



The Geo-Strategic Importance of Pakistan and its Role in Regional Politics

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Abstract:

The geographical location of a country is one of the important determinants that define its role in world politics. Having an important strategic location, Pakistan remains important for power games in the world generally and in South Asia particularly. The current study is an attempt to discuss the strategic and geographical importance of Pakistan and its role in regional politics. Pakistan is a gateway to East Asia from the western side and to Central Asia from the eastern side. Furthermore, it is a neighbor of China which is one of the important game players in regional and international politics. CPEC is the regional project of China to peruse its economic and strategic interest in South Asia. Pakistan is located in a region that has a great political, economic and strategic location. It has been hub of activities of great powers for the last 20 years. It has witnessed the intervention of three great powers i-e Britain, USSR, and USA. Its significance was further enhanced during the cold war when it becomes an ally of US containment policy of USSR and now the post-cold war era has witnessed its significance particularly after the events of 9/11. Pakistan is playing a pivotal role as a front-line state in the US War on Terror. The US experts also accepted the fact that peace in Afghanistan is not possible without the help of Pakistan and the US cannot win the war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, Geo-Strategic location, Regional, Power Player, Regional, USA.

INTRODUCTION

The geographical location of any country determines its role in world politics. Geographical setting by itself can be a sole factor to sort out the strength and weakness of any country's position in the region as well as in the world (Hasnat, 2012). It can be politically, economically, and socially, beneficial or harmful for other countries. Pakistan's geographical location is God Gifted. "While history has been unkind with Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit." (Stephen Cohn) (Rizvi, 1993). Pakistan is located at a very significant point because of its easy access to the energy rich countries. The country is surrounded by big powers like China, India, and energy rich countries like Iran and Afghanistan. These factors strengthen the strategic importance of Pakistan in

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international world politics. Its proximity to Arabian Peninsula (an oil-rich region); access to central Asia and Horn of Africa is its strategic importance. In the Strategic context, major powers like China and USA have their interests and allies towards Pakistan which adds to its importance in the world if it would not be overshadowed with rivals' propagandas of making Pakistan's image worst. Moreover, in economic terms, Pakistan has signed CPEC with the rising power which is going to benefit the economy of both parties. It is an important project for both Pakistan and China. It will help China to find new markets for its services and goods. Furthermore, it will also provide a short, secure, and alternate route to import energy. CPEC will help Pakistan to connect with the international world as its regional location is important as a transit point connecting South Asia, South East Asia and Eurasian region.

GEOGRAPHICAL COMPULSION OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan is an important country due to its geographical location. It is a gateway to Central Asia and the Middle East increases its significance. Pakistan shares its border length 6,774 KM with four important countries. Pakistan in the east shares its border with India, while in the west with Iran and Afghanistan and China is located at the North West. Besides, from the three sides, it is covered by the land and in the south the Arabian Sea increases its significance. Here each of them is discussed in detail.

In the northeast, China shares 523 KM long border with Pakistan although it was changed in different agreements like in 1961 and 1965. In 1963, between Pakistan and China a famous agreement was held name Sino-Pakistan Frontier or Sino-Pakistan agreement, which determined the border between both countries. Pakistan shares almost 2912 KM official border with India which was decided on 17 August 1947 by Sir Cyril Radcliffe who was the chairman of the Indo-Pakistan Boundary commission and was named Radcliffe line. On the Grand Trunk Road (Lahore to Amritsar) between Pakistan and India Wagah is a crossing point which is an important place between the two countries. Wagah is actually a village that became the separating point during the division of the borders. It is also famous for the lowering of the flag ceremony witnessed by the large crowd every evening from both sides. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is called Durand line which is 2430 KM long. The Durand line was demarcated in an agreement on November 12, 1893 between British Empire and Afghanistan. The agreement was signed between Sir Mortimer Durand, a secretary of the British Indian government, and Abdurrahman Khan, the Ameer, or the ruler of Afghanistan (Schons, 2011). Pakistan shares 909 KM long border with Iran which is known as Pakistan-Iran Barrier. Iran constructed 3 feet thick and 10 feet high concrete wall to stop the flow of illegal border crossing. Although, it was opposed by both sides of Baloch people that the wall would create difficulties for them. In the South of Pakistan, there is an Arabian Sea with a coastline of 1046 KM. The Indus River which is the longest river in Pakistan drains out in the Arabian Sea. The Sea is of great importance due to the trade between Pakistan and rest of the World. Gwadar and Karachi ports are major ports for conducting trade (Dawn, 2009).

