



Pakistan's Geo-Strategic Location: Prospects For Political And Economic Gains

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Abstract

Pakistan is a country that has an abundance of natural resources. It is a country which has all the weather. Pakistan's location can earn tremendous economic benefits but more than seven decades of independence what are the reasons that the country is still dependent on outside aid and loans for its running. Over the years, the loans have multiplied and so is the debt. Every leader comes to the office on the premise of freeing the country from the vicious circle of loans and debts, but these promises remain mere rhetoric. Every new Prime Minister takes higher loans than his predecessor and hence subjecting the country to ever-increasing conditionalities of the donor countries and organizations. Using the rational choice theory, this research, therefore, evaluates the reasons why Pakistan has not been able to take advantage of its location and resources and highlights the prospects for political and economic gains.

Keywords: South Asia, Strategic location, Economy, Policies, Political interests

Introduction:

In the South Asian region, Pakistan is situated at the crossroads between the resource-rich and resource-poor countries. Instead of utilizing the benefit of this geographical situation, political the administrations in Pakistan remained more focused on the political utility of the geographical placing and remained dependent on the aid that came as a result of an alliance mostly made with the US. If we look at the alliance made in the first Afghan war, we can see that it led to a chain of events over a decade and eventually with the dismemberment of the former Soviet Union resulted in the end of the "Cold War" and also ended the US interest in the region. The old strategic partnership between the US and Pakistan was re-evaluated by the US resulting in the weakening of the US-Pak relationship for the latest global setting did not allow. The nuclear endeavor of Pakistan became the main reason for this coldness in attitude. In October 1990, under the "Pressler Amendment" being a country-specific law; economic and military sanctions were levied on Pakistan. This law singled out Pakistan as the only nation on the nuclear issue. Another pronouncement in the "Pressler sanctions" included the US decision to deny Pakistan military apparatus worth about US\$ 1.2 billion, while the payments were made for this before 1990.

In 1992-93, relations were severely hampered when Washington imperiled Pakistan by labeling it as a state sponsoring terrorism. In 1993, more economic

sanctions were imposed on Pakistan under the “Missile Technology Control Regime” (MTCR) for allegedly obtaining “missile technology” from China. Resultantly, the consensual exchange became limited. The relationship went abating. The eccentricity of the US “non-proliferation policy in South Asia” was that while the stimulus for “proliferation” constantly came from India, it was Pakistan that was subjected to consequences; being restraints and proscriptions, rather than India. Absurdly, Pakistan became the target of restraints due to India’s explosion of a nuclear device in 1974. Meanwhile, the US non-proliferation rulings such as the 1976 “Symington Amendment” later revised in the 1977 “Glenn Amendment” which was called for ceasing either military or economic aid or both to any country that acquired nuclear enrichment materials devoid of full-scope safety measures. This meant India was omitted from the scope of American non-proliferation laws; however, it had already attained a reprocessing competence. The Pressler Amendment decreed in 1985, “specifically prohibited the US backing or any armed trades to Pakistan till the issuance of Annual Presidential Certification affirming Pakistan’s status regarding the possession of the explosive device. This certification was, however, denied to Pakistan in October 1990, prompting across-the-board sanctions against Pakistan” (Lodhi, 2009).

Pakistan and Afghanistan were left by the US on their own. Pakistan had to handle almost three million Afghan refugees. Furthermore, gun culture became common, and the abundance of narcotics as it was a popular business in Afghanistan and came as a package with refugees in Pakistan. Pakistan is still dealing with the problem of three million refugees who refuse to leave the country. In the nineties after the failure of efforts to have a coalition government in Afghanistan, Pakistan backed the Taliban regime for its pro-Pakistani stance, which was lacking among the prior Afghan political payers. After 9/11, the support had to be retracted for national interest in the changing global environment under tremendous international pressure more specifically the US pressure (Sultana, 2015). As the country remained dependent on external aid and economic packages, so it was imperative to make the political decision of joining the global war on terror. No doubt, national security, and the economy are linked with each other. A country with a weak economy cannot have strong security and a conventionally weak nuclear country has more reliance on nuclear weapons, which exacerbates the fragility of security in the region. The former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’ (USSR) disintegration proves to be a clear example in the absence of economic security, nuclear competence is not sufficient for the defense of a country. The former USSR possessed a huge number of nuclear weapons, arsenals, missiles, and state-of-the-art warheads, nonetheless it disintegrated without a single gun-shot, notwithstanding having the of the WARSAW pact and up-to-date armaments in its hands. The USSR, however, fragmented due to the economic failure, and thus, the world transformed from bipolar to unipolar.

