

Convergence Evolution in West and Southwest Asia and Iran's Position in it

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Received: 02 June 2022 ; Accepted: 20 Aug 2022

Abstract

Southwest Asia, despite its geographical, historical, cultural, and economic contexts, is extremely weak in terms of degree of convergence, and a series of border, political, security, and religious differences have led to critical conditions and suspicion of governments. has brought. Existing economic necessities, especially for countries with closed lands far from the high seas and effective international transportation networks. The aim of this study is to transform the convergence in West Asia and Southwest Asia and Iran's position in it. Southwest Asia is very important from both the land and sea dimensions of the Road Belt Initiative, but since the maritime dimension of this strategy covers a large part of the countries in the region, Southwest Asia has become a region that can play a maritime role. Play a leading role in achieving China's foreign policy goals. There are many reasons for Southwest Asia's pivotal position in China's maritime strategy, which is the most important source of energy for China's economy, as China is heavily dependent on energy imports for economic stability and continued production. Iran played a key role in the ancient Silk Road. From a geopolitical, economic and cultural point of view, Iran is an important country in the road belt initiative.

Keywords: Convergence, West Asia, Southwest Asia, Iran, China, Road Belt

Introduction

Southwest Asia, despite its geographical, historical, cultural, and economic contexts, is extremely weak in terms of degree of convergence, and a series of border, political, security, and religious differences have

led to critical states and suspicion of one another. The existing economic needs, especially for countries with closed lands and far from the high seas and effective international transportation networks, have

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not been able to provide the necessary conditions for the process of regional convergence and hence the problem of ring convergence. The current regional trends in Southwest Asia are missing.

For more than a thousand years, Southwest Asia has been in close contact with each other through maritime activities and trade, creating new and thriving communities throughout the region from the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian Ocean. With the change in global political and economic power in the last two or three centuries, fundamental changes have taken place in Southwest Asia. With the discovery of geographical economic resources of the region, the region has changed and although countries are moving towards convergence to some extent with economic growth, but in the last decade, several deterrents have emerged and with the Arab uprisings, the growth of takfiri movements and competition regional powers, the growing power of the new Islamic movements, have in fact become a very complex horizon for the realization of convergence (Lenz and Schreiber, 2013, pp. 5-15).

Although the region of Southwest Asia is vast in area, different regions and countries are geographically very close to each other, culturally very similar to each other, and deeply influenced by each other in terms of security. Economic convergence and regionalism in general in Southwest Asia refer to regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms that can cover major powers or major ethnic groups in the region. Although regional organizations such as ECO, the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council are relatively developed, they are far from the level of global regionalism. The reasons for the backwardness of the development of convergence and regionalism in

Southwest Asia are very complex and include internal factors and external constraints.

Meanwhile, internal factors are a determining factor in the development of this phenomenon. For example, economic interdependence between Southwest Asian countries remains low, historical and religious conflicts have persisted for a long time, and disputes over regional dominance have led to political divisions in the region. Therefore, the phenomenon of convergence and regionalism development in this region is still facing difficult prospects. Convergence in the security and political spheres faces significant challenges and opportunities, and since economic dependence is still low, regionalism is still lacking motivation among these countries. This study examines the dynamics of convergence and its barriers and the pattern governing inter-community relations across Southwest Asia.

Theoretical Foundations

Regional Convergence

Various theorists of regional convergence define convergence as a special political situation or process for exchanging loyalties to a higher level than the national level (Seyfzadeh, 2008, p. 303).

Convergence is studied both as a process and as a goal. As a process, it is a movement to increase cooperation between governments and the gradual transfer of power to supranational institutions. It is also a move towards the gradual assimilation of values and the eventual emergence of a global civil society and new forms of political society. Historically, the major efforts to establish political communities have been to establish nation-states.

The existence of nationalist sentiments has often described this process as unity, not

convergence. In general, convergent political society has a special structural feature. Accordingly, convergence between states creates a kind of collective configuration in terms of decision-making in which it is more similar to the supranational ideal model than to the international one. The need for convergence is important if the community created is responsible for the distribution of goods and services among the units (Ghavam, 2005, p. 43).

From the earliest days of the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, various theoretical approaches and approaches to explain and analyze the causes and factors, nature, goals and implementation of the European integration process and then other regions were presented and presented, as in the last six decades have seen the emergence of various theories of European convergence in particular and regional convergence in general. Some of these theories are a direct result of the European convergence experience of the 1950s and 1960s. These theories have evolved over the course of European integration. Each of these theories offers a different and even conflicting analysis of the structural and institutional nature of European convergence and the necessary and favorable political, social and economic conditions for the consolidation, continuity and development of this process.

Some theories of regional convergence, beyond the European experience, have been developed as an undeniable international phenomenon in order to explain and understand this process. Some theoretical approaches have regional convergence as a result of the common values and norms of the participating members and the effect of formal consensus, meaning their agreement on a political-economic framework and the procedure for resolving issues and substan-

tive consensus on the nature of the regional system. They know the solutions to political-economic problems.

Some theoretical approaches have regional convergence as a result of the common values and norms of the participating members and the effect of formal consensus, meaning their agreement on a political-economic framework and the procedure for resolving issues and substantive consensus on the nature of the regional system. They know the solutions to political-economic problems. Other theoretical approaches consider regional convergence as a result of the requirements and coercions of the international system. Some see it as the reaction of pluralistic industrial societies to the common functional and technical problems of developed countries. Some theories view governments as key actors and decision-makers in regional convergence, while others see transnational and transnational non-state actors as decisive.

A group of theories believe that the process of regional convergence develops and evolves automatically and away from the will and intervention of governments. Other theories attribute the development and deepening of regional convergence to the will and decision of governments. Finally, from the point of view of some theories, regional unions such as the European Union are transnational institutions, but other groups define them as a conventional international organization (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: 90).

Types of Convergence

Among human societies, four types of political convergence, economic or commercial convergence, social convergence, and cultural convergence can be identified:

Political Convergence

In the political approach to convergence, the emphasis is on the institutional and policy-making dimensions. The most famous political theories of convergence are Mitrani functionalism. According to him, the causes of conflicts between governments are political gaps and these gaps cannot be reached by legal agreement. He assumes that economics and politics can be separated. What is related to economics and social life is in the field of low or moderate politics and there is a possibility of cooperation in it (Moshirzadeh, 2010: 60).

In general, political convergence means convergence in the institutions or policies of different units. This type of convergence has been considered as strengthening the internal connection of a society, its identity and self-awareness. This concept refers to a collective action to improve and promote mutual benefits. This definition of convergence is related to the function of political institutions that are considered by federalists (Koolaei, 2000, pp. 156-157).

Economic convergence

Economic convergence theories, such as the customs union theory, explain its formation based on the benefits of economic convergence and its welfare effects. Most of these theories are static and pay less attention to convergence dynamics such as changes in the rules and policies of economic zones. Customs union is one of the forms of convergence between states. Under these arrangements, governments eliminate customs tariffs from their trade relations, but formulate a common external tariff and apply it against all other governments. As a result, a free trade union is formed.

Arrangements for customs unions are usually based on several stages of coordina-

tion between member states (Evans and Nonam, 2002, p. 177). In this type of convergence, its effects on welfare are explained based on its effect on trade, trade distortion, and trade conditions. In general, the basic premise is that if trade is completely free, people in all countries will be able to get the goods they want at the cheapest price. The formation of a customs union means that several countries, based on an agreement, remove customs barriers from trade relations between them, but will have a common tariff with others (Moshirzadeh, 2010, pp. 40-41).