Pakistan is surrounded by major countries of the world with their unique importance which increases its implications due to its geostrategic position. Due to its location, it was of great importance in the Cold war era. Pakistan considered a pass route to Central Asia and the Middle East which boosted its political importance in the international arena. The Frontier Area of Pakistan has a great strategic position between South Asia and southwest Asian countries making

boundaries on the Persian Gulf and the Central Asian Republic, tribal Area of Afghanistan, and Xinjing province in China (Robinson, 1989). Geo-politically, Pakistan occupies an important central position in the strategic context of the Middle East in general and the Gulf sub-region in particular because its presence at the Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz, Coast Line of Arabia, Indian Ocean, and close to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) enhances the geopolitical opportunity for Pakistan's standing in regional and world politics. Cold War itself provided an opportunity for Pakistan to get maximum benefits and support in terms of economic and military aids against India in regional and world politics and also brought a challenging and demanding situation to play an active role against the world's second superpower.

POLITICAL IMPORTANCE

Due to location, natural resources, and strategic importance, since independence, Pakistan is fulfilling the interests of many major powers. Location is perhaps most important than size as it tends to make a state a land power or a sea power. It also affects national unity and is important from an administration and cultural point of view. In this perspective it is larger than the developed countries like UK, France, Japan and population is less than Malaysia and Indonesia. In this regard, Pakistan is quite enough for its inhabitants and their uses like infrastructure, agriculture, motorways, industries, forestry etc (Farooq, & Munir, 2009). The US has many interests in the region like the containment of China growth, terrorism in Afghanistan, and the Nuclear program of Iran. While the huge market of India is also a source of attraction for the US. The main focus of the US in South Asia is Business and security issues and the US also wanted to show its presence in the region.

The event of 9/11 changed the strategic importance of Pakistan, which brought the United States to the doorstep of China to counterbalance the Chinese ideology. Due to its location, Pakistan's importance increased in this situation. Pakistan attracted more attention and became closer to China due to its long-term interests in the shape of CPEC (Rahman, 2014). In the expansion of China's energy and economic interests in the influence of the US traditional sphere, Pakistan served as a force multiplier. Pakistan played a significant role in the war of the United States against terrorism as a front-line state due to its geographical position in the region. United States and India both have a common interest to stop and counter the growth of China in the region which is going to be the economic power in the world. Pakistan is involved in these changing geopolitics especially after the Al Qaeda operations. US think tanks have accepted this fact repeatedly that we cannot win the war against terrorism without the help of Pakistan. Pakistan has successfully done several operations in Waziristan, and other Tribal areas to counter terrorism. Although Pakistan paid its price in form of economic and military loss due to which Pakistan is still facing problems in Baluchistan province and some parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also became a threat to the IPI gas pipeline. Due to the tension between US and Iran and the negative role of India and due to the instability of the government the point got strength.

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

“While history has been unkind with Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit.” (Stephen Cohn).

Pakistan has a pivotal role in the geopolitics of the world due to its strategic location, defense consideration as well as framing of foreign policy. Due to strategic location, it is also considered as a window of strategic opportunity. There are many factors that increase the importance of Pakistan in international politics. Pakistan has a significant position in South Asia with its proximity to Arabian Peninsula. It also has easy access to Central Asia and Africa which made Pakistan an unavoidable and attractive country for regional and global powers (Arshad, 2019). From the cold war to the present day, location of Pakistan played a significant role in its importance.

