

## Gwadar port's geostrategic significance: a gateway to regional prosperity and integration

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### Abstract:

Gwadar port is playing a pivotal part in its transformative trajectory. It possesses significant geostrategic value and is a crucial economic and strategic chokepoint due to its advantageous location, providing direct access to the Indian Ocean. Gwadar, recognised as the third-largest deep-water port globally, distinguishes itself by its ability to accommodate super-tankers weighing up to 200,000 tons. This unique feature positions Gwadar as the only port in the region capable of handling vessels of such significant size. This maritime prowess positions Gwadar as vital in global trade and maritime activities. The depletion of global oil reserves and the increasing need for energy have greatly enhanced Pakistan's geopolitical significance. The country is positioned to become a significant hub for energy and commercial lines, connecting the economically dynamic areas of China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. The strategic posture holds great importance as it corresponds with the evolving dynamics of international energy markets. This paper examines various ramifications of Gwadar's rise, analysing the possibility of spatial and commercial collaborations to stimulate regional integration. By examining the potential for collaboration in energy, trade, and infrastructure development, the analysis reveals the significant influence of Gwadar on the economic and geopolitical landscape of the associated regions.

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## 1. Introduction

Pakistan is gradually developing itself as a pivotal centre for regional connectivity, fostering collaborations in crucial domains, including energy, shipping, transportation, and tourism. The port city of Gwadar occupies a central position in facilitating Pakistan's regional influence, immense geopolitical value, greatly enhancing Pakistan's standing throughout this region. It encourages Pakistan to increase its influence from the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia via the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf to the west and the Gulf of Oman to the southwest define the seaport's navigational boundaries (Naseem, 2020). Pakistan has become increasingly important in national security due to its geostrategic location and geopolitical obsession. Its unique supremacy in this region is further demonstrated by the seaport of Gwadar's proximity to the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, Eurasia, and the world's key energy and economic chokepoints. According to Kalim (2018), Gwadar's geostrategic location in the Arabian Sea may also make it easier to conduct digital surveillance to monitor underwater activity throughout the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Gwadar seaport is a strategic nautical post. Gwadar, the world's third-biggest port, is near the Persian Gulf's entrance, almost 180 nautical miles along the "Strait of Hormuz" (Mazhar et al., 2012). Gwadar is ideally situated among three increasingly important regions worldwide: the highly populated South Asian region, the oil-rich Middle East, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs), bursting with mineral resources and growing economies (Naseem, 2020). Gwadar is situated at the confluence of three globally recognized and rapidly developing economies: the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Its strategic location makes it an extremely important location (Hussain, 2016). The Persian Gulf surrounds Gwadar to the west and the Gulf of Oman to the southwest. The region's boundaries are Afghanistan to the northwest and Iran to the southwest. Its 600 km of coastline is home to shorelines and natural harbours. It is 120 km west of the Iranian border, 460 km east of Karachi, and 624 nautical kilometres east of the Strait of Hormuz (Ispahani, 2019). Furthermore, it is 400 kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy supply route that transports 16–17 million barrels of crude oil annually (Sakhuja, 2013).

The research gap in this study pertains to the need for a more thorough investigation of the changing geopolitical and economic factors contributing to the strategic importance of Gwadar. The current body of scholarly work emphasizes the significance of this entity as a central point for regional connectivity and commerce. However, there is a shortage of comprehensive examination about the obstacles, prospects, and prospective cooperative efforts that may arise. Furthermore, it would be advantageous for the study to undertake a more thorough analysis of the geopolitical ramifications associated with the development of Gwadar, particularly within the framework of conflicting interests in the surrounding area. Additional investigation into the socio-economic consequences at the local and regional scales and the ramifications for foreign diplomacy will enhance our comprehension of Gwadar's changing significance and capacity to facilitate geographical and economic collaborations. This paper examines the extensive geostrategic and economic importance of the Gwadar port in Pakistan. It thoroughly analyses the port's important function as a hub for regional and worldwide trade. The paper provides

new perspectives on the region's integration by analyzing the possible spatial and commercial collaborations enabled by Gwadar. It highlights the diverse effects of these collaborations on geopolitics and economic progress.

