
CHABAHAR PORT: A GATEWAY FOR INDIA'S INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The development of Chabahar Port in southeastern Iran represents a crucial geopolitical and economic initiative involving India, Iran, and Afghanistan. Formalized through a trilateral agreement in 2016, this strategic venture aims to establish Chabahar as a key deep-sea port to enhance trade routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan's overland corridors. By securing direct access to resource-rich Central Asian states, India strengthens its economic and energy security while counterbalancing China's influence through Gwadar Port in Pakistan. Chabahar's strategic location outside the Strait of Hormuz offers a stable alternative for international trade, humanitarian aid, and regional connectivity, supporting the integration of South Asian, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern economies through enhanced infrastructure, such as rail links to Afghanistan. This paper draws on secondary sources, including books, journals, and reputable online resources, to analyze Chabahar Port's strategic value. The analysis underscores Chabahar's potential to solidify India's presence in the region and promote political, cultural, and economic ties among the participating countries. Chabahar Port stands out as a transformative force in regional stability and cooperation, reinforcing India's role in the global geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: Chabahar Port, India-Iran-Afghanistan relations, regional connectivity, geopolitics, Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

India's interest in developing the Chabahar Port in southeastern Iran can be traced back to the 1990s, ultimately leading to the signing of a formal agreement on May 24, 2016. Under this agreement, India and Iran pledged to develop Chabahar, situated in the Gulf of Oman to the northwest of the Indian Ocean, into a fully functional deep-sea port. The agreement has generated significant interest, not only because of the involvement of Iran and India but also due to Afghanistan's participation. This tripartite arrangement includes the construction of key road and rail infrastructure to link the three nations to the port, with implications for enhanced access to Central Asia and beyond (Salem, 2016). For the resource-rich, landlocked regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia, access to the sea and the expanding Indian economy offers

significant economic potential. Previously, these opportunities were constrained by Pakistan's control over the sole overland route linking India to Central Asia.ⁱ

The development of the Chabahar Port will provide substantial advantages to both India and Iran by improving trade routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia, as well as supporting transnational trade with other countries in the region. Furthermore, it will allow India to circumvent Pakistan's unstable territory when engaging in trade with Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. India also regards the port agreement as a strategic opportunity to promote future political, diplomatic, cultural, and regional collaboration and integration.

Arijit Paladhi opines "The deal in many ways is also a natural progression of India's long-standing relationship with Iran."ⁱⁱ So, is this grand vision of reopening the old Silk Route on the part of India (Salem, 2016).

Chabahar Port, located in southern Iran along the Gulf of Oman, holds significant geopolitical and economic importance in the region. As Iran's only oceanic port with direct access to the Indian Ocean, Chabahar is strategically vital, offering an alternative to the congested and politically sensitive Strait of Hormuz. The port is crucial for enhancing trade and communication between Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia.

The signing of the Chabahar Port agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan aptly reflects its name, "Chabahar," which means "four springs" in Persian (char - four, bahar - springs). This agreement has generated new opportunities for regional economic growth, political stability, peace, and strengthened cultural ties among the participating nations. The Chabahar Port in southeastern Iran is set to provide India with a crucial gateway to the Central Asian Republics.ⁱⁱⁱ The Chabahar Port project, supported by India and Afghanistan, aims to enhance trade, commerce, business, transportation, and the exploitation of oil and gas reserves in Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). While the agreement initially served the strong mutual interests of India and Iran, Afghanistan later became a participant, transforming the bilateral initiative into a trilateral one. This expansion is particularly significant as it provides landlocked Central Asian countries, rich in mineral, oil, and gas resources, with crucial access to international markets.^{iv}

The Port of Chabahar holds significant, though yet unspecified, economic and strategic implications. Located on the Makran coast in southeastern Iran, it offers the quickest route from Iran to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, and is geographically closer to India and Karachi than to Bandar Abbas and other Iranian ports. The expansion of Chabahar is expected to ease the burden on Bandar Abbas, potentially reducing its responsibility for handling goods from Iran, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. As part of its broader plans, India aims to construct a 900 km railway line connecting Iran to Bamyan province in Afghanistan. Unlike Bandar Abbas,

Chabahar's location outside the Strait of Hormuz adds to its strategic significance. In the event of any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, trade and commercial activities at Chabahar would remain unaffected.^v