PROXIMITY OF GREAT POWERS

Pakistan is located at the junction of the great powers. Due to its geographical location, Pakistan became a flashpoint for world big powers like China, USA, and Russia. The soil of Pakistan has always been exploited by these powers on different occasions for gaining their purposes. The Russian invasion in Afghanistan was only to get access to the warm water and Pakistan was used as a buffer state (Daily Times, 2019). China being neighbor country of Pakistan and the rising power of the world always desired to contain the US policies in South Asia and China Pakistan allies are always a major threat for the US policies in the region. Pakistan is also a need of China for their economic expansion. So, in this context, Pakistan is significant for China in the political and economic context (Naseer & Amin, 2015). Pakistan always remained an open country for the US throughout history, especially in the case of Afghanistan and the war against terror. Pakistan has remained American Non-NATO and played the role of the front-line state against the war of Terrorism. It is accepted by different US politicians and experts that Afghanistan peace is not possible without the help of Pakistan. Therefore, the position of Pakistan is considered as most significant to protect the interests of the United States in the region (Arshad, 2019).

A GATEWAY TO CENTRAL ASIA (OIL AND ENERGY GAME)

Central Asia is the most important region in Asia because of its location and resources. It has political, strategic, and economic significance in the region. Therefore, it has always remained a state of attraction for the global and regional powers (Khan & Elahi, 2016). Pakistan has importance due to providing a natural link to the Central Asian States. It connects Central Asia to the SCO states, South Asia and the Arabian Sea. The former President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf several times offered the route for energy transaction and trade purposes (Musharraf, 2006). In 1991, Soviet Union disintegrated and emerged states like i.e. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. With the 4 Million square Kilometer having a population of 64.7 million (Javaid & Rasid, 2015). And due to its strategic importance, it is also called 'Heart of Asia' (Adnan & Fatima, 2015) and most importantly it has accessibility in Eurasia and endows with the cross border-mobility.

However, these are landlocked states therefore they relied on other regions like West Asia, South Asia, and East Asia. For trade with the international world, the Central Asian states are mainly dependent on Russia. For sure the southern region is a good option to overcome the land lock status. But because of the geographical location of Pakistan CARs can utilize their land. There are three contending discourses of the Pakistan foreign policy towards the CARs: To follow the hegemonic discourse, and to defend the principle of unipolarity. While the policy of diversification and unipolar cum multipolar world is the second discourse. Another discourse is about

strengthening and developing the relationship with great powers like China and Russia to advance its policy's options to Central Asia. The last one is to develop the ideological relation with Muslim states. Through Bin Qassim and Gwadar port Pakistan can provide the shortest and easy route to these energy rich countries. The location of Pakistan is playing the role of bridge between Central and South Asia. Moreover, for the Central Asian States it can be significant as trade and energy corridor. For the trade of oil and gas, Pakistan can offer road and rail links to connect with the international market (Cheema, 2011). Instability in Afghanistan is very harmful and a hurdle in the way of development of the region (Javaid & Rashid, 2015).

In the development of human society, geographical environment plays a significant role. And the most important geographical atmosphere is the sea. Water occupies three-quarters of the earth's surface. In international politics, the great power will compete each other in securing of the sea routes which will be used for transportation purposes. As in the contemporary world, there is competition in world powers for control of ports, choke points, and connecting routes. In the near future this contest will deepen. Due to the abundance of the natural resources, the Indian Ocean already became the stage of geopolitical competition.

Stretching from west to South, Pakistan has a long coastline with the Arabian Sea i.e. 1100 KM long. Transit of the Ships is 36000 Annually in Pakistan while the annual rate of the trade of Pakistan is 38 million tons out of which 96 percent is carried out by sea. While 68 percent occurs through port Qassim which is the busiest port in Pakistan. The total trade in 2015 increased up to 91 million tons. Like Dubai Port, the Gwadar port is also a duty-free port located at an important strategic point and will be used for cargo services with a capacity of 91 million tons. Within five years the port will be South Asian biggest port and by 2030 it will be capable of handling 400 million tons of cargo annually (Arifeen, 2018). The shipping activity will increase phenomenally at existing ports. The seaports are of great importance due to their link with the international world. Pakistan's economy can be raised through these commercial activities and will be helpful in the framing of the main commercial hub (Malik, 2012).

