

## **China Central Asia Relations and opportunities for Pakistan**

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this Research paper is to explore the China's relations with Central Asian region and to study its embodied effects on Pakistan.

**Objectives of the Study:** To investigate the strategic depth of China Central Asian relations in the changing paradigm of regional and international politics and to analyze the Pakistan relations with Central Asia and to provide options for CARs to grapple the economic advantages of this regional connectivity of Kashgar to Gwadar through Pakistan China Economic Corridor.

**Design/ Methodology/ Approach:** This research has been carried out using various techniques; documents based on content analysis, and case studies. Historical, descriptive, comparative and analytical method have been taken into practice on all Qualitative and Quantitative data sources which includes Govt. publications, organizational reports, thesis, academic papers, published, printed sources, Newspapers, Books, Journals, Periodicals, electronic sources and e-journal etc. to acquire the optimal results and conclusions.

**Research Limitation-**This research enshrines only three major areas of cooperation among the triangular relations of Pakistan, China, and Central Asia. These three areas are Energy, Economy and Extremism. The regional and international challenges have also been taken into account.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework in social science not only enhances credibility of research but also provides the substructure to the research by interpreting the relevant theories related to research objectives. According to the realist school of thought global political system is anarchic one and states are the main actors in this system. Every state peruses her national self-interest based on rationality and there is no any supranational authority to govern the states. Every state has desire of acquiring

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more and more power to ensure its self-preservation. Power is perpetual as well rational concept. It does not exist in vacuum but in relations with other state. China is expanding herself in terms of economic advancement and affluence not only in the region but as well on world scenario. China is very much engaged in Central Asia to magnify its strategic and economic power to preserve its interest.

Regionalism is the process of integration, geographical relationship, formation of interstate coalition mutual interdependence of the states on the basis of regions. The key ingredients of regionalism are unilateralism, multilateralism and international trading system. The main idea of regionalism is to economically and politically integrate states on regional identification. The SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) is also turning itself into regionalism. Eurasia has abundant energy resources. The exploitation and transportation of these energy resources to the rest of the world has become major challenge due to the deteriorating security situation and unrest of the region. SCO is a powerful regional mechanism which can play significant role in improving security of the region. Regionalism theoretical interpretations can be glimpsed on Central Asia, East Asia and South Asia in terms of economic, energy and security integration.

The Mahan, A. Thayer in his book “The influence of sea power upon history 1660-1783” has concluded that naval strategy and power is a noteworthy factor for the rise of British Empire. The determinants of sea power are economy, population, political will of government and number of coastline and harbors available for sea trade traffic. The ongoing development project of Gwadr by China has proclivity to cater not only Chinese trade through CPEC but also have capacity to provide landlocked Central Asia access to hot water port for energy exports.

**Originality / Value:** This paper is an original research work. The analysis provided is based on facts from various national and international publications.

**Keywords:** Chia Central Asia strategic Partnership, Triangular Relations; Pakistan, China and Central Asia.

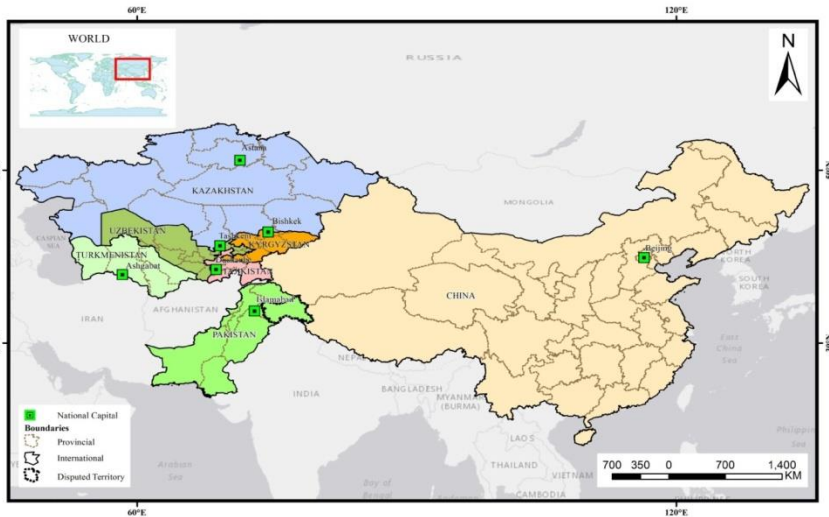
**Paper type:** Research paper

## Introduction

Presently China’s paramount role in Asia Pacific region has become perceptible in terms of political and economic spheres. It is challenging not only for the regional players like Japan, Korea, India and Russia but also global powers of United States and European Union as well. The People’s Republic of China is geographically situated in East Asia, located between longitudes 73’ and 135’ east and latitudes 18’ and 54’ north. China being a most densely populated country of the world having adjoining borders with 14 countries and Pacific Ocean on East, moreover China shares common borders with three central Asian states which are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The latest statistics available with IMF about China’s economy shows that China has become the world single largest