In this context, India's External Affairs Ministry has adopted a notably pragmatic approach, stating: The Iranians have also planned to develop rail lines extending from Chabahar not only to the Afghanistan border but also to the Turkmenistan border via Mashhad. These developments present numerous promising opportunities for the revitalization of industrial activities in Afghanistan, in which India holds a significant interest. As a result, the Chabahar Port is strategically positioned to offer enhanced access to the Central Asian Republics (CARs).^{vi}

For India, Chabahar Port is a strategic asset since it provides direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while circumventing Pakistan. This access is critical for India's geopolitical and economic interests, as it counterbalances China's regional dominance through investments in Pakistan's Gwadar port. Economically, Chabahar improves trade efficiency, lowers transportation costs, and promotes India's energy security by allowing hydrocarbon imports from Iran and Central Asia. India's commitment to developing Chabahar, which includes port modernisation and infrastructure developments, demonstrates its long-term strategic objectives. Chabahar Port serves as a gateway to global markets for Afghanistan, providing an important alternative to dependency on Pakistan's ports. This link increases Afghanistan's commercial potential, economic growth, and inclusion into regional economic frameworks. Furthermore, Chabahar acts as a vital route for humanitarian relief, facilitating the timely delivery of key supplies during disasters.

Chabahar Port's strategic position and India's joint investments emphasise its importance as a regional commerce center. The port not only promotes economic growth and commercial efficiency, but it also improves geopolitical stability and regional integration, which benefits both India and Afghanistan.

The primary potential obstacle to the Chabahar agreement lies in Pakistan's persistent support for terrorism and extremism, which could pose challenges to the project. Islamabad views the Chabahar initiative as a challenge to its ambitions of expanding the Gwadar port in Balochistan with support from China. Since Pakistan's establishment in 1947, its relationship with India has been characterized by conflict and sustained mutual distrust. Pakistan has supported terrorist organizations and utilized them against both India and Afghanistan to further its foreign policy goals, thereby undermining India's influence and relationships in the region. Nonetheless, Pakistan's efforts to counter India's regional influence have met with limited success, given India's strong historical connections and shared geopolitical interests with major regional powers (Salem, 2016).

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this paper is to analyze the significance of Chabahar Port for India, focusing on its strategic location as a maritime gateway that facilitates access to Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond, while providing an alternative trade route that bypasses Pakistan.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This paper utilizes secondary data from a variety of sources, including books, published journals, newspapers, government policies, and credible online resources. The analysis is designed to align with the overall objectives of the research, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of Chabahar Port's significance for India.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Hindustan Times. (2024, May 21), India's Strategic Investment in Chabahar, this editorial is based on “Anchoring ties in Chabahar waters” which was published in Hindustan Times on 21/05/2024. The article brings into picture the India's 10-year contract with Iran to operate the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at Chabahar Port underscores its commitment to strengthening connectivity and influence in Central Asia. Chabahar serves as a strategic counterbalance to China's regional ambitions, enhances India's access to Central Asian markets, and provides an alternative to unstable West Asian trade routes. However, India faces challenges from U.S.-Iran tensions, Iran's political environment, and environmental concerns. India may address these by promoting multilateral financing, green initiatives, and soft power diplomacy.^{vii}

Pant, H. V. (2018), in this paper, “India-Iran Cooperation at Chabahar Port”. On October 29, 2017, India initiated its first wheat shipment to Afghanistan through Iran's Chabahar Port, a strategic hub in which India plays a significant developmental role. Marking the event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his congratulations to Afghanistan and Iran for the shipment's departure from Kandla to Afghanistan via Chabahar. The port is of considerable importance to India, not only as part of its ambitions to expand regional infrastructure projects but also to facilitate trade and aid flows into Afghanistan. However, progress on the project has encountered challenges, and further obstacles may arise as India navigates complex relationships with Iran, the United States, and Israel, while addressing regional competition from China and Pakistan.^{viii}

Salem, S. (2016), In this paper, “New Opening to The Old Gateway: Chabahar Seaport and The Economic and Strategic Benefits to The Region”, he has concentrated on the Chabahar Port Deal between India, Iran, and Afghanistan is a symbol of hope for regional prosperity and

cooperation. Situated in Iran, Chabahar grants India direct access to Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, and enhancing trade opportunities. This strategic port strengthens India's economic influence, counters China's investments in Gwadar, and fosters cultural and economic ties, while opening up new trade routes for Afghanistan and Central Asia to the Indian Ocean.^{ix}