The geographical position of the Gwadar port is significant. It is located in Baluchistan on the coastline of the Arabian sea. It also has importance due to the Persian Gulf and it will soon become the hub of international trade and regional shipping. It has the capacity of the commercial and industrial center because it is located at the deep seaport. It is a part of the CPEC project of China. Through Gwadar Port, Pakistan is connecting with energy-rich resources region of the world. Among these important are Central Asia, China, South Asia, Iran, Russia, and Magnolia. While the Gwadar port is considered as the rival of the Iran and Gulf state. Gwadar port will be a great competitor of Dubai and Chabahar like Hong Kong and Singapore. In the development of the Gwadar Port, the interest of Dubai and Iran is divergent. While for India and the US the Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea near Strait of Hormuz and Gulf is of great worry. They are considering the Chinese presence in this region a threat to their interests due to Central Asian republics and Middle East (Jamali, 2013).

Afghanistan is a land lock country. The country has abundant natural resources. However, these resources are not exploited yet. But it has some exports like textile, agriculture, and steel, etc. and exploited its resources to be dependent on the donor countries. For export and import, it is depending on Pakistan, which is a very easy transit trade route (Matinuddin, 1991). Central Asian

republics states need short routes to supply oil and gas. But they are still dependent on Russia in this context (Blank, 2009). They need another route out from the influence of Russia for export of natural resources. For this, there are two economically feasible routes one is Gwadar and other is Chabahar. Due to sanctions from America and torched relation with Iran the Chabahar is not favorable, so the Gwadar port is the more viable route for the trade with these states for international world.

GWADAR PORT

Gwadar port is the deep sea port of the world and is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The Strait of Hurmuz is near the port at a distance of 180 nautical miles which connects the Oman and Persian Gulf. Gwadar port is near the three important energy-rich areas Middle East, Central Asia, and the Gulf States. These areas contribute a huge number of oil, gas and other sources of energy to the world. Gwadar port will be the trade transit point and economic hub not only for Pakistan but for Afghanistan, Middle East, and Central Asian Countries. Gwadar will be very helpful in making Pakistan an economic and trade center in the international world. Pakistan Government is interested in the developing of Gwadar Port and making it a link from east and west. It will not only be significant for Pakistan but will be able to change the fate of the whole region (Musharraf address, 2002).

The development of human society depends on the geographical environment. The sea plays an important role in today's world because it occupies most of the parts of the world. It is considered that the next competition among the great powers will be sea routes as today's world is struggling for controlling the ports, chock points, and connecting routes. Due to the rich resources and trade importance the Indian Ocean has become the stage of international competition. The countries attached to the ocean are already taking advantages of its location.

Stretching from west to south Pakistan has long coastline with Arabian Sea 1100 KM long. Transit of the Ships is 36000 Annually in Pakistan while the annual rate of the trade of Pakistan is 38 million tons out of which 96 percent is carried out by sea. Port Qassim handles 32 percent while Karachi port takes care of 68 percent of the sea trade. The total trade in 2015 increased up to 91 million tons. Like Dubai Port, the Gwadar port is also a duty-free port located at an important strategic point and with a cargo capacity of one million tons. Within five years the port will be the South Asian biggest port and by 2030 it will be capable of handling 400 million tons of cargo annually (Rizvi, 1993).

The geographical location of the Gwadar port is very important. It is located in Baluchistan on the coastline of the Arabian sea. It has importance due to Persian Gulf and it will soon become the hub of international trade and regional shipping under the shade of the CPEC. Through Gwadar Port, Pakistan is connecting with energy rich region of the world. Among these important are Central Asia, China, South Asia, Iran, Russia, and Magnolia. While the Gwadar port is considered as the rival of the Iran and Gulf state. Gwadar port will be a great competitor of Dubai and Chabahar like Hong Kong and Singapore. In the development of the Gwadar Port, the interest of Dubai and Iran is divergent. While, for India and the US the Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea near the Strait of Hurmuz and Gulf is of great worry. They are considering the Chinese presence in this region a threat to their interests due to Central Asian republics and Middle East (Jamali, 2013).