In general, this type of convergence is primarily concerned with the issue of customs unions and whether the removal of tariffs and customs barriers among a group of countries can drive their economic growth. In this context, variables such as employment level, balance of payments, industry structure, economic ability and the like are examined. Some theorists have proposed economic convergence as a model for economic growth (Koolaei, 2000, p. 158).

Social Convergence

In this type of convergence, the development of social relations is given more importance than other factors in achieving convergence. Theorists such as Karl Deutsch consider the development of social exchanges to be effective in creating a close identity, creating a sense of common interest, a sense of community. In fact, it should be said that social convergence pays more attention to personal communications and its various forms such as trade, tourism, postal and telecommunications and the like (Koolaei, 2000, 157). In other words, convergence leads to a state in which a set of people in a geographical area acquire a sense of the existence of some kind of society, institutions, and methods,

and this sense is so strong that it assures It was possible to predict that for a long time, the developments between this group would be peaceful (Hashimoto, 2004, p. 19).

Cultural Convergence

Karl Deutsch's theory of communication more or less deals with the issue of cultural commonalities and believes that the common feeling that arises from communication and exchanges between people in society implies that common issues and problems can and should be achieved through a process of peaceful transformation. And be resolved without resorting to violence, and peaceful change means the resolution of social issues, mainly with institutionalized arrangements and tools without resorting to extensive physical force.

In the final stage of this kind of separation from convergence, a community of citizens is formed through the process of learning and socialization, as countries converge and unite, gradually feeling a sense of community based on a community based on a common identity, values and achieve a common belief system and a common sense of destiny. In addition, certain norms and habits of social interaction will emerge from a wide range of informal contacts and exchanges. Thus, the feelings of being a community are the result of close relationships and interests between the units participating in the convergence process or to its cause (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2010, p. 36).

The relationship between transport and convergence

In addition, transportation is one of the fundamental elements in convergence, especially regional convergence in the theory of international relations and regionalism. Here, three aspects of the role of transportation in

the field of bilateral, regional and global convergence will be examined:

Dual

In the first picture that can be depicted of the relationship between transportation and communication and convergence, it is argued that the strengthening of transportation and communication causes countries to converge reciprocally and bilaterally. This means that if the transport corridor between the two countries is launched, we should see a gradual increase in the components of convergence and the spread of cooperation to the political and security spheres.

For example, communication and transportation channels between Turkey and Iran have helped to develop convergence between them. In recent years, despite the policy of maximum pressure and sanctions on the relations between the two countries, but the geographical proximity and communication links between the two countries is to a level that neither side can completely ignore the other. In this regard, the Iranian government with rich energy resources and the Turkish government with transit and transportation have the capacity for extensive cooperation in the economic sector and the transfer of energy resources with governments inside and outside the region (Shahbazi et al., 2019, p. 181).

Regional

Transportation and communication corridors will accelerate regional convergence. Basically, most convergence theories and regional studies have focused on transportation and communication corridors between countries. According to Ernst Haas's theory of neo-functionalism and the role of regional actors, regional cooperation with an economic approach, especially in the transport

industry, with an emphasis on rail transport, is the beginning of sectoral cooperation to spread to other sectors. Success in the economic field, such as transportation, can ultimately be extended to other areas of cooperation and convergence, including security, defense, politics, etc., with the confidence it builds in the years to come, and regional development Cause more acceleration (Karimipour et al., 2017, pp. 196-234).

Universal

Also, the existence of a proper transportation system and its infrastructure accelerates the speed of convergence globally. Having the right transportation is crucial to expanding your business and sales market, reducing costs, and accessing new resources at a lower cost and risk. Transportation is contributing to and increasingly contributing to the global production chain. In different stages such as raw material supply, the relationship between upstream and downstream industries, product transportation and supply play a key role. Therefore, in order to increase competitive advantage, cheap transportation is expanding rapidly and low cost, and due to this expansion, many companies in different countries are using a new production system in which the production of the main part of the product in the country or region. The main manufacturer is produced and other parts are produced and assembled in other parts and countries due to the presence of cheap raw materials and cheap labor in them and in order to reduce the contact price of the product (Rezaei and Vaziri, 2007, p. 3).

Transportation Corridors of Economic Development

As mentioned, transport corridors are one of the fundamental elements in regional convergence (bilateral, multilateral and global),

and if transport corridors expand, there will be a deepening of convergence and the spread of cooperation to the political and security spheres. In this regard, the transportation corridors of economic development, which achieve a high level of transportation and communication between countries, expand regional convergence through Iran's connection with the region of Southwest Asia.

There are three types of development corridors: transportation corridors, commercial corridors, and economic corridors. Transportation corridors are at the lowest level of regional convergence development and aim only at the movement of passengers and goods along the route. Business corridors aim to grow business relationships at the beginning and end of that corridor. But economic development corridors form the highest level of corridor development and regional convergence, and at this level of economic growth, the entire length of the corridor is considered.

Overall, Iran is located in the heart of West Asia and is one of the most important countries in Southwest Asia. A region in the context of economic issues. Since Iran is one of the main producers of energy and passes through two international corridors, and in addition it has a prominent transit role, it is like a bridge that can connect the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, so it is the best option among the countries. It is a region that can play a role in various fields such as economic, cultural, etc. as a basis for creating and expanding convergence and cooperation in Southwest Asia (Akhbari and Mayel Afshar, 2018, p. 1).

Finally, after explaining the relationship between transportation and transportation in general in convergence in three dimensions: bilateral, regional and global, the following analytical model was presented.

In evaluating the analytical model of the research, it should be said that the regional convergence theory is a hybrid model with an emphasis on the combined theoretical frameworks

of regionalism for the analysis of this research, and in this regard, three concepts are important:

Developments in International Relations and Economic Geography of Southwest Asia

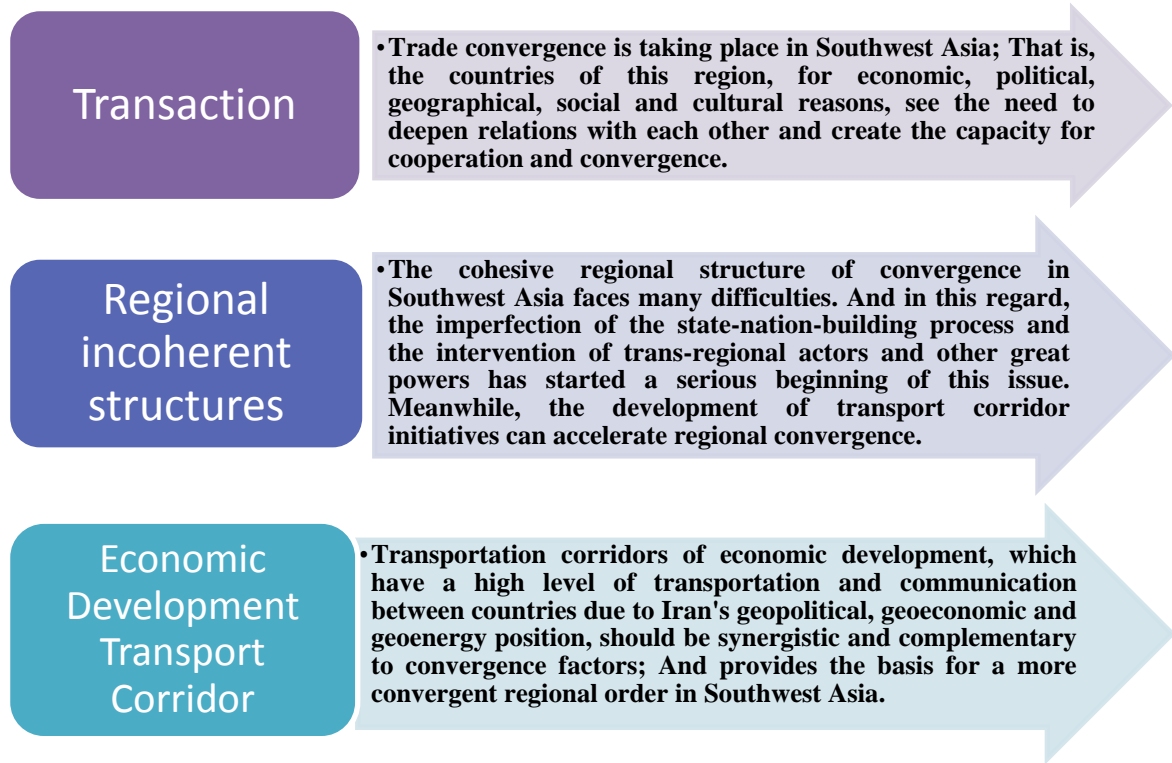


Figure 1:

To enter into a deeper discussion of regionalism and convergence in Southwest Asia, it is necessary to first examine the economic geography of the region. The economic geography of Southwest Asia has undergone many changes as a result of international developments.

The evolution of the role of economics in international relations

During the Cold War and the bipolar rule of international relations, the strategic rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union was a key factor in shaping a wide range of security, political, economic, and

even cultural relations around the world. The policies, values, and norms adopted by these two international poles during the Cold War are a significant gap, not only between the Eastern and Western blocs; Rather, it had even established itself among those countries that considered themselves non-aligned to the two superpowers of the time. The ideological rivalries between the two poles during the Cold War, in the first place, gave a security nature to international relations; Security and military alliance in the form of the establishment of institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Western Bloc and the signing of the Warsaw

Pact by the member states of the Eastern Bloc. And the escalation of the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States quickly escalated tensions between the two blocs. These tensions also overshadowed the nature of international trade and economic relations between the countries of the world; In a way, with the establishment of the following institutions, the situation developed in such a way that international trade and economic relations between the countries were limited to the bloc in which they were members. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization in the Western Bloc, on the one hand, and the establishment of the Joint Economic Assistance Council, known as the COMECON, in the Eastern Bloc, on the other. For example, between 1960 and 1989, bilateral trade between the United States and the Soviet Union accounted for about 0.01 percent of total US foreign trade and 5 percent of total Soviet foreign trade. During this period, the two superpowers, more than anything else, engaged in trade with their bloc member states in order to pursue trade and economic relations beyond their sphere of influence (Ciment, 2015, p. 249).

But with the fall of the Eastern bloc and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, international relations gradually entered a new phase. The end of the Cold War eased international tensions, and as globalization accelerated, trade and international relations emerged from a bipolar phase. In this regard, unlike during the Cold War, when the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union determined the logic of political, security and economic relations in the world; Over time, the role of developing countries and regional dynamics in different parts of the world in determining those relations became more prominent. In this regard, it can

be said that unlike the Cold War, in which the security components were considered the fulcrum of international relations; Over time, components such as economic growth and development have played a more influential role in shaping countries' foreign policy and international relations (Kaishner, 1997, pp. 10-19). In this regard, the globalization of the economy has accelerated the growth of Eastern economies in the Asia-Pacific, such as Japan, China, South Korea and ASEAN members, which has had important consequences. The industrialization of emerging economies and the increase in global export volumes intensified the need to expand demand and global markets. On the other hand, industrialization also increased the demand for energy imports. For this reason, in the post-Cold War era, the geo-economy of Southwest Asia made it an important region in international relations.

Geo-economics of Southwest Asia

The region located at the junction of the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa can be called Southwest Asia, which includes the Arab countries of the region, Iran and Turkey. This region is the cradle of ancient civilizations and divine religions, the source of more than 64.4% of the world's oil and an important point for trade and transit of goods in the world. Southwest Asia today faces a wide range of political, security and economic threats. Terrorism and fundamentalism, the occupation of foreign powers, the crisis of legitimacy for a range of conservative regimes, and the monopoly of national economies are examples of these challenges.

In terms of transit, the geographical location of Southwest Asia, the region connecting the three continents, has for a long time given its global land and water routes strategic importance. An important part of the

Silk Road, which from the Han Dynasty, was a transit point for traders and merchants from China to Europe, passed through southwest Asia. Energy resources in Southwest Asia are important in three ways; Abundance of oil and gas resources, low cost of extraction and transit due to the countries of the region have a variety of transit corridors such as the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Caspian Sea. In general, the Southwest Asia region has an excellent geographical location and excellent access by air, land and sea. Over time, the countries of the region began to adopt many policies, regional cooperation, and programs to develop a better transportation network in the region. This region has a strategic position for world trade, which is beneficial to the

economy and has led to the prosperity of the region (Khan, 2013, p. 93).

Southwest Asia, on the other hand, comprised more than 410 million people by 2016, which emphasizes two propositions along with the region's wealth of energy resources; First, Southwest Asia, due to its rich energy resources, plays an important role in sustaining the economic growth of industrialized countries from east to west of the world. Secondly, due to its high population, this region can be considered an important market for other countries. Given the age of globalization and the expansion of industry and financial markets, this has led to the geo-economic division of the countries of Southwest Asia and the entanglement of their exchanges with the industrialized world.

Table 1: Geo-economic classification table of Southwest Asian countries

Countries with abundant labor and rich resources	Yemen, Syria, Iran, Algeria
Importing countries of labor and rich resources	United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Libya, Bahrain
Countries with abundant labor and poor resources	Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt

The great industrial powers have always been sensitive to the problems of Southwest Asia in the pursuit of energy and economic competition; And as Japan, China and other East Asian countries become major economic hubs, the region's energy importance has increased. Energy is an urgent need of the world in the 21st century, so the struggle for hydrocarbon energy resources between major powers such as the European Union, Russia and China will spread to the geo-economic region of Southwest Asia. The importance of Southwest Asia is heightened when we know that Southwest Asia and North Africa are projected to have the highest oil production capacity in the world by 2050 compared to other oil-rich

regions. (Mortazavi and Ali Karami, 2014, pp. 665-686).

In addition, there are problems for which no solution can be found and which undoubtedly directly affects energy supply from Southwest Asia; These include the problems of protectionism, lack of investment, unresolved border disputes, and growing uncertainty about the political stability of energy of key producers. These problems are likely to be exacerbated by growing demand for oil. The problems of the region undoubtedly affect not only the world economy and security, but also the attitudes and policies of nations towards the producers of the region and also towards each other (Luft, 2009, p. 197).