## **2. Background of study**

This research examines the significant role of Pakistan, with a specific focus on the geostrategic importance of Gwadar as an emerging centre for regional connectivity and economic endeavours. Pakistan's geopolitical significance has been significantly enhanced due to its geographical location at the convergence of South, Central, and West Asia. This has been further amplified by the establishment of Gwadar, which currently stands as the world's third-largest deep-water port. The port's ability to accommodate large super-tankers and its direct connection to the Indian Ocean establish it as a crucial economic and strategic bottleneck. In light of the diminishing reserves of oil and the increasing worldwide energy consumption, Pakistan assumes a significant role in the energy sector and trade pathways, serving as a crucial link between China, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republics. This study seeks to examine the potential for spatial and commercial collaborations, with a focus on the integration of the region through the significant role of Gwadar in promoting trade, shipping, and connectivity across the globe.

Because of its location at the Strait of Hormuz and its point of entry into the Persian Gulf, Gwadar port will serve as several importing features for the demonstration and the preservation of maritime assets, transports, transshipping, and manufacturing expediencies for significant players in the region and beyond, including the European states and the United Arab Emirates (Malik, 2012). Gwadar will be responsible for chances to boost the benefits or maximize the advantages from its strategic position on the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) of the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Hormuz in the future, in addition to working for an economic reward for the country. Sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea that have been exploited for global trade and energy transportation are significant for coastal powers because of their cumulative geopolitical and geoeconomic influence on the global political situation (Kalim, 2018). The Persian Gulf economies operate as an international centre for oil production. They split the world's oil commerce in half (Malik, 2012). An estimated 70% of the global oil trade passes via Gwadar, an imposing economic and strategic chokepoint that offers unrestricted passage across the Indian Ocean for 100,000 transport vessels each year (Tanoli, 2016). As an international gateway for China, Iran, the Gulf States, Pakistan, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs), Gwadar has the potential to form an excellent port (Naseem, 2014). Pakistan's convenient location at the Central and South Asia intersection provides these countries with the quickest possible route to the deep waters of the Arabian Sea, as the country's ports of Gwadar and Karachi are merely 1600 kilometre distant. As an urgent requirement for the Central Asian Republics' (CARs) financial growth, Pakistan can assist the CARs with pipeline networks and cargo services to export their natural resources to international markets (Mann, 2010).

Gwadar is located on the Iranian Plateau and serves as an entry point to the oil-rich Persian Gulf and convenient access to the Central Asian States' untapped natural resources. Pakistan is situated in a geostrategic location from which it has the potential to become the regional hub of commerce and commercial operations (Ali, 2021). Iran has apprehensions regarding the development of the Gwadar seaport due to its adjacent proximity to the Iranian seaports of Chahbahar and Bandar Abbas (Malik, 2012). The Gulf of Oman borders Gwadar on the southwest and the Persian Gulf on the west. Gwadar is a 600-kilometre stretch of seashore with shorelines and a natural harbour in the westernmost part of Baluchistan's coastal region. It is 624 kilometres east of the Strait of Hormuz, 460 kilometres west of Karachi, and 120 kilometres west of the Iranian border. Notwithstanding such misgivings, Iran exchanged the advantages of commerce, transport, and strategic capabilities by building a crude oil refinery in Gwadar (Malik, 2012). In the present scenario, trade is a backbone for regional integration and development, so China and Pakistan launched CPEC to build and expand their economic links. The PRC and Pakistan have a long-standing relationship, which led to the establishment of the CPEC initiative and the determination to finish it according to schedule. The project will contribute to the improvement of confidence and regional cohesiveness. The April 2015 opening of CEPC followed its conception in 2013. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a group of projects within the China Belt & Road Initiative, provides the groundwork for a trustworthy relationship that will be historically significant in a new era of bilateral and shared economic connections (Szunomár, 2018).

The notion of CPEC emerged during Musharraf's rule, and former President Zardari later took it into positive consideration. President Zardari awarded China servicing of the Gwadar port in February 2013, and the deal was transferred from the Singapore Authority to a Chinese business. It was briefly highlighted how strategically important Gwadar Port is in the Arabian Sea. Gwadar is close to the Hormuz Strait, the entry point for 20% of the worldwide oil, and lies between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East (Jetly, 2021). Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the establishment of the CPEC during his official visit to Pakistan in May 2013. The CPEC dream was realized in 2013 with its official announcement, and the CPEC secretariat was founded to promote connectivity. Several high-profile visits between Pakistan and China helped shape the notion of CPEC. The exact layout of the corridor was discussed by Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain during his trips to China starting in 2014. Two months later, Chinese Premier Li and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met to discuss the designs. President Xi's visit to Pakistan in April 2015 was an important turning point. President Xi and Nawaz Sharif collaborated to execute five significant energy projects and signed 51 contracts and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) (Ritzinger, 2015).

