

KINNAIRD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, LAHORE



**POWER POLITICS IN MIDDLE EAST: A CASE
STUDY OF SINO IRANIAN RELATIONS**

(2013-2021)



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**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL
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KINNAIRD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, LAHORE

SESSION: 2018 – 2022

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18 May 2023*

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SINO – IRANIAN RELATIONS (2013-2021)**



**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO KINNAIRD
COLLEGE FOR WOMEN IN FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELORS IN
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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RESEARCH COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that Ms Bakhtawar Obed, Eeman Fatima and Monica Babar of BA Hons (Session 2018-2021), Department of International Relations has carried out research work entitled **“Power Politics in Middle East: A Case Study of Sino Iranian Relations (2013-2021)”** under my supervision. It is assured that research work is original and has not yet been published anywhere else. “All Changes suggested by examiner during defense are incorporated in this final copy”.

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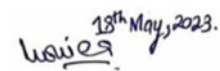
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ABSTRACT

Iran-China bilateral ties, which were formed in 1971, have seen significant changes since 1979, particularly following the conclusion of the Cold War. Both countries chose to expand their relations in various areas despite basic differences in ideological dogma and governance structure, and based on a number of areas of commonality, most notably a similar international outlook as developing states of the South, and mutual need in economic fields, most notably energy, and also in the military field. This research thesis examines the evolution of these bilateral ties since the early 1980s, focusing on two sets of elements that have influenced them: favorable and restrictive factors. While favorable factors contributed to the expansion and deepening of Tehran-Beijing relations during the period under consideration, the article argues that China's grand strategy to become a world power and the requisite policy of rapprochement with the West, particularly the United States, have in fact intervened to constrain China's relations with other states, including Iran. Similarly, the continuation of a state of tension between Iran and the United States after 1979, particularly since 2003 over the nuclear issue, and hence US pressure on China, have played a major role in complicating Iran-China ties. Despite Iran's emphasis on the "Look to the East Policy" since 2005, China's backing for UN Security Council sanctions resolutions on Iran since 2006 has mirrored China's predicament and worked to constrict relations, even to some extent inside the energy area. This research thesis concludes that, despite the inevitability of restrictions in Iran-China relations due to the dynamics at play, both nations would retain their relations in the economic and energy sectors, as well as on international and multilateral matters of mutual importance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRI - BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

GCC – GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

ISIS – ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT

JCPOA - JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION

OBOR - ONE BELT AND ONE ROAD

OPEC – ORGANIZATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES

UAE - UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

USA - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is best described as a chaotic region with conflict violence, in the sense of insurgencies, transnational terrorism, invasions by foreign powers, revolutions, interstate war, for regional hegemony through competing political programs in the region whether in long-ethnic and sectarian strife. It lacks a regional system that includes regional organizations, agreements, and procedures that govern regional relations. Race for the regional hegemony is basically visible in this part of the world and so rifts are seen here.

States finance violent organizations as part of this hegemonic competition to change or sustain the status quo. Iran supports Hezbollah and Hamas, politically influenced and a militarily dangerous non-state actor. In the region, the security agenda takes precedence over the economic agenda. The failure of the region's sub-regional systems, such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, to develop a regional strategy based on a united assessment of threats, their sources, and how to counter them, has resulted in a state of security and political looseness. This is largely due to the role of major powers in impeding such an approach, particularly the United States of America, which has been occupying the region since the collapse of Soviet Union followed by cold war's end.

Now in the post-colonial era, China's interest and engagement are increasing in the Middle Eastern region with its expanding network in the region. China is cooperating with Iran in Middle East. China's vast infrastructure program, Belt and Road Initiative, is making connections. Iran has a lot of interest in this BRI project. As well as the ongoing regional competition for hegemony between Turkey, Iran, and Israel, particularly since the overthrow of Iraq as a rising regional Arab power in parallax. This region not only suffers from political turmoil, but also human rights are their main concern.

Due process, religious tolerance, democratic rights, freedom of assembly, and expression are all conspicuously lacking. The track record is all too similar, whether monarchy or theocracy, parliamentary regime, or revolutionaries. Quoting Thomas Hobbes's words, life in the Middle East seems to be even shorter, even more, brutish, and seemingly more hopeless. China's energy need is the center of Beijing and Tehran relation as Iran has abundant resources. Other

than non-energy economic ties defense cooperation is also their main focus such as arm sales other than that geostrategic balancing against US is a matter of concern.

China's involvement in the region since the end of cold war has grown considerably. China's commercial engagement has increased in recent years because of country's expanding energy demands. In 2016, a series of unexpected political measures by Beijing, notably the announcement of the Great Arab Policy, marked a watershed moment in China-Middle East ties. After years of severe sanctions, China leverages Iran's economic fragility, demonstrating a stark power disparity in Sino-Iranian economic relations. Trade with China has supplied the Iranian leadership with a financial lifeline over the last decade. This gives China substantial bargaining power in the relationship, which is deepening as China expands its economic participation to include investments in key Iranian areas including energy, mining, and transportation.

Access to oil and other raw minerals and the development of BRI is among China's economic interests in Iran. China predicts future gains by investing in Iran as a "distressed asset" having unlimited secure access to the world's fourth-largest oil deposits and second-largest natural gas reserves given Iran's relatively diverse economy and population of 85 million people. Also, Iran's location at the confluence of two major rivers the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital oil shipping routes, and the Middle East, Central and South Asia, all add to China's economic and geostrategic worth.

Over hundreds of years, Iran has been assuming a significant part in the Middle East. Iran was and still is one of the fundamental competitive regional powers. Since the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s, its objectives and interests are in a struggle with those of the Arab nations, by and large, and Egypt. It has a significant impact trying to make its controlling impact over the issues of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. The main interest of Iran is to achieve superiority in the Middle Eastern region.

The way that Iran has covertly developed an organization of non-state unions directly across the Middle East is regularly alluded to as intermediary local armies. Beginning with Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran has been looking to send out its progressive philosophy and extend its impact past its lines since the arrival of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Tehran in 1979. The USA is a challenge to Iran in the sense that the US imposed sanctions on Iran after the Iranian nuclear program. Iran and India maintain cordial relations, but from the perspective of Tehran, Indian

interests are closely aligned with USA. Iran and China have border issues since long. India's main threat in Middle Eastern region is over the China's increasing influence in the Middle East. Another challenge for Iran is Israel as between Israel and Iran there has been an ongoing proxy war. The proxy conflict has been going on between Iran and Israel which involves threats and hostility by Iran's leaders against Israel and their goal to dissolve the Jewish state.

As a theory of international relations Realism focuses on the role of State, national interest, and power in world politics. The international system is anarchic and every state wants to maximize its power and preserve its national interest, according to realism. The theory of realism is centered upon the 3S which are security, survival, and self-help. Both the States China and Iran want to maximize their power and interests using a cooperation mechanism that highlights the essence of survival in the Middle East and that's why they are increasing their engagements in the region in all aspects.

In Sino Iranian relations in the Middle Eastern Region, we can place theory of realism and discuss the cooperation mechanism model. Iran and China, both need each other, both have interests together, in this realist world the self-interests are the priority of every state. China needs Iran for its presence in Middle East, to enjoy the natural resources, Strait of Hormuz which Iran controls which gave access to South Asia, Central Asia, and the important regions, is an eye of Interest for China. Plus, China has economic interests with Iran. The One Belt One Road project is very significant for China and Iran is taken on board for it. 25 years of agreement was signed between China and Iran. China has its strategy of not revealing what it is up to.

Iran has its own interests with China, China supports Iran nuclear program for which USA has sanctioned Iran. Iran has economic, military interest with China. China provides Iran the arm sale and military cooperation exist between both. Both countries are strengthening relations because of their own national interests. Both are cooperating with one another the cooperation mechanism model is implemented. In this realist world are establishing strong relations for their own benefits. USA has alliance with Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Iran is strengthening relations with China. Iran is also fighting for regional hegemony. Both are establishing relations and cooperating with each other because both need each other, and both shares the collective interests.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study is significant in the sense that the Middle Eastern region that that region is a major one as there is no concept of balance of power and BOP is constantly shifting there. This research will analyze China as emerging actor in the Middle East and how it carries its various military and economic engagements and increases its influence in the Middle East. China is playing important role in the sense that it is a new actor in this region and how China is making its influence and new alliance in this region such as with Iran considering Iran a potential regional partner. China has its economic interests in this region and, most importantly, engages in this region for surveillance technology and arms sale with its regional alliance, Iran. This topic is important because it is related to contemporary times and at the same time, China is challenging the western influence in the region as the USA is also gaining its influence in this region for natural resources and other things, such as energy, etc. so China as economic power fulfills its energy and other natural resources from Iran.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To understand, Chinese and Iranian objectives in the Middle East through the lens of realism.
- In the post-cold war era Chinese and Iranian Cooperation mechanism.
- Challenges for China and Iran in the Middle East while keeping in view power politics.
- Implication for Sino-Iranian co-operation in Middle East politics.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How has China increased its military and economic interest by forming an alliance with Iran and keeping China's security engagement in the Middle Eastern region?
- What are the challenges for China and Iran in the Middle East while keeping in view power politics?
- Analyzing Sino-Iranian relations via the lenses of cooperation mechanism and how both practicing realism quench personal interest?
- What is the Implication for Sino-Iranian co-operation in Middle East politics?

1.5 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The research study includes qualitative and quantitative sources of the relevant data used in conducting the study. This research report is qualitative in nature. The articles, journals, books etc. are all relevant to the research topic and are taken by well reputed sources. All the resources have been cited in the reference list. Data selected consists of work on China Iran relations in post-cold war. As well as analyzing China's Grand Arab Policy towards Middle Eastern region, more precisely in Iran's perspective. The theme revolves around highlighting the various dimensions of the relations between China and Iran through the lens of realistic school of thought. Cooperation Mechanism model is used in assessing the China Iran relations.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Jesse Marks in his article "China's quest for a Strategic Fulcrum in the Middle East" distributed in 2020 examines the essential supports in the Middle East. China has spread out a forceful framework to cultivate industry, monetary, security, political, and social binds with key performers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Military backings are those fundamental associations that enable China to expand military power through security interest, military courses of action, and the establishment of an enduring military presence. Military consideration, which recalls security interest for the Middle East, is subsequently both two-sided and multilateral. China has broadened its strategic presence in the Middle East through cooperation concurrences with states in the military, antagonistic to unlawful terrorizing, policing, and non-conventional security along the BRI.

The essayist examines the monetary supports as the ones which China uses to acquire financial relations with its accomplices for Beijing monetary extension like oceanic silk street and through Belt and Road drive. He likewise said that China has agreed to imperative affiliation courses of action in the Middle East identifying basic monetary theory, trade, and investment concurrences with five nations: the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, and Iran (Marks, 2020).

Will Green and Taylore Roth in their research report "China Iran relations: A limited but Enduring Strategic Partnership" published in 2021 investigates China's organization with Iran and talks about China's developing inclusion in the Middle East that area and which have

extending conciliatory, monetary, and military binds with Iran's foes in the district, for example, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. China is trying to strike a balance in its relationship with Iran and the emerging partners. He is of the view that the Sino-Iranian relationship is rooted in pragmatic cooperation on areas of overlapping interest, but this partnership has been evolved as opposed to the US-led international order (Green & Roth, 2021).

An investigation on the "Iran China Strategic association and changing provincial request" by Alam Saleh distributed in April 2021 assesses the Sino – Iranian complete vital organization as one more maneuver by Beijing to expand its force across the world. Iran is further reinforcing its situation in the Middle East. The arising power battle between the superpowers is changing the dynamic of worldwide relations. The territorial security complex of the Middle East is described by the rising predominance of frail states and non-state entertainers also. Tehran has likewise evolved up its atomic program and its tactical force too.

China constituted the great power potential to reduce US hegemony, and Iran has sought to challenge US influence in the Middle East. China additionally means to improve its geostrategic importance by situating Iran as a center accomplice in the Middle East (Saleh, 2021).

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Realism as a term is used in different disciplines, in International Relations realism is the tradition of analysis that emphasize that states priority is their national interests. The political realism, power politics is the oldest theory. Realism is a powerful approach of International Relations. The book length introductions focusing on realism has been provided by Smith (1986) and Donnelly (2000). In relation to two alternative traditions realism is considered by Doyle (1997) and Wight (1991).

2.1 Realism

Theories are filters that direct us, the realism is an important theory of International Relations and contemporary world is all realist, egoistic and selfish in nature. Realism is defined by different thinkers. In details the definition of realism might differs, but they share clear resemblance. Imposition of human selfishness, egoism and anarchic world realists emphasize the politics constraint imposed by egoism and anarchy which require the primary in all political life of security and power. (Giplin1986). The core realist premises are identified as state centrism and rationality. If one thinks of states as what in 1979 Waltz call as units, across international theories the state centrism is widely shared. The core of realism is provided by the resulting imperative of power politics and conjunction of anarchy and egoism. As realists George Kennan, Kennan Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, E.H.Carr and Niebuhr are symbolic figures of twentieth century. Thomas Hobbes and Machiavelli in the western political thought considered as realists. As realist sometimes Thucydides is seen.

As a general theory of politics few theorists adopt realism for example Niebuhr 1932. However, realism is considered as international politics theory by majority theorists. This leads towards shifting of attention towards political structure from human nature. Egoism is usually substantially within states restrained by hierarchical rule. Anarchy allows the expression of worst aspects of human nature in international relations. Realism maintains that to the action of the state's the universal moral principles cannot be applied.

In recent decades to anarchy many realists have given near emphasis, the hierarchical political rule absence. For instance, John Herz states that for power anarchy assures the centrality of struggle even in aggressivity absence. For such theories structural realism is the standard label.

The other standard term is the neo realism, from earlier distinguishing this rigorous structural emphasis. Both the terms are interchangeably used.

Human nature is emphasized by other realists without denying anarchy centrality. For example, it is argued by Morgenthau onto collective plane a projection of human nature is the social world. Such realists believe in human nature the war and conflict are rooted. War could be caused by pride, quest and lust for glory. For this position the most common label is the classical realism.

By exclusivity of their commitment to core realist premises realists can be further distinguished. From the international politics except power and self-interest radical realists exclude almost everything. On the self-interests and predominance of power the emphasize is given by the strong realists but for non-realist forces they allow modest space. Carr and Waltz are leading realist of their generations. The realist analysis of problems of international politics is accepted by hedged or weak realists. Lying outside the explanatory range of realism they see more significant international relations elements.

The concept of classical realism emerges from the Edward Carr's "**The 20 years crisis**" in 1939. Then this theory was further explained by various scholars such as Hans Morgenthau, Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, and Niccolò Machiavelli. The history of classical realism can be traced back to the time of Thucydides. The realist school of thought puts focus on the role of the state, national interest, and the role of power in international system. Realism revolves around four main ideas, the state centrism, anarchy, egoism, and the power.

- **State Centrism:** In the international politics the central actors are the state rather the global organizations or the leaders.
- **Anarchy:** There is no supranational authority for the enforcement of rules the international system is anarchic.
- **Egoism:** States are egoistic in nature and within the global system states act in their rational self-interests.
- **Power:** To ensure the self-preservation states desire power (Ferretti, 2021).

The theory of realism talks about the 3 S that are Survival, security, and self-help. Realism believes that states are selfish and for them their national interests are at priority. The constraints on politics resulted from the egoistic nature of human and above state the absence of the central authority is emphasized by realism. Survival of the state is the highest goal and aim of realism. States actions shouldn't be judged by the principles of moral according to

realists. Realism remains a significant analytical tool for research. In international Relations the dominant schools of thought are realism, theoretically formalizing the realpolitik statesmanship of early modern Europe.

The theory of realism talks about the 3 S that are Survival, security, and self-help. Realism believes that states are selfish and for them their national interests are at priority. The constraints on politics resulted from the egoistic nature of human and above state the absence of the central authority is emphasized by realism. Survival of the state is the highest goal and aim of realism. Realism strongly believes that state will never give on its interests. The states emphasize on what suits them and will behave accordingly. States according to realists are self-centric as world is anarchic, everyone will pursue their interests and will aim for maximization of power in this anarchic global system. Thus, this school of thought emphasizes on the role of power and self interest in determining the state behavior. Moreover, it focuses on the role of state, national interest, and power in world politics.

All realists regard conflict as a key element in politics, including international affairs. A classical type of realism regards conflict and competition as an essential element of international affairs, referring the origin of conflict to the human nature. Humans struggle with each other for resources they need and strive for power to rule over other people. This is a set domestic political systems that give greedy parochial groups the opportunity to pursue self-serving expansionist foreign policies. For classical realist international politics can be characterized as evil: bad things happen because the people making foreign policy are sometimes bad.

Classical realists put more accentuation on the job of human instinct in International Politics. It contends that power lies in human instinct, as the regulations that oversee governmental issues are made by men and furthermore underscores that International Politics is a battle for power which radiates from human instinct. The hypothesis expresses that individual are ravenous, uncertain and forceful and they likewise seek scant assets, so this makes them to go after each other for gain. The desire to have power and self-centeredness of people are viewed as the causes or bases of struggles that exudes among the people. What's more, Hobbes distinguished three chief reasons for clashes which are major to human instinct: rivalry, shyness and greatness. Traditional authenticity is a state level hypothesis that contends that all states look for power, which is driven by want to accomplish public interests. Power is the vital idea for pragmatists, and they contend that to make do, states should expand their power by interior

improvement, for example, in the monetary framework, innovative, political and military means. The hypothesis contends that states look to build their power and reduction the force of their foes and all that they do is for the sake of force amassing (Peter, 2015).

2.3 CLASSICAL REALISM

Hobbes focuses and puts discussion on the term 'condition of nature', yet it is striking that Hobbes trusts that the standpoint of existence without the fundamental social establishments is profoundly skeptical. As indicated by Hobbes, 'human instinct can't exist'. Along these lines, Hobbes' conversation of the self-centeredness of people is based around the person. On the off chance that various people show comparable properties it isn't on the grounds that they share a specific substance; they just look like one another (Ovadek, 2015).

Hobbes make 3 presumptions about the condition of nature.

- Men are equivalent.
- They cooperate in rebellion.
- They are driven by contest, reserve, and brilliance.

The combination of these circumstances prompts a conflict of all against all. Men are equivalent in the natural sense that 'the most vulnerable has strength enough to kill the most grounded.

Because of the shortfall of a focal government there is presence of political agitation and circumstance of war. During the time men live without a typical ability to keep them all in stunningness, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a conflict as is of each and every man against each man.

Hobbes recognizes that such a savage state never existed across the whole globe. Hobbes, as most pragmatists, has one or two doubts of changing human instinct. Experts may sensibly differ about the fluctuation and flexibility of human instinct or the interests of states. Most, nonetheless, would concur that Hobbes' accentuation on rivalry, restraint and magnificence addresses an infiltrating, if uneven, cartoon that merits significant thought.

Turmoil has been supplanted by progressive political rule inside most states. Indeed, even horrible and wasteful legislatures typically give considerable security to the lives and property of their residents, emphatically lessening the tensions to supplant the worldwide condition of nature with global government. Global insurgency can subsequently be anticipated to endure,

even without considering the powerful urge of states and their residents for independence. The Hobbes hypothesis of classical realism examines the incredible great power competition rather as just the overall hypothesis of international relations.

2.4 Offensive and Defensive Realism

On anarchy and polarity, the prediction based solely are indeterminate. To the analysts and the policy makers if realist theories are to be of substantial utility the additional variables must be included not in ad hoc way but integrated into theoretical models. As an extreme statement of defensive and expansive orientations the domination and survival can be seen. The classical realist distinction between revisionist power and status quo is revived by the literature on offensive, defensive realism in effect.

Offensive realism seeks to maximize power in order that states gain hegemony or domination in this international world order. Whereas defensive realists evaluate on the system in which states seek to maximize their own and influence in order to achieve security through domination to hegemony. Moreover, it talks about the projection of its own power. The basic principle of offensive realist is Power Maximization.

Michael Mastanduno (1991) argues that nation states are not the gap maximizers. In Joseph terms they are defensive positionalists. John Mearsheimer states by maximizing their power relative to other states the states seek to survive under anarchy. His states are the short-term power maximizers which is the offensive positionalists. Rather than substantive claims about states nature as the abstract logics of interactions the offensive and defensive realism could be seen.

Defensive realism differs from offensive realists in a way that states should only gain an appropriate amount of power to survive in this anarchic world and not to maximize it. It also does not encourage states to gain hegemony in this international system. The defensive realists encourage states maintain moderate and reserved policies in order to attain security and moreover, evaluates on the fact on the protection of its own power. The basic principle of defensive realists is security maximization.

2.5 NEOREALISM

Man, the State, and War, Kenneth Waltz's first important work, initially published in 1959, emphasizes the proclivity of past thinkers concerned with war and peace, both secular and religious, to seek the basic reasons of conflict in human nature. Waltz, on the other hand, has a different issue. States in the international system have no guarantee that other states will behave peacefully, so they may be tempted to launch a "preventive war," attacking while they are in a position of relative strength rather than waiting for the balance of power to alter. This issue is primarily related to the anarchic structure of the international system, not to the level of the individual or the internal structure of nations. As a result, Waltz proposes three political "pictures" that roughly correspond to three areas of human existence: the individual, the domestic sphere of the state, and the international system. The classical realism belief that conflicts occurs because humans are evil, as well as the optimistic idea that humans may be transformed for the better. The second image is the state's character: authoritarian or democratic, socialist or capitalist. Individuals are, for all intents and purposes, contained within the state's domestic domain. Furthermore, governments' personalities have little bearing on their foreign behavior. The problem of conflict so rests in the anarchic nature of the international system itself. The IR scholar can focus now that the distractions of the earlier two images have been removed, and a clear dividing line between the domestic and internal sphere has been formed. This viewpoint was much more in line with positivism, which had developed and refined quantitative methodologies that could be used in IR. Although Waltz was influenced by economics, he was not mesmerized by statistics, and he did not believe that the concept of 'reality' was simple. Theory of International Politics (1979), his most significant work, begins by pointing out a popular, but incorrect, perspective of theory construction, which claims that it may be created inductively by finding connections. 'It is then simple to believe that a true causal relationship has been established and measured, and to forget that anything was just spoken about dots on a piece of paper and the regression line drawn between them.' He claims that numbers can supply valuable explanations of what is happening in different parts of the world, but they cannot explain anything.

