

# **ACHIEVING PEACE AND SECURITY THROUGH REGIONAL TRADE AND CONNECTIVITY**

ISSRA-SNDU ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION REPORT  
12 JUNE 2024





**Report Of Joint Hybrid Roundtable Discussion With  
Supreme National Defence University Of Iran**

**Supervised by**

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**Disclaimer**

The discussions and report have followed Chatham House rules.  
The statements, facts and opinions by speakers do not constitute the official  
policy of National Defence University.



## Programme

1130 - 1135 hrs	Recitation of Holy Quran
1135 - 1140 hrs	Welcome Remarks by DG ISSRA
1140 - 1145 hrs	Remarks by the Moderator
1145 - 1155 hrs	Navigating Pakistan-Iran Relations Amidst Changing Geopolitical Landscape
1155 - 1205 hrs	Effects of Peace Pipeline on Regional Peace and Security
1205 - 1215 hrs	Role of Pakistan and Iran in Regional Trade and Connectivity: Opportunities and Challenges
1215 - 1225 hrs	Role of Peace Pipeline in Development of Economic Relations between Iran and Pakistan
1225 - 1330 hrs	Interactive Session
1330 - 1335 hrs	Concluding Remarks by DG ISSRA
1335 - 1400 hrs	Lunch & Dispersal



# Achieving Peace And Security Through Regional Trade And Connectivity

## Summary of Proceedings

- The Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA) at the National Defence University (NDU) Islamabad and the Supreme National Defence University (SNDU) Iran jointly organized a roundtable discussion on 'Achieving Peace and Security through Regional Trade and Connectivity' in hybrid mode, on 12 June 2024.
- This event underscored the importance of fostering a long-term, sustainable, mutually beneficial partnership between the two institutions. The collaboration between these two leading universities is expected to play a crucial role in strengthening the broader relations between Pakistan and Iran.
- The session included experts from Pakistan and Iran, and operated under Chatham House rules, ensuring confidentiality and promoting open and frank discussions without direct attribution.
- The discussion featured Pakistan and Iran's mutual vision for promoting regional integration and collaboration while remaining mindful of potential obstacles and disruptions. Key themes covered by the speakers and expert participants included 'Navigating Pakistan-Iran Relations Amidst Changing Geopolitical Landscape,' the 'Role of Pakistan and Iran in Regional Trade and Connectivity: Opportunities and Challenges,' the 'Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline's Impact on Regional Peace, Security, and Bilateral Relations.'

# Key Findings and Takeaways

## A. Navigating Pakistan-Iran Relations Amidst Changing Geopolitical Landscape

- Pakistan and Iran share strong historical and cultural ties, providing a solid foundation for cooperation. They can strengthen bilateral relations by improving public diplomacy, fostering people-to-people connections, and proactively addressing uncertainties related to joint energy and trade initiatives. Their robust relations will promote regional cooperation and integration, fostering peace, security, and stability.
- Pakistan-Iran political relations have largely remained normal. Various international and regional organizations have also been significantly involved in mediating and resolving outstanding issues, strengthening cross-regional ties, and exploring opportunities for trans-regional trade and economic cooperation.
- By serving as a hub for trade and energy projects, Pakistan's strategic location is a key factor that connects South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East with the Asia Pacific. This connection can foster economic growth and regional integration.
- Iran plays a significant role as an energy supplier. The participants emphasised that projects such as the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline are crucial for regional energy security but face geopolitical and sanctions-related challenges. Iran's experience in dealing with sanctions provides lessons on maintaining economic stability and developing alternative financial systems and is crucial for others in navigating economic and geopolitical challenges.
- The discussion also emphasised the need for collaboration among key regional players, including Iran, Pakistan, China, and India, to establish a balanced geopolitical and geo-economic environment. The joint initiatives of these countries, including an interlinked gas pipeline, will connect the entire region, optimize geo-energy resources, and bring

economic benefits while reducing tensions.

- India's unwillingness to support regional development projects involving Pakistan, such as its withdrawal from the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline agreement in 2008, was also discussed with the hope that it would negotiate for the pipeline and other deals for the greater good.
- Regional connectivity is a complex interplay of cooperation and competition. While there are significant opportunities for economic integration and strategic collaboration, historical tensions, security concerns, and the influence of external powers play a crucial role in shaping the landscape and creating formidable challenges. The success of connectivity projects is critically dependent on these countries' ability to navigate their geopolitical differences and urgently foster a cooperative regional framework.