The route's starting point is the Arabian Sea port of Gwadar, Pakistan, in Baluchistan. The Karakoram expressway will travel across the Khunjerab Pass in Gilgit-Baltistan before scurrying into Kashghar, the capital of the Chinese Xinjiang area. The road network, infrastructure, growth in industries, energy, and the highly strategic Gwadar port in Baluchistan are the top priorities of the CPEC program. The contemporary farming industry and its output

are also important (Upadhyaya, 2017). Also, this initiative is expected to be an important foreign policy tactic in the Asian region to extend mutual incorporation and strengthen economic growth. The plan of economic corridors and its execution are working toward the primary objective of their natural world: to enhance mutual trust and regional cohesiveness in the neighbourhood and throughout the continent (Wolf, 2016). Another recent event is the economic corridor in one of South Asia's areas; the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, is the best example. Understanding regional politics and security is critical in forming an opinion regarding policy making.

Nonetheless, the response of neighbouring countries (Iran and India) towards the expansion of CPEC is difficult to predict. Many observers regard CPEC as a game changer since it has the potential to connect and integrate the economies of Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia. Furthermore, it will improve and accelerate Pakistan's economic development (Anholt, 2016). Therefore, to address how CPEC may enhance local integration and establish a plan for the creation and execution of the corridor initiative, the current study has been conducted. Finally, provide some light on the CPEC prospectus.

### **3. Literature review**

Gwadar Port's geostrategic significance has drawn the attention of both local and extra-regional nations. A sizable body of research exists due to its significance in the area, but more investigation is required. The following paragraphs discuss some of the important existing literature. Fayle studied Pakistan's shipping business in his scholarly study "The World Shipping Industry." He emphasized the importance of the shipping and shipbuilding industries to economic development. The book provides a thorough overview of the shipping industry from its inception to the present and its contribution to national economies (Fayle, 2013). Sam Tangredi's "Globalisation and Maritime Power" is another notable study that addresses the navy and naval forces in globalization. The paper offers a detailed examination of maritime power challenges and their implications for rising globalization. A country or state depends on its neighbours, and developments or modifications in a single country impact other country directly or indirectly. This phenomenon is called the process of globalization, often called a global mindset. With the security of international commerce routes, maritime power becomes even more important. It emphasizes the role of maritime power in a globalized society (Tangredi, 2002). In the paper "The Developing Countries and International Shipping," Harald Hansen examines the financial situation of emerging nations and how their global transportation industry impacts them. Despite focusing only on the effects and contributions of shipping companies on emerging countries, this research contributes to the body of present scholarship. Frankel's article, "The World Shipping Industry," shares a comparable viewpoint of the maritime sector and its implications and benefits. Though this paper addressed the global shipping business in depth, it did not address the importance of ports, particularly Gwadar port (Hansen, 1981). The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War by Colin Gray is a highly insightful book that examines all aspects of the Navy's involvement in

the current dispute. It included the defence of maritime communication channels in times of conflict and the growing significance of warships in contemporary warfare. Since sea lines of communication are now more important under the current arrangement, their security is essential for ensuring a steady supply of oil (Gray, 1992).