Despite its flaws, Waltz sees that students of politics have a strong commitment to the inductive technique, believing that linkages and patterns will appear, setting up a "real world" reality. He claims that 'reality' is incompatible with neither a theory nor a model showing a simplified

version of it. This begs the question: what is theory if not a replication of reality? According to Waltz, a theory is a mentally created picture of a certain domain of activity, its organization, and the connections between its pieces, and that this domain must be separated from others to be dealt with intellectually.

Traditionalists like Morgenthau, Waltz claims, were prone to analyzing IR in terms of inside-outside patterns of behavior, that is, by looking at how domestic politics affects international politics and vice versa. But, given the substantial variety of states across space and time, what accounts for the millennia-long continuities? To illustrate, Waltz argues that Hobbesian insights are still relevant in the face of nuclear-armed superpower competition. As a result, "the texture of international politics is remarkably consistent, patterns recur, and events repeat themselves inexorably." And it is anarchy's persistent existence that explains the fundamental similarity of international politics across history. Waltz also expands on the concepts of balance of power and self-help in an anarchic system, noting first that, because some states may use force at some point, all states must be prepared to do so or risk being at the mercy of more militant neighbors, because 'the state of nature is a state of war' among states, just as it is among individuals in the absence of government. Waltz elaborates on Weber's notion that, because nations have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their borders, they will arrange state agents to deal with violence as it arises. A self-help system is not a practical national system in which citizens do not need to organize their own defenses. However, the international system is flawed (*ibid.*, p. 4). States are concerned about survival in a self-help setting, which influences their behavior. They are more concerned with their relative strength than with any absolute advantage. This restricts their cooperation with other countries, particularly if it means becoming reliant on them. Small states with limited resources will be unable to reject dependency. Stronger countries, on the other hand, will prevent this, even if it means committing significant resources to military spending. Anarchy may appear to be alleviated by the growth of international institutions and the fragments of government they provide, as well as some feelings of community and certain orderly and coordinated procedures across a range of international activities, but Waltz claims that this notion confuses process with structure. The key structural conditions imposed by anarchy persist in the absence of a world state. Even if there is a long period of calm, conflict will ultimately return at some point. In summary, conflict will continue to occur in predictable patterns.

2.6. STRUCTURAL REALISM AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The international system's essential dynamics This can be explained in terms of realpolitik, which has three fundamental elements:

- self-interest (on the side of states or rulers).
- Policy necessities appear through unfettered state competition; and
- Calculations based on these necessities produce policies that best serve state interests.

The ultimate measure of policy success is the preservation and strengthening of the state. 'Interest and necessity – and *raison d'état*, the word that encompasses both – have been the essential notions of Realpolitik since Machiavelli.' This brings Waltz to the essential assumptions of balance of power theory concerning states: they are unitary actors that, at the very least, desire to preserve themselves; at the very worst, they seek universal dominance. Internal initiatives (such as expanding economic capabilities and military power) are combined with exterior strategies (such as keeping and strengthening one's alliances while diminishing those of real or potential adversaries).

The theory is based on presumed state motivations and actions; it finds system-imposed limits on state activity and predicts the expected outcome in terms of power balance development. Waltz goes on to say where this model came from: 'Balance-of-power theory is micro theory in the economist's meaning.' The system, like a market in economics, is built by the actions and interactions of its constituents, and the theory is built on assumptions about their behavior.' A self-help system also means that individuals who do not help themselves put themselves in danger. Fear of such unintended repercussions motivates states to act in ways that promote power balances. According to one critic, Waltz is careful to clarify that nations' fundamental purpose is to create or maximize security rather than power, and that power is a means to an end rather than an end. This also shows that nations pursue power solely in relation to other states, which, again, does not imply power maximization in an absolute sense but rather a balancing strategy. More broadly, Waltz's structural realism can be summarized as explaining (rather than merely describing) the international system through reference to the dominant structure imposed by anarchy, defined by the interplay between part units (in terms of states seeking survival), and characterized by specific power distributions reflecting the capabilities of the units. It is the causality inside this system that counts, not issues like diverse political cultures that may influence foreign policy practice and other types of interactions between the units. As a result, this 'systemic' approach is constrained, not trying to explain everything in

politics. Waltz's theories have had a huge impact on IR studies, particularly in terms of theoretical growth. Many later theoretical discussions are a reaction to realism in general and neorealism, just as realism was a reaction to idealism in many aspects. Not all these reactions were hostile to Waltz's fundamental concepts. Many have been sympathetic but have tried to improve or extend Waltz's ideas in some way.

The sovereign and independent organizations the states are the part of international system the larger system. As bounded space one can define the international system where enthusiastically states within a definite structure interact with each another and according to the characteristics of that structure states behaves. The structural designs are highlighted by neorealism that shape up the foreign policy and the behaviors of the states. The answer to the question why in a certain manner state behaves despite having ideological, political and cultural systems differences is provided by the structural realism according to Waltz. In the international system the answer lies as on the states it poses certain constraints, forcing them to behave in international arena in a homogenized way. The international structure posses three characteristics according to Waltz:

- **Character of Units**

The units and the state behaviors are defined by the nature of international order. In international system anarchy prevails which act as state behavior determinant. The Gilpin stated though the international system is anarchic and the element of control over state behaviors is exercised by the system. For ensuring their survival and protecting their security the states work in order. For safeguarding their interest, they take several steps. The states similar objectives force them to behave similarly.

- **The Ordering Principle**

The pattern of activity allowing states to achieve fundamental goals is the international order. In nature the current ordering principle is anarchic according to the neorealism as to administer the state behavior there is no such supreme authority present. Waltz idea was supported by Robert Jervis and Robert Art by asserting that the fundamental fact of international environment is anarchy.

- **Capabilities of Units**

To achieve the similar goals the states, behave in order but in their capacity, they differ to practice power in international politics according to their position. Waltz stated that

although functionally states are like units but in their capabilities they differ vastly. In a nut shell the international environment is anarchic for the neorealists where state interaction is along with facing the challenges imposed by the international structure. According to their capabilities of power exercising making them function in homogenized manner for their own interests.

CHAPTER 3

MIDDLE EAST: SIGNIFICANCE AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

As per structural realism, it features the foundational layouts that shape up the states conduct and international strategies. It likewise centers around how a state acts in a specific way, in spite of the way that there are contrasts in their philosophical, political, and social frameworks. Ordering principle an important characteristic of structural realism says that the current order is anarchic in nature due to the absence of a central authority. In the case of Middle Eastern region, it is experiencing various conflicts for several years. Middle Eastern region is the region of conflicts, wars, human rights abuses, military interventions, chaos, avenue for international powers to compete, armed non state actors and their politics etc. The question arises that why the region which is in various conflicts and chaos is an eye of interest for the world. The simple answer is because of the potential and the significance of the region in terms of its resources, location, economic and strategic significance. This region is an eye of interest for many, and we see involvement of multiple global players in the region. This region has immense importance in terms of economic, geographic, strategic, political, and militarily means. Thus, this region is anarchic in nature and lack a central world order that would be governing this. This research would thus focus upon the dynamics of Middle Eastern region to understand its structure in international order and the characteristics that define this region.

The International order can be explained by the fact that USA established itself as a hegemon or a superpower in the world order. USA still remains a major superpower in this international system, but the fact is that now China is emerging as a rising power in the world. China is trying to make itself an economic hegemon in the international system and trying to challenge the US domination in the world order. China is gaining its foothold in this international arena gradually. In the structure of Middle East, that USA remained as the major external force in the region in the sense that that it was involved in many of the proxy conflicts and civil wars that were going in Middle East. US had great many interventions and intervened in many matters across the Middle East. If we discuss the great power competition in the region USA, China, and Russia remained as the three major external powers which are the main players at the back of the power competition in the Middle East. Increasing regional competition can be seen in the Middle Eastern region as states want to attain hegemony in this region.



Figure 3.1. Geographical Location of Middle East

Source: <https://www.infoplease.com/atlas/middle-east>

3.1 Economic Significance

The natural resource in the Middle Eastern region makes this region attractive and significant in the world. To the most vital natural resources this region is home especially the fossil fuels. In Arab countries 5.2 percent of constituted population enjoyed 27.5 percent of globes natural gas reserves and 55.2 percent of globes oil reserves. In the Arab gulf most of natural energy assets are concentrated. There are oil rich and non-oil rich states in the region. In the global economic indicator rankings, the discrepancies between oil rich and non-oil rich states are evident. The 2016-2017 Global competitiveness reports indicate the region's economic achievers at rank 16 UAE and at rank 18 Qatar while the non-oil rich countries as Israel rank 24 and Turkey at 56. Yemen ranked at 138 while Egypt at 115 (Leo Hindery Jr.,2019). In terms of oil and industry the region is of immense importance. The oil deposits discovery has revolutionized the economy of Middle East. In the region more than half of world oil reserves are existing. Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil exporter and producer, and it has largest deposits. The other major producers are Iraq, Iran and Kuwait. In Turkey coal, oil, magnesium, Sulphur is mined and from Jordon phosphates.

Most industrially developed countries in the region are Turkey, Israel and Egypt. The chief areas of industrial activity are petroleum refining, processing of agricultural products,

petrochemical production, textiles, and traditional crafts as rugs. The heavy industry including steel production, machinery and motor vehicle is encouraged. In terms of agriculture only 15 percent land is suitable, but it is a significant economic activity in the region. Barley, rice and wheat are chief food crops. In the deserts oases figs and dates are grown while in the Mediterranean coastal region the citrus fruits. Tobacco, coffee, and cotton are the major commercial crops producers.

Iran's economy is described by its hydrocarbon, farming, and administration areas, as well as a recognizable state presence in the assembling and monetary administrations. Iran positions second on the planet for flammable gas stores and fourth for demonstrated raw petroleum holds. While generally enhanced for an oil trading country, financial movement government incomes actually depend on oil incomes and have, consequently, been unstable.

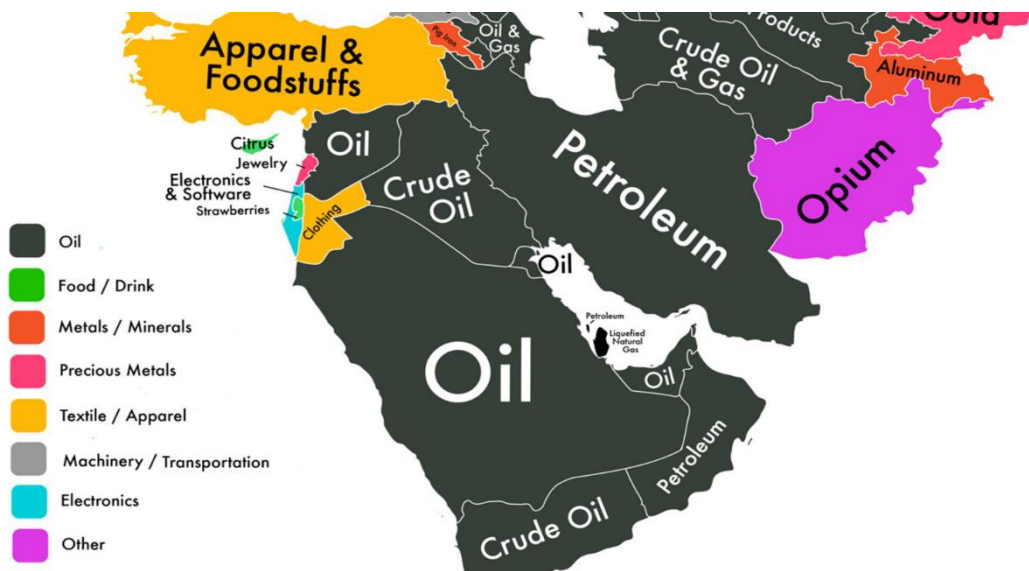


Figure 3.1. Economic significance of Middle East

Source: <file:///C:/Users/asus/Downloads/map-on-middle-east-economy-2016-5.htm>

The Middle Eastern region is the growing market zone not just the war zone. The region is composed of various countries from poorest as Yemen to richest as Qatar. In the world it boasts one of youngest fastest growing population. In the world the region has four of ten most important sovereign wealth funds. Not only under the security or energy prism the region should be looked into but in economic prism as well. Numerous companies have been investing in the region. Uber, Amazon, Coca Cola etc are big names. To reach the well-heeled consumers in the Middle Eastern market's luxury groups as Rolex, Richmond, Hermes etc have greatly invested. Shell, Total and other energy groups enjoy large contracts in the region. In the

infrastructure big names are investing. From the Middle East mobile markets like Apple, Twitter, Facebook have seen important market share gains and profits (Ahmad, 2020).

The One Belt One Road initiative of 2013 by China where multiple Middle Eastern states is taken on board is no doubt a massive economic project which has proved the potential the region has and how China is investing in the region for pursuing its economic and strategic interests. This project depicts the economic significance of the region. In a nutshell in terms of economy the region is of immense importance, the region plays the vital role in global economy. Oil as the resource makes the region extremely attractive, the world runs from oil and oil is as asset for the region. In terms of energy also the region is important. In terms of industry, agriculture, and resources the region has immense significance that's the reason that despite having multiple conflicts, chaos and instability the region is an eye of interests for multiple players.

3.2 Geographic Significance

Middle Eastern region is of great significance in terms of geography. Its rich location makes this region more attractive. Middle East is large diverge geographical area which is situated in southwest Asia and northeast Africa. In the north from black sea, it extends over 2000 miles to the Arabian sea in the south and about thousand miles from Mediterranean Sea in west to mountains of Iran. The total area is nearly 3,500,000 square miles. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in terms of area, Bahrain an island nation in the Persian Gulf is the smallest nation in terms of area. By mountain ranges on the north the region is completely ringed. By mountainous heights in west and south the Arabian Peninsula is bounded that makes up more than one quarter of the regions area. The regions interior mostly is flat and contains deserts. Nile and Tigris and Euphrates are major river systems. Egypt lifeblood is Nile which is world longest river. In Turkey the Tigris and Euphrates rise and through Syria flows and join in Iraq forming region called as Mesopotamia. These river valleys contain regions limited fertile land.

In terms of climate the region is hot and dry except in the highest mountains where snow is frequent. From October to April in most places rainy season occurs. Generally, the region suffers from shortage of water because of limited rainfall. Dams in the region are important such as Aswan High Dam which provides hydroelectric power as well. Pipeline system in Israel is important for diverting water from river Jordan to Negev desert areas. Ataturk dam in Turkey is important. Water passageways is also important. The water route linking Atlantic Ocean and

Mediterranean Sea is controlled by Gibraltar. Through Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the water access between Mediterranean and black seas is only possible. The Suez Canal is another significant water route that connects Mediterranean Sea to Red Sea. The Strait of Hormuz links Indian ocean and Persian Gulf, the Bab el Mandeb Strait separates Red Sea from the Indian ocean (Rashed, 2019).

In a nutshell the rich location and geography of the Middle Eastern region makes this region an eye of interest for many players. The geography of region is of immense significance. The region locates between the three continents, an enclave through which amazing international trade passes, its geography and strategic location makes it immensely significant. The region is suffering from multiple conflicts there is instability, but the region is of immense significance due to its rich strategic location and geography.

The area of Iran's oil fields is basic here, since oil remains its most significant and most essential commodity. Oil is to be found in three areas: The southwest is the significant district, with lesser stores along the Iraqi boundary in the north and one close to Qom. The southwestern oil fields are an augmentation of the topographical development that made the oil fields in the Kurdish district of northern Iraq. Thus, the area east of the Shatt al-Arab is of basic significance to Iran. Iran has the third biggest oil saves on the planet and is the world's fourth biggest maker. In this manner, one would anticipate that it should be probably the most well-off country on the planet. Iran is the course associating the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean Sea. But since of its size and geology, Iran isn't a country that can be effectively navigated, substantially less won. The area of Iran's oil fields is basic here, since oil remains its most significant and most essential commodity.



Figure 2.3. Geographical significance of Middle East

Source: <https://cdn.britannica.com/08/89908-131-D73216FB/Middle-East.jpg>

3.3 Strategic Significance

Iran is arranged at the intersection of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Arab conditions of the Middle East. Middle Eastern region has great strategic significance, strategically located it is a natural land bridge connecting the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia. The enormous deposits of oil have made this region extremely important. Strategically the region importance is evident by the involvement of major powers in the region. The region is an avenue for multiple powers which are involved in great strategic competition (Badran, 2019).

USA is involved nearly in every Middle Eastern matter whether it be in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Lebanon. Whether it be supporting SDF against Bashar al Assad regime in Syria or whether it be invasion of Iraq, or invasion of Afghanistan, whether it be dealing with Hezbollah in Lebanon or dealing with Hamas in Palestine or ISIS in Syria. USA had made Saudi Arabia important ally in the region. Iran and USA have severe clashes, and both are competing with one another. China on the other hand is also involved in the region but China focus is economic rather involving itself militarily. When Soviet Union and USA were invading Afghanistan, China was interested in mining projects and pursuing economic relations. China has made a strong partnership with Iran. The recent China Iran 25 years of cooperation agreement in terms of strategic and economic partnership is of great relevance that depicts the involvement of China in the region.

In a nutshell this region is in great strategic competition. Global players are also involved in the region. USA with Saudi Arabia and China with Iran are pursuing their interests. Iran removing India from Chahbahar project depicts the Iran clear side with China. Between USA and Iran, the Chicken Game phenomena is relevant, both are competing towards each other. USA expect Iran to be feared and become Chicken, but Iran believes it has resources, it has potential though USA is trying best to isolate Iran and is imposing severe sanctions but at same time Iran has back of China so no need to be feared. The region is strategically, economically very significant that's the reason various players are involved in the region. For peace and stability of the states of Middle East it's important to develop the people and gain public support rather giving major powers the opportunity to play and pursue their interests in the region. It is unfortunate that the region has become a playground for major powers to play.

3.4 Political Significance

Middle Eastern region politically is of immense importance. The unrest in the region presently has taken many forms and is due to numerous factors. The factors that contribute to the conflictual situations in Syria, Yemen, Iran, Iraq and Libya are geopolitical discourse, inadequate governance, disfranchisement and religious extremism. Many policy makers and western observers see the region through lens of religious sectarianism. The emphasis is on Suni Shia divide. In the geopolitical competition of Saudi Arabia with Iran this split is clearly articulated and in Iraq and Syria it is played out through violence. Sectarianism is very important phenomena in the region for its regional unrest (Robinson, Connable, Thaler, & Scotten, 2018).

Muslims in the Mideast

Less than 15 per cent of the world's Muslims are Shiite, or Shia; most Muslims are Sunni.

	PER CENT OF POPULATION	
	SHIA MUSLIM	SUNNI MUSLIM
Bahrain	70%	30%
Egypt	-	90%
Iran	90%	9%
Iraq	63%	34%
Jordan	2%	92%
Lebanon	36%	22%
Qatar	14%	86%
Saudi Arabia	5%	95%
Syria	13%	74%
Turkey	15%	85%

SOURCE: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life; CIA World Factbook; Adherents.com



Figure 3.3 Political Significance of Middle East

Source:

https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/09/06/sunnishia_split_the_mideasts_new_gr at_divide.html

Oil is an important asset in the Middle East. The state with oil has immense political significance as world runs with oil. Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait etc. are oil producing state they have immense importance politically. The geo strategic location of the Middle Eastern region between Europe and Asia makes this region of immense political significance. This region has become an avenue for multiple players to pursue their political, economic, and strategic interests. In the region French and British dominance was established by World War 1. The cold war rivalry fueled the arm races and conflicts in the region. When the British and French withdrawals and Soviet Union collapse in cold war time period the USA became dominant superpower active in the region. The faltering Israel – Palestine peace efforts, disastrous occupation of Iraq, dramatic rise in American oil have reduced USA Middle Eastern region commitment which created a vacuum that was filled by Russia, China etc. The regional powers as Iran and Saudi Arabia are supporting armed groups, backing rival governments in there escalating competition in order to gain the regional dominance inflaming the already fragile political situation of the region.

In Middle Eastern region there are various organizations, political economic unions making region more significant politically. The Gulf Cooperation Council is an important regional

intergovernmental economic political union with headquarter in Saudi Arabia. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia are the members. These are Arab state monarchs. Main agenda of GCC is achieving unity among its member with common goals. OPEC is another important intergovernmental organization founded in Baghdad, the initial members were Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Kuwait. The agenda of OPEC is of developing coordinating petroleum policy among its members for securing prices for petroleum producers. In short, the Middle Eastern region is of great importance in terms of political and economic perspective. The region is not an easy place, it involves multiple conflicts and politics is very much evident in the region (VEEN, 2021).

3.5 Military Significance

Middle Eastern region is immensely important consisting up of significant countries. In the region there are multiple factors that enhances the importance of the region. The military significance of the region can't be ignored. Multiple powers are also involved in the region pursuing their interests. In the region states are massively investing and spending on military as the region is surrounded by numerous conflicts. In conflict situation the more is spent on military, arms and weapons for creating deterrence and security. Most spender on military is Saudi Arabia, according to International Institute for Strategic Studies last year the budget of Riyadh was more than next biggest five spenders in Middle East that includes Iran, Iraq, Israel, Algeria and Oman (Dominic Dudley,2018).

In the Middle Eastern region there are strongest military forces with huge budget and great numbers. The map above depicts the military power of the Middle Eastern countries. The countries greatly spend on their defense sector and ensures to empower them by developing the defense sector. The focus is on weapons and arms technology development. As the region is involved in multiple conflicts and multiple powers and players are involved the military aid, arm supports, sending of troops also plays a very significant role in the militarization of the Middle Eastern region.