With the declining economy and plethora of crises in Pakistan, the significant disintegration of one super-power cannot be disregarded, making the most important

factor, economic stability, entirely overlooked. Economic stability and energy crisis, if ignored, lead towards shaky national security. Economic cohesion and stability are most essential. The economic security of Pakistan is under grave threat, facing backlash due to the War on Terror (Government of Pakistan, 2011). Involvement in the global war on terror, on-call of the US, and frequent drone attacks by them in the tribal areas of Pakistan resulted in increased internal threats by the extremists and fundamentalists, the country's law and order situation started deteriorating. This resulted in a depressed growth rate, which reached the lowest of 3.7 percent in 2011-12 (Government of Pakistan, 2011). Without a doubt, the trajectory of development may be accelerated, thanks to significant potential in the industrial, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors. They are, on the other hand, severely impacted by power outages and frequent floods. Despite being a non-member partner of NATO, the War on Terror imposed on Pakistan in response to the situation in Afghanistan has proven to be economically damaging. Economic security has always been an important part of national security as military security depends upon it (IDSA, 2012). The GDP in the last decade remained constrained due to a humongous increase in security-related expenditure. (IDSA, 2012).

Before 9/11, a few incidents of violence took place in the country, however, they grew dramatically in the post-9/11 era. During the fight against terrorism, Pakistan's physical infrastructure has been badly destroyed, with major and far-reaching consequences for the country's economic security. Terrorists' primary goals are to degrade administrative, government, and security forces facilities. Terrorist assaults have occurred at mosques, checkpoints, communication towers, bridges, power generation centers, gas pipelines, schools, railway tracks, basic health units, video/CD/music stores, and barber shops, etc. Apart from unarmed innocent people, the policemen at police stations and the security forces personnel were correspondingly targeted. Malam Jabba Ski Resort, Swat, the Sheraton, Karachi, , Marriot, Islamabad, and Pearl Continental, Peshawar were among the five-star hotels targeted by extremists (Government of Pakistan, 2012). A terrible decline in foreign investment, flight of national capital, enormous unemployment ratio, the decline in industrial production, hyperinflation, and loss of physical substructure is imperative impacts on the economy and national security of Pakistan. Mathematically stated, the ratio of Pakistan's losses against US aid stands at 7:1 (IDSA, 2012). Although, these attacks have been decreased to a great degree due to the operations carried out by Pakistan's military in the affected areas and the end of the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan. Pakistan has paid a very heavy price both in terms of life and economy. The number of terrorist attacks has decreased considerably but has not diminished completely. To put its own house in order Pakistan needs to reevaluate its economic policy. According to rational choice, theory leaders make choices that suit their interests. This research seeks to analyze that in the case of Pakistan is how rational were the decisions made by various leaders.

Reevaluating Economic Policy: Long-term Benefits

Energy is one of the most important inputs to a wide range of production processes. Pakistan has been facing a serious energy crisis as the various governments did not strategize well for future requirements. For a long time, there has been no discussion on energy conservation. This is a global issue that affects the strategic development and policymaking of governments all over the world. Energy conservation is becoming increasingly important as a motivator for globalization and worldwide energy trade. In the medium term, however, we in Pakistan still have a limited ability to substitute energy with alternative means despite suffering a significant economic blow". At a very slow pace, Pakistan is taking steps to address its electricity shortages.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offers Pakistan a fantastic opportunity to improve its economic status. The CPEC administration if not careful enough, might exacerbate internal differences in Pakistan and heighten tensions between Pakistan and other regional actors. Let's take a look at the CPEC's potential impact on Pakistan's development. Since its launch in July 2013, the CPEC has arguably received more attention in Pakistan than any other policy effort. Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has stated numerous times that the CPEC may be a game-changer for Pakistan and the entire region. China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi referred to the CPEC as the "flagship project" of the "Belt and Road Initiative"(BRI) (Sadiq, 2015). Furthermore, political parties, the Pakistani military, and the general public all agree that the CPEC has immense potential for boosting the country's economic growth (NDRC, 2014)making it to be a rational choice.

