Policy Brief

Series Information:
This policy brief is part of the EPINOVA Policy Brief Series on Strategic Competition, AI-Enabled Warfare, and Information Conflict.

Recommended Citation:
Wu, Shaoyuan (2026), Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026: Six Land Routes, Third-Country Goods, and the Southeastern Bypass of Hormuz Pressure, Policy Brief No. EPINOVA–2026–PB–43, Global AI Governance and Policy Research Center, EPINOVA LLC.
DOI: To be assigned after Crossref membership approval.

GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE
RESEARCH CENTER

EPINOVA

Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026:

Six Land Routes, Third-Country Goods, and the Southeastern Bypass of Hormuz Pressure

Gwadar, Taftan, Gabd, and the Multimodal Logic of Threshold-Delaying Supply

Author: Shaoyuan Wu
Affiliation: Global AI Governance and Policy Research Center, EPINOVA LLC
Date: April 28, 2026

Key Judgments

- **Pakistan's 2026 transit order institutionalizes third-country transit to Iran.** It does not simply expand bilateral Pakistan–Iran trade; it creates a legal framework for goods originating outside Pakistan to move through Pakistani territory toward Iran.
- **The six designated routes create a southeastern port–road–border corridor.** Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar are linked to Gabd and Taftan, giving Iran a limited alternative access layer outside direct Gulf entry.
- **The corridor delays pressure; it does not replace Hormuz.** Its value lies in sustaining limited flows of food, medicine, consumer goods, spare parts, industrial inputs, and selected high-value cargo, not in reproducing Persian Gulf maritime scale.
- **The system is best understood as a 6+1+1+2 architecture.** This includes six designated land routes, one potential China–Pakistan rail / CPEC-linked enabling layer, one Iran–Pakistan energy-infrastructure layer, and two intermodal extensions through Pakistan-based air–land and sea–land movement.
- **The Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline is a latent energy layer, not current freight capacity.** Based on public reporting, it may deepen long-term Pakistan–Iran interdependence, but sanctions, financing, construction delays, and demand concerns continue to limit its operational relevance.
- **Blockade monitoring expands from Hormuz to Pakistan's wider logistics surface.** Key nodes include Karachi, Port Qasim, Gwadar, Gabd, Taftan, Balochistan road corridors, bonded cargo systems, air-cargo intake points, port transshipment records, and third-country documentation.

Executive Summary

Pakistan's designation of six Iran-bound transit routes marks a significant shift in the logistics environment around Hormuz. The order does not replace Iran's Persian Gulf maritime system; it institutionalizes a southeastern bypass capable of sustaining selective flows under pressure.

Policy Brief

Its core significance lies in third-country transit. External cargo can enter Pakistan through ports or airports and move onward to Iran by road, shifting the logistics problem from a narrow maritime chokepoint to a distributed system of ports, roads, borders, customs guarantees, financial documentation, and cargo prioritization.

Building on EPINOVA–2026–PB–42's three-layer model—land–sea corridors, air replenishment, and residual Hormuz / Persian Gulf flow—this brief interprets the Pakistan corridor as a **6+1+1+2 architecture**: six designated land routes, one potential China–Pakistan rail enabling layer, one Iran–Pakistan energy-infrastructure layer, and two intermodal extensions through air–land and sea–land movement. **This formula is analytical, not legal: only the six land routes are formally designated by the 2026 order**.

The result is a limited but strategically relevant southeastern logistics switchboard. It does not break blockade pressure; it makes that pressure more porous, regionalized, and administratively harder to enforce.

Why This Matters

Hormuz pressure is not only a maritime problem. It is a systems problem.

A blockade can remain effective even if goods continue to move, provided that throughput falls, delivery times lengthen, costs rise, cargo prioritization weakens, and state capacity is absorbed by logistics management. PB–42 frames this as a shift from flow denial to friction management. Pakistan's transit opening fits directly into that logic.

The policy question is therefore not whether Pakistan can replace Hormuz. It cannot. The question is whether Pakistan can help Iran preserve enough minimum flow to delay depletion, stabilize food and basic goods supply, maintain selected industrial inputs, and keep high-value replenishment routes open.

1. What Pakistan Announced

Pakistan has issued the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, designating six routes for goods moving to Iran. Dawn reports that the routes operate against an encashable bank guarantee and were issued amid reports of containers destined for Iran awaiting clearance at Pakistani ports.