Ali, W. (2021), in this paper, "Strategic and socio-economic importance of Gwadar and Chabahar port", he writes about the importance of Gwadar and Chabahar ports as rival projects in South Asia, carrying significant socio-political and economic implications for Pakistan, India, Iran, and Afghanistan. Both ports serve as strategic trade hubs, impacting regional relationships positively or negatively, especially between Pakistan and India. Gwadar boosts Pakistan's trade with CARs, the UAE, and Gulf nations, supported by Pak-China infrastructure investments. Meanwhile, India, Iran, and Afghanistan's Chabahar project offers similar access, potentially intensifying competition. Pakistan should globally promote Gujarat to reinforce its economic significance and secure its strategic value in the region.^x

LOCATION AND CAPACITY OF CHABAHAR PORT

Chabahar Port is a significant seaport situated in southern Iran along the Gulf of Oman. Located in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province, near the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, it grants Iran direct access to the Indian Ocean.

Location:

- **Coordinates:** Approximately 25.29° N latitude and 60.64° E longitude.
- It lies on the **Makran coast**, approximately 72 kilometers west of **Gwadar Port** in Pakistan.
- Chabahar is the sole Iranian port with direct access to the ocean, serving as a crucial gateway for trade among Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Capacity:

Chabahar Port has two main terminals: Shahid Kalantari Port and Shahid Beheshti Port (Phase 1):

1. **Shahid Kalantari Port:** It is the older terminal and holding smaller volumes of cargo compared to Shahid Beheshti Port.
2. **Shahid Beheshti Port (Phase 1):** The newer and larger terminal, inaugurated as part of the port's modernization and expansion. After the completion of Phase 1, the port's capacity increased significantly to handle around **8.5 million tons** of cargo annually and the Future phases aim to increase the total capacity to approximately **20 to 25 million tons** per year.

The port plays a crucial role in regional trade routes, especially as part of the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, and provides Afghanistan and Central Asian countries an alternative access route to global markets without relying on Pakistani ports.

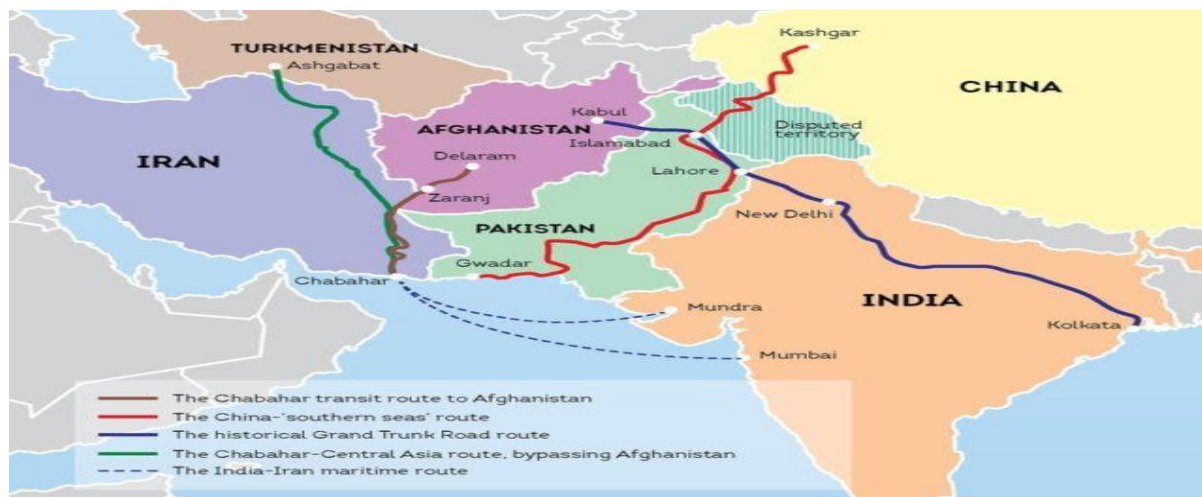


Figure 1, Source:

<https://mateenahaya.com/the-history-of-indias-chabahar-port-and-its-importance-for-india/>

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CHABAHAH PORT FOR INDIA

Chabahar is a coastal county in Sistan and Balochistan and serves as Iran's southern port city on the Gulf of Oman, offering direct access to the Indian Ocean. The Iranian government has designated this strategically important port, located along the Makran Coast, as a Free Trade and Industrial Zone. The majority of the city's population speaks Balochi, and the name "Chabahar" is derived from two Balochi words, "char" and "bahar" (meaning "four springs"), signifying the region's mild climate, where all four seasons are reminiscent of spring.^{xi}

Chabahar's strategic location bypasses the Strait of Hormuz, providing an alternate route to crowded and politically sensitive waterways. This port is critical for international commerce lines that link Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia.