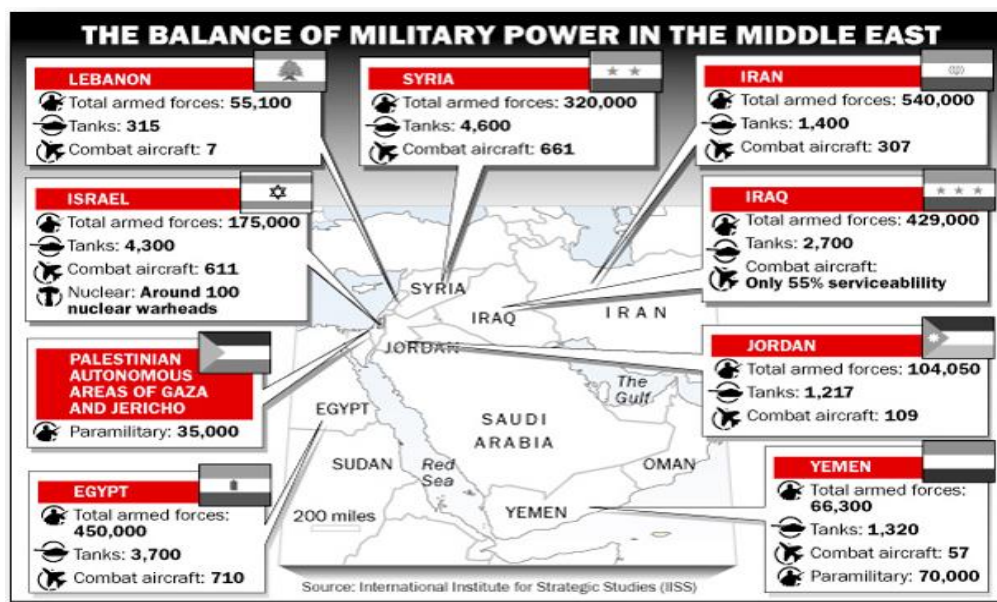


Figure 3.4 Military Power in Middle East

Source:

https://studies.aljazeera.net/sites/default/files/migration/mritems/Images/2018/9/2/5a55481bd e714a7da980eef04336d23f_6.PNG

The military significance of the region can also be registered by looking into the foreign aid, the arm sales, transfer of excellent technology to the region. In case of USA in the region the central component of its economic relations are arms sales. Between 2013 to 2017 half of the USA arms export has been gone to the region. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE were the main names. In telecommunication equipment USA is largest single trading partner of Israel. Globally whole the region receives more than 50 percent of total USA military aid. The other important power is China which is investing greatly to the region and has soft military presence. There is China's peacekeeping forces in the region, Chinese navy technical service, the Chinese escort fleet in Gulf of Aden. China is using the military in service of its geo economic strategy. China has focus on trade and economy along with soft military presence in the region. The military bases of USA, France, Britain in the region is evident for protection of their geopolitical interests. South Korea and India depends upon the military exchanges' temporality for the protection of geo economic interests (Khadduri, 2013).

In addition to it Iranian armed forces are considered the largest in the Middle Eastern region in terms of its troops. The military significance of the region can also be assessed by the fact that Iran began working on its nuclear program and start building the nuclear missiles, arsenals, and nuclear weapons such as the buildup of the uranium mines. Then in response to its nuclear

program an agreement was framed known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action JCPOA in 2015 for the purpose of nuclear nonproliferation and that nuclear weapons are used for peaceful purposes. In response to this JCPOA agreement USA imposed economic sanctions on Iran in wake of its nuclear program.

The military significance of the region can clearly be established. The number of states regionally and globally are involved in militarization of the region. The multiple strategies are being used by the states. The region is suffering the instability and chaotic situations due to great involvement of multiple powers and militarization of the region. China and USA are in great competition in the region. China is providing a strong support to Iran militarily. Arm sale, weapons are being provided by China. USA Iran clash is very much evident. USA has Saudi Arabia has a strong ally. There are multiple powers involved in the region making allies providing military support, aid and pursuing their interests.

The risk of nuclear armament escalation is also evident in the region. It's time to take action looking the current security environment of the region. Freeing the region from all weapons of mass destruction seem to be very difficult close to impossible. Nonproliferation dialogue shall be followed immediately to avoid any escalations. Turkey's current appetite for nuclear weapons as well as Israel nuclear weapon and Iran's missile policies needs to be looked. Nuclearization is the major threat to the region and eventually world's stability and peace.

3.6 Multiple Conflicts in Middle East

The Middle East is the region in which there are multiple on-going conflicts since years. Almost every state is in conflict and militarization is very much evident in the region. The major powers and regional powers are involved in numerous conflicts. The armed non state actors as Al Qaida, ISIS, PLO etc. are very much evident in the region. The military significance of the region can be accessed by numerous military involvements of foreign states in the region. Multiple cases can be provided as the fact that how much the region has been militarized. The following examples of Middle Eastern countries reflects that how much the region has been involved in military conflicts and still many are ongoing.

Syria has been a playground for the foreign and state military. Afghanistan has been always a playground for the foreign powers. Soviets first sent troops then after defeat the USA sent troops which were recently withdrawal and Taliban took over. The Persian Gulf war in which Iraqi forces surrendered, later on in 2003 USA launched operation Iraqi freedom, troops were

stationed, and Saddam Hussein was captured. ISIS in 2014 after troops withdrawal took control of certain Iraqi and Syrian territory.

In Yemen the military split between Houthis which have Iran's supports and Government forces which are being supported by Saudi Arabia is evident. In case of Israel and Palestine various guerrilla groups emerged, number of conflicts took place as Six-day war in 1967, the Yom Kippur war in 1973, the Lebanon invasion in 1982 and Lebanon war 2006. Hence no doubt the region has been and is in numerous military conflicts and has been an arena for multiple powers to intervene, play and pursue their respective interests at the end the people only suffer (Julien Barnes-Dacey, 2018).

In a nutshell the Middle Eastern region can't be ignored, it is of great significance due to its geography, economy, strategic location, political and military importance. Multiple players are involved in the region due to the potential the region has, and this region has been an arena for multiple powers to intervene and play. The oil is the most attractive force of the Middle Eastern region.

The international structure nature is defined by its ordering principle(anarchy), the capabilities of unit (within international system measured by great powers numbers and character of units(states). State basically works in order for protecting their self-interests. In the international system there is anarchy (Bull, H. (1977). State takes various measures in order to ensure their survival. When the states have collective interest and similar goals they behave similarly. It could be best explained under Sino-Iranian cooperation, both China and Iran have collective and similar interests for example it's in the interest of both to counter the western influence, to reduce the influence of USA to get the global hegemony what China wants and to get regional hegemony what Iran wants.

The international order determines the state behavior. USA is the global hegemon and China is in the race of attaining the position. China is in great competition with USA and Iran is fully sanctioned by USA, both have collective and similar goal to counter USA and reduce its influence. As both have collective interests both are cooperating with one another and are there cooperation is threat to the western influence. To understand the dynamics of Sino Iranian similar interests in the region it's important to look into the interests of both the countries in the Middle eastern region.

CHAPTER 4

CHINA AND IRAN'S INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Middle Eastern region due to its strategic, economic military significance is center of focus for many players globally. In the past decade in the Middle Eastern region China has grown its economic, political and to lesser extent its security footprint and has attained the position of biggest trading partner and biggest investor in the region for several countries. China is evolving its role greatly in Middle Eastern region as China is interested in the region greatly. China has immense interests in the region whether it be economic, energy or strategic. China although is the new player relatively in the region, USA has been long involved in the region however China's focus is on economic development and generated the influence greatly through economic dominance while USA has always focus on the military dominance (Camille Lon's, 2019).

China's ties with Middle Eastern region revolved around the energy demand and the initiative of BRI launched in 2013. Officially globally China is the biggest crude oil importer in 2015.

From the Middle East almost half of its supply come. For the future of BRI, the region is of immense significance, for trade routes and sea lanes significant strategically crossroads that links Asia to Africa and Europe are important.

BRI is immensely significant for China as it is designed by China to place itself at global trade networks center. On Gulf states China has great focus due to their great role in the markets of energy. The People's Republic of China (PRC) foreign policy generally introduced itself as an interest driven strategy towards a nation or locale.

Financial interests were prototypically in the frontal area. This changed when Chinese pioneer Xi Jinping came to power in 2012; from that point forward, Chinese interests have obviously gone past monetary issues. Specifically, Beijing is attempting to situate China as a self-assured politically influential nation - and as of now not simply a territorial power went against to the US. Chinese international strategy, which is planned to achieve China's ascent to world power as endorsed by Xi Jinping, is consistently making its imprint as a component of the country's worldwide political desires and foundational contest with the United States.

4.1 China's economic interest to the security and political engagement

With almost 15 Middle Eastern countries China has concluded the partnership agreements. China participates in maritime security missions and in anti-piracy in Gulf of Aden and Arabian sea. In Yemen and Syrian crisis also, China has been involved in the mediation efforts. China in Djibouti have established its first military base. Near crucial maritime chokepoints the Bab el- Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz China's military presence is evident. In supplying arms sale to several Middle Eastern states China is involved.

China is careful to not get involved too much militarily in the region keeping its emphases on economic dominance. In the Strait of Hormuz, the recent series of incident that have enhanced the tensions between the opponent geopolitical players and Iran, to take on greater security role China could be forced for protecting the freedom of navigation which is important for China's energy security. China is maintaining a good balance but at the same time significant announcements are being made. In August 2019 China's Great Game in Middle East was announced by China's ambassadors to UAE. In the strait China might be involved in participating in maritime security operations. Iranian sources have declared that in a joint naval drill China will be involved with Iran and Russia in northern Indian ocean and in sea of Oman however Beijing has not confirmed. In peacekeeping operations China will continue its efforts.

China significant interests in region lies due to the natural resources. From the Middle Eastern exporters China is the main oil and natural gas buyer. From the Middle Eastern region China oil imports are more than 40%. China from the region is greatly dependent on energy. China is looking for the reliable oil partner in the region and is aware of US presence and dominance in the region. China strategically is dealing with US presence in the region and is giving a competition by making Iran a strong ally and recent 25 years of agreement with Iran clearly shows what China is up to in the region.

With 15 nations of Middle East China has signed partnership agreements. In marine security missions and anti piracy China is greatly involved. In Yemen and Syrian crisis China has mediation role. In 2011 with Libya and in 2015 with Yemen China has carried operations to rescue its citizens. In signing nuclear deal Iran was made convinced by China. In 2016 in Djibouti first oversea military station was established by China. Near important maritime chokepoints the military presence of China is of great significance. Militarization of Port Gwadar of Pakistan contributed to Chinas presence near Ba el Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz.

To multiple Middle Eastern countries China has sent small-scale armaments. China believes to not be involved militarily too much in the region but its focus is more towards economic dominance. To protect Syrian regime China has cooperated with Russia at UN Security Council. In Strait of Hormuz Iran has been experiencing tensions with its adversaries, China may be gorged to step in for its energy security interests. In August 2019, the Chinese ambassador to the United Arab Emirates in 2019 said that in strait maritime security operations China may participate. In northern Indian Ocean and Sea of Oman with Iran and Russia China will participate according to authorities of Iran. China has not confirmed the claims. China is going to continue its peacekeeping activities and focus on economic dominance.

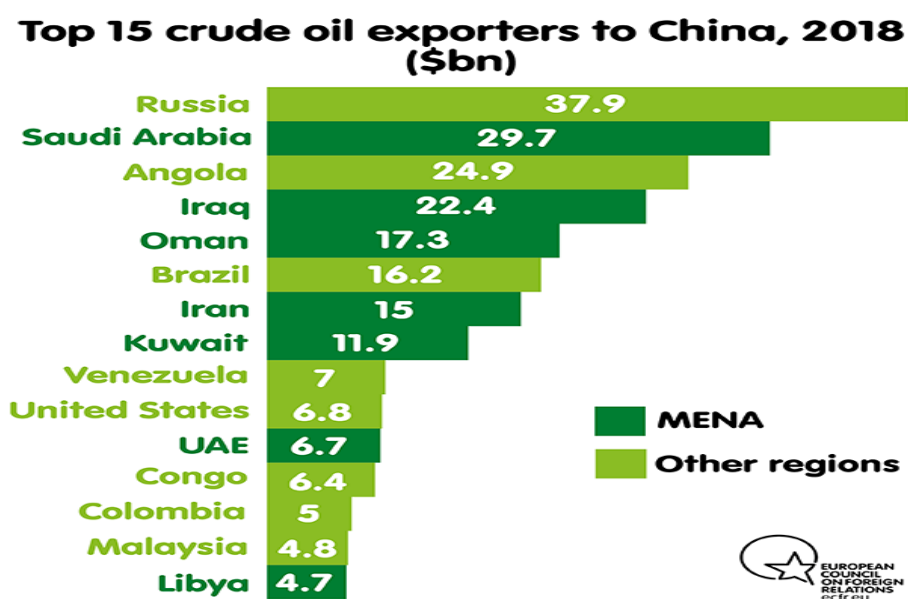


Figure 4.1 Crude Oil Exporters to China 2018

Source: [https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Crude Oil Exports to China 2.png](https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Crude_Oil_Exports_to_China_2.png)

4.2 Trade, Investment and Construction

For Chinese firms the major source of infrastructure construction contracts are the gulf monarchies. Chinese firms have been active throughout the Middle Eastern region. Industrial parks and ports are central to such cooperation as it leads towards creating economic chain that to Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian sea and the Mediterranean Sea connects China. BRI is an important project for China to further enhance its global dominance. China has taken Middle Eastern countries on board and has invested heavily. On Various ports China is generating its influence. Oman’s Duqm port, Jizan port of Saudi Arabia, Port Said of Egypt, Khalifa port of UAE etc. are part of this project. In Syria, Iraq and Yemen on the reconstruction projects China firms are likely to play significant role (Aronson, 2022).

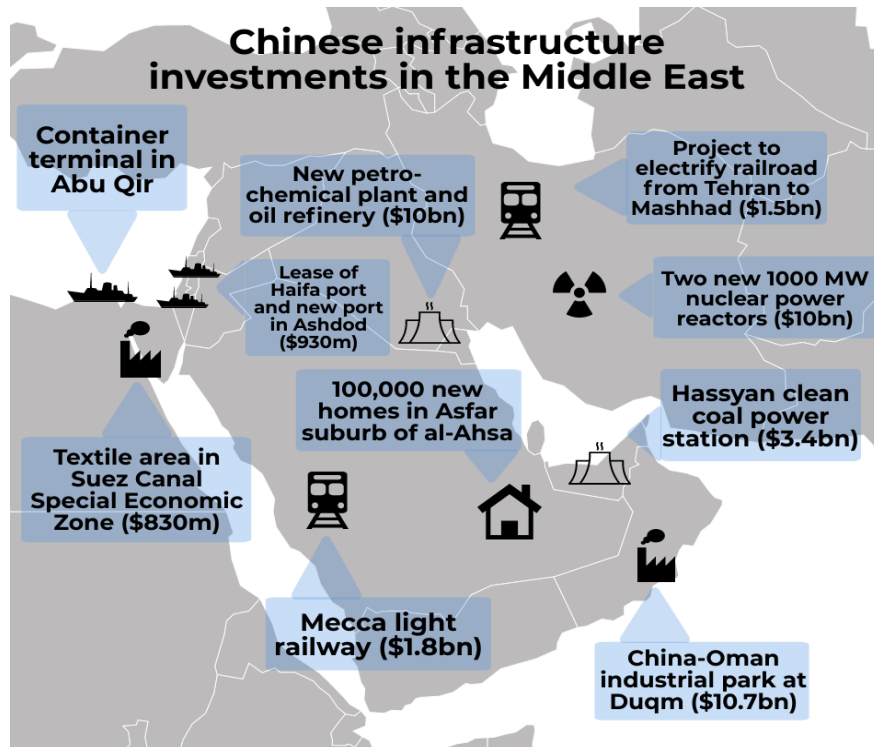


Figure 4.2 Chinese Infrastructure investments in Middle East

Source: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/is-china-the-real-force-behind-iran/>

The largest trading partner of the Middle Eastern region is China; in recent years the trade of China with the Middle East has increased sharply. For the Middle Eastern region China became the largest foreign investment source in 2016. In 2017 according to IMF the volume of trade was under \$197 billion between the gulf states and China. Across the region the BRI China's domestic development programs linking projects have taken on greater significance in its bilateral ties.

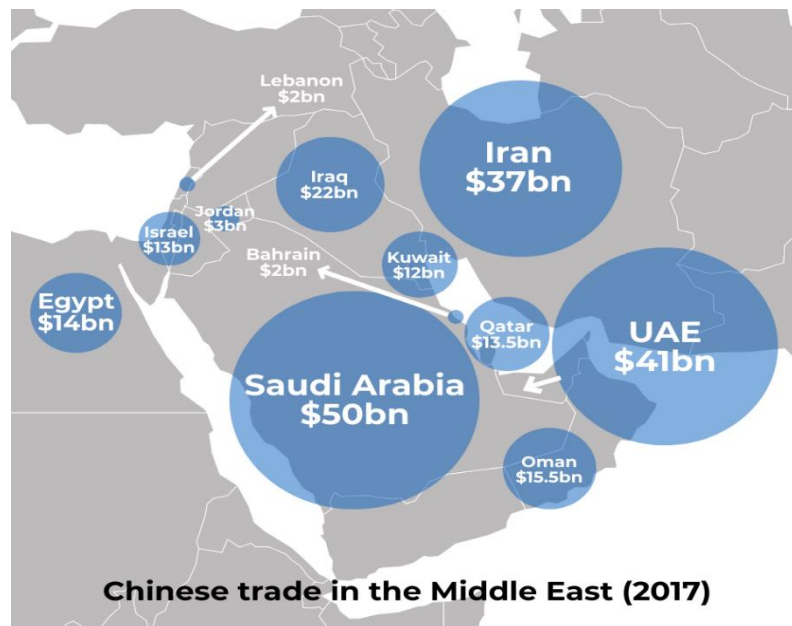


Figure 4.3 Chinese Trade in Middle East

Source: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/is-china-the-real-force-behind-iran/>

4.3 Energy and Space

In the Middle East Beijing first interest is followed with admittance to energy assets. Since last part of 1970s China's exceptional supported financial development has provoked a developing craving for energy assets. To China Oil is greatly significant that in 1993 turned into a net energy merchant. Furthermore, starting around 1995, the Middle East has been China's main wellspring of imported petrol.

As per one Chinese expert writing in an unmistakable foreign relations diary in 2014: "The Middle East will remain China's biggest wellspring of oil imports, and that is the essential meaning of the Middle East for China." Petroleum is positively focal in China's two-sided attaches with both Saudi Arabia and Iran. In 2012, Saudi Arabia was the main wellspring of petrol (before Angola and Russia), and Iran was the fourth most significant wellspring of imported Chinese oil.

Beijing effectively seeks after open doors for speculation and looks for contracts for foundation tasks, admittance to new business sectors for Chinese items in the Middle East. For sure, the New Silk Road drive (frequently alluded to as One Belt, One Road), authoritatively sent off in 2013 by President Xi, is sweeping and appears to incorporate all way of monetary action and contribution in the locale by the PRC administration and privately owned businesses and individual business Chinese people. The nuclear energy was seen as the strength of west but

the agreement of UAE with South Korea for building the Barakah power plant depicts how much competitive the field has become and to enter the market Chinese firms are also very much interested in the region. The significant potential customer is Saudi Arabia. A Memorandum of understanding MoU was signed between Chinese Nuclear Engineering Group Corporation with the Saudi firm for desalinating the seawater by using the gas cooled nuclear reactors in 2017. This cooperation agreement was one of the four MoUs signed between different organizations from both the countries at a meeting of the Saudi Chinese high level joint committee in Riyadh in 2017. The purpose was to develop desalination projects using high temperature and gas chilled nuclear reactors.

4.4 China Bei Dou Framework in Middle East

In the Middle East other priority of China are satellites. China's Bei Dou satellite navigation system has been used across the region. In maritime security, telecommunications it has applications. To build the 5G networks with Huawei the telecommunication companies in UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia has partnered. In Middle Eastern region in solar, hydroelectricity and wind projects also the Chinese firms have been active.

China's Beidou framework is very youthful contrasted to the US GPS framework. Notwithstanding, it is growing rapidly. In the Arab world the advancement of Beidou Navigation Satellite framework is a vital part of the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative; it is a significant measure to develop the essential organization among China and the Arab world and to understand the "shared availability and correspondence" between the different sides. The Beidou framework is additionally a significant component of "going out" methodology to understand Beijing's worldwide outline of the thirteenth Five-Year Plan.

With the reliable extension of the Beidou framework's abroad markets, China's picture has advanced from a conventional one to a cutting edge one. Chinese culture is not generally bound to the customary components like Chinese bunch, Chinese drama, calligraphy, porcelain, paper cutting, and shadow play; a wide margin of China's super advanced businesses has added current highlights to the conventional ones, the previous being the high velocity rail route, atomic power, aviation innovation and the Beidou framework, among others. China is walking forward from a retrogressive country to an extraordinary influence of science and innovation, which has brought an abundance of assets and content to China's strategy. China's tact, consequently, has kept on being more adult for the advancement of the Beidou framework in the Arab world.

4.5 Partnership Diplomacy of China

China is focusing on enhancing the dominance by economic influence. In the region China has various interests in the region such as economic, strategic, and political interests and much more. China is interested in trade and investment in the region as it is aware of the potential the region has when it comes to its location and the natural resources. China is using different strategies in pursuit of its interests. Almost all the strategic partnership agreements China have signed with Middle Eastern countries and north African one's. With Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Algeria China has established the comprehensive strategic partnerships and with Djibouti, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Turkey and Jordan have managed to establish the strategic partnership. With BRI expansion this spell of the diplomatic activity reflects how much this region is important to the Chinese strategic, political goals and interests (Struver, 2017).