A fantastic addition to the nautical research: "Indian Ocean: Maritime Security and Confidence Building, Indian Ocean Security and Stability in the Post-Cold War Era" by Moonis Ahmer. In his writings, he has emphasized the safety and significance of the Indian Ocean. He authored in-depth articles about security flaws. The paper also discusses the competition of large players with competing interests, its 20 repercussions, and the various initiatives taken by significant actors in the ocean (Ahmar, 200). The strategically important Gwadar port connects Central Asia, particularly Central and South Asia, to the Chinese economy in the west, facilitating trade. Gwadar's effective development would attract investors and traders and position Pakistan as an economic rival in global shipping routes; therefore, addressing its problems is vital (Mohamed, 2021). Thomas Gehring's book "Integrating Integration Theory: Neo-functionalism and International Regimes" extensively analyses integrated approaches. He discusses several popular integrating models. Two primary hypotheses are thoroughly investigated: Neo-functionalism and global governance. He applies his theories in numerous situations and places. The theories are critical for understanding integration, and anyone working on integration or regionalism should examine this research (Gehring, 1996). The CPEC and the strategic position of Gwadar port are currently hotly debated topics in Southeast Asian countries. China-Pakistan ties have been steady for several reasons, including their good, cultural, social, and diplomatic cordial collaboration, giving both countries a distinct and unshakeable connection. The One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project has been extensively investigated and examined, and its influence on neighbouring states has also been discussed. However, there have been few studies on how the Gwadar Port in Pakistan links the regions and the importance of mutual integration for the whole region and its forecasts. This study emphasizes Gwadar's regional significance and will recommend future-oriented policies and strategies.

#### **4. Methodology and data collection**

The present study used the inductive analysis technique to formulate its research question. The growth of Gwadar was originally considered an opportunity for evaluating the concept. The main objective of the information gathering was the method of qualitative, both primary and secondary data. The study examined geographic integration through four main aspects: Liberal and Netpolitik perspectives. They are: (a) The significance of Gwadar Port has increased due to the growing interest of local organizations. (b) The change in trade-oriented strategies and regional considerations. (c) Gwadar Port's importance; and (d) the dangers of trade in the region. The four primary portions will be condensed into the examination that follows. It outlines how regional development for trade will be implemented and examines its potential and problems in depth.

## 5. Prospects for regional integration through Gwadar

Pakistan's strategic location at the intersection point of three significant global regions—South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia—allows the landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs) and the western portion of China to have easy access via the sea. Through collaboration in the power sector, freight commerce, transportation, and tourism, Pakistan is becoming increasingly a hub for various corridors that link the three areas. With the passage of Strategic Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and trade lines connecting West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia through Pakistan, the nation has become a commercial hub for promoting interregional industrialization (Ali, 2020). The Makran coast's Gwadar port in Pakistan is mentioned. Gwadar Port, the third-biggest port in the world, is perfectly situated at the entrance to the Straits of Hormuz. Situated around the Persian Gulf's mouth and several significant marine routes, Gwadar, in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, is situated on the Arabian marine coast (Ahmad, 2016). This port handles 20% of all oil shipments globally. It is roughly 380 kilometres northeast of Oman along the Arabian Sea, 120 kilometres from the Iranian border, and 533 kilometres from Karachi. Monitoring India's marine activity in the area is possible by proactively employing Gwadar Port for diplomatic goals (Azeemi, 2007). China will have simple access across the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. China will invest in neighbouring ports, including Sittwe, Myanmar, Chittagong, Bangladesh, and Hambantota, Sri Lanka, and some Indian political analysts think China may follow a more expansive confinement strategy. It will serve Pakistan with an additional maritime platform that is comparatively far from the Indian borders, which is essential to the existence of the nation. Its geostrategic location in the Arabian Sea could facilitate electronic surveillance to monitor the naval activities throughout the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean (Karim et al., 2023; Jaleel et al., 2023).

Gwadar port differs greatly from Mackinder's Rimland theory, implemented during the Great Game. At the time, Gwadar was an important hub for armed forces in the Indian Ocean. Greeks, Arabs, Portuguese, Persians, Russians, and Brits have all traditionally been attracted to Gwadar's soothing waters (Kalim, 2018). The Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) was replaced as the port's manager in 2013 by the Chinese Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC). In addition to serving as a gateway to northern Pakistan and Western China, the Gwadar port project is regarded as an important connection between China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) and "Maritime Silk Road" (MSR). It will result in a Special Economic Zone and cover 152 hectares in the vital deep-water harbour. China offers 80 percent soft loans and subsidies for constructing the seaport and surrounding areas. As part of the CPEC project, Gwadar will be expanded and modernized, enabling massive ships with deadweight of up to 70,000 tonnes to dock. Gwadar is essential to Beijing's understanding of specific geopolitical aspects. The US Navy maintains defence throughout the Strait of Malacca and the expansive coastlines of Indonesia and Malaysia. If Washington and Beijing have subsequent conflicts of curiosity, international pressure may be a factor (Belokrenitsky, 2007, July). Gwadar will decrease the journey from 16,000 kilometres to 5,000 kilometres, or a 60% reduction, between China and the Persian Gulf. Pakistan's rising and improved connectivity to volatile Xinjiang will be