The legal importance of the order is that it provides a framework for third-country goods moving through Pakistani territory en route to Iran. The Express Tribune reports that Pakistan amended the Import and Export Control Act, 1950 to provide the legal basis for the transit arrangement, and that the order applies to goods originating outside Pakistan and transported through Pakistani territory to Iran.

This makes Pakistan more than a bilateral trade partner. It becomes a third-country transit platform.

2. The Six Designated Routes

The Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026 designates six Iran-bound transit routes linking Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar with Gabd and Taftan. Dawn reports that the order was issued amid reported blockade pressure around Hormuz and Iranian ports, as well as delays affecting Iran-bound containers at Pakistani ports, and applies to third-country goods transiting Pakistan toward Iran.

The six routes form a dual-border, multi-port, Balochistan-centered transit architecture rather than a single road corridor. Gabd supports shorter coastal access from Gwadar and the Makran coast, while Taftan anchors heavier inland movement through Khuzdar, Dalbandin, Nokundi, and the Quetta / Lakpass axis. Functionally, the system creates three overlapping patterns: Gwadar–Gabd short access, Karachi / Port Qasim–Gabd coastal transit, and Karachi / Port Qasim / Gwadar–Taftan inland movement. It does not replace Hormuz, but creates a distributed port–road–border system for selective flows under pressure.