economy in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and second largest economy in terms of GDP after US. The September quarter of 2016 reveals that the economy of China is expanding as annual growth rate of 6.7%. The soaring and burgeoning economy of China has created opportunities for regional economic cooperation for Central Asian neighboring states as well as the Asia Pacific region in general. During the last two decades the Chinese engagement and rise as a global economic and political power is substantive.

Central Asian region is composed of five states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan which emerged on the map of the world after the breakup of USSR in 1991. The estimated population of Central Asia is about 66.5 million. In Geopolitical terms this region is considered as the core region of continent Asia. Historically Central Asia is also known as middle Asia, which has served as a crossroad of various ancient civilizations through Silk road bridging East Asia, West Asia, South Asia and Europe. In the North Central Asia stretches its borders with Russia, in the South with Afghanistan, in the East with China and in West it elongates it borders Caspian Sea. Almost all the Central Asian states have significant energy resources but landlocked in nature. The strategic location of Central Asia and its proximity with great powers like Russia and China is making this region vulnerable as a part of great game. The China's quest for energy resources and Russian control over oil and gas pipelines of Central Asian Republics has increased the significance of this region.



Source: (Rashid, 2016)

Study Area Map

### **China Central Asia relations in the Mirror of the History**

Prior to the independence of Central Asian Republics, this region endured under the strict autocratic regime of USSR (Soviet Union) for centuries. China played a marginal role in Central Asia despite of their geographical proximity during

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Russia's orbit spheres. Soon after the independence of Central Asia, China promptly recognized their independence and established diplomatic relations in December in 1991 in spite of certain reservations over the signed of unequal treaties with tsarist and European empires in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on border disputes. The relations between China and Soviet communist parties were lasted tense for many decades on the settlement of borders disputes and were bequeathed to newly formed Central Asian Republics. The depth of China and Central Asian relations and interests of China in central Asia are manifold in nature. It can be structured into following four phases.

### **First phase of China and Central Asian relations from 1991 to 1995**

During the first phase of China and Central Asian relations the main emphasize of China was to resolve border disputes with Central Asia. China had agreed in 1989 to diminish their territorial claim on violent suppression in Tiananmen to only 34,000 km. China signed with Kazakhstan a border demarcation treaty to demilitarize the borders in 1994. The motive behind signing this treaty was also to curtail the muscularity of Uyghur separatist movement.

### **Second phase of China and Central Asian relations from 1996 to 2000**

This period of China Central Asian states relations is considered as the confidence building period. The collective security measures were taken during this period based on mutual understanding attenuating the political tensions. The border disputed areas were settled with Kyrgyzstan in 1996. Although the cession of disputed territories was smaller than stipulated in its original claims, China started to move vigorously to the Central Asian markets for economic cooperation. In order to resolve long time outstanding disputes and to yield the economic cooperation the Shanghai five was established in 1996. The members of Shanghai five were China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

### **Third phase of China and Central Asian relations from 2000 to 2005**

In 2002 China signed another demarcation treaty with Tajikistan to settle its border disputes, getting access to the mountain passes, rivers, and subsoil resources and for the accession of economic strategic viability. These demarcation treaties were criticized and condemned by some segments of population from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan declaring that their governments have tried to delimit China which could claim additional territory in future. China asserted pressure on Central Asian States to block solidarity with diaspora of Xinjiang and Uyghur to cope with separatist's movements. The Uzbekistan became member of Shanghai five in 2001 and this organization was transformed into Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). During third phase certain factors squeezed China to build closer relations with Central Asian Republics which include political harmony,

economic cooperation, security threats, military cooperation, countering terrorism, extremism and decreasing the influence of major powers inimical to China's progress and prosperity. After 9/11 terrorist attacks on US has significantly revamped the political scenario of the region. The establishment of US military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are for the purpose of war against terror. China viewed the US military presence in the region as the US containment strategy and offensive intention against China. Russia and China both presume threats for their strategic, economic and energy interest in Central Asia due to the proximity of US presence in the region.