Certainly, the CPEC's \$46 billion packages of projects provide Pakistan with a unique opportunity to address some of the major obstacles to its economic development, like energy shortages, weak transportation links, and foreign investor interest. According to a November 8, 2014 agreement between the two countries on energy project collaboration, 61 percent of the CPEC investment would be committed to energy projects intended for improving the country's energy system capacity and the transmission and distribution network. As a result, Pakistan may be able to put an end to what a "Wilson Centre" assessment dubbed "Pakistan's unending energy problem," which has cost the country's economy between 2% and 2.5% percent of GDP annually, according to their estimations. Infrastructure, transportation, and communication will receive up to 36% of CPEC funding. Greater connectivity will undoubtedly open up new economic opportunities in Pakistan since the Pakistani Planning Commission estimates that "the poor performance of the transportation sector costs the Pakistani economy 6% of GDP per year" (Government of Pakistan, 2014).Improved connectivity will be critical for both increased domestic market integration and easier exports for Pakistan (Wilson Center, 2014).

The CPEC's immense potential benefits for Pakistan are contingent on its actual implementation, which is beset with obstacles. One of the most visible is the country's

security situation, which continues to represent a greater challenge despite recent advances. The well-known pro-independence Baloch leaders who are being exploited by India have decried the CPEC's harmful impact on Baluchistan, and some have even asked China to "stay away from Gwadar" (News Bharti, 2016). Beijing's concerns on this matter made the Pakistani authorities form a strong force, constituting 12,000 members, dedicated to ensuring the safety of Chinese and Pakistani workers on CPEC-related projects in Pakistan. Pakistan has created a new "Special Security Division" for this purpose. The CPEC's security is also inextricably related to regional geopolitics. In India, even the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, alongside several local bodies has criticized the project and even characterized it as "unacceptable" during his visit to Beijing in June 2015 (Express Tribune, 2015). CPEC transportation projects that pass through Gilgit-Baltistan, which encompasses the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, are largely related to Indian reservations. The consequences of China's expanded access to the Indian Ocean, as well as how they can affect India's security and strategic situation, are also explored (Stodban, 2015).

In Pakistan, it is believed that these objections have even steered collaboration between Pakistani militants and the Indian security agencies; especially the arrest of an alleged officer of the RAW, in Baluchistan in March 2016. It is undeniable, however, that the CPEC can afford spurs for India to start strengthening its relations with Pakistan by facilitating Indian access to Central Asia, and boost regional connectivity and security. Even in Afghanistan, the CPEC's potential contribution to regional stability is more apparent at the moment. China is prospering and has surpassed the United States as the world's second-largest economy (Haider & Oarar, 2016) and thus, Gwadar seaport can become the new hub of economic progress in the region. The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline, which is a sustainable and affordable source of energy, has been dubbed "the peace pipeline" in political jargon since it is seen as the most reliable measure for developing trust between India and Pakistan, but still waiting to be materialized. This pipeline project has significant stakes for both India and Pakistan. The geopolitical situation of the three countries involved has harmed an economically viable partnership. The pipeline was proposed to resource both the countries with gas: India has 90 million cubic meters of gas per day, while Pakistan has 60 million. Pakistan's interest in IPI is strong from an economic standpoint, as it is an "energy-scarce country and major gas fields are nearing the end, and supplies have been declining since 2010". In addition, due to a fast-rising population, energy consumption has increased dramatically in recent decades. One of the obstacles in Pakistan's desire for economic growth appears to be the lack of energy.

All of these characteristics indicate that Pakistan can reap tremendous gains if it has a dynamic economy, a vibrant foreign policy, and a strong and rational political will. Pakistan's location and demographics also work in its favor (Hussain, 2012). Despite all these factors, Pakistan's economy remained dependent on US aid and, thus, Pakistan has to tow the US line in the region. Two factors determine a country's geostrategic and

geopolitical relevance in today's world. As is the case with China, India, and Afghanistan, you are either a great manufacturing market or a far larger consumption-based market. The latter is an energy-rich country, but the others are not. Economic security is not only part and parcel of national security, there is also huge interdependence because economic security is required for strengthening physical and strategic security. Despite its geostrategic importance as a gateway to the Middle East, where China seeks access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf region, Pakistan has always been classified as a total dependent market due to financial constraints (Chaziza, 2016).