Initiatives and Development of Regional Convergence in Southwest Asia

During the twentieth century, attempts to pursue regional convergence, especially by Arab leaders, and for integrating Arab identity in Southwest Asia. The flagship of these actions, the former Egyptian President, was Jamal Abdel Nasser, which, under the title of Pan-Arabism and the fight against imperialism, tried to promote the identity of their area in opposition to the colonial approach of European powers. Abdul Nasser's actions culminated in 1958 with the establishment of the "Union of Arab States" with Syria. The alliance with Abdul Nasser, which gained considerable popularity among the Arab nations of Southwest Asia, including Syria, after the Suez Canal crisis in 1956; He was seen by the Syrian Ba'ath party elites as a viable option for rebuilding a common Arab identity and confronting foreign threats. In this regard, the Union of Arab States between Egypt and Syria was formed under the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1958; However, Abdul Nasser's approach to electing Egyptian officials to high-ranking positions in Syria and dissolving all the parties in that country gradually reduced the support of the Syrian people for their country's alliance with Egypt. Growing dissatisfaction with Nasser's discriminatory policies toward Syria eventually led to a coup d'état in that country and the end of the alliance in 1961. Meanwhile, the decline of Abdul Nasser's Pan-Arabism and nationalist policies intensified after the 1967 defeat of the Arab states by the Israeli regime. Another important point of Nasser's attitude towards regionalism was that it was competitive with other Arab countries in the region. As King Hussein's concerns about Jordan's growing power in the region prompted King Nasser to make a proposal to King Faisal of Iraq to

form an alliance against Egypt and Syria. Acceptance of this proposal by King Faisal led to the establishment of the "Arab Federation" consisting of Jordan and Iraq in February 1958; However, this federation, with the coup d'état of July 1958 in Iraq and the overthrow of King Faisal, was only enough for a few months (Sayigh, 1961, pp. 487-507).

These efforts for regionalism are a clear manifestation of the negative impact of political rivalries in Southwest Asia on convergence between countries in that region.

Expansion of trans-regional convergence to Southwest Asia

What has been said so far has been indigenous efforts to develop regionalism and convergence in Southwest Asia. At the same time, we can cite examples of initiatives proposed by other countries - or international institutions - to pursue regionalism in Southwest Asia. In this regard, the European Union, as a powerful trading bloc in the neighborhood of Southwest Asia, has always sought to play a role in shaping regional convergence in the Mediterranean and North Africa. In this regard, two factors can be mentioned as potential convergence capacities between the European Union and Southwest Asia and North Africa. The first factor is the interdependence of security between these regions, as well as Europe's vulnerability to the spread of security unrest in Southwest Asia; Which reduces regional tensions and conflicts in the region as an important part of the EU security strategy. The second factor is the EU complementary economies with Southwest Asia and North Africa; On the one hand, the European industrial economy needs a market for exports, and on the other hand, the generally single-product economies of Southwest Asia, which

can accelerate and facilitate the process of economic development by attracting European capital. For this reason, the expansion of political and economic relations between the two regions in recent decades is natural.

Reasons for the lack of development of regional convergence in Southwest Asia

Although many efforts have been made by governments over the past half-century to regionally converge in Southwest Asia, the process has been limited by political, security, and economic cooperation. Despite religious and historical commonalities between a large number of countries in the region, a range of political, security, and economic barriers in recent decades have, in various ways, reduced the speed and effectiveness of regional integration and integration in Southwest Asia. Among the political-security factors that have disrupted the process of regional integration in Southwest Asia in recent decades are the following options. Contradiction of the nation-state structure governing the region by the colonial powers after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire with the historical, ethnic, religious and political dynamics of Southwest Asia; Zionist occupation in Palestine; Deprivation, independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region by the destructive action of Western powers such as the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan; The spread of fundamentalism and terrorism, and ultimately the escalation of sectarian strife. In general, various factors can be considered in the failure of the process of deepening regional convergence in Southwest Asia; some of these factors are as follows:

1. Security dependence of some countries in the region to ultra-regional powers

In recent decades, the dependency of some regional governments to the security umbrella

experienced an increasingly increasing trend. An obvious example of these countries, Saudi Arabia. During the Cold War, Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States were formed on two bases. The first base was to exploit the influence in Arab countries to deal with the expansion of communism discourse. Saudi Arabia, had the same idea of communism being threatening, with the United States: this fact provided for the expansion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. It is evident that this cooperation in the Nixon Columnist doctrine occurs in Saudi Arabia, along with Iran, the responsibility for establishing and protecting liberal order in Southwest Asia. The second foundation of bilateral interaction between the United States and Saudi Arabia was the issue of oil, which also returns to the Cold War. In this regard, Saudi Arabia was committed to the lack of use of oil exports yes industrialized countries. Although this commitment was not observed in the oil crisis of the seventies of Riyadh. Over time, but the importance and strength of these two foundations were reduced; Because with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat of communism was destroyed, as well as the Shale Revolution in the United States, over time, the country's dependence on Southwest Asia was reduced (de Albuquerque, 2016, p. 18).

2. US military presence in the region and the expansion of extremism

Another factor that prevents regional convergence in Southwest Asia is the military presence of foreign powers. The Afghan military occupation in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, in the short term, provided the threat of terrorism in the region, but also provided conditions for the expansion of extremist tendencies in the region and the emergence of a new range of terrorist groups in Iraq and

Syria. The exploitation of some regional powers such as Saudi Arabia from this wave of extremism in order to reduce regional influence in Iran is a fundamental factor in the failure of regional convergence in Southwest Asia.

3. Determination of regional economies

One of the economic factors affecting the lack of regional convergence in Southwest Asia is the single economies of its economies. Earlier in the review of the Agreement was said to be one of the important factors in the expansion of the convergence and commercial centers of the Mediterranean countries with the European Union's economic block, the complement of its economies of two blocks. On the one hand, the markets of Arab countries in the Mediterranean and North Africa have the necessary capacity to invest and enter European industrial companies; And on the other hand, Europe can account for its market for its new destination and its export commodity. This is more than facilitating the convergence between members of the Southwest Asia region, a factor in expanding their commercial centers with ultra-regional economic powers such as China, India and the United States (Grow, 2019, Page-11).

4. Insufficient motion for regionalism

Although the Southwest Asia region has transnational Islamic and Pan Arabic beliefs, political elites have cooperated with each other to unite and integrate the region, along with the post-colonial area, there is still a heterogeneous area between the Sunnis and Shiites. Islam tribe and the national government after colonialism, as well as land disputes and the Israeli and Palestine war (Ahmad, 2013). The Arab countries are dominant countries in Southwest Asia, and geographically and in terms of population are much more than Iran, Turkey and Israel.

Therefore, Arab countries continue to demand the main leaders of regionalism in Southwest Asia.

Convergent initiatives in the Southwest Asia region are not a precise security community, but also a political alliance, as well as economic and commercial investment in this area is very weak and less than the governments of the region.

5- Economic distance and development

In recent years, domestic and foreign space economic development in Southwest Asia has undergone positive changes. First, Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states provide long-term development and long-term development programs and try to optimize the economic structure and consolidate the foundation of economic development; Second, reducing the economic impact of the United States in Southwest Asia will lead to the flow of US dependence on the region. Third, the China Road Belt Initiative considers Southwest Asia as an important region and provides more economic resources for Southwest Asian countries; Supports the promotion of industry in Southwest Asia as well as encourages countries in the region to cooperate.