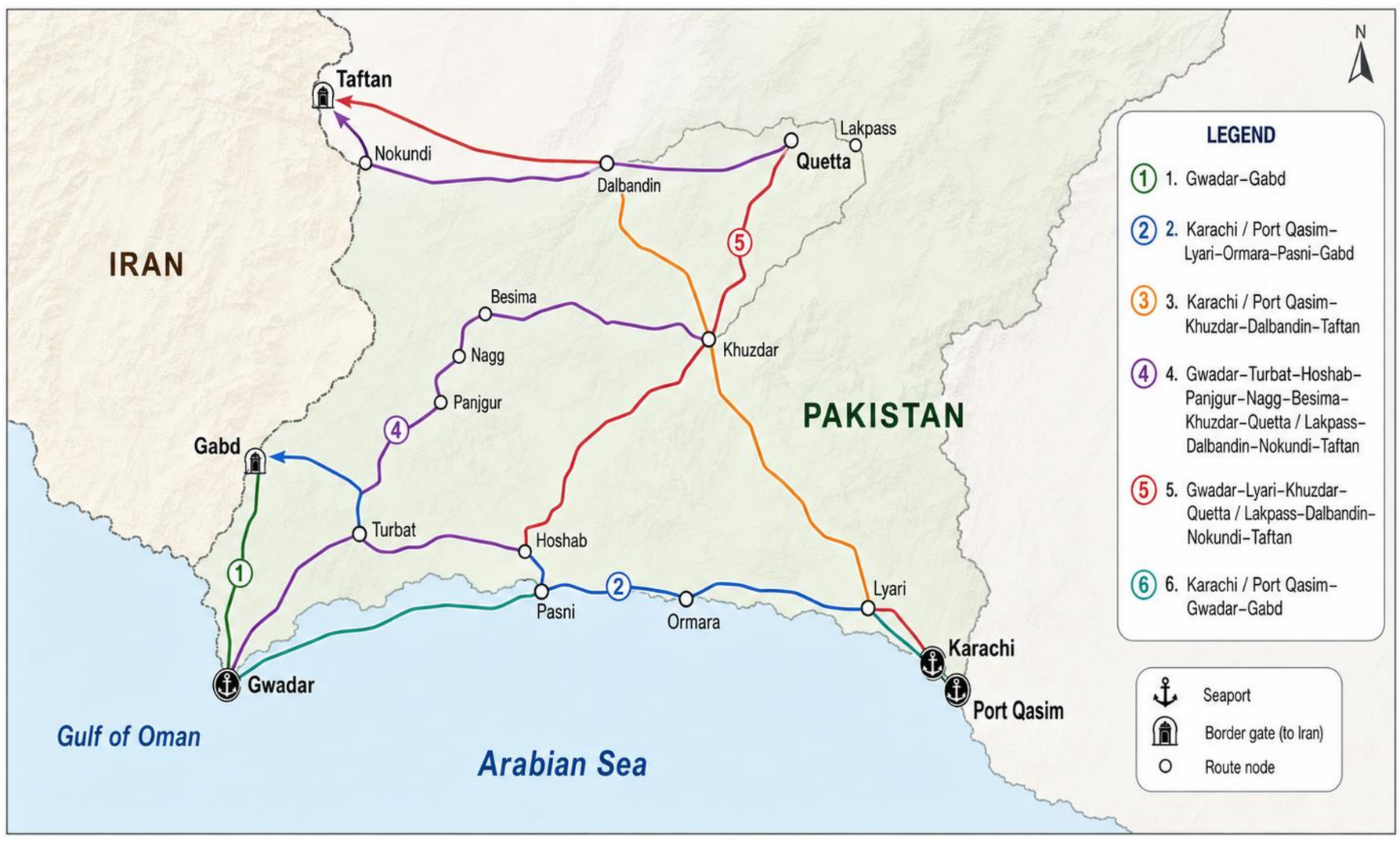

Figure 1. Pakistan–Iran Transit Corridors, 2026

Caption: The map shows the six designated Pakistan–Iran transit routes under the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, linking Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar with the Gabd and Taftan border exits. The routes form a dual-border, multi-port, Balochistan-centered transit architecture for third-country goods moving toward Iran.

Source: Author's reconstruction based on Pakistan's Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026 and public reporting.

Note: Approximate schematic map for analytical use; not for navigation.

Table 1. Pakistan's Six Designated Iran-Bound Transit Routes

Layer	Component	Status	Function	Strategic Role
Core 6	Six designated Pakistan–Iran transit routes	Legally designated	Port–road–border movement	Creates a formal third-country transit framework
+1 Rail	China–Pakistan rail / CPEC-linked rail potential	Potential enabling layer	Rear-area cargo movement toward Pakistani ports and Balochistan corridors	Adds logistical depth if future rail upgrades mature
+1 Energy	Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline / potential hydrocarbon layer	Latent infrastructure layer	Long-term energy connectivity	Deepens Pakistan–Iran strategic interdependence
+ Air–Land	Pakistan air-cargo intake + road movement to border	Supplementary	High-value, low-volume, time-sensitive cargo	Preserves critical inputs
+ Sea–Land	Karachi / Port Qasim / Gwadar maritime intake + road exit to Iran	Most operationally relevant extension	Third-country cargo enters Pakistan by sea and exits to Iran by road	Regionalizes Hormuz pressure

Source: The listed routes are based on Pakistani reporting of the 2026 transit order, including Dawn and ProPakistani.

3. From Six Routes to a 6+1+1+2 Architecture

The six designated routes form the legal and operational core of the Pakistan–Iran southeastern corridor. Their strategic value, however, depends on the wider logistics system around them. Building on PB-42's three-layer model: land–sea corridors, air replenishment, and residual Hormuz / Persian Gulf flow, the Pakistan case can be understood as a more specific 6+1+1+2 architecture: six formal land routes, one potential rail-enabling layer, one latent energy-infrastructure layer, and two intermodal extensions through air–land and sea–land movement. PB-42 emphasizes that alternative corridors should be understood as a threshold-delaying system rather than a replacement for Hormuz-scale maritime capacity.

Table 2. Pakistan–Iran Southeastern Logistics Architecture

No.	Route	Main Nodes	Border Exit	Primary Function
1	Gwadar–Gabd	Gwadar, Makran coast	Gabd	Short southeastern access route
2	Karachi / Port Qasim–Lyari–Ormara–Pasni–Gabd	Karachi, Port Qasim, coastal Balochistan	Gabd	Port-linked coastal corridor
3	Karachi / Port Qasim–Khuzdar–Dalbandin–Taftan	Karachi, Port Qasim, Khuzdar, Dalbandin	Taftan	Inland heavy road corridor
4	Gwadar–Turbat–Hoshab–Panjgur–Nagg–Besima–Khuzdar–Quetta / Lakpass–Dalbandin–Nokundi–Taftan	Gwadar, interior Balochistan, Quetta axis	Taftan	Deep inland redundancy route
5	Gwadar–Lyari–Khuzdar–Quetta / Lakpass–Dalbandin–Nokundi–Taftan	Gwadar, Khuzdar, Quetta, Dalbandin	Taftan	Gwadar-to-Taftan inland corridor
6	Karachi / Port Qasim–Gwadar–Gabd	Karachi, Port Qasim, Gwadar	Gabd	Port-to-port coastal relay

Source: Author's analytical framework, based on Pakistani reporting on the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, PB-42's three-layer logistics adaptation model, and public information on China–Pakistan / CPEC rail potential and the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline. The classification is analytical, not an official Pakistani or Iranian designation.

