperation. The partnership is economically a

The 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement is just one of the many pacts between the two countries that are based on energy cooperation, infrastructure development and long-term investment projects, which also promote China's Belt and Road initiative. Security and strategic coordination are cautious but have significance, which is based on regional stability and sovereignty, and limited military exercises without deep entanglements. Nevertheless, the partnership has inherent restrictions such as China's need to maintain balance in its relations with Iran's regional neighbors, economic relations with the West, the U.S. sanctions, economic imbalances, as well as domestic problems in Iran. In sum, the Iran-China relationship is marked by a robust, enduring, pragmatic and mutually bolstering strategic cooperation while remaining careful to not become ensnared in the "entanglement of interests" of each other, which, all in all,

is a prime example of today's "realist" international cooperation.

The China–Iran Strategic Partnership: Implications for Pakistan.

Geopolitical implications for Pakistan

China has been increasingly working with Iran, which bolsters the multipolar world order idea. This is a step that has thrown the traditional western powers into a dismay in the global political arena. Historically, Pakistan has been a state which has been standouting for a balanced international system respecting sovereignty and a principle of non-interference. Hence, China-Iran collaboration fits in with the general geo-political perspective of Pakistan. China's greater involvement in Iran bolsters Beijing's role in the Middle East. The impact of this shift has indirect implications on Pakistan. Pakistan, as China's nearest strategic ally in South Asia, has a greater significance in China's calculations of the region. Pakistan has the potential to project itself as a major regional linkage and a connector between China and the Middle East, the Muslim world and the Arabian Sea.

Such geopolitical change also enhances Pakistan's diplomatic worth. With this international attention, Pakistan may be able to gain from being a country which is linking multiple regions. This can give Pakistan a better leverage in regional and international fora.

But geopolitical circumstances also become more complicated. Political, economic and security ties between Pakistan and the Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are strong. In many of these countries Iran is seen as a regional competitor. The escalation of such tension between Iran and the Gulf States could put Pakistan under diplomatic pressures to choose a side. Pakistan has traditionally not been a part of the Middle Eastern rivalries. It is neutral which enables it to have balanced relations. This may be put to the test by the China-Iran partnership that is growing. Pakistan needs to be careful while playing its relationship so as not to affect any big regional player's relationship.

India also takes a keen interest in the China-Iran cooperation. India has made investments in Iran's port of Chabahar, and views Iran as a key regional partner. These developments of closer relationship with China can make Iran less dependent on India and create competition between the two countries in the region. Pakistan is to be careful of policies that will increase the rivalry with India or make the region unstable.

Implications for Pakistan's Foreign Policy Orientation

Pakistan's foreign policy is aimed at protecting the sovereignty of the state, national security and development of the economy. China-Iran Strategic Partnership is a part of Pakistan's policies to pursue foreign relations other than with western countries.

China continues to be Pakistan's best strategic ally. The partnership is founded on mutual trust, economic cooperation and defense collaboration. Being a neighboring country, Iran is important for Pakistan for various reasons such as: shared borders, culture, and regional security. With the improvement of China-Iran relations, Pakistan can move the trilateral cooperation forward.

Possible activities of such trilateral engagement may include political consultations, regional cooperation and coordination, and cooperation in infrastructure development. It also has the potential to enhance regional diplomacy and conflict management by Pakistan.

In spite of these opportunities, Pakistan is beset with serious constraints in foreign policy. Iran continues to be under international sanctions which restrict the expansion of trade and investment on the part of Pakistan. Pakistan should follow the international financial rules to save itself from being economic punishments and diplomatic isolation.

Pakistan also has good ties with the United States and the European Union. Such links are vital to trade, financial assistance and diplomatic involvement. Therefore, Pakistan needs to ensure that it is increasingly aligning itself with China and getting involved with Iran, with a positive

relationship with Western powers. This equilibrating policy continues to be a difficult part of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Regional Security Environment and Strategic Stability

Security issues form the crux of Pakistan's policy in the region. China-Iran Strategic Partnership can have a positive and negative impact on regional security.