#### **Fourth phase of China and Central Asian relations from 2006 to date**

During this phase succeeding borders disputes with the Central Asia and to topple the Uyghur separatist's movement China floated its massive economic, energy, security, trade and strategic presence in Central Asia by investing within the SCO. Although SCO has defused a huge number of disputes and conflicts mostly related to borders of its members, but could not form as a military defense alliance like NATO (Peyrouse, 2009).

#### **Economic, Trade and investment relations of China with Central Asia**

China is developing its political and economic influence in Central Asia not only to protect its strategic importance and trade investments, but also trying to compete, major powers regarding struggle for resources. The Russia and US, both have their own interests in Central Asia on pipelines and over military bases. China has become crucial trading partner of Central Asia and principal sources of investment and loans provider for Central Asian region. The investments of China have been significantly increased from \$1 billion to about \$50 since the independence of CARs. Chinese government, entrepreneur and corporation are investing in development of infrastructure, transportation, productions, roads, railways hydrocarbon sectors and energy pipelines. The Xinjiang have its adjoining borders with three Central Asian countries through which 75% of trade of China with Central Asian region is been carried out. Xinjiang is serving as economic and transportation hub for china to connect with Central Asia. The presence of Islamic extremist in Xinjiang, Central Asia is becoming a major challenge for trade and investments of China.

#### **Energy interests of China in Central Asia**

China's energy demands are enhancing day by day. After the economic liberalization china has intentionally planned to develop good relations with Central Asia as a source of energy to cope with its increasing requirements. Prior to this China heavily depends upon coal power generation due to domestic abundant coal resources. The coal production capacity of China increased annually

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230 million tons during the period from 2000 to 2007. Now China is decreasing its vulnerability on coal power generation due to efficiency, cost and environmental concerns (Khan, 2014).

The domestic oil and gas natural resources of China are unable to quench its demands. For increasing transportation fuel requirements the import bill of China has been increased significantly. The China stood second largest fuel importer having bill amount of \$313 billion after US in 2012. Therefore China is much focused to promptly improve its energy relations with Central Asia, heavily depending of fossil fuel to meet its energy needs. Presently Kazakhstan China oil pipeline is carrying 11 million tons of oil daily from Caspian to Xinjiang and expected to increase its volume up to 20 million tons daily at the end of 2020. Another gas pipeline is expected to be completed in 2014 to transport western territory Gas of Kazakhstan to Industrial area of South to reduce imports of gas from Uzbekistan. In 2006 the China was extracting the 25% of Kazakhstan oil resources. China has also provided loans worth of 5 billion and 1.7 billion to the petrochemical industry of Kazakhstan. China is also importing Uranium ore from Kazakhstan and China had pledged \$ 8 billion worth in 2011 for the purchase of uranium from Kazakhstan. (Rosseau, 2013).

China is also cooperating with others Central Asian countries as well in the energy sector. China had made an agreement with Turkmenistan in 2006 for 30 years. According to this agreement China will ship 30 billion cubic feet gas through a 7,000 km gas pipeline every year, starting from 2009 (Wishnick, 2009). China has imported 50 billion cubic meter gas since 2009 and committed to sign new import deal of gas with Turkmenistan (Rejepova, 2013). Turkmenistan is exporting 25 billion cubic meter of gas from Gas reserves of Galkynsh to China every year after an agreement between the presidents of two countries. This agreement will be ended in 2020. China's is investing a huge amount of money for tapping crude oil though China Investment Corporation (CIC) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). During the past two decades the Central Asia and China are aggressively engaged in energy cooperation through investment on various projects like Kazakhstan China oil pipeline and Central Asia China gas pipeline etc. China has invested in KazMunaigas production and exploration projects in 2009 with worth of \$2.6 billion and in Kashagan oil field with \$700 million acquiring shares. The growing energy cooperation between China and Central Asia has created a strategic competition among Europe, Russia and China.