This model should be framed carefully. The +1 rail layer is not an operational China–Pakistan–Iran rail corridor; it is a potential rear-area support system that could strengthen the corridor if future rail upgrades connect more effectively with Pakistani ports and Balochistan road nodes. The +1 energy layer is not current freight throughput; it is a latent energy-security layer centered on the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline and possible future hydrocarbon connectivity. The two intermodal extensions—air–land and sea–land—matter because they expand the six-route framework beyond road freight and allow Pakistan to function as a broader third-country transit platform.

4. Estimated Capacity and Cargo Absorption

The Pakistan–Iran southeastern corridor should be treated as a low-to-medium capacity threshold-delaying system, not as a substitute for Persian Gulf maritime throughput. Its effective capacity is likely to be constrained by port clearance, trucking availability, road security in Balochistan, border processing at Gabd and Taftan, customs procedures, insurance, bank guarantees, and cargo documentation requirements.

The estimates below are scenario-based capacity bounds. They indicate the likely order of magnitude of sustained movement under constrained conditions, rather than measured operational throughput.

Table 3. Indicative Route Capacity and Cargo Fit

Route	Estimated Sustained Capacity	Annualized Range	Best Cargo Fit	Strategic Role
Gwadar–Gabd	300–1,200 t/day	0.1–0.4 million t/year	Food, medicine, small containers, humanitarian cargo	Fast southeastern access
Karachi / Port Qasim–Gabd coastal route	800–2,500 t/day	0.3–0.9 million t/year	Food, consumer goods, refrigerated cargo, agricultural inputs	Sea–land coastal bypass
Karachi / Port Qasim–Taftan inland route	1,500–4,000 t/day	0.5–1.5 million t/year	Containers, industrial inputs, spare parts, construction materials	Main heavy road corridor
Gwadar–Interior Balochistan–Taftan	600–2,000 t/day	0.2–0.7 million t/year	Mixed cargo, emergency supply, light industrial goods	Deep redundancy route
Gwadar–Khuzdar–Quetta–Taftan	700–2,200 t/day	0.25–0.8 million t/year	Containerized goods, food, machinery parts	Gwadar-to-Taftan inland bridge
Karachi / Port Qasim–Gwadar–Gabd	1,000–3,000 t/day	0.35–1.1 million t/year	Transshipped containers, food, consumer goods	Port-to-port relay

Source and Method Note: Author's scenario estimates based on the six designated routes under the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, route geography, likely truck-based throughput assumptions, port–road–border constraints, and the constrained-capacity methodology used in EPINOVA–2026–PB-27. The ranges assume constrained truck-based movement using indicative loads of 25–40 tons per truck, adjusted for road security, customs clearance, border-processing capacity, port congestion, and partial utilization. The figures are analytical bounds, not official Pakistani or Iranian capacity data.

At the system level, the corridor's working capacity is likely to fall around 3,000–8,000 tons per day, or approximately 1.1–2.9 million tons per year. Under favorable conditions, an upper constrained range of 10,000–15,000 tons per day may be possible, equivalent to roughly 3.6–5.5 million tons per year.

Route-level estimates should not be mechanically summed. As PB-27 emphasizes, constrained logistics systems do not operate as simple additive networks: effective throughput is reduced by node bottlenecks, channel coupling, intermodal delays, and nonlinear failure dynamics. In the Pakistan case, the key limiting factors are likely to be border-processing capacity, trucking coordination, cargo documentation, security risk, and the ability of Pakistani ports to handle Iran-bound third-country cargo without creating secondary congestion.

5. Cargo Categories

The Pakistan corridor is most relevant for selective, continuity-preserving cargo, not high-volume replacement trade. Its strongest value lies in goods that can be moved by container, truck, bonded transit, air cargo, or limited intermodal transfer through Pakistani ports and border exits. The corridor is therefore better suited to food security, humanitarian supply, repair-cycle support, and high-value replenishment than to bulk maritime substitution.