However, the above changes in domestic and foreign conditions do not necessarily lead to the development of regionalism in the economic field; On the contrary, economic integration and cooperation still face very serious challenges. Fundamental change is difficult given the low economic growth of countries in the region. The Gulf states are expected to maintain a significant position in the global economic value chain due to their rich energy resources, but in general Southwest Asia is relatively backward in terms of economic development. Although the economies of the Persian Gulf countries are still relatively well off, they are

clearly facing the pressure of financial contraction caused by falling oil prices. In 2015, due to the shrinking oil market, Saudi Arabia's financial deficit reached US \$ 98 billion, equivalent to 15% of its GDP (Al-Khatib, 2015). Transitional countries such as Egypt and Tunisia still face the problem of weak growth. Other countries, such as Yemen, Libya and Syria, are still trapped in internal turmoil and economic development cannot be discussed.

6- Low economic dependence between the countries of the region

Economic interdependence between countries in the region is another difficult issue. The economic development strategies of the above-mentioned countries all emphasize the use of economic powers outside the region to achieve economic growth; And even if the goal is achieved, the basic pattern of their external dependence will not change and interdependence in the region will remain low for a long time. For example, Saudi Arabia 2030's vision focuses on the economic integration of the GCC countries and the development of non-oil industries, but this plan is not based on regional economic cooperation, but on the expansion of the global market. Kuwait has offered the United States \$ 130 billion in investment to build the Silk City by 2035, with the goal of connecting to the China Road Belt Initiative (Congressional Research Service, 2020: p. 18). After reaching a nuclear deal, Iran focused on developing economic relations with China and European countries, but did not show enough interest in the regions around Southwest Asia. Overall, the economy of Southwest Asia is still relatively low in development and interdependence will remain low. The level of economic integration of the GCC continues to improve, but global economic coordination and coopera-

tion are not yet motivated. If Southwest Asian countries make significant progress in their political and security cooperation, their economic cooperation is expected to resume.

Achievements and improvements of the road belt

The connection of infrastructure is a priority in the Road Belt Initiative, and in this regard, the formation of a multi-layered and complex infrastructure network with the axis of railways, highways, transportation, aviation, pipelines and integrated information networks is strongly on the agenda. This can greatly reduce the costs of trading goods, money transfers, information, technology, etc. across regions.

Progress has been made in building international economic cooperation corridors. Six major corridors of international economic cooperation; Including the new Eurasia, China-Mongolia-Russia land bridge; China-Central Asia-West Asia; China-Indochina Peninsula; China-Pakistan and Bangladesh, China-India-Myanmar; It follows the economic circle of Asia and Europe to create and strengthen infrastructure and create an efficient and easy market between Asia-Europe and other parts of the world.

1- New Eurasia Ground Bridge Economic Corridor

Over the past five years, cooperation in the economic corridors of the new Eurasian Ground Bridge has intensified; Which has increased open, inclusive and mutually beneficial partnerships to a new level and increased economic and trade exchanges between Asia and Europe. The Budapest Declaration on Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe and the Sofia Declaration on Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe were agreed upon, and practical cooperation is being pur-

sued within the framework of China-Europe connection. Construction of an old section of the Hungarian-Serbian railway began in Serbia. It has also begun a more than 2,000-kilometer international highway connecting China to Europe (Yu et al., 2020, pp. 19-2).

2. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor

China, Mongolia and Russia have put on the agenda the establishment of a cross-border infrastructure network with railways, highways and border ports as the axis of cooperation between them. In 2018, the three countries signed a memorandum of understanding on establishing a joint mechanism to promote the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor, which improved the working mechanism of trilateral cooperation. The Russia-China River Railway Bridge was completed in October 2018. Construction of the Heihe-Blagoveshchensk border road bridge is progressing slowly. The Enterprise Sino-Russian investment consortium has completed the initial design of the Moscow-Kazan high-speed railway project. Also, the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transportation along the Asian Highway Network, which was signed by the three countries and formally entered into force. China-Mongolia-Russia (Ernhot) cross-border overland cable system completed. In the political evaluation of these projects, it should be said that this is a Chinese initiative that started with the main goal of developing infrastructure in Central Asia; It was highly suspected by Moscow as a threat to its economic and geopolitical interests. But Russia gradually welcomed it by launching the Eurasian Economic Union economic idea and seizing the opportunity of the Road Belt Initiative to integrate the region into the surrounding countries (Alexeeva and Lasserre, 2019, pp. 69-77).

3- China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor

The following long list of countries is classified as part of this corridor; Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Palestine, Romania, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). Negotiations over the development of these corridors have been ongoing over the past few years, deepening cooperation in the fields of energy, interconnection, economic and trade, and production capacity. China has signed bilateral international transport agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey and other countries, as well as multilateral international transport agreements or agreements such as China-Kazakhstan-Russia, China-Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. Infrastructure construction continues in Central and West Asia. The China-Saudi Arabia Cooperation Summit was held around the joint construction of the China Road Belt Initiative and Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision for Industrial Connection, and the total value of the cooperation agreements signed between the two countries exceeded US \$ 28 billion. China and Iran are negotiating and agreeing on their unique advantages in various fields, and cooperation on infrastructure, infrastructure, energy and other areas is on the agenda. This corridor is very important from the perspective of energy security and China's influential role-playing in the developments in West Asia (Kian, 2018, pp. 26-55).

4- China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor

This economic corridor connects several cities in southern China and major cities in Southeast Asia. These include Hanoi in Vi-

etnam, Vientiane in Laos, Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Bangkok in Thailand, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and Singapore with modern roads, railways and pipelines. The corridor is designed to better connect neighboring economies and encourage development in the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area. This corridor has made positive progress in connecting infrastructure and building a cross-border economic cooperation area. The Kun (Ming)-Man (Valley) Highway is fully connected, and projects such as the China-Laos Railway and the China-Thailand Railway are in progress. Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor and the Belt Road project have accelerated, and economic cooperation between China and Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand are expanding. In this regard, the China-ASEAN Cooperation Mechanism (10 + 1), the Lansang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Economic Cooperation have been crucial; Because this plan includes new policies aimed at coordinated development in the region (Lee et al., 2019, p. 4).

5. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The corridor focuses on energy, transportation infrastructure, industrial park cooperation and the port of Gwadar. In this regard, China and Pakistan established the Joint China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cooperation Committee and established a regular meeting mechanism. A number of projects have been started, including the Gwadar Port Highway, the Peshawar-Karachi Highway (Sukul-Multan section), the second phase of upgrading and reconstruction of the Karakoram Highway and the 1,320-megawatt power plant in Qassim port. The future of Pakistan-China relations now depends on the success of the project. The route serves as the main corridor for the Silk Road and Belt

Road program and could resolve many issues, including the energy crisis facing Pakistan. (Khan, Ahmad and Zheng, 2018, pp. 12- 23).

6- Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor

The four sides of Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar have jointly promoted the construction of this corridor within the framework of the joint working group; And have researched and developed mechanisms and systems, infrastructure connectivity, commercial and industrial park cooperation, international open financial cooperation, cultural exchanges, and people's livelihood cooperation. China and Myanmar jointly establish China-Myanmar Economic Corridor Joint Committee and sign memorandum on joint construction of economic corridor. Currently, further development of this corridor, especially towards India, is influenced by political and security considerations between the two emerging powers, and the geopolitical complexities of the region and the existence of alternatives are practically considered inactive corridors other than Myanmar. (Karim and Islam, 2018, pp. 283 - 302).