### **Extremism and security cooperation between China & Central Asia**

The Xinjiang is a pivot region for China towards its policies of Central Asia due to its geographical proximity with CARs. China is very much worried about the unrest of Kyrgyzstan because it has about 1000 km long border and Fergana valley with China. The great security concern of China in Xinjiang is to fight three evils which are terrorism, religious extremism and separatism. China intends from Central Asian countries to fight actively against Uyghur separatist movements

because most Central Asian states have great number of Uyghur populations threatening to China's security. (Asia Centre, 2011) There are long listed security threats to China from Central Asian region which are owing to ethnic conflicts, domestic grievances, beneath stability and unrest of Afghanistan. The major concern is Islamic insurgency of Xinjiang which gets technically, financially and training support from Afghanistan. (Mariani, 2013)

Although China is engaged in Central Asia to develop people to people contact but it is seen in the prism of state to state relations. This shows that China's focus is only her national interest rather than human security. The China's policy makers often ignore the concerns of civil society of Central Asian region which are that rising nationalism about Chinese expansion have few tangible and grassroots benefits (International Crisis Group, 2013).

China has not yet deployed its military in Central Asia in spite of the threats to their investments and citizens. Even in 2005 the so called "Tulip revolution" and unrest of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 did not change the security policy of China. China is only utilizing the SCO to address its security threats and issues from Central Asian region. In order to cope with security concerns China is establishing a collective discourse with Central Asian for terrorism, nontraditional security threats, natural disasters and transnational crimes. SCO during its summit in 2001 signed Shanghai Convention combating extremism, separatism and terrorism. The other important security cooperation agreements signed on the platform of SCO are anti-drugs Cooperation, SCO Convention against terrorism and joint fight against crimes agreement. The security manifesto of SCO has been expanded in other broader areas which include defense, strategic security, information security, law enforcement and fight with transnational crimes. The headquarter of regional anti-terrorist structure is in Uzbekistan and permanent secretariat is at Beijing. The bilateral and multilateral exercises for countering terrorism are carried out on the SCO podium on regular basis. Chinese leadership is fully aware of the fact that multilateral security cooperation through SCO level is still rudimentary. They have suggested SCO to develop a full-fledged system for security cooperation. For this very purpose the capacity building of SCO for resisting all real threats is under consideration which includes "three evils", transnational organized crimes and drug trafficking etc. Other significant recommendations from China are establish

“establish a more comprehensive security cooperation system, actively implement the Shanghai convention on fighting against the ‘three forces’, earnestly implement the bilateral security cooperation agreements, deepen security dialogue and consultation and information exchange, continue to hold regular joint anti-terrorism exercises, enhance security cooperation on large events, strive to increase the organizational capacity for action and rapid response capability, fiercely combat the ‘three forces’ and effectively curb drug trafficking, arms smuggling and other transnational organized crimes

to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region”.  
(Wu B., 2011)

During annual summit of SCO held in 2012 at Beijing a general rule was formulated to collectively response to the events which are threats to the peace, security stability of its member states. China is strictly following its principle of non-interference in Central Asian region in spite of security threats to its economic engagements in the region. Presently china is proactively affianced in Central Asia and utilizing its economic, trade and investments for the peace and prosperity of the region.

### **Pakistan and Strategic vision of Foreign Policy 2014**

Pakistan is located between 24.50 and 36.75 latitude on the North and on the East 61 to 75.5 longitudes. It is situated on the crossroad of West Asia, South Asia Central Asia and Middle East. Pakistan is the sixth largest country of the world in terms of population, thirty sixth largest countries in terms territory and twenty sixth largest countries in terms of purchasing power parity. The region in which Pakistan is situated has great strategic, political and economic significance in international politics. This region has observed the intervention of world great powers i-e USA and former USSR during and after the cold war. The importance of Pakistan enhanced after become the partner of US policy for the containment of USSR during cold war. After 9/11 the pendulum of world attention again swung in favour of Pakistan and Pakistan has to act as frontline state against the war on terrorism and non NATO ally. Pakistan shares almost 510 km boarder with China in the North through Karakoram highway about 2250 km with Afghanistan in the West through Durand line, about 1650 km boarder with Indian in the East, about 909 km with Iran on West and on South about 700 km Coastal belt with Arabian Sea. The Strategic significance of Pakistan in the world is idiosyncratic due to its geographical location, proximity of great world powers like China, Russia and India, the only Muslim country with nuclear capability, a gateway for landlocked Central Asia, a tendency to become transit economy through Gwadar and proximity with Persian Gulf which produces 65% of the world oil and adjacency with strait of Hormuz from which half of the world oil trade is being carried out. The noteworthy geostrategic importance of Pakistan has compelled China to develop Gwadar port and to connect China and Pakistan through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which include railways, highways, and oil and gas pipelines. Gwadar port can only be the shortest and direct link of China and Central Asia with Middle East and West for promoting transshipment and prove to be the essential containerized cargo instrument besides unlocking the development potential for hinterland.