helpful as a transit route between China and the rest of the world. India wants to create a port of Chahbahar in Iran, modelling itself after the popularity of Gwadar. The seaport project has about 500 Chinese workers continuously to finish it. On November 14, 2016, Pakistan's Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif officially launched the Gwadar port. On October 29, 2016, the trade container departed from Kashghar, entered Pakistan on October 30, and arrived in Gwadar without incident in November. Their appearance was frequently referred to as "a momentous event." Gwadar's implementation demonstrated that the partnership between Pakistan and China can't be viewed in terms of money. That is not even close to that. China has embraced the "Go West" plan and established Gwadar as its fundamental component to further boost its formerly undeveloped Xinjiang province's economic growth (Malik, 2012).

Pakistan could gain economic strength from the Kashghar-Gwadar Economic Corridor (KGEC), which could benefit China's western region. KGEC is a multi-million-dollar master plan with a 2030 timeframe that is part of a regional strategy. It will involve a range of sectors of shared expertise, scientific, commercial, and growth in infrastructure, including building road and rail links, fibre optic cable projects, industrial expansion, and benefits to neighbouring nations, all of which will enhance ties (Sheikh, 2014). With the Gwadar port operating, Pakistan will be an international terminal for the entire region. Therefore, the authorities of Pakistan regard CPEC as a national enterprise. Moreover, Pakistan's advantageous geographic location allows it to link China, South Asia, and the landlocked Central Asian Republics (CAR), which are good for global connectivity. There is a great chance for all the local economies with CPEC. The CPEC holds significant importance in multiple domains within China. China can counter US hegemony in Asia by fostering financial development and maintaining regional security stability. Locating a substitute for the Malacca Strait, a riskier and more expensive trade route for China, is another problem that worries the Chinese regarding CPEC (Cheema, 2015). China and Pakistan could have more economic security due to the construction of Gwadar Port. With the inauguration of Gwadar Port, China could import energy and oil directly from the Middle East via Pakistan's oil pipeline. Through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), products from Central Asia, including Europe and the USA, will settle at Gwadar Port and enter China in addition to oil (Gholizadeh et al., 2020). In addition, China needs to improve Xinjiang, the region in its undeveloped northwest. As part of China's ambitious "one belt, one road" concept, CPEC has, in reality, been retracted. Reducing distances and increasing international trade and economic cooperation are the objectives of CPEC. Moreover, regional long-term peace and prosperity will be gained from CPEC, trade, its trade, and economic expansion.

## **6. Results and discussion**

The region's persistent worry has heightened the Persian Gulf's relevance, worsened by the Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq War, and the emergence of newly independent Central Asian countries after the USSR broke up. In terms of preserving the Central Asian Republic (CARs) and the

whole region's transportation business, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Ports Master Plan studies consider Gwadar seaport as an alternative to the Persian Gulf Ports with the geostrategic and geoeconomic barriers of local alterations in mind (Hussain,2020). It may be more practical for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to invest in the planned petroleum refineries built in Gwadar and use the port city to transit petroleum and gas (Ahmad, 2016). The principal crude oil and gas resources have been investigated in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The Caspian region will continue to influence events in neighbouring states, including Pakistan, Iran, India, China, and Russia, as well as the US, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, due to the politics surrounding oil and natural resources (Hussain, 2020; Tariq & Mustafa, 2022). The Gwadar seaport project aims to create a manufacturing sector metropolis that resembles Jebel Ali, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore in terms of major business: the corporate office, truck yards, refrigerator storage, and privately operated stores. With Pakistan's involvement in these initiatives, regional economic and cultural links to the Indus Valley era will resurface. Economic development and regional cooperation could be enhanced by the resuscitation of historical trade connections between South and Central Asia and the construction of new interlinks across structures, energy, transport, and telecommunications (Ranjan, 2015).