Gwadar port will be helpful for China because its western region is at a large distance from Sea and less developed as compared to other provinces. Furthermore, for the development and growth of the Chinese economy and military strength China needs to keep a good relationship with its neighbors. Due to which they are paying more attention to the western region as they develop the trade to 33 billion dollars from 22.8 billion dollars of the western province which is connected to Pakistan. Chinese government is also developing tourism in this part. Western province of China is like Baluchistan because it has a very low population which is about 23 % while area is 56 % of total China. There is abundant natural resources still the province is less developed. Now China is paying more attention and investing a huge amount of money for the development of this province (Jamali, 2013). Gwadar port has a great significance due to its location. It has protentional to become a trade and economic center. But some power has a great influence in the region, and they wanted to utilize it for their interest. There is an abundance of natural resources in Afghanistan. A huge amount of it is unexplored. For the utilization of resources and exports like textile, agriculture, and steel it is dependent on Pakistan. Due to its dependency Pakistan can get benefit from it (Matinuddin, 1991).

US and Indian activities can be observed in the Indian Ocean with the presence of the Chines in the chock point of the Gulf (Nixon, 1980) and it is important strategically for the Naval power of Chines (Yeuh, 1972). Most importantly it will reduce the distance from 1000 KM to 2500 KM and will reduce the cost of expanding trade with Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East (Khalid, 2009). The energy rich Caspian region can be accessed through Gwadar, avery short and an easy alternative route which will also be significant for the fate of the Western province of China Xingjiang. Xingjiang is less developed, and this route will help in the development of the western part of China.

By every year the Chinese economy is growing with a nine percent growth rate. While the GNP rate is 7.3 percent and the volume of trade is \$1.76 trillion US trade. It is expected that China in future will be an economic superpower in the world of technology nd trade. They are redesigning their fiscal program to become a permanent supplier to these countries to which they are connected through different routes because of their abundant production. China is a string member of the World Trade Organization due to which their their policies are influential. China has a policy of becoming a world great economic power and they are focusing on regional development. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chinese government is emphasizing on determined and pragmatic policies to become a great economic power in the world. The Central Asian Republican states need economically workable pipeline itineraries. These states are dependent on Russia (Blank, 2009). To access the international market, and energy rich resources regions, expanding trade with other countries without affecting from Russian Influence Chines need and safe way. Keeping this in the mind, there are two available options for China. One is Chabahar in Iran and the other one is Gwadar through Pakistan. Iran is a hard option for China because of the growing tension of Iran and international politics and the presence of India a tough competitor in the region. So, the Gwadar port is the best and easily available option for China.

AFGHANISTAN FACTOR

Afghanistan is located at the center of Asia, which is land lock country. Afghanistan shares its south and east boundaries with Pakistan. It has always been a center of the foreign invaders and suffered

a lot in internal civil wars. It was invaded by Russia in 1979 and later on in 2001 by the US. It has always been exploited by great powers for their purposes, which created a lot of problems for Afghanistan like terrorism, drug trafficking, smuggling, and religious extremism. These problems not only hurdled in the way of Afghanistan's development but also affected the neighboring countries especially Pakistan. Pak-Afghan relation has always remained tense throughout the history. Pakistan always wanted stability and peace in Afghanistan because Pakistan is the only country that suffered most from the instability in Afghanistan. Geostrategic, stable, peaceful and friendly Afghanistan is the need of Pakistan because of its border and social, cultural and religious connectivity to Pakistan. Stable Afghanistan is the need of Pakistan.

South Asia is always being a center of attraction for the great powers of the world due to its strategic importance and energy resources. Afghanistan has always remained a hub for these powers. Being an immediate neighbor, Pakistan always affected by the intervention of the great powers in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a land lock country and it always relied on Pakistan for trade purposes through Karachi port. It is big leverage with Pakistani authorities. Stable Afghanistan is a need for enabling the Oil and Gas pipeline from Central Asian states because it passes through Afghanistan and lined to Gwadar (Sahni, 2019). However, there is a great market in the Central Asian Republics States for Pakistani goods and on another side Pakistan can utilize the Gwadar Port for import and export with these states. The stability in Afghanistan is also significant for Pakistan's trade with the Central Asian States. By stability Pakistan will open a trade route for these states. Pakistan lost this due to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. The project of oil and gas pipeline is very important for CARs and this project is dependent on the peace and stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan (Ottaway & Lieven, 2002).

CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

The economy of China is growing at a consistent speed in comparison to other greater economies of the world. It gives China an influential role in the international political system. China has launched programs and projects to reduce the distance of the world and increase international economic engagement and trade across the continents of the globe by cooperation in economic fields. To achieve the objective China is concentrating on the idea of cooperation and the development of global infrastructure (Asif, 2018). The "One Built One Rout" was a huge economic development project started by China in 2014. In this project, China is investing about three million dollars in the development of infrastructure in sixty-eight countries of the world. This drive is aimed at the revitalization of the ancient Silk Road which was at its best functioning conditions at the time of Han Dynasty from 207 BCE to 220 CE. It was a means of connection among many countries of the world. The caravans from China to Africa, Europe, and the Middle East traveled through Central Asia and South Asia. The accomplishment of the project will be a renewal of the ancient Silk Route with modern seaports, roads, railway lines, pipelines with liquid and gas energy, and fiber-optic. The program will be accompanied by the development of energy, industrial and agricultural centers in the shareholders of the projects. All these centers will be linked to Chinese institutions (Farr, 2017).

CPEC is part of the greater plan of China to manage a global integration mechanism. It is a mutual project of China and Pakistan to build a seaport, construct roads and stretch railway lines across Pakistan to accelerate trade and economic activities in the region. It will provide an opportunity for Pakistan to utilize the environment for its grave needs. The CPEC is providing Pakistan with an

opportunity to be connected to a web of energy to fulfill its dire needs of energy to support its economy (Ahmed & Malik, 2017). The CEPC was initially allocated by China with US\$46 billion. Geographically it is destined to connect Kashgar, which is located in Xinjiang to Gilgit-Baltistan and then to Gwadar, which one of the few seaports of the world (CEPC, 2019). This 3000-kilometer-long road is estimated to be completed by 2030. It will enable access of China to Indian Ocean to avoid the problematic route of Strait of Malacca due to its tensions with regional and international actors.

There are six corridors in the One Built One Route project. These corridors are extended on thousands of kilometers and railway tracks supported by facilitation and logistics centers. CEPC is the number five corridor and the most important of all due to its strategic position in the region on economic and military grounds. The corridor consists of 3,700-kilometer roads and 2000 kilometers railway lines. It is connected to another corridor. It facilitates the land-locked countries of Afghanistan and Central Asian regions to have access to the sea (Hali, nd). This project has a deep-sea port which will help China with its economic and military imperatives. The need to construct the corridor was felt a decade before by China to avoid the long, risky, expensive, and full of threats sea route for trade and transportation. This corridor is not financed by the Silk Route fund or by the AIIB (Reuters, 2015).

The project has enormous importance for China. After the construction of CEPC, China will be contented in any natural disaster, global adversities or war like situations in the Indian Ocean or eastwards, about its trade with west and Africa and the flow of oil import from the Middle East will remain uninterrupted in any situation. Political instability, deteriorated law and order situation of Pakistan, and the volatile conditions of the province of Xingjian, has never deterred China from pursuing the construction of the CPEC project. China is aimed to counter the evil of terrorism by constructing infrastructure and elevating the living standards of the people of Pakistan. Terrorism is considered the major obstacle by international observers in the development of CEPC. China is the only country in the world which has invested such a huge sum of \$46 billion in Pakistan at a single installment. The USA is considered the main supporter of the economy of Pakistan but its investment in Pakistan has never been so massive and in a single move. If the amount announced and allocated, is invested in the estimated 15 years it will be equal to the entire collective gross direct foreign investment in Pakistan since 1970 (Sherani, 2015). CEPC is stretched through all the length of Pakistan which will bring a compounding economic impact on the country.

TURKMENISTAN-AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN-INDIA PIPELINE (TAPI)

TAPI is a proposed pipeline project among Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. Its funding source is Asian Development Bank. The cost estimated for this gas pipeline project is \$ 7.6 billion. In this mechanism, the gas will be transported in pipelines from the Central Asian republic of Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and finally to India. Eight percent revenue of this project will be received by Afghanistan. Pakistan and Turkmenistan were the signatories to the founding MOU between the two governments in 1995 (Javaid & Rashid, 2015). In the year 2008, an agreement of TAPI was signed by India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. The vision for the project was to stretch more than a thousand miles' gas pipeline, connecting the natural gas reserves of Central Asian republic, Turkmenistan, to the energy-stressed regions of the South Asia (Souza & Mariet, 2014).

