China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: An Evolving New Security Complex and its Implications

Prof. Dr. Lubna Abid Ali, * Dr. Hussain Abbas** & Dr. Saira Nawaz Abbasi***
*Former Dean & Professor, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defense University, Islamabad
**Faculty Member, Department of International Relations, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
***Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad

ABSTRACT

China-Iran relations have witnessed a new ascendency. Where China-Iran ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’ (CSP) is characterized by deepening economic, trade and investment ties, cooperation through Belt and Road Initiative and shared interests in promoting stability and security, it has raised concerns of the international community, especially by the US. The prime concern is regarding the shift in the balance of power in the region. China through its diplomatic efforts has somehow addressed the concerns by brokering rapprochement agreement between Saudi-Arabia and Iran, but Western and US concerns persist as they view the new partnership as a challenge to their influence and interests of its regional allies. This paper hypothesizes that China-Iran CSP, if fully realized would establish a new regional security complex that would undermine the US-led status quo regional order. This paper analyzes this very research puzzle by enquiring about the evolving nature of the China-Iran economic, political and security relationship and its implications for the regional political and security complex through the lens of Regional Security Complex theory (RSCT). Through Qualitative methodology, it explains the convergences of interests of Iran and China, the dynamism in the relationship and its implications for the regional security complex.

Keywords: China, Iran, Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Regional Security Complex, Middle East.

1 Introduction

The international system is in transition. The new emerging international system is characterized by trends of multipolarity with the rise of regional and global powers and the enhanced interaction between the regional and extra-regional powers. Competitive-Cooperative relationships between the major powers like US and China and regional powers like China and India and Iran and Saudi Arabia have a clear impact on the nature and dynamics of the system. Besides these, major powers’ relationship with regional powers like China-Iran, in this transition phase, has impacted the US-led world order and regional architecture. In the emerging international system, China has perceived that a strategic opportunity has arrived to expand its political, economic and security influence.

China's exponential growth and Permissive-restrictive international strategic environment have motivated its leaders to adopt proactive economic, political and security posture. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, China has become a confident power ‘striving for achievement’. An assertive turn in its policy is witnessed in which global ambitions are set and competition for strategic presence and influence is the new dynamic. Where strategic imperatives of US over-emphasis on competing and countering efforts in the Asia-Pacific has put restraints on Chinese ambitions of establishing Sino-centric regional order, its relative decline and softening of grip on various other regions including the Middle East has provided China with an opportunity to expand its interests and influence. As China strives for the expansion of influence and interests, it has embarked upon strengthening ideological alternatives to Western notions of order (Stanzel, 2022). Its discourses of ‘Community of Common Destiny’ and ‘South-South Cooperation’ have marked significant progress under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China has endeavoured to occupy the space by enhancing its strategic partnership with the key regional players. The 2021 China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP) deal is an important case. It has marked a significant shift in the diplomatic, economic and security landscape of the Middle East especially the Gulf region. Where it has the potential to change the regional order, in the context of US-China competition, in the Western view, US support for revisionist Iran would challenge US political and security interests in the Gulf. As a result, the
regional security complex of the Middle East may witness a change with implications for the region and beyond. In
the context of China-Iran CSP, Saudi-Iran competition for influence in the region has made regional politics
dynamic and risky. Where its impact can be witnessed in the shape of China's global status in the world vis-à-vis the
US, Iran's drive for strategic dominance and its regional influence may cause a new wave of political and security
competition with Saudi Arabia.

China and Iran have a long-standing relationship that has been characterized as a strategic partnership. This
new CSP would further enhance mutual economic, political, and security interests. These regional dynamics can best
be explained through the lens of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as it explains the political and security
complex web of the relationship of actors and its dynamics between regional and extra-regional powers in a
particular region.

This paper endeavours to explain the nature, dynamics, and implications of China-Iran comprehensive strategic
relationship by employing Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). New regional dynamics can best be explained
through the lens of RSCT as it explains the political and security complex web of the relationship of actors and its
dynamics between regional and extra-regional powers in a particular region. The social scientific methodology has
been utilized to interpret, analyze and explain the phenomenon through the qualitative technique of data acquisition
from primary and secondary sources. Data is analyzed through the content/document analysis research method.