Iran's strategic location presents significant opportunities for India across various sectors, including transit facilities, trade, commerce, and energy. Countries interested in fostering relations with Iran, India, and Afghanistan, as well as those aiming to counter terrorism and enhance regional stability, are keen to develop their energy and trade sectors. Consequently, India has adopted a policy of maintaining amicable relationships with all major nations in the region. Similarly, Iran constitutes a central player in this dynamic, holding considerable strategic importance for India.^{xii}

The closeness between India and Iran is driven by both strategic and economic considerations. India aims to reshape the strategic landscape of the Indian Ocean in its favor through the construction of Chabahar Port, positioning itself as a key regional power, particularly in South Asia, while also aspiring to elevate its status as a global power.^{xiii} India, along with China, is among the world's fastest-growing economies and is currently the sixth-largest energy consumer. By 2020, it is expected to become the fourth-largest consumer, following the United States, China, and Japan. In comparison, Iran possesses the world's third-largest oil reserves, estimated at 132 billion barrels, and the second-largest proven natural gas reserves, amounting to 971 trillion cubic feet.

The Chabahar Port in Iran offers a strategic gateway for Central Asian and Afghan products to access the Middle East and potentially Europe. Afghanistan's war economy has faced challenges due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient connectivity. India maintains a substantial military and intelligence presence along the Iranian coastline, particularly in regions bordering Pakistan. Indian consulates in Zahidan and Bandar Abbas facilitate reconnaissance of maritime activities in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. This presence enhances India's strategic capability to monitor Pakistan and covertly support low-level insurgencies in the neighboring Balochistan region within Pakistan's borders. Additionally, Chabahar is viewed as an economic and strategic competitor to Pakistan's Gwadar Port, further complicating regional dynamics (Mohammad Yousaf, 2021).^{xiv}



Figure 2, Source:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/02627280211055981?journalCode=sara>

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHABAHAR PORT FOR INDIA

Chabahar Port facilitates access to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Europe, and India has been developing this port since the 1990s to establish connectivity with these regions. The port is vital for India's economic objectives, prompting the country to invest in the construction of highways in both Iran and Afghanistan to link Chabahar with these areas. Between 2005 and 2009, India invested \$100 million in the construction of a road connecting Delaram in Afghanistan to Zaranj on the Iran-Afghanistan border. Additionally, Iran has developed a road linking Chabahar to Milak, located near Zaranj. This infrastructure, comprising Milak, Zaranj, and Delaram, facilitates access to Afghanistan's "Garland Road," which links the country's major cities, including Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Mazar-e-Sharif. Once integrated into the International North-South Transport Corridor, Chabahar Port would grant India access to Russia and Europe, as well as the Middle East. Research indicates that utilizing the Chabahar route could reduce India's transportation costs and transit times to Europe by nearly 50% (Jawad Falak, 2016).

India's interest extends beyond Central Asian markets; it has long sought to establish economic and diplomatic connections with Afghanistan. Consequently, India views Chabahar Port as a more accessible sea-land route to Kabul, Iran, and Central Asia. The significance of Chabahar increased notably after Pakistan refused to grant India land access through the Wagah border in Punjab.^{xv} However, the original route from Karachi to Torkham to Aqina is several hundred kilometers shorter. By investing in Chabahar, Iran may offset the increased distance of this route by reducing transit fees and providing other incentives. Consequently, Iran is positioned to act as a conduit between Central Asia and South Asia, bypassing Afghanistan and Pakistan (Mohammadi, 2018). India will gain power in Afghanistan while also establishing a strategic footprint in the area. In the long run, it will function as a center for Indian commercial activities to venture into the oil and mineral-rich Central Asia.^{xvi}

This will also lend momentum to the International North-South Transport Corridor, to which both countries, along with Russia, are original members. Iran is the project's major gateway. It includes the shipping, rail, and road networks that transport goods between India, Russia, Iran, Europe, and Central Asia. The corridor primarily facilitates the transport of goods among India, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Its objective is to enhance commercial connectivity between key cities, including Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, and Astrakhan, among others.^{xvii}