Domestic and international contexts for promoting the Belt Initiative

In terms of global economic trends, the economies of China and other parts of the world have entered a period of moderate growth. The Belt Initiative can spur a new round of productivity in Europe, Asia and Africa and boost global economic development. At present, global economic growth is slowing down, a new round of technological and industrial revolution is still in its infancy; Key technology and innovation in the business model lacks fundamental advances and it is difficult to reach a strong sustaina-

ble growth point in the short term. (Enderwick, 2018, pp. 447-454). In order to promote and improve the economy, many countries have an innate desire to use trade support. The failure of the last stage of economic globalization to achieve a balanced, inclusive global development has widened the gap between rich and poor and changed the structure of social classes. Many countries on the sidelines of the Road Belt Initiative have been ignored for many years by many developed countries and multinational corporations, who see the Road Belt Initiative as a historic opportunity to break free from poverty and achieve development. As Chinese-backed infrastructure and industrial investment projects expand to these developing countries, so do these countries and their people. The Belt Initiative contributes to the convergence and joint development of Europe, Asia and Africa. The Global Road Belt Initiative will increase global revenue by 0.7% in 2030 compared to the base. Globally, this initiative can help eradicate 8.7 million people from extreme poverty and 34 million from moderate poverty (Maliszewska and van der Mensbrugge, 2019, pp. 19-20).

At present, the management of global issues such as weak economic globalization, fragmentation of regional cooperation, climate change, migration issues and the fight against terrorism is becoming increasingly complex. The internal affairs of some countries have become international. Existing international mechanisms for compliance and response are weak. Change in the international system is hard going, and the role of the G20 is shrinking. There is no roadmap for how the G20 will integrate with existing international mechanisms and increase effectiveness. Issues of global and regional sovereignty, such as the mechanism for ne-

gotiating international currency, the regulatory mechanism for the flow of international capital, and financial issues, and the challenge of multilateral trade law, all need to be addressed. Through the Belt Initiative, China is taking on the new flag of globalization, promoting its new version in Asia-Pacific and even the world, and becoming a promoter of free trade. As China's second largest economy, the world's largest exporter of industrial products and the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries, China's laws provide a new impetus to promote globalization and change global governance through the Belt Initiative. Thus, in an age of increasing inclination and isolationism in the face of globalization, the belt initiative provides a powerful platform for progress in global governance. This idea promotes the evolution of epistemology in world governance. Global public goods provide sustainability and improve ethical standards for global governance. It combines top-down and bottom-up approaches by encouraging voluntary action in global governance. This idea draws on China's own experiences in integrating reform, development, and stability, and helps balance the economic, social, ecological, and security dimensions of global governance to foster joint development between countries and regions along the way. It also strikes a new balance between South-South and North-South cooperation, and by providing public goods and strengthening the concept of justice in the world, will make a tangible and intangible contribution to global governance (Chun, 2017, pp. 175-191).

In terms of domestic development, China's economy has entered a new normal phase called the "middle-class income trap," and the Belt Initiative could help the country break the middle-class income trap. The

middle-class income trap was first an economic concept introduced by economists at the World Bank and later became a political concept. Research on the state of world economic development over the past few decades has shown that it is very difficult for many developing countries to move from a middle-income to a high-income economy. Many economies easily fall into the trap of recession, widening the gap between rich and poor, and increasing social instability. In recent years, economic development has highlighted the complexity of China's economic transformation and placed China's economy in transition. If China is to succeed in overcoming the middle-class income trap, it must overcome various challenges, such as employment, consumerism, and the development of uncoordinated regions. Through the Belt Initiative, China's production capacity and infrastructure can be shared with countries along the way, and it can create economic growth and employment in the countries along the way. The Belt Initiative is an endeavor that could expand China's economy beyond its current level. This plan can solve all the problems of China's domestic demand, including in the cement, steel and aluminum industries (Blasingame, 2019).

From the participants' point of view, the Belt Initiative is an open road that contributes to the coordinated development between different regions and countries. This initiative, unlike traditional cooperation mechanisms such as free trade zones and customs unions, involves links to various existing international mechanisms and development strategies of different countries. The Belt Initiative does not predetermine preconditions and does not follow a single institutional arrangement. At the international level, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Industrial De-

velopment Organization, the United Nations Housing Program, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the World Health Organization, etc. are all seeking to converge on this initiative. Overall, the Belt Initiative is China's new endeavor to further integrate and converge with the world. Since the reforms and open doors, China has focused on opening up to the outside world, mainly in the East. In contrast, the development of the central and western regions has been relatively slow. In order to achieve a prosperous economic society, unequal regional development must be eliminated. The Belt Initiative means accelerating development in the central and western regions and improving the overall level of China's openings. Adequate Chinese involvement in international affairs has always been criticized. The Belt Initiative is China's way of responding to the expectations of the international community and emphasizes the concept of international public goods. The Belt Initiative should therefore be seen as a Chinese effort to create international public goods and a common solution to the existing infrastructure shortfall (Ozturk, 2019).

Opportunities and Challenges of the Belt-Wing Initiative

The scale of this plan is very large and a wide range of countries can be under its umbrella. The belt-participating economies make up one-third of the world's gross domestic product and trade, and almost two-thirds of the world's population. In some countries participating in the Belt Initiative, poverty rates (the proportion of people living below the international poverty line at an average daily cost of US \$ 1.9) remain high, such as 25 percent in Kenya, 23 percent in Uzbekistan and Djibouti, and 21 percent in

Laos. If the projects under this initiative succeed, it will certainly benefit a large number of poor people and many of the world's economies, and will have a very positive impact on global prosperity.

Under the broad umbrella of China, China has shown great desire to strengthen its political influence and economic integration with neighboring countries through inter-regional communication projects. The Belt Initiative provides opportunities for greater economic cooperation and deeper regional integration, primarily among emerging economies. This idea focuses on establishing a global economic balance and expanding global relations. Another possibility is that the economies participating in the Road Belt Initiative are increasingly integrating with other world economies. In the last two decades, the share of participating countries in world exports has almost doubled. Among these economies, several economies (especially China) have the largest share of global exports. The trade of many economies such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Tajikistan, Laos, etc. has not reached its potential due to insufficient infrastructure, weak policies and other gaps. If the Belt Initiative succeeds, it can help fill these gaps and promote the development of international trade, especially for countries that are unable to fully integrate into the global economy (Khan et al., 2018, p. 3).

The challenges and threats of the Belt Initiative are also not negligible. On average, transportation delays, cumbersome customs procedures and restrictions on foreign direct investment are more evident in the countries participating in the initiative than in other regions. For example, business environment indicators show that in Central Asia, the process of importing different goods may take 50 days, while in the G7 countries, it takes less than 10 days. Com-

pared to high-income OECD countries, countries participating in the road belt scheme may have more restrictive policies on foreign direct investment and may also exert more pressure.

Large infrastructure projects are more prone to social and environmental damage. Any major infrastructure project may have environmental, social, and corruption risks. For example, these risks may include biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, or elite recruitment. Among the countries participating in the Belt Initiative, these risks may be particularly high, as the governance of these countries is often relatively weak.