Table 4. Cargo Types and Corridor Suitability

Cargo Type	Suitability	Best Route / Mode	Strategic Value
Food and basic consumer goods	High	Karachi / Port Qasim / Gwadar to Gabd or Taftan	Stabilizes basic consumption and reduces short-term social pressure
Medical and humanitarian goods	High	Air–land or Gwadar–Gabd	Preserves critical social resilience and emergency response capacity
Industrial inputs and spare parts	Medium	Karachi / Port Qasim–Taftan	Supports repair cycles, maintenance, and selective production continuity
Construction and infrastructure materials	Medium	Inland heavy road route to Taftan	Supports infrastructure continuity but remains constrained by weight and road capacity
High-value components and electronics	Medium–High	Air–land; future rail-enabled rear area	Maintains selective technological inputs and time-sensitive replenishment
Bulk strategic commodities	Low–Medium	Karachi / Port Qasim–Taftan	Possible in limited volumes, but constrained by trucking, border handling, and security
Energy connectivity / pipeline gas	Not current freight	Iran–Pakistan pipeline layer, if activated	Long-term energy-security relevance, not immediate goods throughput

Source: Author's assessment based on route geography, likely modal suitability, Pakistan's six designated transit routes, PB-42's distinction between land–sea corridors and air replenishment, and PB-27's constrained-capacity logic. The table identifies plausible cargo suitability, not verified commodity flows.

Overall, the corridor is most useful for goods that matter disproportionately to system continuity despite limited volume. Food, medicine, consumer staples, spare parts, and high-value components can help slow depletion and preserve minimum viable flow. By contrast, heavy bulk commodities and energy flows remain constrained by road capacity, border processing, and the fact that the Iran–Pakistan pipeline is a latent infrastructure layer rather than an active freight channel.

6. Pakistan as a Third-Country Transit Platform

Pakistan's most important role is not simply as a supplier, but as a third-country transit state. Under the 2026 transit order, external cargo can enter Pakistan through seaports, airports, or future rail-linked nodes, then move onward by road toward Iran through Gabd or Taftan. This shifts Pakistan's role from bilateral trade partner to southeastern logistics platform.

Table 5. Potential Source Countries and Regions for Pakistan-Based Iran Transit

Source Country / Region	Feasibility	Likely Pakistan Entry	Likely Iran Exit	Cargo Fit	Main Constraint
China	High commercial relevance; medium Iran-bound feasibility	Karachi, Port Qasim, Gwadar; future CPEC-linked routes	Gabd / Taftan	Machinery, electronics, components, medical goods	Sanctions screening, final-destination risk
Gulf re-export hubs: UAE, Oman, Qatar	Medium	Karachi / Port Qasim / Gwadar	Gabd / Taftan	Food, consumer goods, spare parts, medical goods	Political sensitivity, banking exposure
Southeast Asia: Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam	Medium–High	Sea freight to Pakistani ports	Gabd / Taftan	Palm oil, rice, food products, light industrial goods	Documentation, insurance
South Asia: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka	Medium	Karachi / Port Qasim	Gabd / Taftan	Textiles, tea, food, consumer goods	Port handling, customs bonding
India	Low politically; medium geographically	Theoretical sea entry to Pakistani ports	Gabd / Taftan	Pharmaceuticals and civilian goods, if legally and politically permitted	India–Pakistan political restrictions; sanctions and licensing risk
Central Asia	Medium for rerouted goods	Overland or sea-linked rerouting	Taftan / Gabd	Grain, cotton, fertilizers	Existing Central Asia–Iran routes are more direct
Russia	Low–Medium	Sea to Pakistani ports	Gabd / Taftan	Grain, industrial inputs	Caspian route is more direct
Europe	Low–Medium	Sea freight or humanitarian channels	Gabd / Taftan	Medical goods, industrial equipment	Export controls, sanctions compliance
East Africa	Medium	Sea to Karachi / Gwadar	Gabd / Taftan	Food, livestock-related goods, agricultural products	Port reliability, insurance
Humanitarian organizations	Medium–High for permitted goods	Air or sea into Pakistan	Gabd / Taftan	Medicine, emergency food, relief goods	End-use verification

Source: Author's assessment based on the third-country transit logic of the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, Pakistan's port and border geography, likely trade-source compatibility, and sanctions / documentation constraints. The table identifies plausible source regions and cargo categories, not confirmed transit flows.

Pakistan's highest practical value is likely for China, Southeast Asia, Gulf re-export hubs, and humanitarian suppliers, where sea–land or air–land transit through Pakistan can support selective Iran-bound flows. It is less efficient for Russia and Central Asia, which already have more direct northern or northeastern routes to Iran. It remains politically constrained for India and some Gulf actors, where diplomatic, banking, licensing, and sanctions exposure may limit actual use.