Table 1 Four Layers of China's Partnerships in the Middle East

Partners	Roles of partners	Year of partnership	Category of partnership	Region
Algeria	Pivot state	2014	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Maghreb
Egypt	Pivot state	2014	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Saudi Arabia	Pivot state	2016	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
Iran	Pivot state	2016	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
UAE	Pivot state	2018	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
Turkey	Node state	2010	Strategic cooperation relationship	Eastern Mediterranean
Israel	Node state	2017	Innovative comprehensive partnership	Eastern Mediterranean
Sudan	Key state	2014	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Iraq	Key state	2015	Strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
Morocco	Key state	2016	Strategic partnership	The Maghreb
Qatar	Stronghold state	2014	Strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
Jordan	Stronghold state	2015	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Djibouti	Stronghold state	2017	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Kuwait	Stronghold state	2018	Strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf
Oman	Stronghold state	2018	Strategic partnership	The Persian Gulf

In 2018 to UAE Xi made a visit for upgrading the relationship of UAE with China to highest level. To the China's Middle East great game President Xi demonstrated that it was a central pillar. In 2019 Qatari Emir visited China and aimed to continue the relationship within the

framework of strategic partnership established in 2014 and didn't upgrade the relationship depicts China's important for UAE more than Qatar. China has a lot of strategic and military interests in the region. In Gulf of Aden as part of international anti-piracy mission on Arabian Peninsula ports the People's Liberation Army Navy visited, giving the opportunity to the naval officers of China for developing relations with their Arab counterparts and increase the influence. To Lebanon since 2006 China has also contributed UN peacekeepers. Chinese arms sale has also been increased to the region. China is greatly active in the region due to its interests in the region and wanted to enhance its influence. China is in great competition with USA for global hegemony in which Middle Eastern region can't be avoided.

In a nutshell the Middle Eastern region is of great importance when it comes to strategic, economic, political and military significance. China is future superpower and is in great competition with USA, this region is very much significant especially due to the oil and its extremely important location. China is enhancing its role in the region greatly. USA has been involved in the region for long, China is comparatively newcomer, but the policies of China are greatly evoking its role in the region and worrying USA. USA has always been focusing on the military aspect, but China is focusing on the economic perspective.

China has a lot of strategic, economic, and political interests in the region. For which China is greatly investing in trade, construction and in nuclear energy. China knows the potential of the region. Energy is core to China. BRI plan depicts how much important this region is to China. Hence China's interests in the region are vast and China is very much active in pursuing its goals in the region.

4.6 Iran Interests in the Middle East

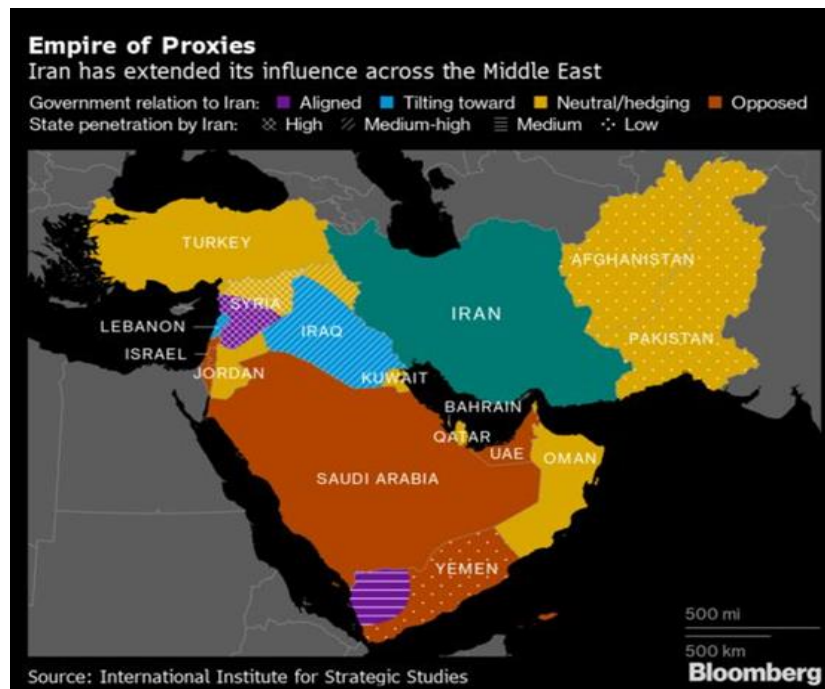


Figure 4.4 Iran Interests in the Region

Source: <https://assets.bwbx.io/images/users/iqjWHBFdfxIU/ir2MHhwKwaZU/v0/560x-1.png>

Iran holds great significance as a Middle Eastern country. There are primary economic, strategic, and military interests of Iran. The primary aim of Iran is the regional hegemony means to attain a hegemonic status in the Middle Eastern region. In this region Iran is trying to strengthen its ties and further collaborate and partner with China in a sense that China is an economic power and China and Iran pursuit of interests in the region will challenge the USA hegemony in the Middle Eastern region. The interests of Iran can be construed as the mechanisms for expanding the regional hegemony which is the major desire of Iran. Around four main factors the Iran interests revolves, the key areas include the Islamic identity, regime continuity, national security and the domestic support.

4.7 Iran's Economy

By hydrocarbon, horticultural, and administration areas, as well as an observable state presence in the assembling and monetary administrations Iran's economy is described. While moderately differentiated for an oil trading country, financial action government incomes actually depend on oil incomes.

A complete technique of market-based changes has taken on by the Iranian specialists for their 20-year financial vision and 5-year improvement plan for 2016/17 to 2021/22. The improvement of a strong economy, progress in science and innovation, and the advancement of social greatness are the three support points of the arrangement. The arrangement imagines yearly financial development of 8%.

4.8 Land Bridge

The idea of establishing the land bridge through Syria and Iraq to Lebanon is linked with the goal of Iran for reducing the influence of USA in the region. To maintain this block of allies is crucial to the Iranian interests, for reducing the USA influence along with maintaining the deterrence against the Israel and also to deny Saudi Arabia the platform for enhancing the influence in Iraq particularly among the Sunnis population. Iran major interest is to expand its regional hegemony for which Iran is working to expand its influence on the actors having similar interests that would foster the Iranian influence in the region.

The long-term USA presence in the region is against the Iranian interests. Iran intends to enhance its influence in Syria and Iraq. Iran perceive itself as leader of Islam and believes in reinforcing its role of leadership. In Iraq and Syria to defend the Shia, Sunni religious sites Iran has successfully used the Watkins who are the Shia militias. In Iraq the Iran interest is to have pro Iran government rather than pro Saudi Arabia one. In safeguarding long-term ally Syria Iranian interests lies. Iran is likely to continue its support for the regime of Bashar-al-Assad. Through Astana talks the Iran focus is for pursuit of favorable political resolution that sustain Shia militias deployment with limited USA influence.

4.9 Sectarianism in Middle East

Sectarianism and partisan clash in the Middle East are frequently introduced as exceptionally old strict and religious peculiarities. The people who buy into such reasoning accept sectarianism runs so profound that it can't be tended to or settled. Individuals high in the echelons of force, like previous President Barack Obama, have additionally embraced this view. In his 2016 State of the Union location, Obama said, "The Middle East is going through a change that will work out for an age, established in clashes that date back centuries.

In actuality, the partisan struggle among Sunni and Shia Muslims in the Middle East is a cutting edge, revisionist peculiarity - for the most part a response to explicit advanced occasions and issues. Its underlying foundations can be followed back to the disappointment of state-working

in the Middle East and the 1979 Iranian upheaval instead of extremely old strict and political divisions. It has additionally been exacerbated by a bunch of ensuing turns of events, boss among them the 2003 US intrusion of Iraq, the 2011 Syrian unrest, the conflict in Yemen and other continuous issues.

In all actuality, in any case, Sunni-Shia partisan struggle is a cutting-edge revisionist peculiarity that to a great extent is a response to explicit advanced occasions and financial issues. Its underlying foundations can be followed back to the 1979 Iranian upheaval as opposed to seventh-century strict and political divisions inside Islam. It has been exacerbated by a bunch of resulting outer and homegrown occasions; boss among them is the 2003 US intrusion of Iraq, the 2011 Syrian unrest, the conflict in Yemen, and other running contentions in the locale. Truth be told, sectarianism implies the disappointment of state working in the Middle East, which focuses, thusly, to unfamiliar intercession. Iran perceives itself as the global champion of Shias and it's in Iran's interest to defend Shias everywhere. Iran focuses on preventing the Shia marginalization and aims in limiting the US troops presence in the region as it is in the interests of Iran. Iran aims to have pro-Iranian government in the region so that it could expand its influence regionally. Iranian leadership aims in maintaining the form of government and the stability in the country which is very important and key to the Iranian interests. If it's not stable internally and do not have domestic support from home, then to booster influence regionally is very difficult. Iran is suffering from years of economic sanctions, for Iran it's very important to have a prior concern on reviving the domestic economy. Thus, we can say that sectarianism is a major issue in the Middle Eastern region and accounts for various conflicts and political and military unrests in the region.

Iran also aims in strengthening the conventional forces, it's in Iran's interest. Development of strong conventional capability is very important for deterring the enemies along with fostering the regional hegemony. Iran aims in improving joint operation, command and control in states like Syria. Iran's key agenda is to enhance the regional hegemony around which Iranian interests revolves. The development of the nuclear program is very important for Iran's strategic interests along with its national security. Iran aims to enrich uranium as it is key to its strategic and military interests (Canna, 2018).

Iran is enhancing its association with China, regionally China is investing greatly in Iran, Iran believes China Iran relations are very crucial for Iranian interests. Iran is not feared by USA and do not care about USA, one important factor is the China's back, its financial and military

assistance. USA is aiming to isolate Iran globally, but Iran knows how to counter. Iran aims in limiting the US presence in the region along with absence of US troops in the region. In a nutshell Iran has crucial economic, military, strategic interests in the region. Iran goals and objectives reflects the Iranian interests in the region.

4.10 Strategic Interests

Iran is continuously focused on increasing and enhancing its influence and role in the region. For which Iran is using various strategies also the use of non-armed state actors is important. Iran is using these actors for pursuing its interests regionally. Supporting the Houthi rebels in Yemen supporting Hezbollah against USA, supporting Hamas against USA and Israel, Iran is clear with its strategies for maximizing its interests. In a nutshell Iran clearly knows what it is up to regionally and globally. Which fronts Iran should be on, how Iran must enhance its role regionally and as Islamic leader, where to support government as in Syria and where to support the non-armed state actors like in Yemen and, Israel and Palestinian conflict. Iran clearly knows its goals and interests and knows how to enhance its interests regionally and globally (Julien Barnes-Dacey,2018).

4.11 The 25 Years of China Iran Strategic Agreement-Major development between China and Iran

The 25 years of strategic agreement draft was published in 2020 by New York Times between China and Iran which was leaked by Iranian sources. In billions of dollars of infrastructure investments China will receive a priority in Iran according to the draft along with the substantial discount on regular supply of oil and gas. Between both the countries the military cooperation is also going to be increased. Since Xi visit to Iran, it is predicted that Iran was busy in working for this agreement. The agreement details were kept secret as China do not want to disclose the details. The agreement between both the states reflects the collective interests of the states. The agreement was made as its crucial to the interests of both states so for China and Iran to sign such agreement is in their respective state interests. The agreement of 25 years of strategic cooperation is no doubt a key development in China and Iran relations. China is interested in long term commercial benefits along with maintaining a balance between relations with gulf states and Iran.

Iran economy need such boost and specially when USA has been successful in isolating Iran by imposing severe sanctions on it. It's in Iranian interests to sign such agreements and have a back of China. In the period when Iran is suffering from USA sanctions, troubling economy,

major wave of protests, killing of Qassim Suleimani al Quds commander, after taking off from Tehran the downing of Ukrainian passenger jet, pressure of USA against Iran for extending the weapons embargo and at Natanz the attack on centrifuges assembly, under all these circumstances this agreement can be achievement of Iran for shifting the regional and global balance in its favor.



Figure 4.5 Timeline of China Iran Strategic Agreement

Source: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/the-china-iran-25-year-cooperation-agreement-what-is-it-and-should-regional-investors-traders-pay-attention/>

On the other hand, China also needs a reliable oil partner and to increase its influence in the region Iran is the best option along with dealing with USA as strong competitor. China has commercial interests with Iran. For oil and energy benefits China is interested in Iran. In the Chahbahar project Iran has withdrawn India and Indian media gave a lot of coverage to it declaring China's influence in Iranian policies however Iran claim that this decision is taken due to the delay of payments from Indian side.

According to the Journal published by the Middle East Institute in 2021 on the Iran China Strategic Agreement discussed that this agreement was firstly announced in 2016 when Xi Jinping visited Tehran in the time when economic sanctions were imposed on Iran in wake of its 2015 Nuclear Deal. Then it further evaluated by saying that the BRI project has greater economic opportunities for Iran and moreover, gives Iran the advantage over its regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and furthermore, the ties between China and Iran are stronger in the energy sector (Vatanka, 2021).

The 25 years of strategic cooperation agreement was signed between China and Iran on 27th March 2021 at Tehran by the Chinese foreign minister Mr. Wang Yi and Iranian foreign minister Muhammad Javad Zarif. Between the two countries the visit marks the 50 years of diplomatic relations. The details are not much disclosed as China is not interested to disclose the information however it is absolutely a key development where Iran and China have committed in strategic, economic cooperation for 25 years which is not a small time period, and this development would have great implications for the region and globe. In the next decade the agreement aims to increase the bilateral trade more than 10-fold to \$600bn (Sima Shine, 2020).

Key Provisions of the China-Iran 25-Year Cooperation Agreement

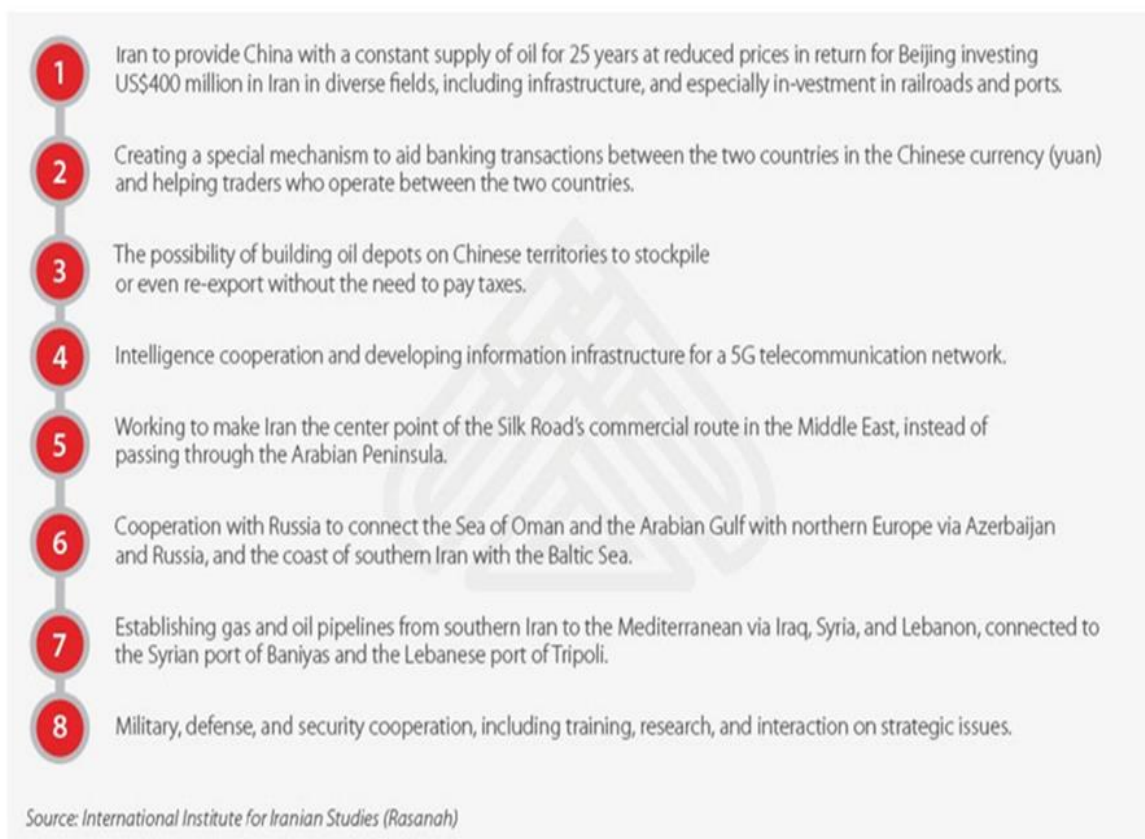


Figure 4.6 key Provisions of China-Iran 25 years Cooperation Agreement

Source: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/the-china-iran-25-year-cooperation-agreement-what-is-it-and-should-regional-investors-traders-pay-attention/>

Iran and China Cooperation on the basis of Collective Interests

Iran	China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Iran Cooperating with China on the basis of economic, strategic interests. Iran will be getting \$400Billion investment in diverse fields by China for developing infrastructure, railroads and ports. ● Iran has China back to survive the international isolation imposed by USA sanctions. China has become a lifeline for Iran and its top trading partner. ● Chicken Game is relevant in understanding the dynamics of US Iran and China relations. ● Through BRI Iran is getting massive economic opportunities. This will also provide edge to Iran over its rivals as Saudi Arabia. ● Iran is getting aid and machinery from China. In energy sector deep cooperation is evident from both the sides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● China is going to get discounted constant oil supply from Iran for 25 years. ● China through BRI and taking onboard various Middle Eastern countries is enhancing its influence. ● China knows the potential of Iran when it comes to natural resources and China is engaged with Iran for utilizing the resources. ● China is utilizing the ports and enhancing its naval and military presence in the region. ● China through Iran is enhancing its influence and is countering the western influence in the region. ● China major interests in terms of trade, investment and construction lies with Iran. ● China is cooperating with Iran due to its massive economic interests in the region, approximately ½ oil reserves of China is from this region.

4.12 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

China and Iran are cooperating on the basis of collective interests, both have signed 25 years of agreement on the basis of collective interests. Between China and Iran, the Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is immensely important that consist up of 20 articles that specifies the roadmap of deepening and developing relationship between Iran and China on economic, political, military, energy and infrastructure domains. In both the countries the statement was published at end of President Xi visit to Iran. Both Iran and China emphasize on cooperation aims to deepen the association. Both sides agreed to establish the relationship based on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The 20 articles of Joint statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (Full text of Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between I.R. Iran, P.R. China, 2022) between China and Iran reflects deepening ties between the two in following domains:

- **Political Domain**

Article 1 states that under the present scenario of globalization of economy and multilateralization of world order, the association between Iran and China has strategic significance. For both the sides foreign policy to expand the relationship bilaterally is the priority. Both consider each other significant strategic partners. It's in the common interests of both to deepen the ties and contribute for the development, peace and stability regionally and globally.

Article 2 states that both the sides established the consensus for enhancing mutual strategic trust by establishing the annual meetings mechanism between there Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Article 3 states between the central administrations, local governments and the political groups both the sides emphasize the necessity for expanding the ties for strengthening partnerships in all fields.

Article 4 states in expanding the relationship emphasizing both the countries legislative bodies effective role and emphasizing the enhancement of exchanges between the parliament of both sides in multiple fields.

Article 5 states both Iran and China greatly support each other, Iran immensely supports One China policy and China on the other hand supports Iran's Development Plan and its regional and global role.

Article 6 states in view of expanding ties and cooperation in numerous areas infrastructure, energy, technology and industry etc. Both sides aim to conclude 25 years of bilateral Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement and agreed to put the consultations and discussions.

- **Executive Cooperation**

Article 7 states Iran welcome Chinese initiative of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and both China and Iran aim to expand the ties and investments mutually in multiple areas as railway, ports, transportation etc through signing documents as MOU on Reinforcement of Industrial and Mineral Capacities and Investment, the MOU on 21st century Maritime Silk Road and on Jointly Promoting the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Article 8 states both sides shall expand ties in areas as fossil fuels as renewable energies, demand supply etc in view of their relative economic advantages. China must consider in financing and investing in the energy industries and on the other hand Iran shall provide the requires facilitations.

Article 9 states both sides based on bilateral MOU on Strengthening of Investment Cooperation aims to enhance trade exchanges and promote cooperation in finance, banking, transportation, mining, ports development, railway expansion, using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, environment protection and food security.

Article 10 states both sides aim for joint effort for peace and prosperity of region and globe. As the founding member of Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank Iran participation is appreciated by China.

Article 11 states for the bilateral joint cultural committee both sides agree for leading role for the cultural cooperation. They aim for strengthening ties in tourism, sports and youth. Enhancing press and public diplomacy is key. For enhancing friendly relationship between the two countries, both aims enhancement of dialogue, communication and human exchanges.

Article 12 states both China and Iran in fields of education, academic, science, technology transfer aims to strengthen the cooperation.

- **Judiciary, Defense, Security**

Article 13 states through high- ranking exchange of delegations, Extradition treaty, Mutual Judicial Assistance in Criminal and Civil affairs agreements both sides shall enhance the judicial cooperation.

Article 14 states cooperation against three evil forces. Both sides believe terrorism, extremism and separatism as threat for humanity, peace and stability. In this regard both agree to discuss the pragmatic cooperation.

Article 15 states both shall cooperate and fight against the smuggling, illegal trafficking, cybercrimes etc. They shall cooperate to form new mechanisms to deal with these threats. Between the law enforcement agencies, they also shall to cooperate.

Article 16 states both sides for the stability view the communication and cooperation between the armed forces and defense ministries important. Both aims in cooperation in technology and equipment's along with human training and fighting against terrorism.

- **Regional and Global Domain**

Article 17 states both shall cooperate to tackle international challenges and both should support each other in international affairs. Both sides show their commitment towards UN Charter and believes in global peace and stability. They oppose the unjust use of force and sanctions against the countries and believe issues solution through dialogue and negotiation.

Article 18 states Iran constructive role for regional stability and against terrorism is acknowledged by China. Both sides have common interests for world peace. On major global issues both the sides ready for bilateral consultations for example in case of Syria and Yemen resolving issues through negotiation. Both sides support each other and realize the sustainable stability and economic, social development.