The upside is that China's presence in Iran could help the country prosper in terms of economic development and diplomacy and thus help stabilize it. Economic growth can help to lessen domestic unrest and prevent the spread of extremism. Better relations between Iran and China could help bring stability to the Pakistan-Iran border.

Illegal trade, smuggling and cross-border crime can be decreased through the economic development of Iran. Sharing of intelligence and counter-terrorism information could also aid Pakistan's security problems in its western provinces.

But, there are also security threats. A greater Chinese footprint in the Middle East could be worrisome for other powers, particularly the United States. This may increase the chances of more militarization and strategic competition in the region.

Pakistan could have indirect pressure as it is in close relations with China. It is obliged to make sure that its domain and facilities are not viewed as part of the competition between the world powers.

Also, the Middle East is prone to instability, which can have an impact in South Asia. Potential refugee movements or economic disturbances or sectarian tensions within Pakistan could spill out from conflicts involving Iran. Hence, Pakistan should focus on maintaining regional peace and not engage itself in wars which may jeopardize the country's internal security.

The economic implications and impact on CPEC are discussed in the next section.

The China–Iran Strategic Partnership is primarily based on economic cooperation. Iran has a large stock of oil and natural gas, China looks for long term and secure sources of energy. This cooperation opens doors to economic opportunities for neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan. The CPEC is one of the flagship projects under Belt and Road initiative by China. It's focused on improving connectivity, infrastructure and economic development of Pakistan. Iran's increased participation in the connectivity projects of the region may make CPEC more significant from the regional point of view.

Pakistan has the potential to serve as a transit hub between China, Iran, Central Asia and Middle East. This will boost trade through Pakistan and make it more relevant. In this regard Gwadar Port plays a significant role. Strategically and economically, it is of significance due to its position in proximity to the Strait of Hormuz. Boost regional trade can help make Gwadar a logistics, trade and energy hub. This would create jobs, investments and earnings for Pakistan. In addition, there is the possibility of energy cooperation. Pakistan has been suffering from chronic energy shortages which have been adversely impacting the country's economic growth. In the long term, regional energy pipelines, electricity exchange, and cooperation in energy projects with Iran and China may be able to solve such problems. But one big hurdle to quick progress is the sanctions against Iran.

Implications on Pakistan's relations with regional and global powers

China-Iran Strategic Partnership also has impact on Pakistan's ties with other actors in the region and world. It is a development that could be seen with guarded eyes in the Gulf countries as Pakistan has been engaged with Iran. Pakistan needs to assure them that its policies are and will remain neutral and regional stable.

The U.S. could also be worried about increasing cooperation between China and Iran. The

Pakistan-Washington ties have been marked by ups and downs in the past. Therefore, Pakistan should make it clear that it is not seeking military alliances but economic development during its engagement with the region. Meanwhile, Pakistan enjoys a balance which affords it diplomatic opportunities. In the past, Pakistan has been a mediator between the regions. In the changing regional scenario, maybe Pakistan can play a role of a mediator between the conflicting regional powers.

Strategic Opportunities and Policy Challenges for Pakistan

The China-Iran Strategic Partnership presents Pakistan with a number of strategic opportunities. It helps to facilitate regional connectivity, economic integration, and dependence on non-Western dominated financial systems. It also boosts Pakistan's strategic value in China's overall regional agenda.

But there are major hurdles to be overcome. Pakistan needs to act with caution against sanctions-related risks, and remain from the political tussles in the region. It should also guarantee that the projects of CPEC will be economically viable, transparent and will bring benefit to the local people.

It is key to have effective policy planning. There is a need for Pakistan to have clear diplomatic strategy, robust regional interaction and internal economic reforms. The increasing regional partnerships will not be able to translate into full benefits for Pakistan without political stability, economic strength and institutional capacity.