2 Statement of the Problem

The China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership has been the subject of much debate and analysis, with
some viewing it as a positive development that could help to promote stability and economic growth in the region,
while others view it with concern as a threat to regional stability and American interests. One of the main problems
with the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership is its potential impact on regional stability. The partnership
has the potential to alter the balance of power in the region and reduce American influence, which could have
implications for American security and economic interests and a pretext for renewed rivalry. The partnership has the
potential to increase Iran's confidence and ability to pursue destabilizing actions in the region, potentially
heightening tensions and undermining peace and security. This is a particular concern of the US and its regional
allies given in the context of Iran's support for armed groups in the region, its history of destabilizing actions, and its
ongoing nuclear program.

In addition, there are concerns about the economic implications of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic
partnership. For example, some argue that China's investment in Iran's infrastructure and energy sector could
undermine American efforts to isolate Iran economically and could benefit the Iranian regime. In essence, the
China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership is complex and challenging as it is driven by a combination of
economic, political, security, and ideological considerations, and it is likely to play a significant role in shaping the
regional security complex and geopolitical landscape in the region. Hence, this paper aims at explaining the nature,
dynamics of the partnership, the motivations of China and Iran and its Implications for the political and security
complex of the region.

3 Contextualizing China-Iran Partnership: A Theoretical Framework

The China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership can be analyzed through a number of theoretical
frameworks, depending on the particular aspect of the partnership being studied. This study has utilized New
Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), especially its post-cold war extension, proposed by Barry Buzan. This
theoretical framework can offer insights into different aspects of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic
partnership, and they can be used in combination to provide a more complete understanding of this complex and
evolving relationship.

Regional Security Complex Theory is a theoretical framework that seeks to explain the security dynamics
between states and other actors in a particular region. The theory argues that the security of one state in a region is
closely connected to the security of other states in the same region and the regions nearby creating a complex web
of security relationships (Buzan et al., 2003). Buzan provides that “a regional security complex has been defined as a
group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot
realistically be considered apart from one another” (Buzan, 2003). He further emphasized that “security complexes of
states depend primarily on the pressures deriving from geographic proximity, and the interplay between the
anarchic structure and how balances of power play out in the system. They view the world as regional clusters,
wherby security complexes are magnified within these clusters” (Buzan, 2003).
Where he emphasized the traditional sources of the security complexes and balancing between the states, he also includes the economic, environmental, and societal aspects into play in the formation of the regional security complexes. He reiterated that mutual and rival interests like ensuring energy security can form a regional complex. Buzan by proposing the assumptions believes that it would benefit analysts in analyzing the traditional and non-traditional security factors of collaboration and concerns between members of a given regional security complex (Buzan, 2002). RSCT lacks the explanation power to explain the role of the nearby regions and the role of the great/major powers on the securitization of the regions and in shaping and changing the regional security regions. Dennis Senam Amable by extending the theory emphasized on the role of the major power on such regions (Amable, 2022). Amable provides that overlook the phenomenon that how security regions evolve into security complexes. Amable provides that external great powers, their positions, interests, and role in the region through collaboration and alliances create a security structure that shape and tame the nature of the relationship between the regional and extra-regional players (Amable, 2022). The combination of Buzan and Amable regarding the regional security complexes and the role of the traditional and non-traditional factors and the great powers best explain the China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

In the context of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership, Regional Security Complex Theory sheds light on the impact that the partnership has on the security of the Middle East region. The theory suggests that the partnership has the potential to influence the security of other regional actors, such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, as well as the stability and security of the region as a whole. The partnership could impact regional security by increasing the military and economic power of both China and Iran, potentially emboldening Iran to pursue destabilizing actions in the region. On the other hand, the partnership could also promote stability and security by increasing economic cooperation and promoting regional development.

From a Regional Security Complex perspective, it is important to consider not only the impact of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership on the two countries themselves but also its impact on the security of other regional actors and the region as a whole.

Explanation through the Regional Security Complex Theory would be useful in understanding the security implications of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership as it highlights the interconnectedness of security relationships in the region and the potential impact of the partnership on regional stability and security.