Article 19 states within the framework of regional and global organizations both the sides shall enhance their consultations. China realizes Iran's role as regional power, its significance and Iran under Shanghai Cooperation Organization role is positively evaluated by China.

Article 20 states both sides welcome the agreement between Iran and P5+1 countries on JCPOA and agrees nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. According to NPT Iran legitimate right of peaceful use of nuclear energy was realized. Both agreed that in good faith JCPOA and UN Security Resolution 2231 should be implemented and the SilkRoad Economic Belt.

4.13 Under the Agreement the Areas of Cooperation between China and Iran

<p>Military Cooperation</p>	<p>Military training, land, naval, ariel exercises for example China, Russia and Iran naval exercise in Gulf of Oman.</p>	<p>Iran to get military hardware's by China. Supply of weapons and arms to Iran by China.</p>	<p>With China cooperation and aid, Iran aims to upgrade its military capacity and technology.</p>
<p>Economic Cooperation</p>	<p>China aims to invest in energy sector of Iran covering oil and gas industries along with pipelines. Strategic industrials and infrastructure projects are key.</p>	<p>For supporting Iran's sector of national banking China may build offices in Iran. China aims to invest in the infrastructure, hotels, airports and railway tracks with Iran.</p>	<p>Across Iran Chinese companies likely to enter the emerging commercial markets. In the various industrial fields China aims to contribute with the advanced technologies.</p>

<p>Energy Cooperation</p>	<p>Iran energy sector development is key part of the agreement.</p> <p>China aims in contributing to the gas and oil pipelines the existing regional pipelines along with forming new pipelines corridors.</p> <p>With the strategic agreement the energy agreements may be ensued.</p>	<p>The Iran- Pakistan gas pipeline from the gas field South Pars in Iran to Pakistan in Karachi remain delayed. Agreement between China and Iran provided the final push for the completion of this project.</p>	<p>Currently Iran is focused in building Jask Goreh oil pipeline which would have great strategic importance. The 25 years agreement aims for increasing the production of oil. The main focus would be in West Karoun the oil fields area. The oil transfer chain would be focused.</p>
<p>Telecommunication and Manufacturing Industry</p>	<p>Reforming telecommunication sector of Tehran is needed. For 5G capability Iran aims but internal issues exist. In Iran Huawei 5G network may gain long term position.</p>	<p>Iran Manufacturing industry produces telecommunication equipment's, appliances, steel and industrial components.</p> <p>China modernization of the manufacturing industry of Iran.</p>	<p>Educational and scientific exchanges between Iran and China through the universities and the research institutes.</p>

<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Iran effectively has entered to OBOR initiative of China in infrastructure field.</p> <p>The Chinese developers aim to develop the Chabahar port.</p> <p>Along with Iran's coastline and Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, the Chinese developers aims the development.</p> <p>With the high-speed railway infrastructure Chinese developers aims to modernize Iran's railway network.</p>	<p>China and Iran aim the connection of Iran transportations to emerging Central Asian infrastructure architecture.</p> <p>For the supply chain connectivity China aims to connect the maritime ports and terminals with the highways, railways to different economic zones forming the economic corridors.</p>	<p>Both Iran and China aim to connect CPEC 3200 km long. This could be possible as Iran Pakistan relations are improving. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan in 2019 has visited twice to Iran and has discussed various infrastructure projects.</p> <p>In long term there is also the possibility of China, Iran, Afghan infrastructure initiatives.</p>

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGES TO IRAN AND CHINA IN MIDDLE EAST

Iran is dealing with a number of domestic issues, including the murder of Qassemi Soleimani, Ukraine Airlines flight downing as well as the most dramatic and significant global event the COVID-19 pandemic, which had the worst effects in the Middle East on Iran. These events occurred devastating economic condition and great political polarization. Mohsen Fakhri Zadeh, the director of the nuclear weapons program murder and Israel's normalization accords with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were important events. Iran remained strong in its stance despite series of terrible events. As Saman Vakil stresses, for example, neither the US' "maximum pressure" approach nor the targeted assassinations succeeded in causing Iran to alter its policies. Most of the nuclear deal's provisions were also broken by Iran as it proceeded to expand its nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran has about 2.5 tons of low-enriched uranium in September 2020, and enrichment is still taking on at two facilities.

A new location for building new centrifuges has also been established deep below to replace the one that was damaged in attack in August occurred at Natanz . Advanced centrifuges have also been filled with gas. Beyond the nuclear agreement, the IAEA asserts that Iran is not upholding its obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The Iranian parliament passed the law that demands the government raise the enrichment level to 20 percent, that work proceed to restore operation of the research reactor at Arak, and that cooperation with the IAEA be downgraded, could be heard as a threatening message aimed at the incoming Biden administration following the murder of Fakhri Zadeh.

According to the Iranian regime, the Joe Biden presidential election of the United States has the greatest significance because it will spare Tehran dealing with President Donald Trump, who, in addition to the severe sanctions he imposed on Iran, appeared unpredictable in his military actions. The killing of Soleimani, which dealt a severe blow to the government and its leader, Ali Khamenei, personally, was undoubtedly the most significant of these. But as Michael Singh points out, there isn't much of a difference between the goals of the two administrations— Trump's, which is coming to an end, and Biden's, which is now beginning its term: both want a better deal, and I would add that both are committed to stopping Iran from

obtaining nuclear weapons, even though their methods are very different. The ideal course is diplomacy, but the US is prepared to return to its commitments to lift the nuclear sanctions if Iran renews all its obligations under the agreement, as indicated by Biden and made apparent by his national security selections. In Israel and the Gulf States, this strategy is already causing alarm. It is unsettling to think that Iran could get the much-needed economic support it requires once more while it maintains its economic and military hegemony over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. (Robinson, Connable, Thaler and Scotten, 2022) With the money it receives, Iran might even be able to tighten its hold on these nations. Iran has set the initial goals of rejoining the JCPOA framework and preventing Iran from developing a rapid nuclear breakout capability because it believes that the Biden administration does seek to reverse Trump's approach towards Tehran. However, it also pays attention to claims that the agreement's terms should be changed, as well as calls for a debate of its missile program and regional strategy. The E3 concurs with these demands (France, Germany, and the UK). As Raz Zammit points out, a contentious discussion on Iran's return to talks with the US is already taking place within the Iranian political system. The circles of pragmatism, led by President Hassan Rouhani, are in favor of restarting talks with Washington in principle. Radical elements, which first opposed the deal and Rouhani's readiness to make concessions to the West, oppose starting new negotiations, claiming that the US cannot be trusted. The supreme leader of Iran will finally decide whether to allow the president to resume negotiations or to maintain his obstinate stance despite the country's escalating economic crisis and the continued COVID-19 outbreak. Of course, the type of the American offer made will play a role in his decision. According to Vakil, Tehran has the chance to resolve the three crises it is currently experiencing increasing external pressure, economic hardship, and internal political rivalries after four very trying years. To handle the issue of succession following Khamenei's departure in the future, it is also vital to reduce these pressures through communication and agreements with the US. In the upcoming year, the issue of the JCPOA's European signatories' involvement will be crucial. Reestablishing ties with the US's close friends across the Atlantic are a priority for President Biden. This is his geopolitical philosophy, which is crucial to many of the issues on his agenda, including relations with China and Russia, the Iranian crisis, and cross-border problems like the environment, diseases, and immigration. Iran profited from the hostility between the US and its European allies during the Trump administration and even established a strategy to keep Europe on its side as part of its efforts to isolate the American administration. The European nations' votes at the UN Security Council against the arms embargo extension on Iran (through October 2020) and their opposition to the American attempt to reinstate the Security Council

sanctions are evidence of the significant success of this Iranian policy. Iran is all the time facing crisis in one way to another.

5.1 Religious Extremism

Beyond Iran's geopolitical position, Shiite factions' ascent to prominence in Iraq's political and power structure and Shiite government's ensuing demands for close ties with Iran have increased Iran's influence in the political dynamics in country as well as throughout the region particularly in Lebanon. Iraq was ruled by a Sunni minority under the ancient political system, which was based on tribal allegiance and indirect rule. This order's main purpose was to contain the nearby non-Arab states of the area, namely Turkey and Iran (Robinson, Connable, Thaler and Scotten, 2022). The Sunni administration in Iraq counterbalanced Iran and Turkey's regional influence by maintaining control over the Shiite in the south and the Kurds in the north. (LIU, 2010). This established order was overturned by the fall of the Ba'ath regime, which was succeeded by a new system centered on increased influence for Shiites and Kurds and the rule of the majority. Due to its deep cultural and political ties to both the Shiites and the Kurds, this development particularly reinforced Iran's position. Regarding Iran's relations with Shiites, these links presently go beyond ideological and theological considerations because they are also founded on social and cultural affinities, a significant component that dispels the conventional notion of "two strategic foes" between Iran and Iraq. In the region growing influence of Iran suggests that for political, monetary, and logistical support to maintain their influence in Iraqi domestic politics and in their relations with Sunni Arab states and the United States, Iraqi Shiite factions will look to Iran. According to the Shiite groups, there is always a chance that American policy may shift in favor of the Sunni factions, which could eventually result in traditional Arab Sunni powers like Saudi Arabia interfering in political affairs of Iraq.

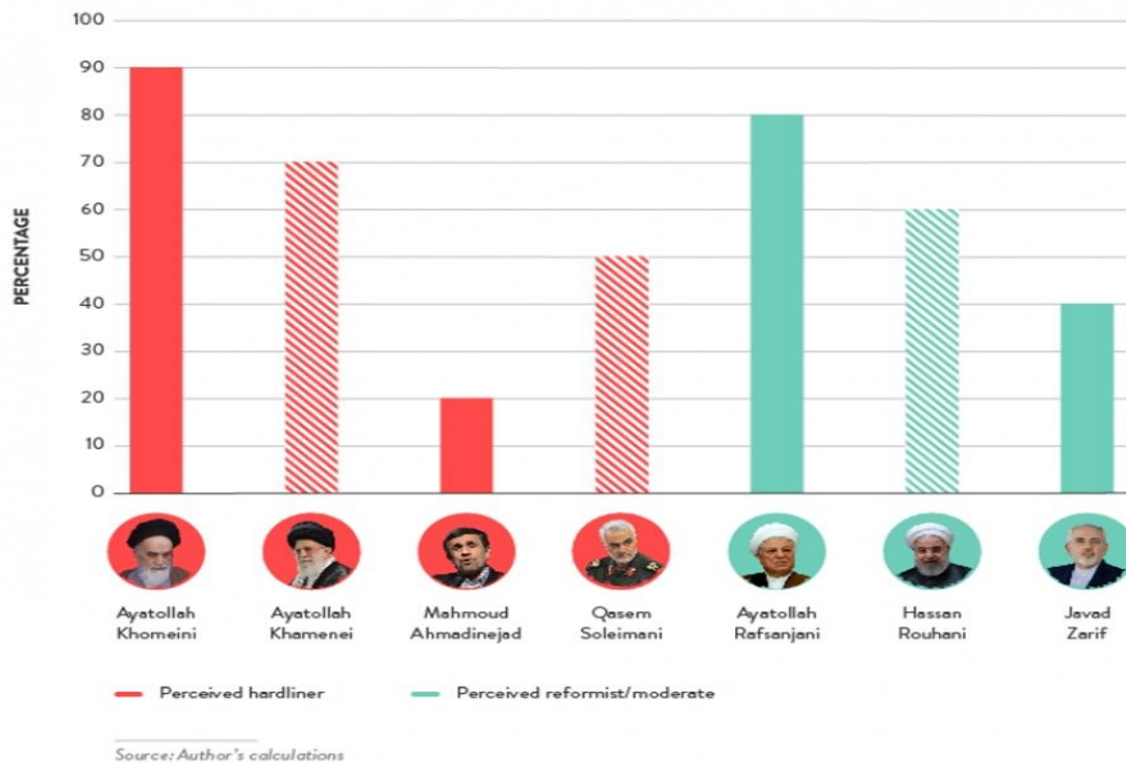


Figure 5.1. Percentage of Leaders' Speeches That Refer to Islamic Governance

Source: <https://www.institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/fundamentals-irans-islamic-revolution>

Experience suggests that in Iraq new political system these Arab nations would not accept a larger role for Shiite groups. The sole friendly nation in the area, Iran, must assist the Iraqi Shiites in forming the first Shiite administration in the Arab world after years of marginalization. 20 The Shiite government of Al Maliki is undoubtedly not as well received in Riyadh as it is in Tehran. Additionally, tight ties between Iran and Iraq can be used as a negotiating chip by the Maliki administration to control its regional and global relationships, particularly with Turkey and the United States. Iran's regional influence has grown in Lebanon because of the three-stage ascent of the Shiite factor. Iran's influence in Lebanese and Palestinian issues was strategically solidified with Hezbollah's victory over Israel in the summer 2006 conflict, which marked the beginning of the first stage. Some commentators perceived the 2006 conflict as a regional conflict between Iran and the United States through their proxies, Hezbollah, and Israel, rather than as a conflict confined to Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. In this sense, the conflict prepared the door for Iranian direct presence on

the Israeli border and the Mediterranean coast. When Hezbollah overthrew Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's pro-Western administration in Spring 2008, it marked the beginning of the second stage of Lebanon's internal political conflict. Some observers believe that the ensuing accord reached between various Lebanese factions at the Doha Conference was yet another tactical success for Iran and Hezbollah in the Mediterranean. Iran has managed to establish "strategic deterrence" in the region by maintaining active role in Afghanistan and Lebanon. The development was called as the beginning of a new "Cold War" between Iran and the United States in the region by some radical western commentators. Thirdly, Iran's opposition to Israel's military assault on Gaza during the 22-day conflict enhanced its influence in the area. Iran was significant regional countries that denounced the Israeli regime's military activity and actively requested a harsh response from the world community, while all the traditional Arab regimes remained silent.

5.2 Unemployment in Iran

According to the Majlis Research Centre, which conducts research on behalf of the Iranian Parliament, young unemployment in some regions of the country is as high as 50 to 63 percent. The survey also verified that, despite allocating a higher portion of its budget to job development, the government does not have a clear strategy to address the problem. With rates varying between 10 and 15 percent over the past 20 years, unemployment has emerged as one of Iran's most difficult socioeconomic problems. (Iran's Rising Unemployment Crisis, 2022). Due to the labor market difficulties facing Iran's younger generations, social effect as an increase in the average marriage age and a slow population growth are becoming apparent in all socioeconomic strata. Additionally, intermittent riots and protests have occurred around the nation because of growing sociopolitical discontent among social groups who are marginalized. Because of poor economic policies Iran is projected to experience increased economic pressure, international sanctions, which would result in a tighter labor market. This might exacerbate sociopolitical unhappiness and lead to more upheaval. The public discussion of this topic reveals a high level of anxiety among the political class, even though the government would probably respond to popular mobilization with violence (Newton, 2015).

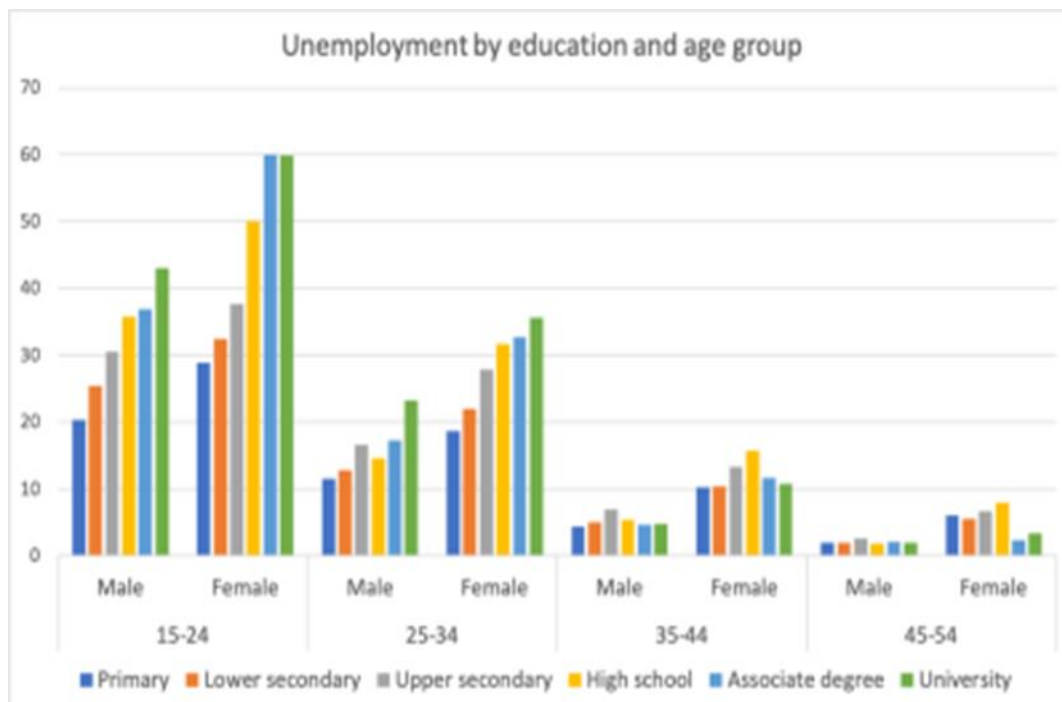


Figure 5.2. Unemployment by age group and education in Iran

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Unemployment-by-education-and-age-group-Source-Iranprimerusiporg-2022-Revolution-at_fig4_360868239

Iran has a significant unemployment problem at all skill levels. Iranians without jobs make up 42% of those with a university degree or more. The long-standing brain drain from Iran has been exacerbated by this tendency. This is partially a result of the skills gap between what is taught at Iranian colleges and what employers are looking for. Iran's university curriculum is comparatively out of date. Every Iranian university graduate must complete obligatory courses in religion, Islamic history, and the Quran; some institutions also require students to study the "Will of the Founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini." For the past forty years, Iran's higher education has placed a greater emphasis on teaching ideologies than on imparting practical skills. Because of this, many fresh graduates who enter the workforce lack the necessary training. Iran has high rates of both urban and female unemployment. Iran's urban female unemployment rate is over 25%, which is twice as high as the urban male jobless rate. According to the Iranian Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare among rural men the highest rate of labor participation in Iran in 2016 was 66.3 percent among rural men, while the lowest rate was 14.5 percent among urban women. Male labor involvement, which is at 64.1% nationwide, is much higher than female work participation, which stands at 14.9%. Iran's labor force participation rate did not rise above 66 percent between 2006 and 2016, and

this low figure has a significant influence on women's empowerment. Additionally, youth unemployment rose. Young rural women in Iran make up 28.7% of the unemployed, compared to more than 50% of young urban women. While having highest education level 28.4 in this age group 28.4 percent Iranians have high school diploma and about 34.5 percent have one undergraduate degree. The highest unemployment rate is among Iranian citizens between 27 and 36 leading 53 percent unemployed Iranians. This reflects for younger generations loss in job creation and imbalance between labor market needs and type of education in schools. Access to employment has been exploited by the Islamic Republic as a reward for individuals who adhere to the regime's political ideology, and over the past 40 years, filters have been put in place to weed out Iranians who do not share this ideology. Political and religious opposition figures have been structurally excluded from the job market. The highest unemployment rates have historically been found in Iran's western and eastern regions, which border Iraq and Pakistan and are home to Sunni Baluchis, Sufis, and Kurds from Iran. For instance, Kermanshah has the highest jobless rate among Iranians between the ages of 27 and 36, at 36%. (The capital of the western Kermanshah province). Iran's unemployment rate is anticipated to increase further. Senior leaders attribute the weak economic situation to the sanctions and characterize an economic conflict with the United States. According to the former labor minister, the reimposed U.S. sanctions will result in the loss of more than one million jobs. (Iran's Rising Unemployment Crisis, 2022) The sanctions would undoubtedly worsen the labor market position, yet the average Iranian does not see this as the root of their employment problems. Instead, it is believed that Iran's economic woes are a result of years of bad policy decisions made by the government and corruption within the political class. The social media campaign launched by Iranian teenagers familiar with technology asking Iran's top politicians where their children are. The hashtag campaign gained enough momentum that even broadcast media state sponsored raising questions. Campaign reflects the nepotism and corruption existence in the political elite. Unemployment is a serious challenge for Iran and there is no clear strategy in dealing with it.

The young Iranians who enter the labor force each year cannot be accommodated by the governmental or commercial sectors. (Iran's rising unemployment: inside the problem, 2022) As a result, it is expected that an increasing number of Iranian residents will experience poverty, social unhappiness, and a general loss of hope for the future. If the public mobilizes in response, the state is likely to retaliate violently. This might then lead to increased government supervision of public and internet places.

5.3 Challenges faced by Iran in Middle Eastern region

Iran as a major regional player is surrounded by various regional and external conflicts. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 Iran has been one of the world's most active terrorism sponsors. Over the years hundreds of violent groups have been armed, financed, motivated, coordinated, and otherwise supported by Tehran. Iran funded a variety of factions, not just those in the Middle East. Terrorists and radicals in Lebanon, as well as terrorists and radicals in the Persian Gulf territories, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, and other places. Even today, this support is strong: The US government claims that Iran is linked to a variety of extreme groups in Iraq on a regular basis. Despite Iran's well-documented support for terrorism for more than a quarter-century. Despite having chemical weapons in its possession for almost 15 years, Tehran has not transferred them. Terrorists are vulnerable to unorthodox systems. Iran is expected to maintain its current policy of moderation.

Debates on foundation reasons of terrorism and radicalism within the region is a complicated issue. To fight against the terrorism the most important thing is to look into the reasons that led terrorism. Interpretation of Faith has a great role when it comes to terrorist assaults and that can be proved by multiple incidents such as Nairobi mall assault and in Somalia the assaults closer to Turkish Embassy. Multiple terrorist ideologies reflect certain agenda's and they have some belief on the basis of which they commit attacks. In the Middle East multiple terrorist organizations reflects strong ideologies behind them for e.g., ISIS, Al Qaeda etc.