## **B. Role of Pakistan and Iran in Regional Trade and Connectivity: Opportunities and Challenges**

- The connection and trade within and between regions are essential for driving comprehensive growth and development. They provide access to larger markets, diversify trade opportunities, improve resource efficiency, increase productivity, attract investment, and promote technological advancements.
- Iran has a strong interest in enhancing its engagement and connectivity with Pakistan.
- Pakistan and Iran have several bilateral and multilateral cooperation opportunities. Their strategic cooperation in manufacturing and overland and maritime trade will strengthen bilateral relations and address minor legacy issues.
- Pakistan and Iran can focus on three key areas to strengthen bilateral trade and improve regional connectivity. These are:

- Building a stronger relationship with China and creating a China-Pakistan-Iran trilateral arrangement.
- Exploring currency swap agreements and alternative financial transactions.
- Leveraging technology to address climate change and implement innovative, environmentally friendly agriculture and water conservation methods.
- Regional connectivity improvement hinges on bolstering border security and upgrading infrastructure, including roads, railways, and air links.
- It is also crucial to strive to increase the volume of exported goods and services by opening new trade routes and improving existing ones despite facing various obstacles.
- Both countries must remain steadfast in addressing challenges from detractors and spoilers opposing regional integration and cooperation.
- There is a focus on the potential to enhance trade connectivity through Iran to West Asia, creating opportunities for economic interdependence and improved diplomatic relations in the region.

### **C. Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline's Impact on Regional Peace, Security, and Bilateral Relations**

- The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline agreement was signed in May 2009. Of the 1,950 kilometres-long pipeline, 1,150 kilometres is in Iran and 780 kilometres in Pakistan.
- Naming it 'Peace Pipeline,' the SNDU representative said Iran has completed over 900 kilometres of the pipeline within its territory.
- In March 2024, Pakistan announced the plan to construct an 80-kilometre pipeline from the border to Gwadar Port.



### Proposed Iran-Pakistan Pipeline Project<sup>1</sup>

- According to its proponents, the 'Peace Pipeline' offers several advantages compared to the proposed TAPI project. First, it will not be under geopolitical stress, unlike the situation in Afghanistan, which has affected politico-economic decisions and large regional joint projects. Second, it is a comparatively cost-effective project. Third, it will help address the challenges related to great power competition posed by projects offered by partners from outside the region.
- Pakistan's connection with the North-South Corridor via the 'Peace Pipeline' route will extend energy links to Southeast Asia. Partnering states can collaborate to attract investments to enhance the pipeline's capacity, with the potential for the initial plan to succeed and bring about significant changes in the energy sector.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Research Gate. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Iran-Pakistan-Pipeline-Project\\_fig2\\_344831604](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Iran-Pakistan-Pipeline-Project_fig2_344831604).



### Construction Site of Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline in Iran<sup>2</sup>

- The pipeline project is designed to bring mutual benefits to both countries, strengthening their economic ties to a strategic level.
- The project is envisioned to significantly impact employment, particularly in their oil and gas industries and commercial sectors. It will also create joint investment opportunities for their domestic and private sectors, improving livelihoods on both sides.
- Moreover, their efforts will make the development of deprived border areas, such as those in Pakistan's Balochistan and Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan provinces, possible. The joint security arrangements will also ensure the security of energy transmission lines passing through these areas.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Provided by SNDU, Iran.

- There was a discussion about giving diplomacy the leading role in expediting the 'Peace Pipeline' project. Both states can use their political leverages to create a larger win-win environment. Such efforts will help all parties by easing sanctions on Iran's energy supplies and fostering a sense of optimism.
- The discussion concluded that Pakistan and Iran should seek investments for the pipeline project from major Asian economic powers such as China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and others to ensure a shared and prosperous future for the entire region.

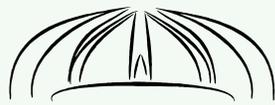
# Picture Gallery





## List of Participants

CHAIR	
Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad HI (M)	DG ISSRA
MODERATOR	
Dr. Syed Qandil Abbas	Assistant Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad
EMINENT SPEAKERS	
Brigadier General Dr. Mehran Keshtkar	SNDU Iran
Ambassador (Retd) Farukh Amil	Chairperson, Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO), Pakistan
Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri	Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Islamabad
Dr. Hamed Ebrahimi	Head of Scientific Research Institute, SNDU Iran
EXPERT PARTICIPANTS	
Dr. Atia Ali Kazmi	Director, Global and Regional Studies Branch, ISSRA
Dr. Muhammad Ramadan	Head of International Relations, SNDU Iran
Dr. Jafar Naghdi	Expert from SNDU Iran
Ambassador (Retd) Naghmana Hashmi	Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China and European Union
Rear Admiral Faisal Ali Shah (Retd)	Former Naval Attaché of Pakistan to Iran
Brigadier Masroor Ahmed (Retd)	Director, Defence and Strategic Studies, ISSRA
Dr. Khalid Mahmood Shafi	Director, Internal Security Studies, ISSRA
Ms. Gulandam Mian	Lecturer, Faculty of Contemporary Studies (FCS), NDU, Islamabad
Mr. Umar Abbasi	Lecturer, Faculty of Contemporary Studies (FCS), NDU, Islamabad
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