According to Regional Complex theory, states in a particular region form complex networks of relationships, in which each state is influenced by the actions and interests of its neighbours and other regional actors. In this context, the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership can be seen as one component of a broader regional complex, in which the actions and interests of China and Iran are shaped by the actions and interests of other regional actors, such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

From a Regional Complex perspective, the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership is a way for both countries to assert their influence and power in the region and to counteract the influence of other regional actors, such as the United States. By forming a strategic partnership, China and Iran can increase their bargaining power and achieve common goals, such as promoting stability, increasing economic cooperation, and countering American influence.

Overall, the Regional Complex theory provides a useful framework for understanding the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership, as it highlights the role that the partnership plays in shaping the broader regional landscape and the interplay between different regional actors.

4 China-Iran relations: A Historical Context

The relationship between China and Iran has a long history that can be traced back several thousand years. However, the modern relationship between the two countries has its roots in the 20th century, when both China and Iran underwent significant political and economic transformations. These two countries with distinct civilizations, shared historical roots, rich cultural relationships, and common psychological identification regarding the imperial past. It can be furthered that both countries have no history of conflict and war and share the scars of humiliation from foreign aggression mainly from the West (Amable, 2022).

Ups and downs have been part of their relationship during the Cold war, both China and Iran underwent major political changes, with China becoming a communist state under the rule of Mao Zedong and Iran undergoing a series of reforms and coups that eventually led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. These changes brought both countries into conflict with the West and positioned them as rivals of the United States, which helped to lay the foundation for their modern-day strategic partnership (Abidi, 1981). Since the Tiananmen incident and the
end of the Cold War in 1989, Iran and China have pursued a cordial and productive relationship. The Iranian president, Ali Khamenei, visited China and assured Deng Xiaoping of Iran’s commitment to expanding friendly relations between the two nations. As a result of this closer relationship, Sino-Iranian trade increased substantially in the 1980s. Total trade between the two countries increased from $627 million to $1.627 billion (Olimat, 2013). In addition, cultural relations between the two nations also expanded: student exchanges, scholarship and re-search programs, increased artistic interactions, and the waiving of visa requirements for tourists (Olimat, 2013). Iran-China economic relations are wide-ranging and extensive. China has built Tehran’s subway system, dams, fisheries and cement factories and is currently engaged in many other reconstruction projects. China is also a major provider of consumer goods to Iran; by 2003, it was responsible for 9.5 percent of Iran’s total imports. In what follows, we will discuss in detail the most important aspect of this relationship: energy (Huwaidin, 2003).

5 Changing Regional Dynamics and China-Iran Convergences

In the decades since, the relationship between China and Iran has been shaped by a combination of economic, political, and security considerations. For example, both countries have significant oil and gas resources, and they have collaborated on a number of energy projects. They have also worked together to counterbalance American and Western influence in the region and to promote stability and security in the Middle East. Despite these shared interests, there have also been periods of tension and disagreement between China and Iran, particularly with respect to the pace and scope of their economic and political cooperation. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two countries is likely to continue to play an important role in shaping the geopolitical landscape in the region and beyond (Khanmohammadi & Sun, 2022).

Economically, both countries have a strong interest in developing their energy resources and have collaborated on oil and gas projects. China has also invested in infrastructure projects in Iran, including highways, ports, and telecommunications networks (Abbas et al., 2021). Politically, both countries have a history of challenging the United States and the West, and they see their partnership as a way to counterbalance American influence in the region. They also share a commitment to preserving their respective political systems, with Iran being an Islamic Republic and China being a Communist state (Greer & Batmanghelidj, 2021). Geopolitically, the strategic partnership between China and Iran has the potential to alter the balance of power in the region, with China playing an increasingly influential role in the Middle East and Iran strengthening its ties with a major global power.

In terms of security, both countries are concerned about instability in the Middle East, and they see their partnership as a way to maintain regional stability and counter-terrorism and other security threats (Stanzel, 2022).

Despite these shared interests, there are also significant differences between China and Iran, including their different political systems, cultural backgrounds, and regional influence. As a result, the development of their strategic partnership has been uneven, with periods of closer cooperation followed by periods of tension. Nevertheless, the relationship between China and Iran is likely to continue to play a significant role in shaping the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East and beyond.