Instead of developing long-term strategies, the leadership remained focused on short-term gains for their political offices. Hence, the decision taken resulted in overburdening of the economy the clear-cut example is the deal of various previous governments with foreign rental power companies to have a quick solution for energy shortfall. However, under the current Prime Minister, Imran Khan's leadership, the government was able to resolve issues with the help of the Turkish Prime Minister—one of the 12 rental power companies. The choices made by the leaders play a very important role. For, example, today Malaysia is free from IMF tentacles all because of the great decisions taken by the great leader Mahathir Muhammad (Teik & Jin, 2012). To reap the fruit in the future our Prime Minister will have to make decisions for the maximum benefit of the country. Pakistan's location is a huge advantage if it is bargained properly for the role of Pakistan as a crossroad between South and southwest Asia.

Pakistan, South and Southwest Asia: Crossroads

Pakistan is strategically placed at the intersection of South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and Western China. It provides the quickest access to the Arabian Sea, Central Asia, and Western China. Connectivity must be improved to produce the greatest results. Because it lies in the southern neighborhood of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, Afghanistan is strategically placed in landlocked Central Asia and South Asia (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2009). As a result, Pakistan must ensure that its trans-border projects are completed to maintain connectivity with Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and Central Asia. This would facilitate the flow of individuals, products, and services between these nations. When combined with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the quality of Pakistan's land connectivity in terms of infrastructure might be greatly improved.

Pakistan has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It will aid in the improvement of the country's strategic and economic position. Gwadar port will give a cost-effective gateway to all of Asia's regions and neighboring nations, namely Western China, to reach Asia's and the rest of the world's developing consumer markets. Millions of direct and indirect employments are expected to be created as a result of the projects and accompanying economic development efforts. As a result, within a decade, the trade patterns and economic profiles of the aforementioned regions will be changed for the better. Afghanistan has

the potential to transport natural gas and power from Central Asia to South Asia, export mineral resources to China, and serve as an international center for overland trade between Iran and Pakistan with enhanced security and connectivity. These trends have a greater chance of transforming Pakistan's economy than any direct foreign aid or indigenous investment.

Academics, economists, and media professionals analyzed Pakistan's socio-economic growth in the context of regional and global challenges, and so determined the major factors that have influenced Pakistan's economy. They evaluated that the 9/11 terrorist attacks have harmed Pakistan's development (Chand & Mangi, 2003). Pakistan's foreign policy needs to be reshaped to emphasize the country's economic interests in other countries. Pakistan must continue to respond to changing trends with vigor and enthusiasm. It must maintain beneficial engagement and collaboration for promoting its national prosperities, concurrently functioning for national solidarity.

A strong economy is vital for the stability of a nation, which shall not be ignored, by any sovereign state for an extended time. The growth rate of Pakistan's economy as compared to other countries in the region, such as China and India the statistically demonstrated that our financial stability has been jeopardized by the malicious scheme created in the post-9/11 era by the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and the decisions taken by the actors (leaders) who were most active throughout this war. This has weakened the foundations of national security, putting human security in danger, causing underdevelopment, an increase in the unemployment rate, and unrestrained poverty thus resulting in overall deterioration (CNN, 2012). Unfortunately, none of the leaders has focused on long-term goals taking the excuse of the delapidating economy, justifying their hasty policies for the extension of their political goals thus compromising countries valued economic potential.

Conclusion

With our region's geopolitical landscape rapidly evolving, many optimists believe Pakistan will play a larger role. Some argue that this job is primarily focused on geoeconomics. However, there is no compromise in terms of security. Pakistan's deteriorating economic indicators do not support claims that the country is making hasty efforts to improve its geostrategic or geoeconomics approach. For example, the (CPEC), which was once acclaimed as a game-changer for Pakistan's ailing economy, has fallen victim to state institutions' short-sightedness. Those who observe a shift in Pakistan's geostrategic stance, on the other hand, do not rely solely on economic grounds; they also point to the country's evolving geopolitical behavior, particularly about Afghanistan. The importance of Pakistan's contribution to the Afghan peace process cannot be neglected. It was largely credited for helping to secure the US-Afghan Taliban accord on February 29. However, this does not indicate a shift in Pakistan's strategic thinking. Instead, it sticks to its long-held position, arguing that a negotiated

settlement between the Taliban and other Afghan players is the best option for the country.