It would oppose China's dominance in the Arabian Sea by assisting Pakistan in establishing the Gwadar Port. It can be used to post security vessels for commercial ships off the African coast, aside from giving the nation a presence in the western Arabian Sea, which is crucial because many of its oil imports transit via the route.^{xviii}



Figure 3, Source: <https://mitkatadvisory.com/india-to-operate-chabahar-port-in-iran/>

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CHABAHAH PORT FOR INDIA

India perceives both political and economic advantages in the development of the Chabahar Sea Port. Economically, the port will allow India to directly access markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia while circumventing Pakistan's inequitable geographical control. Pakistan has restricted India's overland trade and economic opportunities with Afghanistan across its territory.^{xix} The Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement limits the connectivity of Indian goods with Afghanistan by allowing Afghanistan trucks to load cargo at Pakistani ports; however, they are prohibited from transporting Indian products from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Consequently, the expansion of Chabahar is expected to reduce costs by approximately one-third while enhancing the potential trade volume among India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.^{xx}

Chabahar is poised to emerge as a crucial facilitator for Iran's gas exports to India, whether in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG) or through pipeline connections via Pakistan or Oman.^{xxi} India has committed to building a \$400 million railway link from Chabahar to Zahedan, which is anticipated to bolster India's steel industrialization while simultaneously generating employment opportunities in both countries. The Chabahar Port has an annual cargo handling capacity of 10 to 12 million tonnes, thus facilitating Chabahar's integration into the global economy, which is valued at \$8 trillion in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP).^{xxii}

The Chabahar port project will enhance the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). This route comprises maritime, rail, and road connections that facilitate trade between India, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. The Chabahar port will provide impetus to the INSTC and enable India to engage in trade with Europe, thereby promoting Indian economic growth and industrial production.^{xxiii}

The Chabahar port will lower the cost of transporting goods from India to Central Asia while also functioning as a secure all-weather trade route. This development is expected to encourage both small and large enterprises in India to invest in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, potentially boosting the GDP growth rate to approximately 8.3% once the Chabahar port becomes operational.^{xxiv}

India will also be allowed to invest in the natural resource sectors of Iran and Afghanistan, including coal, steel, copper, iron, oil, and gas. This access would ensure a cost-effective supply of raw materials, thereby reducing the production costs of various finished goods. Consequently, Indian enterprises will be positioned to achieve higher returns with lower investments (Jawad Falak, 2016).

India perceives both political and economic advantages in the development of the Chabahar Port. From a commercial perspective, the port will enable India to directly access markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia while circumventing the challenges associated with the Pakistani region. Pakistan has restricted India's overland commercial access to Afghanistan via its borders, thereby hindering the transportation of Indian goods to Afghanistan.^{xxv} The Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement permits Afghan trucks to transport cargo to Pakistani ports; however, these trucks are not allowed to carry Indian products from Pakistan to Afghanistan. As a result, the development of Chabahar is anticipated to lower transportation costs by approximately one-third while increasing the potential trade value among India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia (Salem, 2016).

Afghanistan's strategic location allows it to function as a gateway to South, Central, and West Asia. By bypassing Pakistan's control over access to Afghanistan, India's geostrategic influence is anticipated to be considerably strengthened.^{xxvi} Investing in the Chabahar seaport provides India with several benefits in a variety of fields, including cultural, economic, political, maritime, and strategic. From an economic standpoint, this investment will allow Indian enterprises to enter hitherto unexplored markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia, opening up new potential for trade and commerce. It provides a vital gateway for India to expand its trade networks and minimise its reliance on other routes, particularly through Pakistan.



Figure 4, Source: <https://launchpadeeducation.in/chabahar-port-india/>

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHABAHAR PORT TO INDIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Chabahar is considered a vital element of India's involvement in Afghanistan. For India, the Chabahar Port functions as the gateway to the Indian Ocean within the framework of the Great Northern Transit Corridor, enabling access to Central Asia, Russia, and ultimately the European markets. This development enables India to conduct trade with Central Asian countries without dependence on Pakistani territory for transporting goods.^{xxvii} India's primary objectives for its presence and investment in Iran include fulfilling domestic requirements, competing with China, expanding its influence in Central Asia, and enhancing its status as a strategic power in the region. This involves establishing direct trade routes that circumvent Pakistan and securing energy supplies through diversified access points.^{xxviii} Chabahar also enables India, the world's fourth-largest energy consumer, to access and store Iran's crude oil reserves, which surpass 150 billion barrels, along with 1.187 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Furthermore, it provides access to additional energy resources in Central Asia, including those from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.^{xxix}