6 China-Iran Comprehensive Partnership Since 2021

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic, due to non-security issues and crises in the third world, the world has witnessed a profound change in international and regional economic and political systems. Due to the inability of the West especially the US to cope with the issues through their economic and political influence, non-Western powers especially China have expanded their sway. China has expanded its influence to occupy the space left by the West, especially in the regions of its vital interest. The Middle East especially the Gulf has been the prime focus. Where China has established partnerships with other Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE, it has also embarked on establishing enhanced cooperation with Iran to balance its relationship with the major actors in the region in the shape of a China-Iran Comprehensive partnership.

The China-Iran strategic partnership is driven by a combination of economic, political, security, and ideological considerations, and it is likely to continue to play a significant role in shaping the geopolitical landscape in the region (Khanmohammadi & Sun, 2022). This has clearly manifested in their 25 years deal in 2021. Through this deal, Iran and China have agreed to deepen their cooperation in all areas of convergence, especially in economic, trade and energy security areas. But this also provides for the enhanced security cooperation though limited is known regarding the nature and exact outlook of security and military cooperation. The charm of the agreement for both sides lie in the Chinese investment of $400 Billion in Iran’s oil, financial and infrastructure sectors and projects (Fassihi & Myers, 2021). This agreement has a clear potential of success and challenges as well.
On the one hand, Western perceptions regarding the Chin-Iran CSP are that as both Iran and China are revisionist states their partnership has a clear geopolitical design. Both through collective efforts can challenge the US dominance and the change in international system through hard and soft balancing. Both Iran and China want to assert their regional claims as regional and global powers respectively. For example, during the previous decades when other powers including Russia downgraded their defence and military cooperation with Iran, China maintained its military and defence cooperation with Iran and even continued its arms supply (Lim, 2021).

On the other hand, The Middle East region is undergoing significant changes and transformations, which are shaping the political, economic, and security landscape of the region. These changes are having a significant impact on the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership, as both countries seek to adapt to the evolving regional environment and pursue their own interests and goals.

One of the most significant changes in the Middle East is the shift in power dynamics, as new actors such as China, Iran, and Russia emerge as influential players in the region, while the traditional dominance of the United States and its allies is being challenged. This shift in power dynamics is creating new opportunities for China and Iran to assert their influence and pursue their own interests, as well as new challenges and risks. Another major change in the Middle East is the increasing fragmentation and instability in many countries, as civil wars, sectarian tensions, and political turmoil continue to rage in many parts of the region. This instability is having a major impact on the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership, as both countries must navigate the complex and often unpredictable security landscape of the region (Khanmohammadi & Sun, 2022).

Despite these challenges, the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership is becoming increasingly important for both countries, as they seek to deepen their economic, political, and security ties in the face of changing regional dynamics. Through the partnership, both China and Iran are seeking to increase their influence and bargaining power, promote stability and security, and counteract the influence of other regional actors, such as the United States.

7 Economic and Trade Dynamics

Changing dynamics of the Middle East are shaping the evolution of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership, creating both opportunities for new era of trade and investment opportunities. Though sanctions have impacted the cooperation and remained subjected to external constraints but now because of this agreement and inclusion of Iran in the BRI project would benefit both sides. Following data table shows an upward trend in China’s imports and exports with Iran in 2021 as compared to previous years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>China's Imports from Iran (USD Billion)</th>
<th>China's Exports to Iran (USD Billion)</th>
<th>Total Trade (USD Billion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>33.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>18.62</td>
<td>17.06</td>
<td>35.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16.81</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>31.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>10.99</td>
<td>24.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>14.10</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>23.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>20.16</td>
<td>37.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>33.37</td>
<td>52.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>22.77</td>
<td>33.50</td>
<td>56.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled by the Authors. Source: Official Statistics from General Administration of Customs of China.