IRAN-PAKISTAN INDIA GAS PIPELINE

It is a gas pipeline project among Iran, Pakistan and India. The length of this line is 2,775 kilometers and its estimated cost is \$7.4 billion. The completion of the project will change the political dynamics of the South Asian Region. IPI pipeline project is estimated to get completed in a span of 3 to 5 years. IPI will pump 60 million standard cubic meters of gas daily to Pakistan for the fulfillment of its stressing energy needs. On the other hand, it will pump 90 mms' cm gas to India to fulfill its energy needs. The pipeline source point is Assaluyeh which is also known as the South Pars gas field. This gas pipeline is stretched on more than one thousand and hundred kilometers with a diameter of 56 inches. Then the line enters Pakistan passing the area of Khuzdar and Multan or it travels along the coastal line of Pakistan to reach India.

PAKISTAN SHARES MARINE BORDER WITH OMAN

Oman is the closest Arab neighbor of Pakistan. Its population is about 4.4 million (CIA, 2019). It is predominantly inhabited by Ibadiyaa Muslims and is the only state of the Ibadiyaa Muslim in the entire world (CIA, 2019). The sect of Muslims in Oman is different from that of Sunni and Shia Muslims as these two sects have extreme views about each other while the version of Islam practiced in Oman in the shape of Ibadiyaa is more tolerating, peaceloving and promoting co-existence for other sects and religions of the world. The believers or followers of other faiths have been permitted to form their prayer houses to facilitate practices of their respective religions. Oman shares its frontiers with Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Both Muslim neighboring countries have cordial and long-lasting relations with the rest of the Arab world. Both states have very same stances on regional as well as international issues. That is way they have remained so to accommodate sustaining durable relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia (Mishra, 2017).

Oman shares historical linkages with Baluchistan. When the Omani Sultan bin Ahmad Busaidi was overthrown in 1784, he sailed to Baluchistan to seek help from Nasir Khan, the Khan of Qalat, for the recapturing of his lost kingdom (Beatrice & Jane, 2004). Nasir Khan denied the request and gave Sultan and his family asylum and provided him the land of Gwadar as jagir. At that time, it had no more value than a small fishing village (Beatrice & Jane, 2004). In the following years, Sultan managed to recapture his thrown in Muscat. He annexed Gwadar and made it a part of Oman. In 1958, Government of Pakistan purchased the area from Oman and was made a district of Baluchistan province of Pakistan in 1977 (Beatrice & Jane, 2004). Due to this background, Balochs were respected and accommodated with open heart in the state of Oman. At present Baloch are 20% of the total population of the state of Oman (Long, Ian, Gurahpal & Yunas, 2016). It is also said that the royal family of Oman is rooted in Baloch ancestry due to intermarriages. It is also said that the share of the people of Balochi origin in the army of Oman is about 40% (Long, Ian, Gurahpal & Yunas, 2016). In comparison, it will be concluded that the share of the people of Baluchistan is more in Oman than the army of Pakistan. Oman often arranges the army recruitment drives in districts of Panjgur, Kech and Gwadar (Dawn, 2019).

IMPORTANT LINK IN THE CHAIN OF MUSLIM COUNTRIES

Pakistan is located at a very significant position in the Muslim world. Its history, its ideological elevation, and its geo-strategic position make it significant not only in the Muslim world but in the

world in general too. The Muslim world has always been a cause of political, moral, and emotional support for Pakistan. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto extensively visited the Muslim countries of the world and tried to unite and integrate them as a single force against any adversary. At the climax of his episode, he arranged an Islamic Summit on February 1947 in Lahore. The first in Rabat was attended by 24 countries, while the second, in Pakistan was attended by 38 Muslim countries. Stanley Wolpert gives all the credit of arrangement and management of the second summit, to the personal efforts and energy of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. He terms it as the greatest triumph of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Farooq, 2014). It is generally believed that the sway of Pakistan is always weighted in the affairs of the Muslim world.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Pakistan is faced with the dilemma of terrorism since September 2001. It has engulfed more than 3500 security personals and 35000 citizens. It has left the infrastructure of Pakistan almost destructed with an additional \$67.93 billion direct economic loss (Ministry of Finance, 2010-2011). Terrorist activities and suicide attacks are routine matters. The law-and-order situation is at its bitter. In such an environment the foreign investors are hesitant to invest in Pakistan. Search operations against the terrorist, left, almost all the population of FATA and Sawat, internally displaced. The image of Pakistan was spotted by terrorism in the international community (Janaid, 2011). Terrorism was a risk to the survival of Pakistan. The direct and indirect damage done by the terrorist activities sums \$126.79 billion. After a decade of continuous wrestling with terrorism, Pakistan has been able to show continuous improvement and progress in the law and order of the country (Mustafa, 2018).