The Middle Eastern region is surrounded by various conflicts, wars, and proxy wars. This region is a hub of conflicts and wars that are going on since the beginning and continued till present. These include Syrian civil war, Yemen civil war, proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia and much more. In a broader sense, there is an intensifying battle with Iran in the area that includes the war in Yemen (which saw against Saudi Arabia the Houthis launch ballistic missiles), the expanding Israeli-Syrian conflict, in Iraq the expansion of Shia militia forces, targeted killings. Israeli officials, who over the past few years have ordered hundreds of military strikes against missile and other targets, are worried about Iran's growing presence in Syria, for instance. Iran's allies have enhanced their capabilities in fields like drones and missiles thanks in part to support from the IRGC-QF. These changes are important because Iranian commanders believe that irregular warfare, which includes supporting non-state partners, is a crucial part to assert US in the region.

Since Iranian conventional divisions struggled against a far weaker Iraqi force, in the military philosophy Iran the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) marked a significant turning point. Iran's comparative advantage changed from traditional Iranian military capabilities to its capacity to collaborate with both state and non-state entities, an unconventional strategy directed by the IRGC. Iran, for instance, supported Iraqi Shia militant organizations during the Iran-Iraq War.

The Gulf war also known as the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990 when Saddam Hussein Iraqi president ordered the invasion on Kuwait, US was called by Egypt and Saudi Arabia to intervene. UN Security Council was defied by Hussein that demanded the withdrawal. Persian was initiated.

In response to the Iran's buildup of nuclear program in 2015, the United States and the international community restricted Iran continuing its nuclear program but Iran was forcefully pursuing its nuclear program and stated that it was only for peaceful purposes. In response to this an agreement P5 + 1 was formed in which 5 major countries along with the addition of another state-initiated imposition of economic sanctions on Iran due to its nuclear program. United States have also issued all the international community to stop any kind of trade activities with Iran in view of its nuclear program. USA emerged as a common challenge both to Iran and China in a sense that USA doesn't want both Iran and China to strengthen their ties in various fields in the Middle Eastern in order that USA remains a major external player in the region. In response to this USA also imposed economic sanctions on Iran.

5.4 Challenges faced by China in Middle Eastern region

The Challenge of Terrorism to China

Terrorism is the major threat for the Chinese interests in the Middle Eastern region. For China's trade, energy and economic cooperation the region holds immense importance. China has greatly established trade, economic and energy links in the region. In Middle East although in recent years terrorism was reduced but it still persists and is spreading. In the region the Chinese citizens who are involved in tourism and cultural activities are targeted by the terrorist organizations and extremist groups along with separatist forces as East Turkistan (Weilie, 2018). Several attacks had been made on Chinese's institution and people which is dangerous to Chinese interests in the Middle East. Agenda is to build pressure and harm the Chinese interests in the region. After 9/11 attacks have been increased against Chinese people. Chinese labors are greatly targeted in various terrorist attacks.

In the region although against Chinese interests the direct attacks are limited but the incidents already caused has damage the extension of the Chinese interests in the region and has damages cooperative relations between Middle Eastern countries and China. It shall be noted that from the region half of China's crude oil requirement is fulfilled so terrorism and terrorist attacks pose serious economic, energy and security threats to China in the region. China's most important oil suppliers are in the region, further terrorist attacks on oil transport facilities will harm Chinese's interests in the region and will negatively impact the China's development.

Terrorist attacks against the Chinese's Institutions and People

Against Chinese people and institution there had been several attacks in 1990's.	For e.g., Case of Qian Yongqiang and Liu Caifa who by four Islamic militants in 1994 in Algeria were killed, they worked in representative office China Water and Electric Corporation.
In Turkey the Chinese Embassy was attacked in 1997 March.	By the 'East Turkistan' terrorists attack was made.
In 1998 on 5th March the bombs were sent by the terrorist organization 'East Turkistan'.	Against the Chinese Consulate General of Istanbul, Turkey.
On 2002 12 th April Suicide bombing in Jerusalem.	Killing 2 Chinese and injuring 2 others.
In Tel Aviv two suicide bombings on 17 th July.	Killing two Chinese people and injuring four.
On 2003 January 5 th another suicide bombing.	A Chinese citizen was killed in suicide bombing and 7 got injured.
On 2005 November 9 th in Amman, Jordan series of hotel bombing occurred.	Killing three and injuring one from a China National Defense University delegation group. Al-Zarqawi's terrorist organization "Jihad al-Qaida" in Iraq planned it.

On 11 th April 2004 by armed men detention of Chinese to Iraq.	From Fujian Province 7 Chinese were abducted and detained near Fallujah.
From Iraq to Jordon hostage of Chinese citizens by Iraqi militants on 2005 January 18 th .	From Pingtan, Fujian Province 8 Chinese citizens were held hostage.

The Regional Geopolitical and Geoeconomics Challenges to China

The Geopolitical Challenges for China

Middle East has been experiencing profound transformation since turn of century that has exposed the region to instability and geopolitical threats. In the disintegration process as regional order and global relations are yet to reach new equilibrium, such restructuring cause the geopolitical conflicts. China has immense energy and economic interest in the region. The BRI project of China is remarkable taking various Middle Eastern countries on board. The success of the project is the main priority of China and China faces challenges by US and its allies. For the proxy conflicts the region serves as an arena. For example, between USA and Russia. The great power competition exists between the two. Russia has emerged as a major military actor in the region taking the advantage of US eastward strategic rebalancing. Notably in Syria Russia is a key actor. Moscow position mostly is supported by China but for China to attain more influence in the region playing strong role in regional central challenges is important.

In the Middle Eastern region strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is also very evident. Across the Muslim world Sunni Shia sectarianism animosity has fueled. Sanctions against Iran by USA is complicating the efforts of China to advance BRI which is the main priority for the Chinese interests. Iran strategic location makes it really important; it lies at intersection of Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road. Along the China Central Asia West Asia (CCA) Iran is one of the major countries. The CCA is immensely important strategic hub that links Middle East, Central and South Asia (Chaziza, 2020). Iran due to its location and rich reserves of natural resources is an eye of interest for China. China considers partnership with Iran important for its interests and sanctions against Iran leads towards challenges in way of China.

The region involves numerous conflicts and situations that could further trigger the conflict. For example, hostility between Iran and Saudi Arabia or between Iran and USA could trigger open conflicts. These uncertainties could really affect the Chinese interests in the region. Such dynamics could really pose serious geo political challenge for China in the region.

Geoeconomics Challenges for China

China in the region faces various geoeconomics challenges. The Middle Eastern region holds immense significance for the Chinese interests. In fulfilling of ambitions of China, it faces various challenges in its way. Most of the states of the region at initial stage of industrialization, they are under the western influence that poses challenge for China. Although China's investment has been welcomed in the region but question on Chinese ambitions is raised. For instance, its BRI program, the critics consider plan more beneficial to China than host countries.

The uncertainty about oil prices in future and foreign currency reserves depletion has forced the Gulf state for adoption of restraint in economic policy. In the Gulf states the instability in terms of economy could threaten the Chinese interests in the region along with its ambitions and goals in the region. In the Gulf region to market access there is a high barrier. Due to bureaucratic corruption the foreign investments and businesses are struggling in Gulf states. In the ratings and foreign enterprises evaluation there is no distinct price advantage for Chinese enterprises. The western standards are recognized by Gulf states in design, planning and quality supervision. India and Turkey in field of traditional civil engineering poses competition to China.

Below 50 almost 70 percent countries of Middle East have scored according to 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index. Above this average only five countries managed as Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel and UAE. In the region most of the countries are facing regime survival, wars, chaos, terrorism, political instability and economic collapse leading towards posing serious challenge to China's ambitions and goals in the region as such dynamics makes the region risky to invest (Chaziza, 2020). For the economic growth the ability of region to tap its vital potential is curtailed by various factors as low productivity growth, lack of economic diversification, low trade integration regionally, weak governance etc.

Through BRI China aims to strengthen its influence in the region and take Middle eastern countries on board for collective prosperity. China is providing loans and is heavily investing in the region for its interest ultimately. The chaotic situation and uncertainty in the region will

pose great challenge for China. The region countries mostly are under severe fiscal pressure and to meet their investment financing targets their options are limited. In a nut shell this region involves massive Chinese interests but the uncertainty and chaos in region poses threat to China's interests.

Challenge of USA and India to Chinese Interests in the Middle East

With China India's border conflict is escalating into wider confrontation in the region between two Asian powers. Looking into the dynamics of the region Iran deepening its strategic partnership with China has drooped India from Chahbahar project where the Indian role was scrapped by Iran. India relations with Turkey is also important which have deteriorated due to siding with Pakistan over Kashmir issue and relations between Turkey and China have also been improved. The changing geopolitical situations urge India for its interests to build stronger US Indian partnership in Indo Pacific and Middle Eastern region.

USA and India pose challenge to Chinese interests in the region (Singh, 2021). USA and India both have similar interests and strong partnership between them will pose threat to the interests of China in the region. China is strong competitor of USA and soon is going to be global hegemon, USA does not want this to happen and wanted to enhance its influence and domination all around the world. Middle Eastern region is immensely important and can't be ignored. USA along with India and Israel Saudi Arabia is trying to maximize its interests in the region and counter the China Iran partnership. China's BRI project is going to bring revolutionary benefits to China with USA would never want. USA is trying its best to enhance the western influence in the region and propagate that this project is to make the countries dependent on China and is more beneficial for China then the host countries. USA is on the agenda of destabilizing Chinese interests. Between China and USA, the great power competition is evident in the region. There is clear clash of interests between USA and China. China aims for maintain regional stability and peace and resolving matters through negotiation. China aims to deter USA threats and sanctions against countries. On the other hand, USA aims deter China, Russia and Iran and aims to strengthen western influence in the region.

China's growing influence in the region is also not in the interests of India. In the Middle East and North Africa over \$55 billion China has invested between 2005 and 2019 according to AEI's China's Global Investment Tracker (Alhasan, 2020). Through BRI China has greatly enhanced its influence in the region. China has deepened its strategic partnership with Iran by signing 25 years of strategic agreement. China knows what it is up to. India and USA are

worried over growing influence of China and aims to threaten the Chinese interests in the region. India to contain regional clout of China deepen its ties with USA. As the deep pockets and influence of China in the region can't be countered by India alone. India USA is posing challenge to China in the Middle East.

With Gulf monarchies and Israel India have good ties and since 2014 under Modi regime it has improved further. India along with USA is countering China and its influence across the region. The Quad poses serious challenge to the Chinese interest. Quad includes Australia, Japan, USA and India. India aims to strengthen Quad and play an important role in enhancing its influence and declining the Chinese influence in the region. For inclusive and prosper Indo Pacific region the Quads aims for and it aims to counters military presence and political influence of China in the Indo Pacific. QUAD is claimed by China as US led Asian NATO.

Looking the dynamics of the region one can establish China Iran and Russia on one side and USA, India and GCC countries on the other. The agenda is to gain power the struggle is for maximizing the national interests and gaining the power eventually. The region has become an arena of global powers and regional powers competition where everyone is revolving around gaining the power. This is the reason why this region has so many conflicts and is a chaotic region.

Challenge of Russia to China

Mostly if one look to Moscow and China's interest in the region there are similar, often Moscow is sided with China but that does not mean there are no potential areas of conflict between the two. Looking into Maritime presence China aims to strengthen its military presence in Bab-el- Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz, in Djibouti. In maritime security operations and anti-piracy operations China has greatly participated in Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea. Near crucial maritime chokepoint China aims to enhance its influence. Russian on the other hand has established maritime influence already for example in Mediterranean Sea. The finalization of agreement of Russia with Sudan to form naval base in Port Sudan is important which will give Russia significant toehold in Red Sea. The overlapping of interests and closer geographical proximity can be problematic between China and Russia. It could lead towards confrontation and also towards the possibility of cooperation for example in 2019 joint maritime maneuvers with Iran (Danny Citrinowicz, 2021).

Looking into Arms Sale the policy of China is focused on the economic gain and by development assistance it is complemented. The arm production of China in the region has

increased that may spark exports of Chinese weapons to the region. China focuses on small scale weapons as drones and aims to strengthen strategic relationship with countries of Middle East for securing the prospects of energy. On the other hand, Russia enhances its military and political presence in the region and uses arms sales to boost its economy. Russia aims for generating the dependency on the Middle Eastern states over Russian arms. Russia has set no boundaries and ready to sell sophisticated military capabilities. China is greatly investing in the region and many countries are looking to China for investments. With Russia over the intensifying regions weapons market China may come into confrontation due to increased proliferation of Chinese arms.

Coming to the nuclear capabilities which plays crucial role. For many Middle Eastern countries, the nuclear technology of Russia is ideal as its rapidly delivered and is inexpensive. It does not include non-proliferation conditions unlike US and west. The Atomic Energy law was drafted by China's Ministry of Justice in 2018 which calls upon its nuclear industry for securing a portion of globe's nuclear export market including in Middle Eastern region. On facility construction for uranium yellowcake extraction from uranium ore that depicts that for military purposes Saudi use of civil nuclear program Saudi Arabia and China has collaborated. Between Russia and China, the conflict could be sparked due to competition in the nuclear market.

In a nutshell from above dynamics, it can be clearly established that there might be many triggering points between Russia and China and that could trigger serious conflicts between the two strong countries that would eventually pose serious challenge to Chinese interests. Russia, China and Iran on one side against USA, India on the other does not mean there is no challenges existing between China and Russia. Russia and China mostly are sided because of collective interests but there are multiple triggering factors which can trigger serious conflict between the two and can pose serious challenges to Chinese interests in the Middle Eastern region.

CHAPTER 6 SINO-IRANIAN COOPERATION: A PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIP

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Iran in 1971, the two nations have forged strong ties in various areas such as politics, economics, and military affairs. China has provided Iran with much-needed commerce and investment, and as Iran's economy has become increasingly isolated, China has become one of the country's most significant foreign stakeholders.

In particular, Chinese enterprises have played a critical role in building Iran's energy industry by making significant investments in resource extraction and infrastructure development. China's oil purchases from Iran have also been a vital source of revenue for the country.

Despite China's tendency to keep its connection with Iran low-key, the two countries enjoy close political relations. Moreover, China has provided military assistance to Iran through arms shipments and military cooperation since the 1980s.

For thousands of years, China maintained economic relations with ancient Persia via the Silk Road. During the Ming Dynasty, this relationship included a seafaring component (Roth, 2021). The most powerful illustration of this was the Chinese imperial fleet's frequent excursions to Persia during the renowned voyages led by eunuch admiral Zheng He. China's marine presence, and hence the maritime feature of its relationship with Persia, collapsed almost overnight during the Ming dynasty. In 1971, Iran and China established diplomatic ties. Despite limited early exchanges, China took a long time to establish significant vested interests in the region, particularly with Iran. China lacked the financial, diplomatic, and political might to promote and protect its interests in the region at the time. The year 1979 marked a watershed moment in China-Iran relations. China may be said to have been on the wrong side of history at the time. Before revolutions in Iran, China was perceived as a revolutionary power in the region, supporting local communist organizations, while Iran was seen as a status quo state under the Shah. By 1979, China had abandoned its support for provincial Communist parties and appeared to be settling into a regional status quo, whereas Iran was a revolutionary force.

The China-Iran relationship were previously based on limited pragmatic collaboration, but in recent years it has boosted into a partnership that is more openly hostile to the US-led world system, simply bypassing USA's interest in the Middle Easter region. Beijing sees Iran's anti-US stance as bolstering China's growing global clout, as illustrated by Iran's dissemination of Chinese anti-US disinformation during the new coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Figueroa, 2022).

The disruptive acts of the Iranian regime in the Middle East also hamper the US' efforts to shift its focus to the Indo-Pacific. Iran, for its part, sees China as a vital economic lifeline and a diplomatic ally in the face of US pressure. The latest proof of the two sides' readiness to coordinate more closely is a 25-year collaboration agreement inked in March 2021. China is said to be taking a more active role in the most recent round of discussions in Vienna aimed at reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal. Meanwhile, China has expanded its oil purchases from Iran and has deliberately provided a rhetorical support to Iran against US stance against Iran (Green & Roth, 2021).

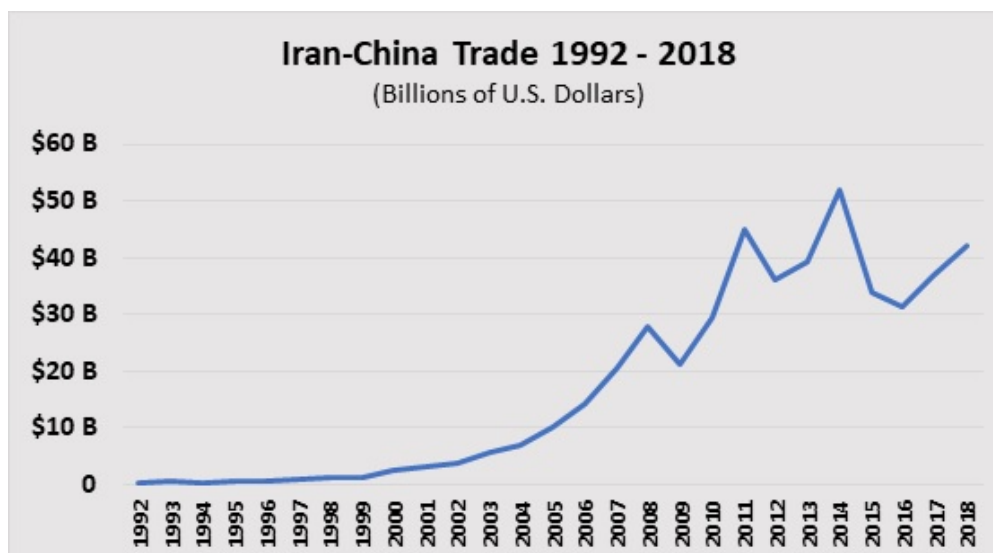
Despite considerably reduced economic involvement due to partial compliance with US sanctions, China has maintained its position as Iran's leading economic partner. Despite this, China has continued to buy Iranian oil in violation of the sanctions through a variety of techniques. China, as Iran's main oil consumer, gives the Iranian dictatorship a financial lifeline while strengthening its grip on the country. China hopes to improve its future access to Iranian energy and raw materials by investing in Iran's power generation and multilateralism. China and Iran continue limited defense cooperation and intelligence sharing, which is said to include information that led to the collapse of much of the US spy network in both nations. For decades, China has backed Iran's cruise and ballistic missile projects, notably by providing technology that is likely to be used in at least one of the missile systems used in Tehran's 2020 strike on US forces in Iraq. Despite Tehran's desire for modern weapons from China, Beijing may be hesitant to sell the sought weapons out of worry for its Gulf partners' relations.

Jonathon Fulton interviewed Anoush Ehteshami in the Atlantic Council Forum regarding the Sino Iranian Relations which evaluated that China has been extending its footprint in the Middle Eastern region through its belt and road initiative during the last decade, affecting the region's economy, politics, and even security. Furthermore, since China imports oil from Saudi Arabia, Iran has gained China's attention due to its strategic relevance for the Belt and Road Initiative (Fulton J., 2022).

6.1 Arm Embargoes & China backing Iran

With the UN arms ban on Iran set to end in October, US endeavors to broaden it have been met with far and wide global analysis. This is occurring during the absolute bottom in US-China relations in many years, giving Beijing's perspectives on the circumstance with Iran an additional weight. Up to this point, Beijing has been clear about its goals, with a representative for the Chinese UN mission tweeting: US neglected to meet its commitments under Resolution 2231 by pulling out from JCPOA.

The two offer a complete vital organization that features guard participation. They have well established strategic ties and noteworthy relations returning across hundreds of years. Iran is a gigantic likely market for Chinese shippers; for arms, however for customer and modern deals, too. Continuing an arms supply relationship with Iran would give China — a \$13 trillion economy with a couple million bucks, expecting Iran's powerless economy could concoct the hard cash to buy in huge amounts. Simultaneously, it would pointlessly irritate the United States and distance a few Iranian opponents across the Middle East, a significant number of which are likewise essential accomplices for China. Thus, it can be concluded that China is siding with Iran and supporting arm embargoes between both the countries in lieu of US sanctions imposed on Iran as well (Figueroa, 2022).



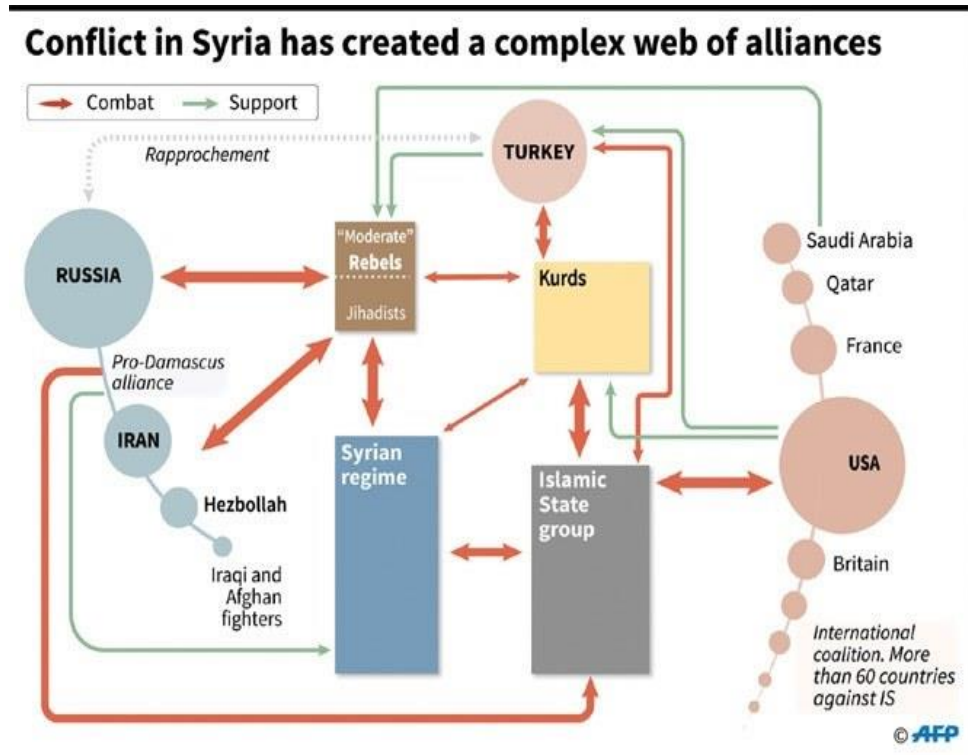
6.2 Sino-Iranian Cooperation's Political Dimension

The Sino-Iranian agreement also has a significant political component. Pursuing this relationship is as much about Beijing as it is about Washington for Tehran. Iran understands

the great power rivalry between the United States and China is expected to increase in the coming years. As Western countries debate their economic connections with China, the Sino-Iranian pact provides Iran with an opportunity to garner attention. This can provide Iran some leverage in future sanctions negotiations with Europe and the US, as Tehran can depict itself as a balancing force in Western capitals' dealings with Beijing and Moscow. Iran has looked to China and Russia for protection at the United Nations against US pressure and will demand for a strong response from them if any member of the US leadership tries to reverse UN sanctions on Iran. China has been a more outspoken supporter of Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency, even defying a European-led vote condemning Iran last month. Iran has also requested full participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in exchange for its observer status, which requires China's consent (Iran, Russia, China Hold Joint Naval Drill amid Growing Ties, 2022).