7. The Energy Layer: Iran–Pakistan Gas Pipeline and Hydrocarbon Connectivity

The Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline should be included in PB-43 as a separate energy-infrastructure layer, not as part of the six designated goods-transit routes. Its relevance lies in long-term strategic coupling rather than immediate freight movement.

If revived, the pipeline could broaden the Pakistan–Iran corridor from a goods-transit arrangement into a wider energy-security interface. It would not move food, containers, or industrial inputs, but it could deepen bilateral interdependence, reduce Pakistan's energy vulnerability, and create a more durable infrastructure link between Iran and Pakistan.

According to public reporting, Iran has completed its side of the pipeline, while Pakistan has not completed construction on its section and continues to face sanctions, financing, construction, and demand-related obstacles. Based on that status, the pipeline should not be counted as immediate cargo throughput.

It is better treated as a latent energy-security layer that could deepen Pakistan–Iran interdependence if sanctions, financing, construction, and political constraints are resolved. A future oil or fuel corridor may be analyzed as a potential hydrocarbon extension, but not as an operational component of the 2026 goods-transit order.

8. Strategic Assessment

Pakistan's corridor system has four strategic effects.

- **Regionalizes Hormuz pressure.** Cargo can enter through Pakistani ports rather than Iranian ports, shifting enforcement from maritime chokepoint control to a wider port–road–border monitoring problem.
- **Extends Iran's minimum-flow capacity.** Even limited daily movement of food, medicine, spare parts, and basic goods can slow the conversion of blockade pressure into domestic supply stress.
- **Increases documentation complexity.** Third-country transit requires monitoring of cargo origin, end use, bills of lading, customs guarantees, bonded movement, trucking records, and border clearance.
- **Expands the logistics surface.** Enforcement can no longer focus only on vessels entering Iranian waters; it must also track Pakistani seaports, airports, inland corridors, border crossings, and potential energy infrastructure.

9. Policy Implications

- **Shift monitoring from maritime traffic to logistics systems.** Key indicators include activity at Karachi, Port Qasim, Gwadar, Gabd, Taftan, Quetta / Lakpass, Dalbandin, Nokundi, bonded cargo movements, air-cargo intake, port congestion, and border-clearance rates.
- **Focus pressure on bottlenecks rather than whole corridors.** The most important vulnerabilities are customs interfaces, port clearance systems, border exits, fuel availability, trucking capacity, insurance, and bank guarantees—not the long road segments alone.

- **Interpret air–land movement as a critical-input channel.** It is not a bulk-trade solution; its value lies in medicine, electronics, communications equipment, precision components, and time-sensitive parts.
- **Treat China–Pakistan rail connectivity as a future enabling layer.** It should not be counted as a current Iran-bound corridor unless formal linkage or operational evidence appears.
- **Treat the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline as a long-term energy-security variable.** Its strategic relevance is high, but its current operational contribution to logistics capacity remains limited.

10. Limitations

This brief has several limitations. The capacity estimates are scenario-based bounds rather than real-time operational measurements, and should be read as plausible throughput ranges under constrained conditions. Although the six routes are legally designated, actual flow will depend on customs implementation, port clearance, road security, trucking availability, insurance, bank guarantees, and border-processing capacity.

The analysis also cannot verify cargo composition from route designation alone. It identifies plausible cargo categories, but does not claim confirmed commodity flows. Finally, the China–Pakistan rail and Iran–Pakistan energy layers should be treated as enabling or latent layers, not as active seventh or eighth freight routes unless supported by formal linkage or operational evidence.

Conclusion

Pakistan’s Iran transit opening does not break Hormuz pressure. It changes its geography.

The six designated routes create a legal and operational framework for third-country goods to move through Pakistan toward Iran. Gwadar, Karachi, Port Qasim, Gabd, and Taftan become part of a southeastern logistics architecture capable of supporting limited but persistent flows under constraint.

This system is best understood as a 6+1+1+2 architecture: six designated land routes, one potential China–Pakistan rail enabling layer, one Iran–Pakistan energy-infrastructure layer, and two multimodal extensions through air–land and sea–land movement.

It cannot reproduce Persian Gulf maritime capacity. But it can preserve minimum viable flow, support food and basic-goods continuity, maintain selected industrial inputs, and complicate blockade enforcement. Its strategic value lies not in replacing Hormuz, but in delaying threshold collapse.

Pakistan is therefore not merely a neighboring trade partner. It is becoming a southeastern logistics switchboard within Iran’s wider threshold-delaying supply system.