The war on terror was targeted at the eradication of global terrorism. It was further aimed at avenging on planer and participator of 9/11. The targets of America were the state which provided support to terrorist, terrorist activities, and organizations. It was quite difficult for the US to have a solo flight. It needed local partners to assist her in the war. Pakistan was a convenient choice. The main concern of the United States was to get the support of Pakistan against those countries that are helping the terrorist organizations. The partnership was a marriage of convenience and was based on divergent interests (Kayani, 2019).

America used terminologies like, "rough states" or "Weapon of Mass Destruction", "international terrorist organizations" and terrorism" (Record, 2003). Among all these Al-Qaeda with Osama Bin Laden was its prime objective. The American program for the attainment of its objectives was laid down in the statements of the 2002 and 2006 strategy security of the US. The GWOT started with "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan, the prime targets of the operation were the terrorists involved in the incident of 9/11. On the other hand, the attacks on Iraq were based on the allegation of having weapons of mass destruction (Stohl, 2019).

The geo-strategic location of Pakistan made it the most appropriate choice of US to be utilized as a front-line ally in the war on terror. Pakistan is the one among those few nations who had put in Afghanistan about the recognition of Taliban Government, however, due to the dramatically changing international political scenario; Pakistan took a U-turn in its relations with Taliban regime and become the front-line ally of USA in combating the evil of terrorism from the globe. This decision was also not easy to be taken as the northwestern part of Pakistan shares linguistic, ethnic,

and cultural ties with the people in Afghanistan across the border. That is why; it is generally believed that the people of the country were not happy with the government's decision to give side to US in her war against terrorism (Saima, 2011). The then president of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, on 19th September 2001 explained that there are 3 areas where America needs Pakistan assistance and help. The first thing is information and intelligence exchange, secondly, they need Pakistan space to use, thirdly, they need a logistic support from Pakistan. We may suspect the intentions of the government of USA, but their decision has the backing of the United Nations resolution of Security Council and General Assembly for the eradication of terrorism. A wrong decision at this critical time may produce the worst consequences and vice versa. The solidarity and integrity of Pakistan can be threatened by the negative results. The critical concerns like causes of Kashmir and strategic assets are endangered. Moreover, the state can cope up with the problems if we try to become politically committed, and strong.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of Pakistan's position and policies shows that, Pakistan is pursuing hedging strategies to counter all global and regional dynamics and challenges but not through violating the international laws and norms as India is doing in its strategies. Being a Muslim neighbor, Pakistan has helped Iran in times of need and even Afghanistan to overthrow USSR Government. It's helping many states in trade which is the signal of its good relations with certain countries. The international world is changing into multi-polar world due to the emergence of eminent powers like China, Russia, and Europe. They compete each other to win the race. At this time of need Pakistan is fulfilling the interests of two main powers in terms of economy and security. Their policies have also brought stability in the region as Pakistan is now busy with its own affairs and not take into account Indian propagandas else the region would experience another war. Concluding economic significance, Pakistan's economic allies with China will not only help traditional friend in economy but will also fulfill its own economic needs. It is recommended that Government must ensure the smooth functioning of trade routes and must first resolve the controversies related to CPEC. After analyzing the Geopolitical-Strategic and economic significance of the second largest nuclear power of South Asia it is now clear that on the international forum it must be given its prime position and this importance must be taken into consideration while taking any negative and positive steps towards Pakistan. So, that with the dynamic scenarios of international politics Pakistan would assist further those who will need help.

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