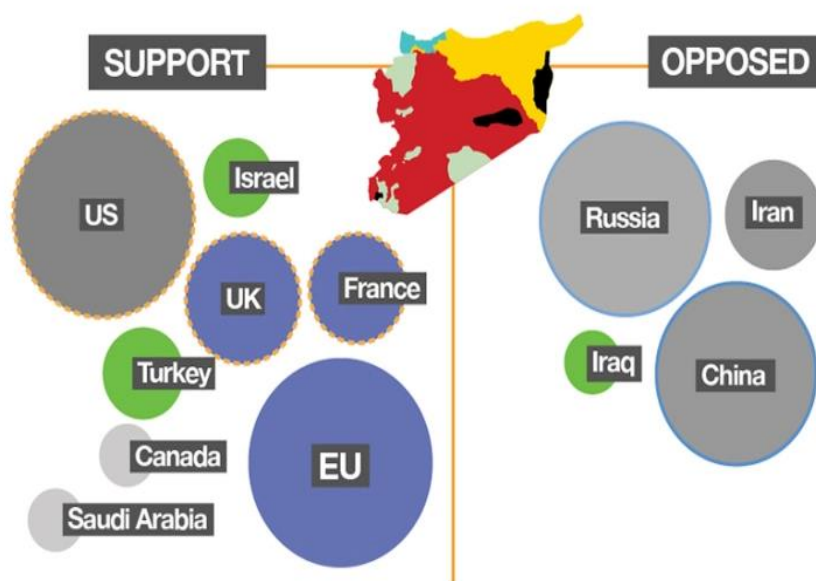
Iran and China are cooperating on the basis of their collective interests. Both states take position on the basis of their interests and what suits them. For example, the case of Syrian civil war, which is the ongoing war between the Syrian administration and rebels Iran and Russia are standing with Bashar al Assad regime in Syria and China has the strategy of wait and look. States are taking sides on the basis of their interests. For Russia it is economy and ideology that led Russia to stand with Syrian government. Russia is Syria's biggest arm supplier and has the ideological goal to restrict US influence. Iran alliance with Syria involves two important factors the religion and strategy. Iran is popular Shiite Muslim nation; in the administration of Syria the majority is of Shiite and in rebel's majority is of Sunni. Also, the Syrian rebels are being supported by Iran rivals as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Hence, it's in the interest of Iran to support Syrian administration of Bashar al Assad regime. Syria is an important strategic ally for Iran and Iran believes that Syria is a victim of international plots. Iran believes that the efforts of West for regime change will lead towards further chaos. Iran major agenda is to restrict the Western influence which is essential and vital for Iranian interests. Coming to China, Syria is viewed as significant trading hub in eyes of China. China has collective interests with Iran and Russia to limit the western influence. China believes that states should respect the Syrian sovereignty and shouldn't interfere in its internal affair. China has taken the position of being neutral and has chosen more sophisticated strategy in case of Syria (Yan, 2013). However, China along with Russia being permanent member of UN has blocked the sanction attempts repeatedly on Syria. China believes political solution for the Syrian conflict essential. China, Russia and Iran opposed US attacks and opposed the use of chemical weapons. From the case

of Syria, it can be clearly establishing that states will take sides and positions on the basis of their respective interests and will cooperate on the basis of there collective interests.



Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1280157>

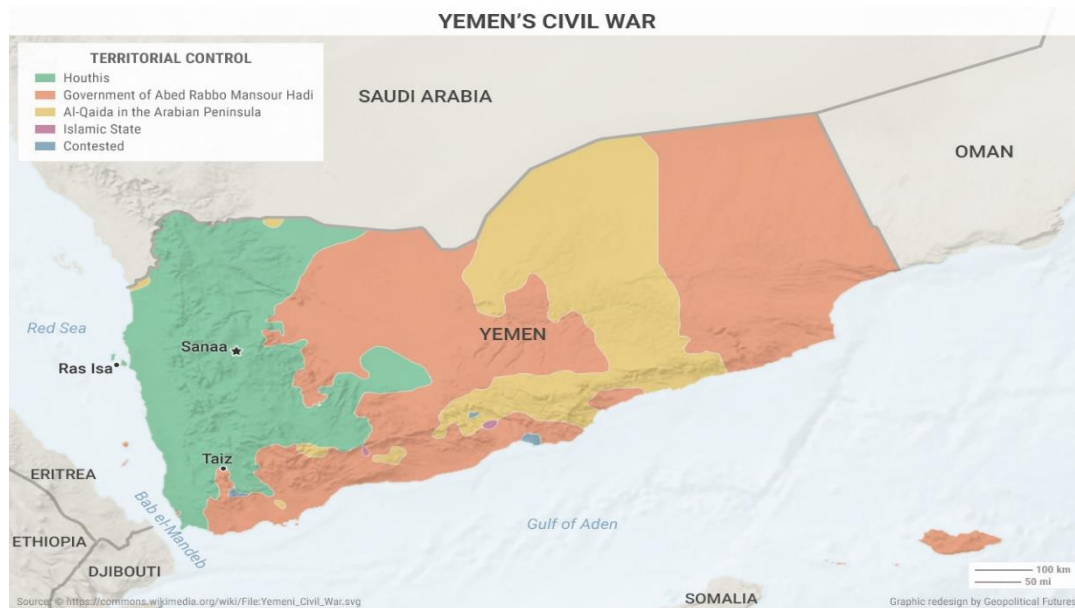
Who is fighting who in Syria?



Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/4/16/syrias-war-allies-and-opponents>

States Position on US led Attacks in Syria

The case of Yemen civil war is also significant which is ongoing multiparty civil war between Yemen administration led by Mansur Hadi and Houthi rebels. Iran supports the Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia supports the administration of Yemen. This civil war is turning as the regional conflict between two important powers Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran is questioned on providing weapons to Houthis. Iran is supporting Houthis to counter Saudi Arabia and its rivals. Houthis are supported by Iran on the basis of its interests. Yemen crisis has generated massive humanitarian crisis with more than 10,000 casualties and almost 3 quarter of country's population is need for humanitarian assistance. China has supplied humanitarian aid and has involved in regional and international efforts to mitigate the Yemen conflict. Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, Peace talks led by UN and the National Dialogue Conference is significant in this regard.



Source: <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/yemens-civil-war/>

Yemen Civil War

In Yemen conflict China's position is driven by its interests of maintaining close strategic association with Saudi Arabia. This led acquiescing of Beijing to Saudi led military campaign in Yemen. China has outsized the economic presence in Yemen as its important trading partner. Through it Belt and Road initiative in Yemen postwar reconstruction China can play an

important role. To Saudi led airstrikes China response as muted as it does not want to confront with Saudi Arabia over Yemen as important strategic interests of China lies with Saudi Arabia. In the Middle Eastern region to the Sunni Arab world Saudi Arabia constitutes significant gateway. Saudi Arabi is immensely important for China as it is the regional focal point for China's BRI initiate along with its major oil supplier (Chang, 2018). Publicly both the countries respect each other core interests. For example, China's position on Taiwan, South China Sea and Xinjiang is supported by Saudi Arabia and in return Beijing supports the security interest of Saudi Arabia in Yemen and supports legitimate regime in Yemen of President Mansur Hadi's.

In the conflict of Yemen one can see the confronting positions of China and Iran but this is not affecting their relationship as the recent 25 years of strategic agreement depicts that how important Iran and China re for each other. China and Iran position on Yemen crisis is according to there respective interests. The case depicts that the country will always take stance and position according to its interests. China and Iran are the realist countries for them their national interests are their priority. China believes peace in Yemen and consider it important trading partner and supports Saudi Arabia in Yemen while Iran is completely supporting the Houthis rebels against the Yemeni government.

In a nutshell from the above cases one can see how states are taking sides on the basis of there interests. In case of Syria China is neutral and is against the US attacks on Syria and in case of Yemen it supports the Masur Hadi regime and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Iran is supporting the Houthis in Yemen crisis and in Syria Iran is siding with Bashar al Assad regime. Hence it can clearly be established that though Iran and China are close strategic partners but their position and stance in Middle East is on the basis of their respective interest. There association and relationships beyond this, the 25 years of strategic agreement is clear evidence for it.

Power Politics in Middle East:

Power politics as a term is utilized as a political way of talking and a hypothetical depiction of how states associate in quest for their benefits in the global field. It suggests utilizing power or the dangers posed by increased use of power. In American English the word politics usually means intimidation rather than collaboration rather it may be military or economic. A fact that a no state has the total power but have some power which makes it as the "Power Politics" (Etzoldand and Messer, 2022). Middle Eastern region is seen as an area of power politics

where great power competition can be witnessed. They inspect incredible power contest in the locale exogenously, focusing on how outside worldwide powers are controlling issues in the Middle East to propel their own advantages. Regularly absent from this discussion is how outside commitment is being taken advantage of and formed by territorial powers and endogenous turns of events.

This region has become a significant locale for China after the Indo Pacific. China's foremost interests in the region are economic. Approximately ½ China's oil reserves originate from this region. With the start of Belt and Road project in 2013 Chinese presence and collaboration has become greater and more complex, with state owned companies executing major port production facilities and other infrastructure projects in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE etc. The great power competition in the Middle Eastern region can be seen from the fact that United States has gained a foothold in the region along with the Russia and China as the emerging major powers in the region and furthermore, along with India and European Union trying to sought for greater influence in the region. Russia proved itself as a major player in the international world. With its involvement in Syria and Syrian conflict it persists as a primary player in the middle eastern region.

The Middle Eastern region has become an area of incredible power competition as China's developing interests and Russia's growing interests in the region are evident. The two states USA and Russia wanted hegemony over this Middle Eastern region and entered in a competition. China is somewhat a new player in the region as compared to USA and Russia who has been the key players in the region from a very long time. Previously, Beijing was all centered exclusively on the economic aspect of the region but now it has expanded to the political and military aspects of the region. The main aim of Russia and China is to limit the USA influence in the region.

Russia has been increasing its involvement and influence in the Middle Eastern region for political, military, and economic reasons. The belt and road initiative the two great powers Russia and China ends up in a battle for mastery in the region. With the significance highlighted of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it is the two great powers that are in a continuous battle for achieving hegemony in the region. After the breakdown of USSR, China and Russia relationship changed into strategic partnership from a constructive partnership. Xi Jinping the Chinese president visited Moscow in 2013, Vladimir Putin the President of Russia said that both the countries were establishing a special relationship (Calabrese, 2021). Various states

such as United States, Russia, and China has sought for greater influence in the Middle Eastern region. The great power competition is underway in the Middle East and there is a debate on the fact that how major powers want and how they seek to achieve their goals. There are various regional actors as well who have pursued their interests by working with the major powers such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and UAE.

Saudi Arabia has aligned itself with USA and regards Iran as its regional antagonist and rely on USA for its protection. The Saudi Arabia has no other option other than to align itself with the United States of America but moreover with the differences on the Yemeni issue and the Human rights issue which in turn test the US Saudi Relations. The Saudi government has indicated their willingness to develop their further ties with China and Russia. In regard to all the regional powers, Turkey's relationships and interests are the most versatile. Turkish leaders seek a more independent foreign policy from the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to establish Turkey as a leader in the Middle East. As a result, Turkey has played a major role in regional conflicts such as those in Libya and Syria, resulting in both conflict and cooperation with major powers, especially the United States and Russia. Finally, Iran aspires to become a regional leader as well and has thus sought to undermine the United States and its regional partners. The Iranian leadership has advanced this goal through geostrategic cooperation with Russia, especially in Syria, and the development of economic ties with China. The UAE is an important factor in the regional anti-Iran coalition and a security partner of the United States, but it defines its interests more broadly. Notably, the Emiratis have sought to counter the accumulation of Islamist power around the region and to oppose popular uprisings. As a result, the UAE has a confluence of interests with Russia, which is also suspicious of popular protests and Islamist political parties. Separate from its core geostrategic interests, the Emirati government has deepened its economic ties with China (Cook, 2021).

6.3 Defense Cooperation

In the northern Indian Ocean, Iran, Russia, and China are staging their third combined naval practice, sparking concern that the three countries are banding together in the face of rising regional tensions with the United States. The Russian Defense Ministry said on January 21, 2022, that Russian ships, along with those of China and Iran, practiced "joint tactical maneuvering and practiced artillery fire at a naval target as well as search-and-rescue missions at sea." The sides also "practiced inspection and liberation of a ship that was allegedly captured

by pirates." Eleven Iranian ships were joined by three Russian ships and two Chinese ships, according to Iranian Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajuddin.

Iran's hard-liner President Ebrahim Raisi has pursued a policy of deepening ties with both Moscow and Beijing since taking office in June 2021. Western sanctions have been imposed on Russia, Iran, and China on a variety of issues, including Russia's threats to Ukraine's territorial sovereignty, China's human rights abuses, and Iran's nuclear program. "Improving bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow will strengthen regional and global security," Raisi said after returning from a visit to Russia on January 21, according to the Iranian government's news agency IRNA. Last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited China, where it was revealed that the two countries had signed a 25-year cooperation agreement aimed at enhancing political and economic relations.

The third cooperative naval practice between Iran, Russia, and China since 2019 will encompass 17,000 square kilometers and aims to improve maritime security, according to Iranian official television. The drills will be attended by a missile destroyer, a supply ship, shipborne helicopters, and 40 Chinese marines, according to China's Defense Ministry on January 20. A Russian naval force consisting of a missile cruiser, a huge anti-submarine warfare ship, and a large sea tanker anchored off Iran's port of Chabahar in the Gulf of Oman ahead of the maneuvers, according to the Pacific Fleet. Russia launched massive naval operations in numerous places on January 20 using most of its naval potential, including over 140 warships and over 60 planes (Iran, Russia, China Hold Joint Naval Drill amid Growing Ties, 2022).

Expanding Military Cooperation between China and Iran

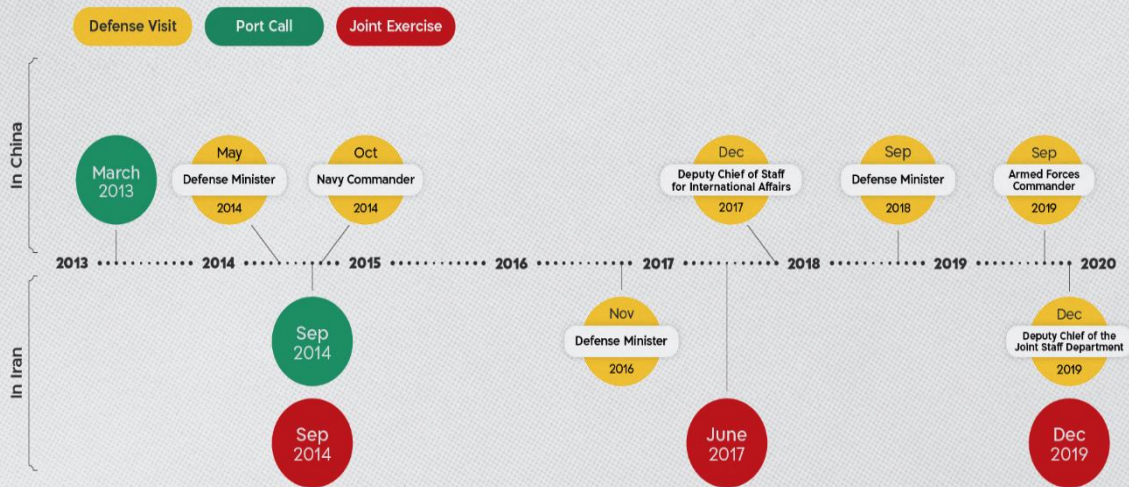
In April 27th 2022 the national defense minister of China Wei Fenghe visited Iran. China states Iran as strategic partner for China. Intention depicts that their cooperation will lead towards strong strategic cooperation. Two sides agreed after meeting with President Ebrahim Raisi to expand cooperation in all areas. Both Iran and China aim in expanding military cooperation. They both agreed in respecting each other's fundamental rights and restricting the west interventions in Middle Eastern region. In joint military exercises, training, in exchange of strategies both China and Iran aim in deepening the cooperation. Iran's relation with Chinese PLA has deepened in recent years due to the strong defense diplomacy of Baqeri's. Since 1979 Islamic Revolution to visit China Baqeri's was the first Iranian armed forces chief of staff in 2019.

In the region and Gulf China aims to strengthen its commitment for security and peace and believes to restrict the influence of USA. China criticizes USA on imposing unilateral sanctions on Iran. China considers Iran its important strategic player. In terms of arm supply China is greeting supplying weapons to Iran. It was the largest supplier of arms to both sides during Iran Iraq war, in late 1980s they bought more than 7.75 billion arms (Zaheer, 2022). China took the advantage of flaw in pre 2006 orders and continue supplying arms to Iran according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute after years of sanctions. These arms were surface to air missiles, anti-ship missiles, air search radar and armored personnel carriers.

Iran control on strategic barrier of Strait of Hormuz is of immense importance through with one fifth oil of world passes and Iran use it to shoot down US drone and attack passing tankers. To counter USA and allied navies China and Iran both for their interest on their shores are trying to develop A2/AD capabilities. Chinese companies are into boosting the Iran's development of indigenous weapons. In the Chinese weapons the defense industry of Iran is showing the interest. By former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the Persian Gulf the possibility of Chinese J-10 fighter jet deployment was raised. In post sanctions period the analysts believe that to Iran China becoming major arm exporter. In 2021 the sources of China confirmed that to China's BeiDou satellite navigation system Iran and Pakistan had gained the access for military purposes. BeiDou can assist Iran forces determining the target positions and launch locations.

In recent years both China and Iran have increased their cooperation in military between there navies. For example, in the Indian ocean the joint naval drilling is the classic example of there military cooperation. The 25 years of strategic agreement is the milestone in cooperation between China and Iran signed in march 2021. From cooperation in economic to defense sphere China and Iran aims in deepening cooperation through agreement. In a nut shell China and Iran aim in deepening military cooperation on the basis of their collective interests and the agreements such 25 years of strategic agreement is a proof for it. Such agreements would greatly impact on fighting the terrorism in the region along with diffusing unilateralism.

China-Iran Defense and Military Timeline 2013-2020

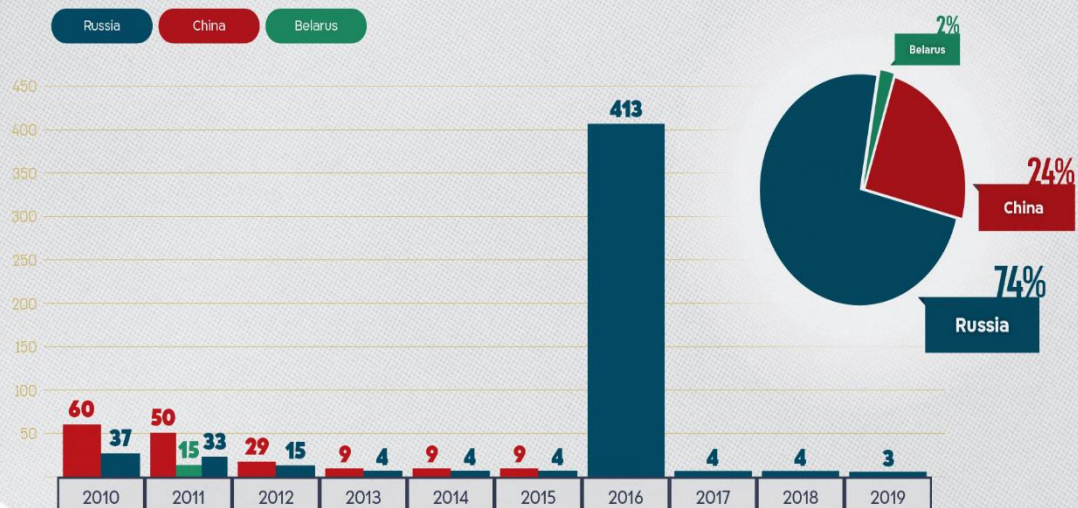


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Source: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/china-iran/>

China and Iran Defense Military Timeline

Iran's Arms Imports (in millions USD) 2010-2019



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Source: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/china-iran/>

The Iran Arms Imports 2010-2019

The general backdrop of the Iran-China economic agreement shows that it is essentially an Iranian initiative meant to gain political capital from a superficially improved relationship with one of the world's great powers, aside from the fact that it is phrased in generalities. The agreement obscures Iran's severe economic problems while simultaneously demonstrating that it is capable of finding a way around the restrictions put in place by US-led sanctions. Through its agreement with Beijing, Tehran is also sending a message to the world that it will exert "maximum opposition" against what it sees as Washington's plans to lessen Iran's regional influence and even topple the government. While there is still a chance of reaching agreement over at least some form of "live and let live" understanding on a broad range of international geopolitical and economic issues with the US and its allies, it is notable that China's Foreign Ministry and media outlets have made little comment on the deal. It is likely that this official discretion reflects Beijing's need to keep its options open and avoid provoking the US in the Middle East. If Beijing and Washington can manage to forge a cooperative relationship on other matters, increased Chinese influence in Iran could be advantageous from a US standpoint in terms of limiting Iran's nuclear programmes and active backing for its regional proxies. The Iran-China agreement is therefore a public relations gimmick that primarily masks its lack of substance. While the agreement may make it easier for China to help Iran with certain projects in return for Iranian oil supplies, it won't bind Beijing to the point where it endangers its interests elsewhere in the Middle East. Beijing's policy will continue to be determined by its larger regional and global interests, not least in relation to the urgent need to address the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme and international sanctions on Iran, even though Tehran is attempting to demonstrate that it has alternatives to the West.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATION FOR SINO-IRANIAN CO-OPERATION IN MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

China and Iran relations are strengthening greatly due to their collective interests, if their relations remain cordial there will be great implications for the region in terms of economic, political, and strategic means. Number of states, their behavior, policies are going to be greatly impacted due to China's strong involvement in the region along with strong relations with Iran. China chooses Iran from the region to develop the relations and enhance its influence region. Iran being internationally isolated had great opportunity to get China's back and support. With China Iran relations the implications for the region will be great. The dynamics of region would be shaped, and situations will take new forms. Cordial relationship between China and Iran will bring great implications for the region.