Security Cooperation

China-Iran security cooperation started in 1980s during the Iran-Iran War. During 1980s China became one of the major suppliers of arms and a contributor to its nuclear technology program (Stanzel, 2022). Since 1990s, China remained restrained to establish a comprehensive security and military partnership with Iran due to the pressure from the international community and partly because of the sanctions on Iran due to its nuclear program.
and post-9/11 US policies against Iran (Stanzel, 2022). China has aligned its policy towards major Middle Eastern states like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE that is flaunted in 2016 China’s Arab policy white paper (2016).1 Turning point came in its policy with the JCPOA agreement that eased sanctions on Iran and paved the way for the Chinese regime and its companies to legally operate in Iran (Iran, China to Form Joint Commission for Military Cooperation, 2016). Between 2014 and 2018 China-Iran had 12 military interactions and ventures that includes high-level dialogues, bilateral exercises and port visits besides the technology and arms agreements (Allen et al., 2017).

And in 2020 when the UN lifted a large arms embargo on Iran, China engaged meaningfully with Iran to establish military and security cooperation. In fact, China helped Iran end the UN arms embargo in 2020, when two months before the end of the embargo the US introduced a resolution to extend it, China along with Russia vetoed it and touted it as “preserving multilateralism”. It was rather in China’s interest to end the embargo and make close military cooperation and trade with Iran.

Besides the overt China-Iran military and security cooperation, it is alleged that China has covertly supported Iran to develop its missile system and sophisticated weapons. Chinese state-owned enterprises continued to sell technology and know-how to Iran has been used to develop and improve missile technology and its range and accuracy (Lincy, 2021). The new Comprehensive partnership and China-Iran 25 years deal has also a security variant. It is unknown how they will further their military and security cooperation, but one thing has become clear China has embarked on a new kind of strategy to engage the strategic regions into a web of not only socio-economic but also security and military cooperation. This can be a clear signal to the US that China has the capability to establish security commitments with different regional powers and especially that can be made in its historical area of influence and with its opponents. It is clear defiance and resistance by China as well as of Iran to the US-led security complex in the middle east and especially in the Gulf.

8 China-Iran Cooperation for Security Balancing and Changing Security Complex

China-Iran 2021 deal and especially its security cooperation variant has a significant shift in China’s decade-old discourse of non-interference in the security dynamics of any region around the world. It has not only capitalized on the US’s inability to maintain security in the Middle East but also has directly engaged in the security partnership with Iran. For this, it has assertively engaged in the region and brokered a deal with the arch-rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran to revive their relations. It has also made separate deals with the other regional powers in the Gulf to maintain balance. Where China has manoeuvred to strike balance, it still has challenges in its way. The changing security complex in the Middle East is having a significant impact on the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership. As the region becomes increasingly fragmented and unstable, security concerns and risks are becoming more prominent, and the partnership is being shaped by these new realities. From a security perspective, the partnership is becoming increasingly important for both China and Iran as they seek to address common security challenges, such as terrorism, extremism, and regional conflict. By deepening their security cooperation and coordination, both countries are seeking to enhance their ability to address these challenges and promote stability and security in the region (Allen et al., 2017). However, the partnership also poses challenges and risks for both China and Iran, particularly in the context of the broader international community’s concerns about Iran’s nuclear program and regional influence. As the United States and its allies increase their pressure on Iran, the partnership is being tested, as both China and Iran must navigate the complex and changing international landscape (Fulton, 2022).

From a regional security complex perspective, the partnership is also having an impact on the security dynamics between other regional actors, such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. As China and Iran deepen their security cooperation and coordination, other regional actors are likely to respond by adjusting their own security strategies and alliances, potentially leading to new security dynamics and risks in the region. Therefore, the changing security complex in the Middle East is shaping the evolution of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership,

---

1 It states that China’s Middle East policy is rooted in following six core principles: 1. Creating communication and dialogue mechanisms to allow political cooperation; 2. Strengthening economic ties through investment and trade cooperation; 3. Promoting the principle of territorial sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs; 4. Cooperating on matters of social development such as health care, education, science and technology, and agriculture; 5. Cooperating on the media and broadcasting as well as on culture, arts, and literature; 6. Cooperating on traditional security matters such as terrorism and policing, and non-traditional matters such as cybersecurity.
creating both opportunities and challenges for both countries as they navigate the complex and evolving regional security landscape (Fulton, 2022).