Budgets and loans provided to partner countries under various road-belt projects are large, causing the partner country's debt to rise to an unsustainable level. For some countries, funding for road belt-initiated projects may increase debt to volatile levels. For example, the construction of the Laos section of the Kunming-Singapore Railway will cost about \$ 6 billion, which is approximately 40% of the total Laos gross domestic product in 2016. Relevant Laotian government departments worked hard to control the impact of the project on the country's public property. Special measures to control its investment in this sector of the railway are about \$ 700 million, of which \$ 500 million was a loan provided by China to the Laotian government. According to recent calculations by the World Development Center, projects under the Belt Road Initiative will increase the debt-to-GDP ratio of some participating countries.

Another issue is the economic dependence of partner countries on China. Some critics believe that the Belt Initiative has increased the dependence of partner countries on China's trade. China benefits from regional and global trade interests and can

reap more benefits from the Belt Initiative. These benefits could include Renminbi internationalization, outsourcing projects to Chinese banks and companies, and the development of a Chinese-centric regional infrastructure network. Insufficient attention to sustainable development goals. The scale of the road belt initiative and its integrated approach to building infrastructure may lead to

the neglect of sustainable development goals (Dossani et al., 2020: pp. 19-20).

The Situation of Iran in the China Road Belt Initiative

To understand Iran's position in the Road Belt Initiative, one must analyze the situation in Southwest Asia and then explain Iran in that context.

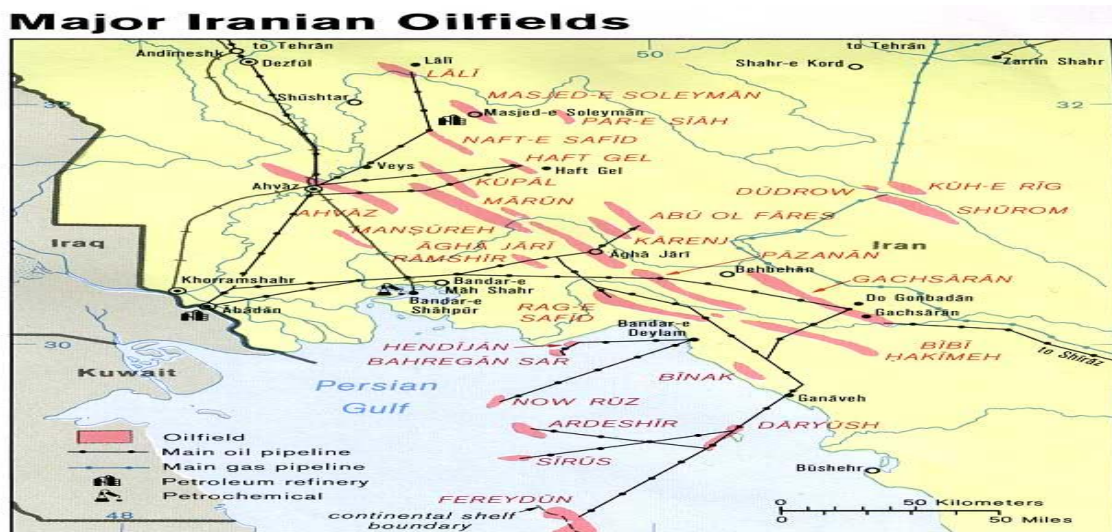


Figure 2: Iran's main oil fields in the western part of the country

Source <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/iran.html?p=print>

1- Southwest Asia region in the initiative of the road belt

The Southwest Asian region is of great importance both from the land and sea dimensions of the Road Belt Initiative; However, since the maritime dimension of this strategy covers a large part of the countries in the region, Southwest Asia has become a region in the maritime dimension that can play a prominent role in achieving China's foreign policy goals. There are many reasons for Southwest Asia's pivotal position in China's maritime strategy, which is the most important source of energy for China's economy, as

China is heavily dependent on energy imports for economic stability and continued production. In 2013, China became the world's largest importer of crude oil, with about half of China's crude coming from southwest Asia, making energy security in southwest Asia the most important dimension of China's foreign policy in the region. China's focus on increasing relations with countries in the region has led it to increase its investment in energy, infrastructure development, ports and transportation lines, and so on. In addition, with the aim of deepening relations with countries in the China region, it has

invested in facilitating foreign exchange. Of course, it should be noted that countries with high national status and power such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran and Egypt have priority for China in this regard. Whereas achieving strategic goals through economic means is China's foreign policy discourse; Constructive economic diplomacy, including economic cooperation and economic assistance to other members, has been defined as one of China's most important strategies for infiltrating Southwest Asia. Since its inception in 2013, the project has been hailed as China's main solution to improve economic and interna-

tional cooperation to build a "Common Society of Humanity" and the idea of a Green Silk Road and a digital Silk Road. (Hey, 2020: p. 139).

In this regard, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor is on the agenda in order to deepen economic convergence and facilitate the transit process in the Southwest Asia region. This corridor is one of the 6 land corridors introduced in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2015. This corridor, which connects China and the Arabian Peninsula, covers areas where the ancient Silk Road once flowed (Beltendrod, 2020).

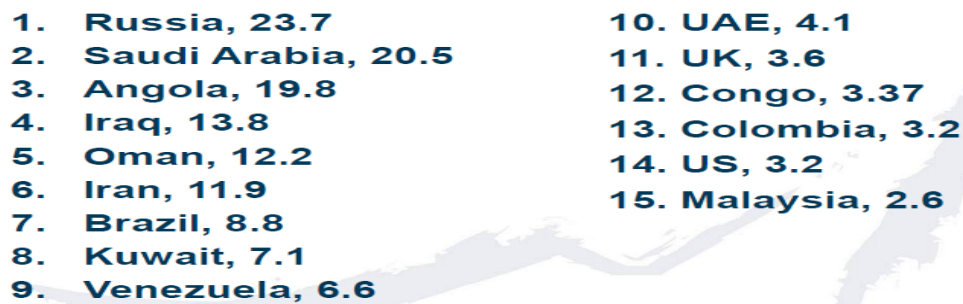


Figure 3: China's oil imports from major suppliers (in billion dollars) in 2017

Source: <http://www.worldstopexports.com/top-15-crude-oil-suppliers-to-china/>



Figure 4: Eighty percent of China's oil imports in 2011 came from the Straits of Malacca, mostly from West Asia

Source: <https://deepresource.wordpress.com/2014/08/03/chinese-energy-import-patterns-2011/>

The prospect of Iran joining the road belt
 Iran played a key role in the ancient Silk Road. From a geopolitical, economic and cultural point of view, Iran is an important country in the road belt initiative. China's road belt initiative needs Iran's support and participation. Although Iran is still at the initial stage of cooperation with the China Road Belt Initiative, in general, the Iranian authorities have always strongly supported it and are trying to participate in the Road Belt Initiative. Iran has the advantages of roads and railways, which is in the second region after Turkey and has a good infrastructure. In this regard, the International Railway Corridor can improve the geopolitical situation of Iran on the one hand and on the other hand can also form a transit economy and

have a positive impact on the Iranian economy in the short term. If Iran joins the China Road Belt Initiative, China could reach Syria via Iran, Iraq, and eventually the Mediterranean. This frees China from the siege of the United States and the eastern Mediterranean, because the Mediterranean is a big market. Iran's advantage is that China can invest in Iran and use Iran's economic transformation and cheap labor to quickly bring Chinese goods to the Mediterranean market. At the same time, it also creates job opportunities for Iran, increases Iran's GDP, and improves Iran's position in Southwest Asia, which opens a new path for Iran. The China Belt-Road Initiative can be extended east-west from China to Iran and then west and Europe through the following proposed routes:

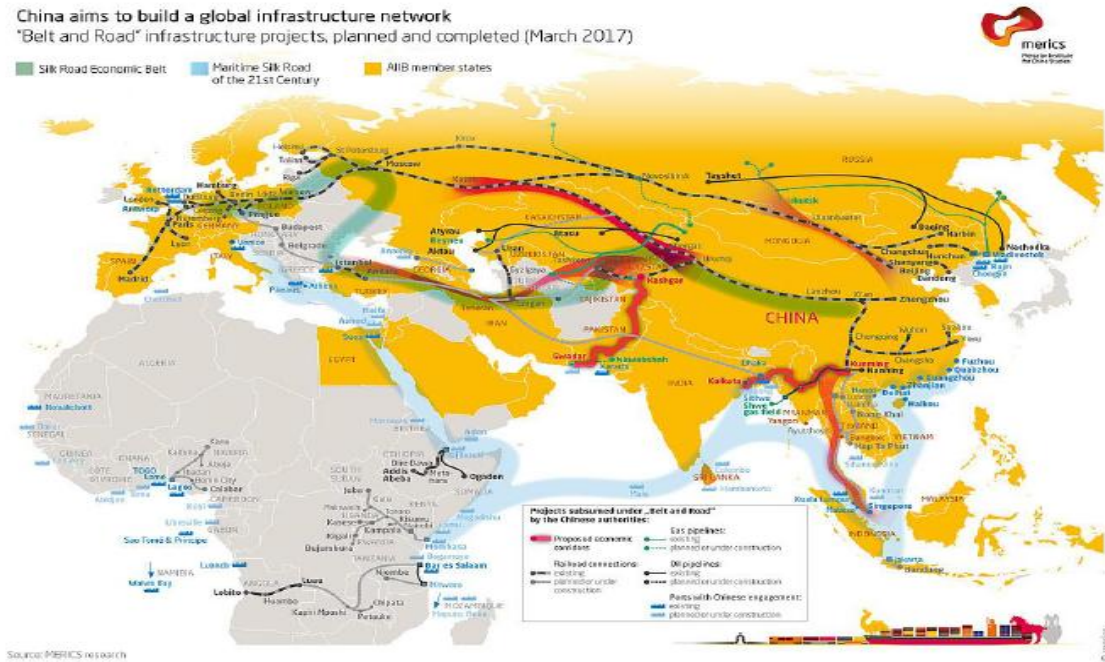


Figure 5: Iran in the proposed routes of economic corridors in 2017

Connecting Chinese ports by sea to the southern ports of Iran, especially the port of Chabahar in the Oman Sea and then connecting it to Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe railway route

China-Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe route

China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe route.

As China's economic and trade partner, Iran is an important partner in advancing the Road Belt Initiative in Southwest Asia. In January 2016, China and Iran upgraded the relationship between them and established a comprehensive strategic partnership that further strengthens the potential for cooperation between the two countries. This issue is under consideration in the framework of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation program between Iran and China. In December 2014, the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway was opened, which is a strategic route for Iran to enter China.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Road Belt Initiative is currently an important tool in China's foreign policy and aims to secure China's trade and strategic interests. The large number of partnership documents signed between China and countries or international organizations shows that the idea has been relatively well received around the world. China is estimated to have invested more than \$ 90 billion in more than 70 participating countries, and the Belt Initiative is now the largest development finance project in the world. This initiative develops the infrastructure of partner countries in terms of project implementation scale. Road Belt Initiative infrastructure projects strengthen the internal and global relationship of part-

ner countries. This ensures integration, development and mutual benefit, because as local partner high-speed rail systems become more connected to China, local supply chains can become global. Thus, the Belt Initiative can have significant national, regional, and even global impacts on trade and supply chains. Also, the Road Belt Initiative is mainly funded and implemented by Chinese state-owned companies and is inextricably linked to China's foreign policy. Asia needs \$ 26 trillion in infrastructure investment by 2030, and China can certainly help. Its investments have a positive impact on the countries involved by building infrastructure. Mutual benefits are a feature of the Road Belt Initiative, which will also help develop Chinese product markets in the long run and reduce industrial surplus capacity in the short term. With this initiative, China is creating new mechanisms for international economic cooperation. The Belt Initiative will be a stimulus for cooperation between China and the countries along the way in various aspects such as infrastructure, trade and investment, energy, regional integration and the internationalization of the yuan.

Conclusion

How does Iran's position in Southwest Asia increase the capacity of the initiative to increase convergence? In the evaluation and final conclusion, it should be said that the Road Belt Initiative has become a popular platform for international exchanges and cooperation; It helps countries and regions along the way to improve needed communications and transportation infrastructure, increase opportunities for economic and trade cooperation, and provide growth and development for national and regional economies. In this regard, Iran's position and coordinates can serve as a catalyst for the de-

velopment of the Belt Initiative and the deepening of regional convergence in Southwest Asia. China views Iran as a large and populous country, a powerful political and strategic player in the heart of West Asia, located between the Strait of Hormuz and the Caspian Sea. Geopolitically, Iran's role-playing is essential to achieving the goals and implementation of the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Belt Corridor, and Iran's participation by the Chinese is important for the success of the China Belt Initiative projects in the region. China also sees Iran as a counterweight to US influence in the Persian Gulf. In general, the most important role of Iran in the road belt initiative is:

Iran's rail link and facilitate international transit

Strengthen customs communications

Abundance of energy resources and availability of transmission infrastructure

Iran's land and water borders with most countries in the region

Iran's access to open waters

Geopolitical geographical location of Iran

Popular relations and cultural and linguistic affinity of Iran with the region

Important market providing goods and services and access to the area

Finally, it should be noted that the connection of transport infrastructure is an important platform for deep exchanges in international politics, economics and culture. The construction of international transportation corridors is not only affected by the progress and situation between countries, but also by the level of development and efficiency of the services of the domestic transportation system. Iran's unique geographical location determines that it can play an important role in transporting regional

cargo. Iran is developing plans to improve its transit capacity, including the development of large container ports such as Bandar Abbas in the south and Chabahar Port in the southeast to strengthen the connection between the port and the railway network. In general, if China wants to do land trade with countries along the road belt; In the first stage, it depends on the connection of infrastructure and the construction of main networks in which the regions, location and advantages of Iran are at a high level of importance. To develop the modern land Silk Road trade, there must be the ability to produce, complete and transport goods across Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia to reach Europe and elsewhere. Iran This is an important corridor connecting Eastern and Western civilizations. The country is located in the two main oil and gas production regions of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and enjoys a prominent position as a center of energy and transportation. The Government of Iran has developed a major railway development program in order to establish a modern rail transportation system and make full use of the benefits of the international hub.

Offers

At present, the country's railway productivity is not acceptable, and Iran's rail productivity indicators are sometimes half or even a third of the global average. This has created many problems and sidelined the railroad from major mapping in the national economy. Such a trend has caused the owners of domestic and international goods to turn away from the transportation of goods by Iranian railways. Solving the problems of these strategic corridors should be considered with higher priority. It should be noted that

delays in solving the country's rail transit problems will increase the share of alternative routes in neighboring countries and make it more difficult to absorb transit demand in the future.

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