Greater petroleum deposits than crude oil reserves can be found in the Caspian geographic area. According to Ahmed et al. (2015), the Central Asian Republics (CARs) have an abundance of natural resources, including oil and gas, and many expensive metals, including gold, silver, uranium, and manganese, and raw materials for industry, including iron and copper. The biggest reserves of oil and up to 250 billion barrels of petroleum are thought to be contained in CARs. While Pakistan faces an energy shortfall, Central Asia offers vast hydropower capacity (Ranjan, 2015). Pakistan continues experiencing an electricity shortage, which has disrupted daily and commercial life and decreased economic expansion by 3% annually (Ahmed et al., 2015). The Central Asian Republics (CARs) possess abundant natural resources and a labour force with sophisticated expertise. Every nation-state aspires to acquire the largest feasible stake to achieve its strategic goals and establish regional supremacy. Central Asia's geographical location and abundance of petroleum and natural gas have been important factors in establishing the continent's importance in world politics. The transportation routes connecting West-East and North-South are geo-strategically located in Central Asia. The Caspian Sea has been essential as its main food supply and a centre for hydrocarbon riches. Based on Sengupta & Rakhimov (2015) work, most natural reservoirs remain unexplored, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) lack the necessary infrastructure to exploit these reserves. Central Asia is so significant to global politics that it is called the "heart of Asia." Due to its advantageous geographical position and massive hydrocarbon reserves, it has become a point of dispute for major nations (Ahmed et al., 2015).

Central Asian Republics (CARs) have been fighting to establish commercial ties with South Asia, Turkey, and China since the USSR fell apart. The region's countries agreed on the TAPI and IPI oil pipeline projects because of their respective energy sources. The Northern channels

and transportation routes have not facilitated the export of Central Asian hydrocarbon resources. The remaining gateway is in South Asia, specifically via Afghanistan and Pakistan, which serve as a regional hub using Gwadar Seaport (Sahgal & Anand, 2010). The plan to construct gas pipelines from Iran's South Pars fields or Turkmenistan's Daulatabad oilfield to the Gwadar seaport in international geopolitics started a cold war between pro- and anti-project factions. It should be noted that although promoting the TAPI gas pipeline initiative, the United States opposes the IPI gas pipeline, frequently referred to as the "peace pipeline" (Fazl-e-Haider, (2009). The TAPI and IPI, oil pipeline schemes, may add to the normalization of relations between India and Pakistan by operating as CBMs. The United States oil company 'UNOCAL' has suggested building the TAPI oil pipeline, highlighting the deep-water port of Gwadar's tactical importance. Since Central Asia borders Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Middle East—all of which might be dangerous for the balance of the world—it is particularly important for the establishment of a Muslim bloc in the region (Ahmed et al., 2015). The geography of humanity states that hegemonic and temporal techniques in international political societies cause human ideology and understanding to change. The path length linking Pakistan and Central Asia will be reduced by approximately 500 kilometres with the development of the Gwadar port and linked business routes with Afghanistan. As a centre for transportation and business between Afghanistan and the rest of Asia, Gwadar will certainly be used extensively. Approximately 85% of Afghanistan's commodities go via Pakistan. Afghanistan can enter the Indian Ocean most quickly and affordably via the Gwadar Port. Like connecting with other significant participants via Gwadar and Afghanistan, European nation-states started battling to access this region rich in mineral and hydrocarbon resources through the Caspian Region (Malik, 2012).

Economic integration that would foster a favourable climate makes the surrounding regions and other major countries interested in preserving the area's peace and security. Natural resources, including hydrocarbons, abound in South and Central Asia. The region's natural gas and oil contributions are of major significance to large corporations (MNCs) along with various national and international powers (Chawla, 2018). Because of its geographical location, it was largely expected that the Gwadar seaport would serve Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan through Afghanistan. The world's greatest reserves of fuel are found in Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan has the top spot in producing silk and precious metal. The largest storage facilities of natural gas in the whole globe are found in Turkmenistan. Great countries have been drawn to take control of the region to further their national interests due to Central Asia's vast energy resources and strategic location (Ahmed et al., 2015). Turkmenistan's natural gas reserves are expected to be connected from side to side with Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The oil and gas pipelines in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and the other (CARs) countries are scheduled to be interconnected to the Gwadar seaport, which is the Chinese port in Pakistan, and Chahbahar, known as the Indian port in Iran. According to several scientists, the globe obtains its oil from the Caspian Sea using the ports of Pakistan and Iran (Wei, 2023). The ongoing operation of routes and links may be essential to the Central Asian Republics' (CARs') continued existence. The only harbour throughout the area large enough to accommodate

200,000 tonnes of super-tankers was Gwadar. The Gwadar port has a lot of potential economic trade, but one challenge it will face is competing with other growing local ports. To foster industry development, deliberate measures based on research techniques and practical guidelines will be required to ensure the work is included. Stability would be absent if players across the regional and extra-regional levels did not collaborate (Chawla, 2018).