As the US is planning to completely withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan's concerns and role cannot be ignored for the greater peace and security in the region. For a variety of reasons, Pakistan has enabled discussions between the US and the Taliban. First and foremost, the United States has accepted Pakistan's desire for a negotiated settlement. Second, because Pakistan does not want a massive, lengthy battle along a critical belt of its ambitious connectivity effort, the Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC were also factors. Pakistan's domestic security concerns, as well as its desire to improve its international image, have also proven to be key factors of Pakistan's collaboration in Afghanistan. These efforts haven't translated into support for its position in India-controlled Kashmir. It will take a thorough investigation to determine how well Pakistan can utilize these elements using a rational approach and how much they influenced the country.

However, Pakistan's strategic doctrine appears to have stayed intact throughout the process, because the country's geopolitical and strategic difficulties have yet to be resolved. Pakistan made a concerted effort to bring the matter to the attention of the world community and appropriate platforms, with a particular focus on human rights violations in occupied Kashmir. Pakistan made a deliberate effort to bring the issue to the notice of the international community and suitable platforms, focusing on human rights violations in occupied Kashmir. The world media and human rights organizations took notice of the atrocities in Kashmir as a result of their efforts. Pakistan, on the other hand, has not amassed sufficient political and diplomatic support to compel India to reconsider its violent actions in Kashmir. China-backed Pakistan's position before the UN Security Council, but this was insufficient to put pressure on India. However, Pakistan suffered a serious setback when the Muslim bloc, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, blocked any Pakistani attempts to use the Organization of the Islamic Conference platform to resolve the Kashmir issue. It demonstrated that religious ties are only relevant in international affairs when they are combined with a robust economy.

Pakistan is in severe need of economic recovery, despite having implemented structural and stabilization reforms. This confidence has been bolstered by the nuclear arsenal and formidable military forces. Afghanistan is at the heart of this strategy, as it is from there that the country can garner international assistance. Pakistan is interested in Afghanistan not only because of the Indian presence in its neighborhood but also for geopolitical reasons, which the US has successfully exploited. Pakistan's participation in the Afghan peace process improved its worldwide image. Pakistan must strike a balance between its relations with the United States and China. Fear of being blacklisted by the FATF, the international financial watchdog, has compelled it to provide additional assistance to the United States in Afghanistan. The FATF has proven to be a fatal element, thwarting Pakistan's efforts to profit from its Afghan assistance.

The country's relationship with the United States has had its ups and downs, but it cannot afford to be at a standstill with China, as the two countries' geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic contexts are vastly different. Resentment in Beijing has grown as a result of the perception that Pakistan is keen to rebuild its connection with Washington over the previous two years. The CPEC's slowdown has further added to the doubts. In a word, Pakistan is striving to modify its geopolitical goals, and its geostrategic ideology has remained unchanged. A geostrategic shift should have resulted in improved economic and political relations with neighbors, as well as a more aggressive pursuit of the completion of transnational energy and infrastructure megaprojects that have already been agreed upon and only require a little nudge. A move like this would have been substantiated by the CPEC and its connectivity with Afghanistan, as well as structural economic improvements. Exporting hydropower and natural gas power from Central Asia to South Asia via Afghanistan has a lot of potentials. The area, which is even more landlocked than Afghanistan, will benefit from new bridges and road connections. Pakistan and Turkey, on the other hand, have consented to economic unification.

A consensus has been reached between the two parties to increase bilateral commerce and investment by improving railway and road connectivity. Turkey has a strong relationship with Pakistan. An effort has also been made to strengthen mutual collaboration through the platform of a high-level Strategic Cooperation Council, particularly in the commerce and energy sectors (Titlay, 2015). CPEC would expand the relationship's possibilities. Pakistan would be able to connect with West Asia and Turkey as a result. Turkey's unique geoeconomic strength allows it to link with a wide range of countries. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will cross Iraq and Turkey. The road and rail networks are already in place, but they need to be expanded. All of these initiatives necessitate creative and brave thinking, rational choices made by leadership. A rational approach would be to maintain focus on economic uplift, strive for political stability, and bring an end to insurgency and terrorism as key agenda for the domestic front. Meanwhile, Pakistan should act as a reliable peace broker not only in Afghanistan but also in West Asia where Pakistan is considered an important pillar of Middle Eastern security architecture.

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