7.1 SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

The ramifications of the recently marked Sino-Iranian arrangement otherwise called the Joint exhaustive Strategic Agreement endorsed in 2021 go past financial matters. The arrangement likewise covers security matters relating to insight and military collaboration that furnish both Iran and China with benefits over rival states. The arrangement covers 25 years of collaboration between the two states and assists Iran with breaking the global confinement it has been enduring US sanctions. The arrangement likewise assists China with growing its worldwide impact.

The Islamic system in Iran has encountered various knowledge and counterintelligence disappointments throughout the past 10 years. Generally, this is because of the system's annihilation, out of dread of upsets, of the Iranian military and knowledge local area after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Over its 40-year residency, the system has chiefly rested on the instruments of brutality, torment, and death to assemble knowledge and kill dangers.

The system comprehends that compelling insight and counterintelligence are essential for its endurance. To change and work on these areas, Iran as of late marked an insight settlement with Russia. The knowledge joint effort specified in the arrangements is in arrangement with this objective. The Sino-Iranian arrangement will give Iran admittance to Chinese innovation,

preparing, and mastery, and will add to more grounded Iranian knowledge and counterintelligence.

Iran is profoundly dynamic in the area as well as in Europe and the US concerning undercover work, psychological oppression, and destabilization, and there is no question that the Iran-China arrangement will help its knowledge and counterintelligence abilities and accordingly make it more forceful. This will have serious consequences for the Iranian resistance, as the Islamic system will be more powerful against its adversaries. The Islamic Republic will turn out to be more hearty and powerful because of the arrangement.

7.2 Economic Implications

The China Iran economic relations have been greatly strengthened by the 25 years of deal between China and Iran. The economic implications for the region are evident by China Iran continuation of cordial relations. In the context of USA China conflict the new deal between Iran and China should be considered, conflict between USA and China is over numerous issues from maritime disputes to covid pandemic to human rights violations in Xinjiang to the political repression in Hong Kong. China is making clear to US administration by boosting its ties with Iran that the Middle east is the focus of the China and China is increasing its influence in the region and is all set-in supporting regime whose polices to the traditional US allies in the region are antithetical (Harold & Nader, 2012).

China and Iran deal is going to further strengthen the relations between the two however for the other regional countries, the Arab Gulf states will remain integral to important aims of Beijing in terms of foreign economic strategies towards the region. The exports of Chinese to Iran between 2004 and 2018 has increased by annual rate of 16.9 percent. During this period with other trade partners in the region the China trade remain relatively constant. China Iran cooperation economically does not mean that to other regional partners China will be ignorant. The UAE set to manufacture and distribute the Sino pharm vaccine on global basis the recent announcement reflects how much China places great value in UAE as ally. It is trusted as technological diplomatic partner. The China UAE strategic partnership of 2018 reflects the strengthening relations between the two.

The implications due to China Iran economic relations in the region will be for USA and its close allies. As USA is worried due to the increasing influence of China in the region especially through Iran which USA is isolating internationally and has imposed numerous sanctions. Key

sectors where China and Iran are cooperating are economic industries, defense industry, cyberspace, high tech etc. China Iran economic strategic cooperation is worrying Washington a lot. On the other hand, China is clear in boosting its ties with Iran along with strengthening relations with other Arab countries. To deal with regional security issues, USA is attempting to use the regional allies as the proxy mechanisms. Israel and Saudi Arabia are utilized as the regional checks on Iran's ambitions in the region and to contain Iran (Saleh and Yazdanshenas, 2022).

It is also important to register that China is strengthening its relations with Iran and along with does not want to disclose the details of its cooperation agreements. To China the Saudi Arabia is the top supplier of crude oil and it is the closest ally of USA, the tensions between China and USA can lead towards the USA pressurizing the allies to end the energy cooperation with China that could lead China in trouble. 2016 million barrels per day the new record set from Chinese imports from Saudi Arabia. So, China isn't focusing on one supplier Iran is a channel for China to have guaranteed and discounted source of energy in return with economic, strategic cooperation and support for Iran.

The political landscape of the region will be inevitably reshaped by Chinese Iranian ties in favor of both the countries undermining the influence of USA further. China is given the opportunity to play a greater role in most important region of the world. In 2016 an Arab Policy Paper was issued by China that indicated the Declaration of Action on China Arab States Cooperation which was issued in 2018 during the 8th China Arab States Cooperation Forum. China knows the potential of the region as involved the regional countries in revolutionary project of Belt and Road initiative. The agreements are made with countries like Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Kuwait etc. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank of China is also playing a key role for China global hegemony. Some of these countries were accepted as founding members.

In the renewable energy, electricity, petroleum, nuclear energy sectors the cooperation is initiated. China is investing in the region looking the potential and is not just sided with one country but is keeping its options open and multiple and doing cooperation and strategic agreements, keeping the details disclosed. China in return is focusing on getting oil, deepening its engagement in the region. In a nutshell looking into the economic implications due to China Iran relations it can be established that USA and its close allies in the region like Saudi Arabia and Israel are worried due to China Iran economic cooperation, however the political landscape

of the region would be in favor of both if between both the relations remain cordial. China is worrying USA through Iran but is also focusing on other regional players as well. China is not just focusing Iran, but other countries as well bring them into China's side through the projects like Belt and Road initiative.

7.3 Geopolitical Implications

The Middle East continues to be one among the foremost dynamic regions of the globe because it undergoes economic, geopolitical, and security changes influencing not only countries within the gulf, but also global powers that are vying for influence. Relations between Iran and China are key driver within the changes currently underway.

Collaboration between these two countries isn't new and has been creating in its present setting since the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). Their even minded kinship flourished during this conflict, laying out the establishment for an organization that today is reinforcing Iran's monetary and provincial position and gives China an essential traction in the Middle East. This is massively significant inside the setting of China-Iran relations, and inside the more extensive system of China's test to U.S. authority.

China's developing impact combined with its Belt and Road Initiative have major key ramifications as Beijing looks to interface its financial, geostrategic and security interests. No place is this clearer that its relationship with Iran, as it assists China with upgrading its focal points and connection the Middle East, Central, and South Asia together (Mackenzie, 2010). It likewise gives Iran a genuinely necessary lift to its critical monetary circumstance as its populace keeps on wrestling with monetary and general wellbeing challenges. The development of the China-Iran relationship laid out during the Iran-Iraq War won't just reshape the political scene of the Middle East, it will likewise fortify every administration's situation inside their individual country.

With China's developing impact in Africa and East Asia, its improved situation in the Middle East adds one more aspect to its test to U.S. authority and its worldwide reach. Specifically, China's relationship with Iran is an essential organization that is critical to China's progression in the locale. This has been valid for north of forty years. Today the profundity and size of China-Iran relations inspire extraordinary interest on local and worldwide levels. The seeds of their advanced relationship were planted during the Iran-Iraq War. This war gave an ideal second to China to exploit and lay the preparation for financial development and political

impact in the short and long terms. The Iran-Iraq War, combined with Iran's global disconnection during that period, made a scene where Iran expected to work with any accomplices that would help the country both in a conflict setting and to meet its essential necessities (Hamrah & Eliassen, 2021).

The crossing point of Chinese and Iranian interests and the essential structure for their association during the Iran-Iraq War fostered their commonly useful relationship regardless of a complex worldwide scene. It laid out the foundations of their association on a drawn-out premise, assisting China with its big picture approach.

To comprehend the intricacies of China-Iran relations today and its direction, it is fundamental for glance back at this conflict and the political, security and financial subtleties that laid out the establishment from which these two nations are reinforcing their positions today. China is maintaining its close ties with Iran due to geopolitical and economic reasons. Iran is a part of BRI project from the geopolitical point of view and hence, which increases the importance of stability in the region for China (Keller, 2020).

The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been there since long. Both the countries are one of the major states in the middle eastern region. Furthermore, both Saudi Arabia and Iran wants to gain hegemony in the region and are in a constant battle for achieving supremacy and hegemony in the region. Secondly, the religious issue is the major bone of contention between both the powers Saudi Arabia and Iran. The religious differences that exist between both the countries is the Sunni Shia Divide. Iran is a largely Shia Muslim Population and the Saudi Arabia accounts for the Sunni majority population. This Sunni Shia divide is a common issue within the Muslim population instead of the direct war between both the counties, there are various proxy conflicts that in which Iran and Saudi Arabia are indulged.

7.4 Strategic Implications

While the agreement's specifics are unknown, the joint statement issued upon its signing mentions strengthening political and parliamentary ties, recognizing, and pursuing mutual strategic interests, increased defense training, equipment, technology, and intelligence cooperation, increased counterterrorism and counter-narcotics cooperation, and expanded trade relations, particularly in finance, mining, energy, agricultural sectors, and infrastructure. Ports and railway networks are included in the infrastructure, which is related to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Iran has triumphed on several fronts. Politically, the accord strengthens

the Iranian regime's legitimacy and prestige while rejecting the former Trump administration's and regional backers' drive for "regime change."

In terms of strategy, the agreement recognizes Iran as a state with genuine strategic perspectives, interests, and regional clout. Iran's policies are described as playing a "constructive role," helping to peace and "sustained stability." Other parties should consider these elements more thoroughly when proposing "inclusive viable solutions" to regional disputes, according to the message. These problems are currently being addressed by the US and NATO in Afghanistan, as well as by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies in seeking a solution to the Yemen conflict.

Nuclear analogies have strategic ramifications as well. According to the agreement, it "contributes to ensuring the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear operations" and respects Iran's right to "peaceful use of nuclear energy in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)." The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), to which China is a signatory, should be implemented "in good faith and in an inclusive and balanced way," according to the document. In fact, the pact reaffirms both countries' commitment to the JCPOA, and it does so by implicating them in it.

Although there is no evidence of direct cooperation, China and Iran are allied in their objective to weaken US dominance in Afghanistan, and both have taken steps to thwart US interests in supporting good governance and democracy in the country. Beijing and Tehran also want all US military personnel out of Afghanistan, believing that their national security interests are jeopardized by the presence of US marines. For example, Axios reported in December 2020 that US intelligence thinks China has offered nonstate actors' money to assault US forces in Afghanistan. Beijing is also said to have turned a blind eye to smuggled weaponry to the Taliban (Abdulraouf Mustafa al-Ghunaimi, 2020).

7.5 Regional Implications of the Partnership

China is making deals with Iran as part of a bigger regional security plan, citing a Tang Shipping article published in China's important Strategy and Management journal in 2000. The US already controls the west bank of the Persian Gulf, according to this article, through proxy states such as Saudi Arabia and its smaller Gulf neighbors. As a result, the Persian Gulf serves as an "internal sea" for the US. However, Shipping claims that if China and Russia develop an

"axis" of relations with Iran, they will be able to maintain a "minimum balance" to foil US measures to embargo or control energy supplies from the Gulf, because such acts would require control over both the west and the east. The new agreement should be viewed in light of the escalating US-China hostility over matters such as the Covid-19 epidemic, maritime disputes in the South China Sea, political repression in Hong Kong, and human rights abuses in Xinjiang. China is letting the Biden administration know that it is expanding its influence in the Middle East and is willing to support a government that has views that are in opposition to those of the US's long-standing allies in the region by strengthening its connections with Iran. The China-Iran agreement may strengthen ties between Tehran and Beijing, but Beijing's foreign economic strategies for the Middle East still depend on other nations in the region, particularly Arab Gulf states. In fact, the Chinese leadership has been eager to strike a balance in its relations in order to move beyond the geopolitical divisions and interconnected regional disputes that have governed prior great power engagement in the region.

Between 2004 and 2018, Chinese exports to Iran increased at an average annual rate of 16.9%, which is consistent with the average annual growth rate of Chinese exports seen in many other countries in the area during this time, including Pakistan (15.6%), Saudi Arabia (16.1%), and Turkey (16.8 percent). It is also important to note that since 2014, China and Iran's trade relations have deteriorated, with exports falling by an average of 11.5 percent year between 2014 and 2018, despite Iran enjoying increased sanctions relief during this time. Comparatively, during this time China's trade with other Middle Eastern trading partners has been largely stable. Beijing won't pursue closer ties with Iran to the point that it endangers its connections with other regional allies, especially when it comes to access to hydrocarbons. It is worth noting that in 2019, as much as 17 percent of China's oil imports were purchased by Saudi Arabia, 10 percent from Iraq, and a mere 3 percent from Iran. It is clear that Chinese self-interest forbids a strategic alliance with Iran that may jeopardise its fundamental interests in the wider region, despite the fact that the entire accord will worry the US and its allies in the Arabian Gulf. China will keep giving the region's ties with Arab nations a high priority. Beijing's recent announcement that the UAE will produce and market the Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine globally is a sign of how crucial such alliances are to Beijing. Through this deal, it is clear that China values the UAE as an ally and reliable diplomatic and technological partner. Additionally, it shows that the 2018 China-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has developed into a partnership capable of producing significant and measurable outcomes. Although the most recent agreement strengthens a relationship that has developed over many

years, it does not imply that China is now prepared to give Iran precedence over other allies. It is important to note that "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" is a term frequently used in bilateral agreements between China and other countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the agreement with Iran does not signify a special "alliance" between the two nations. There are not any provisions for particular financial commitments or contracts, despite the fact that a wide range of sectoral collaboration is mentioned. Iran has not been given geopolitical precedence over its neighbors, and a number of factors, including US sanctions, guarantee that Beijing and Tehran's relations will continue to be tense. It should be mentioned that Chinese corporations have had difficulty making lucrative investments in Iran. In fact, the National Iranian Oil Company turned away Chinese oil and gas companies from the South Pars project (NIOC). Although the agreement gives Iran some political clout to use against US pressure and may enable Iran to gain from increased Chinese cooperation in vital fields like high-tech, cyberspace, and the defense industry, the continuation of sanctions will thwart the deal's economic provisions and likely put Beijing in an advantageous position when US sanctions are lifted.

Furthermore, it should be noted that although the bilateral agreement lays out an ostensibly ambitious road map for the next 25 years, both the draught version from July 2020 and the final version lack the executive steps, level of specificity, and necessary financial clauses that are typical of legally binding agreements.

CONCLUSION

Hence, we can conclude that this Middle Eastern region is an anarchic and a chaotic one. It is an unstable region with ongoing wars, proxy militias and various ongoing conflicts. We can witness there is a continuous struggle for achieving hegemony between various powers in this region. Thus, there is power politics and regional hegemony undergoing in middle east. In Middle Eastern region there is a serious interplay between various state actors and non-state actors. There is presence of various non state actors as well in this region and who also wants to gain hegemony in this region. The major actors involved in the power politics or the great power competition in the Middle Eastern region are USA, Russia, and China along with other regional and extra regional players that are trying to gain influence in the region. Initially USA was the sole superpower in Middle East that was trying to assert its hegemony, but later China and Russia challenged the US dominance in the region and established its strong with Middle Eastern States such as China and Iran Collaboration in the Middle Eastern region. Hence, the realist school of thought accounts that states are selfish in nature and pursue their national interests for the sake of power maximization. While applying this theory on Sino Iranians relations it can be said that both states are realist. China and Iran have signed various agreements and treaties to enhance their bilateral ties and investing in the region of Middle East. both Iran and China are investing in various fields such as economics, military etc. While implying the cooperation mechanism model it says that states cooperate in the international system because cooperation by states is very important to survive in the global order as states cannot live in isolation. Same is the fact with Iran and China that both these countries are cooperating with each other in this international system and trying to increase their foothold in the Middle Eastern region. The Middle Eastern region is of great significance and importance for the regional and extra regional players in terms of its resources, geo strategic location etc. Due to this great power competition or power politics can be witnessed in this region. This region is rich in oil and gas reserves. Saudi Arabia is the leading oil exporter and producer of oil in the region along with other various states in the region. It is a growing market zone and not the only war zone. China has initiated the belt and road initiative (BRI) in which various regions of the world are involved and where the purpose is to integrate the regions such as Asia, Africa and Middle East, Europe. The One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative is an economic project of China. It has taken Middle Eastern states onto board. China is investing in the Middle Eastern region for pursuing its economic and strategic interests. This region is also significant in terms of its geography. In terms of its geo strategic position, it bridges the

continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia. Strategically the region is important in terms of the involvement of major powers in the region. China is more of economically involved in the Middle Eastern region. Hence China has made strong ties with Iran. Oil is one of the important assets in the middle eastern region and because of this fact it holds great political significance. Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are among the oil producing states. So, we can also conclude by analyzing that this region has become an avenue for multiple players to pursue their political, economic, and strategic interests. China's energy demand and Iran wealth of energy resources are at the very basis of Sino Iranian relations. Hence, the China Iran partnership is strengthening due to their collective interests. China emerged as Iran's biggest oil import market and most importantly as a development partner. In terms of its military significance, this region is a chaotic and an anarchic one. Almost every country in the region is in conflict and war situation. The armed non state actors such as Al Qaeda, ISIS, and PLO are also subsequently involved in the region. Hence, by concluding that socio economic pressures, various conflicts, and extra regional involvement have undermined the foundations of regional order. Iran and China signed a 25-year Comprehensive Strategic partnership cooperation agreement in 2020. It is in terms of strategic and economic partnership, and which also depicts the involvement of China in the region. It marked as one of the key developments between China and Iran. There is no presence of central authority or framework in the region where it lacks balance of power. This disturbance in balance of power may lead to war. There is presence of territorial powers in the region, and which also tries to seek for regional hegemony in the region. After the end of cold war period, USA tried to assume hegemony over the Middle Eastern region. The event of Arab Spring in 2011 witnessed the emergence of extra territorial powers in the region with the aim of preserving their national interests. The neo realist theory of international relations attributes states as the primary actor in the Middle Eastern region and thus due to the anarchic nature of the Middle Eastern region, states strive to achieve power against their opponent and try to attain hegemony over the region. It can be attributed from the above-mentioned fact that the realist theory remains mostly applicable in the case of Middle Eastern region and in the case study of Sino Iranian Relations due to the fact that this region is the center of world's crisis. Moreover, it is a war prone region with its anarchic nature and insecurity that can be witnessed. Further, the realist school of thought attributes anarchy and insecurity as the main feature of states system and which moreover can also be witnessed in the Middle Eastern region. The major actors involved in the power politics or the great power competition in the Middle Eastern region are USA, Russia, and China along with other regional and extra regional players that are trying to gain influence in the region.

Initially USA was the sole superpower in Middle East that was trying to assert its hegemony, but later China and Russia challenged the US dominance in the region and established its strong with Middle Eastern States such as China and Iran Collaboration in the Middle Eastern region. Hence, the Sino Iranian cooperation can be attributed to the fact that the partnership between these two countries is not new and has been developing since the Iran Iraq war (1980-1988). Their pragmatic friendship took root during this war, which served as the foundation for the partnership, and moreover, which is strengthening Iran's economic and regional position and provides China with a strategic foothold in the region. Due to China Iran collective interests, it can be concluded that Sino Iranian cooperation poses great implications in the terms of economic, political, and strategic means. The behavior of the states is greatly impacted due to the China's strong involvement in the region and its developing close ties with Iran.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The stability in the Middle Eastern region is immensely important, conflicts in the region should be dealt by engaging the parties to negotiate rather imposing them the foreign solutions making the situation more complex.
- China and Iran both should deepen their relationship and should ensure collective respect for each other in order to make their partnership successful.
- Iran has grown its influence in the region, from Syria to Yemen and has survived decades of sanctions, for China to grow its influence in the region the Iran is the major player. It's important for China to grab the opportunity which China has.
- China has focus on economic dominance rather militarily and its BRI plan is a proof which involves Middle Eastern countries. China needs to continue its policies with keeping options open in the region.
- For Iran's economy China has become a lifeline, both should deepen there relations further as both have collective interests and have intensified economic and diplomatic confrontations with the West.
- Iran needs the China's back as survival in international isolation isn't possible in today's realist and globalized world. The Iranian regime could be shielded by the effects of global sanctions by deepening economic ties with China.
- In the region it's important for the players to show support for de-escalating the tensions, rather moving the region in opposite direction.
- The relationship between China and Iran could be deepened due to the collective interests. China can be viewed as potential ally against USA for Iran and Beijing can view Iran as partner which has the potential and can assist in limiting the influence of USA in the region.
- Between Iran and China, the symbolic powerful gesture is important to send the signal to the western bloc led by USA.
- For the region peace the behavior and attitude of the stakeholders really matters. Development rather than spending on defense is important in the region. Stability in country is important for stability in the region and so in the world.

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