Iran fears that Gwadar will lessen the significance of its ports for Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs), especially Chahbahar, which India is assisting in developing to compete with Gwadar seaport. Due to the deteriorating ties since the 1990s, the competition between the two growing seaports can exaggerate the financial strength of Pakistan and Iran. Iran and the United Arab Emirates see Gwadar Seaport as a developing, difficult port. Because Gwadar Seaport shares the trade and economic benefits they could ordinarily enjoy solely, they are terrified of it (Malik, 2012). With India's assistance, Iran has been building its port, Chabahar, and plans are in place to build a 200-kilometer road between Afghanistan and the Iranian seaport, Chahbahar, which will facilitate trade with the Central Asian Republics (CARs). It has been stated that Gwadar will serve as a hub for transportation, shipping, and transiting business. It could also hold the key to unlocking new opportunities for expansion and economic growth for Pakistan and Baluchistan (Iftikhar et al., 2019). The Central Asian Republics (CARs), South Asia, and China are the key users of the Gwadar harbour; therefore, cooperation with Afghanistan may eventually be required. Substantial economic growth and employment opportunities will result from those mentioned above to regional prosperity and advancement (Ahmad et al., 2017).

## **7. Conclusion**

In the context of national security, it is imperative to deduce that Pakistan's geostrategic location and geopolitical fixations are extremely important. Naval operations in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean may be monitored electronically, thanks to Gwadar's strategic location in the Arabian Sea. Gwadar is strategically positioned among three increasingly important regions of the worldwide: the heavily populous South Asian region, the oil-rich Middle East, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs), which are becoming more and more prosperous due to the abundance of their resources (Naseem, 2020). Its strategic location makes it an extremely important location (Hussain, 2016). It is roughly 400 kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy supply route that transports 16–17 million barrels of crude oil annually (Sakhuja, 2013). Gwadar will oversee prospects to boost dividends or take full advantage of its strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz and the Indian Ocean's Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). Additionally, it might strengthen the country's economic objectives. Gwadar Seaport is important for trade with the Central African Republic, the United Arab Emirates, the Persian Gulf, Eastern Africa, and Northwestern India, claims Naseem (2020). According to Kalim (2018), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has recognized that the distinctive marine characteristics of the Gwadar seaport can support huge oil cargo tankers and shipping vessels, enhancing the Persian Gulf ports.

ADB has described Gwadar as a stand-in for Dubai World Port (UAE). Gwadar is located beyond the chokepoint and the Strait of Hormuz, and it can handle larger 'S' class cargo ships and oil boats. Pakistan's advantageous location at the confluence of the three major world regions—West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia—gives the western half of China and the landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs) immediate access to the sea. Due to the passing of Strategic Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and the nationwide economic ties between South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia, Pakistan has developed into an advantageous international commerce hub (Anwar, 2011). acting as the principal trading hub for the area. Gwadar Port will serve Asia's customers with its cutting-edge shipment handling capabilities and assist the area in resolving issues brought on by the growing global trade sector (Tanoli, 2016). For CARs looking for a feasible gateway to the outside world, Gwadar Seaport is the best option. The two possible routes available to the CARs are the seaports of Gwadar in Pakistan and Chahbahar in Iran. European nations fought to reach this region rich in mineral and hydrocarbon resources via the Caspian Region before other important actors via Gwadar and Afghanistan. The port's geographical location and China's capacity to finance its growth and administration have piqued the interest of both regional and extra-regional organizations. For the Gwadar Seaport to be successful, China, South Asia, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) must make use of it. Large-scale economic activity and job prospects will follow, which will unavoidably bring prosperity and advancement to the area.

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