India's connection to Afghanistan has been established through the Chabahar Port, strategically situated at the intersection of the Central Asian highway and crucial maritime routes that serve as vital conduits for the region. This port provides the closest access to open waters for Central Asian countries that are landlocked, including Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, thereby enhancing its significance for transit and trade. Chabahar Port functions as a reliable and cost-effective international transport link for Afghanistan, India, and other Central Asian countries, owing to its direct access to open seas, its positioning outside the Persian Gulf, and its robustness in the face of regional crises.^{xxx}

India must recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran as a significant and influential neighbor of Afghanistan and an important strategic partner for the country. Consequently, India should prioritize the development of the transit route for goods through Iran's Chabahar Port to Zaranj, the capital of Afghanistan's northern province. The transshipment of goods and supplies to Afghanistan via Iran is significantly more cost-effective than transporting these items through Central Asia and Pakistan, thus affording India a viable logistical advantage.

This underlines India's strategic aim of using Chabahar to provide more cost-effective and politically secure commerce access to Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

Chabahar Port plays a vital role in enhancing India's geopolitical and economic presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The trilateral agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan designates the port as a significant gateway, facilitating trade and transportation while granting India direct access to markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia without dependence on Pakistan. This represents a key strategic advantage, enabling India to circumvent the politically sensitive region and counter China's growing influence in the Arabian Sea, especially in light of China's investments in Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

Chabahar provides new potential for economic integration, access to global markets, and prosperity in Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). It lessens reliance on Pakistan's ports and provides a more stable and safer route for trade and humanitarian aid. The port is also projected to improve regional security by encouraging more collaboration and cultural interchange among the participating states.

India's long-term strategic goals include not just economic gains but also the deepening of political and cultural relations with the area. The Chabahar port is a valuable asset for India in terms of expanding its influence, improving energy security, and promoting its status as a growing regional force. With infrastructural improvements like rail and road linkages linking Chabahar to Afghanistan and Central Asia, India is poised to play an important role in the region's economic and geopolitical destiny. This project improves regional connectivity by boosting commerce via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and enhancing India's standing in global trade.

Thus, Chabahar is more than simply a port; it signifies a strategic shift in regional dynamics, promoting economic growth, improving geopolitical stability, and opening up new avenues for collaboration across South Asia, Central Asia, and beyond.

SUGGESTION

Before implementing recommendations to enhance the strategic significance of Chabahar Port for India, it is important to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan, one that gains recognition from the international community. Such a government would provide a foundation for peace and stability in Afghanistan, ensuring security and fostering a reliable environment for regional connectivity. A stable government in Afghanistan will enhance prospects for trade, infrastructure, and economic growth in the region, enabling Chabahar to fully realize its potential as a strategic hub connecting India to Central Asia and beyond.

1. **Strengthening Infrastructure Development:** It is essential for India to prioritize investments aimed at developing comprehensive road and rail networks that connect Chabahar to key markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Upgrading existing infrastructure will facilitate smoother trade routes, improve cargo handling capabilities, and reduce transit times, thereby rendering the port a more attractive option for regional trade.
2. **Enhancing Regional Collaboration:** India could initiate strategic partnerships with Central Asian nations to promote joint ventures and investments in the Chabahar region. Collaborative efforts on projects that enhance connectivity and economic development will not only strengthen political ties but also promote mutual interests, encouraging broader utilization of the port by various countries.
3. **Diversifying Trade Opportunities:** Expanding the range of goods and services traded through Chabahar will augment its utility. India should pursue the establishment of trade agreements that facilitate the import and export of diverse commodities, including agricultural products, textiles, and technology, thus diversifying economic activities associated with the port.
4. **Promoting Energy Security:** India should capitalize on Chabahar as a strategic node for energy imports from Iran and Central Asia. Investing in energy infrastructure, such as pipelines and LNG terminals, will bolster India's energy security while fostering deeper economic ties with Iran and the resource-rich Central Asian countries.
5. **Boosting Security Cooperation:** It is imperative to enhance security measures around Chabahar Port to ensure safe maritime operations and secure trade routes. India can collaborate with Iran and other regional stakeholders to improve maritime security, counter piracy, and address potential threats, thereby reinforcing the port's role as a stable trade hub in the region.

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