There are far-reaching implications of the China-Iran Strategic Partnership for Pakistan. It has an impact on the geopolitical stature, foreign policy stance, regional security dynamics and economic development agendas like the CPEC of Pakistan. The partnership presents both opportunities and challenges.

Balance and pragmatism is the key for Pakistan. However, with the help of this neutrality, economic diplomacy and cooperation among the nations of the region, Pakistan will be able to convert the changes in the region into its strategic gains. With careful management, cooperation with China and Iran can help Pakistan achieve its long-term ambitions of stability, economic development and connectivity in the region.

Conclusion

The study explored the historical development and current dynamics of Pakistan-China and Pakistan-Iran relations and analyzed the newly established China-Iran strategic partnership, its implications on Pakistan's foreign policy, regional security and economic development. The analysis reveals that Pakistan's foreign policy trajectory is influenced by historical alliances, evolving geopolitical dynamics, economic connections, and strategic considerations. The Pakistan-China relationship now encompasses a broad-based, forward-looking strategic partnership marked by deep defense cooperation, growing economic cooperation, mutual support in the development of infrastructure and diplomatic consultations. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a key feature of this cooperation, which boosts Pakistan's strategic confidence, connectivity and economic development. Pakistan's voice in regional and international forums has also been enhanced due to China's unwavering support.

By contrast, the relations between Pakistan and Iran are pragmatic and cautious. The geographic proximity, cultural and religious ties, and shared security concerns, however, have not been sufficient to spur bilateral cooperation, which has been hampered by regional rivalries, Iran's ties with the Gulf nations, and international sanctions. However, Iran still matters to Pakistan, especially pertaining to border security, regional stability and future energy cooperation.

This strategic partnership between the two nations, China-Iran, introduces another dimension to the strategic landscape of Pakistan. It helps to create a more multipolar regional landscape. Beside

promoting regional economic integration, it also adds to Pakistan's diplomatic predicament. With its close ties to China, and its borders with Iran, Pakistan could be a key regional crossroads between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. This position must be skilfully balanced in order to be able to avoid being caught up in regional dynamics and maintain positive relations with the Gulf countries, the U.S. and other key players. In conclusion, it is clear that Pakistan's foreign policy needs to remain pragmatic, forward-looking, and resilient due to the institutional challenges. Selectively engaging with regional partners and managing risks can help Pakistan improve its security, economic opportunities, and regional influence in today's complex international system.

Policy Recommendations

Strategic Balance and Diplomatic Neutrality

In order to deal with China, Iran and the Gulf states, Pakistan should adopt a balanced and pragmatic approach to foreign policy especially the Middle East policy. By keeping itself strategically neutral, Pakistan will be in a position to maintain its diplomatic flexibility, reduce its exposure to regional rivalries and protect its security and economic interests, while also enabling it to engage in constructive discussions with one of the major regional and global stakeholders.

Regional Connectivity and Institutional Capacity

Pakistan should further develop its position as a regional transit hub, emphasizing initiatives like CPEC and Gwadar Port that will allow it to play a more active role in promoting economic integration between South, Central Asia and Middle East. At the same time, it is crucial to develop national institutions, governance structures and policy coordination to guarantee that foreign partnerships will lead to lasting development results and measurable strategic benefits.

Implications for Foreign Relations of Pakistan

The China-Iran strategic partnership is significant in the context of Pakistan's ties with regional and international players. The relations with the Gulf states can become more sensitive as they are rivals of Iran and diplomacy is needed to reassure and be neutral. But, along with the ties with China and Iran, Pakistan's ties with the United States and the European Union, especially regarding trade, sanctions and financial regulations, should also be kept under consideration. Regionally, Iran and China related developments could have indirect impact on Pakistan's strategic situation with respect to India and Central Asia. Moving towards changes in regional connectivity could further boost the strategic importance of Pakistan, but this also could add to the competition in the region and warrant careful and stability-focused approach.

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