**China-Iran Strategic Partnership: Implications for the Gulf Regional Security Complex & Beyond**

China’s new security agenda in the Middle East is being shaped by its evolving interests and priorities in the region. As China’s economic and political influence in the world continues to grow, it is seeking to assert its interests and influence in the Middle East, including through its comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran. From a security perspective, China is seeking to balance its interests in the region, including promoting stability and security, countering terrorism and extremism, and safeguarding its own economic and energy interests. China's security agenda in the region is also being shaped by its broader strategy of seeking to counteract the influence of the United States and its allies, as well as by its pursuit of a more independent and assertive foreign policy.

However, balancing these interests is not always easy, as China must navigate a complex and often unpredictable security landscape in the region, including the ongoing civil wars and sectarian tensions in many countries, as well as the increasing pressure on Iran from the United States and its allies. From a regional security complex perspective, China’s new security agenda in the region is also having an impact on the security dynamics between other regional actors, such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. As China’s influence and engagement in the region increases, these actors are likely to adjust their own security strategies and alliances, potentially leading to new security dynamics and risks in the region. China had assisted Iran in its efforts to keep out of isolation and resist US pressure (Wuthnow, 2012). The China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership has significant implications for the Gulf regional security complex and beyond. On one hand, the partnership has the potential to enhance stability and security in the region, as both China and Iran seek to address common security challenges and promote their shared interests and goals.

On the other hand, the partnership also poses risks and challenges for the Gulf region and beyond, particularly in the context of the increasing pressure on Iran from the United States and its allies. As China and Iran deepen their security cooperation and coordination, other regional actors may respond by adjusting their own security strategies and alliances, potentially leading to new security dynamics and risks in the region. In terms of the Gulf regional security complex, the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership has the potential to disrupt existing security arrangements and alliances, as China seeks to assert its influence and counteract the influence of the United States and its allies in the region. This could lead to new security dynamics and risks in the region, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflicts and sectarian tensions in many countries.

Beyond the Gulf region, the partnership has implications for the broader international community, as China and Iran’s deepening security cooperation and coordination may be seen as a challenge to the existing international security architecture and the dominance of the United States and its allies. This could lead to increased tensions and conflict between China and the United States, as well as between Iran and the United States and its allies.

Overall, the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership has significant implications for the Gulf regional security complex and beyond, as both countries seek to assert their influence and address common security challenges in the context of changing regional and international dynamics.

**9 Conclusion**

The China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is a significant development in the international relations of both countries, with potential implications for the wider Middle East and global politics. This evolving new security complex reflects a shared desire for economic and strategic cooperation, as well as a shared sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the United States. The partnership is characterized by deepening economic ties, including the Belt and Road Initiative and increased investment in Iran’s energy sector. Additionally, both countries share a common interest in regional stability, with China potentially using its influence to encourage Iran to engage in more constructive dialogue with its neighbours and play a more positive role in regional security.

However, the China-Iran partnership has also raised concerns in the international community, particularly with regard to its potential impact on the balance of power in the Gulf, Middle East and the wider region. Some analysts have suggested that the partnership may embolden Iran to pursue more aggressive policies and undermine efforts to promote regional stability and security. Furthermore, the partnership may also have implications for the global balance of power, particularly in light of China's growing geopolitical ambitions and its desire to challenge the dominance of the United States. Some experts argue that the China-Iran partnership may be part of a broader strategy by China to expand its influence and promote its interests on the global stage. China-Iran Comprehensive
Strategic Partnership represents a significant development in international relations and has the potential to shape the political and economic landscape of the Middle East and beyond. Its long-term implications remain to be seen, but it is clear that the partnership will continue to be closely watched by policymakers, analysts, and the international community as a whole.

China-Iran cooperation reflects a deepening of economic and strategic cooperation between the two, with a shared interest in promoting regional stability and security. The partnership involves increased investment in Iran's energy sector, infrastructure development, and collaboration on military and intelligence matters. It reflects a deepening of economic and strategic cooperation between China and Iran, with a shared interest in promoting regional stability and security.

The China-Iran partnership is an evolving new security complex that may have implications for the wider Middle East and global politics. As the partnership deepens, it may affect the balance of power in the region and potentially challenge the dominance of the United States. Several potential implications of the China-Iran partnership, including the potential impact on regional stability, the balance of power in the Middle East, and global politics.

Bibliography