The fourth pillar of strategic vision of Pakistan’s Foreign Policy 2014 reveals that “Pakistan’s strategic geographical location from a liability into an asset through trade, transport and energy connectivity with China, Central Asia and West Asia. This is turn could also help to re-balance our geostrategic and geo-



economics priorities”.

About strategic partnership with China the Foreign Policy 2014 of Government of Pakistan states “Our time tested and all weather relationship with China has been transformed into strong strategic partnership, with focus on trade, investment, energy infrastructure and connectivity. Counter terrorism cooperation continues to strengthen, while Pakistan’s support to China’s core interests of Tibet and Taiwan remains unwavering. Mutual collaboration in regional forums like SCO, CICA and heart of Asia has stepped up. A monumental achievement is the initiation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is considered to be a “game changer” in terms of trade, investment, connectivity and regional economic integration.

### **China and its relations with Pakistan**

Pakistan is a next door neighbor of China and is located on North Western part of China. China is interested in leveraging Pakistan as a launching pad for greater connectivity with energy producers in the Gulf and Middle East, as well as markets in the West. Pakistan was the first country who started official diplomatic relations with China since its inception. Since from that period both countries have very close strategic economic, military and cultural relations. Pakistan has played a significant role in bridging the China’s relations with the West by arranging US president Mr. Richard Nixon visit to China in 1972. China has always remained central part of Pakistan’s foreign policy. China has always supported Pakistan’s point of view on various regional and international issues including Kashmir. The China Pakistan friendship is quoted as a “Friendship which is higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, stronger than steel, dearer than eyesight, sweeter than honey and so on”.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) is a megaproject signed agreement between Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Nawaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Mr. Xi Jinping during his state visit of Pakistan in April 2015 worth of \$46 billion and now enhanced about \$51.5 billion. Asian Development Bank has committed to provide \$8 billion for the up gradation of main railway line from Karachi to Peshawar. This project will connect Kashgar situated on North-western part of China with Gwadar located on the South-western part of Pakistan and has tendency to connect Central Asia as well. This corridor will serve as a game changer for the region and is a proposed silk route of twenty first century. This project will not only join the region through railways, highways and pipelines of oil and gas but also develop the transport, telecommunication and energy infrastructure. This corridor will transform geostrategic significance of Pakistan into geo-economics worth and will provide an opportunity to become a regional economic hub. The international newspaper, “The Guardian” narrates that “The

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Chinese are not offering to build much needed infrastructure but also make Pakistan a key partner in its grand economic and strategic ambitions”.

Pak-China Economic Corridor is equivalent to worth of almost 20% annual GDP of Pakistan. It will add 10,400 megawatt of electricity to national grid through, nuclear coal and renewable resources. \$622 million would be spent for development of Gwadar port, \$44 million for fiber optic cable and \$28 million for pipelines infrastructure. The up gradation of transport infrastructure will include Karakorum highway from Havelian of Abbottabad district to Thakot, Lahore Karachi motorway from Multan to Sukkur, Gwadar international airport and Gwadar port East bay expressway project. This corridor will not only provide the China a shortest trade route but also connect China to resource rich Middle East and Africa via Gwadar port. China intends to establish an oil storage facility and a refinery at Gwadar sea port to meet its energy needs. Economic corridor will also provide better access to landlocked, economically and traditionally closed region of Central Asian countries to the global trade network. In words of Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Federal Minister

“CPEC has three phases and four major areas, namely Gwadar Port’s development, energy projects, road networks and industrial cooperation. The short term, medium term and long term projects will be completed by 2020, 2025 and 2030, respectively. At present work is in progress in the first three areas of infrastructure development, which will enable the two nations to push for industrial cooperation”.

Mr. Zhou Gang a former Chinese ambassador to Pakistan has declared Pakistan and China Cooperation in such words; “China and Pakistan must guard against hegemony and unilateralism, and safeguard their own sovereignty and security interests. They must learn the lesson of turbulences from West Asia and North Africa, firmly safeguard their domestic security and stability, steadily promote their reform, and oppose the interference of foreign forces in their internal affairs”.

In his book “The clash of civilization” Samuel P. Huntington has included the Sinic civilization along with other civilizations of the world. He has described that the Sinic world is based on culture instead of religion. He considers that political and cultural spheres help in division of power and for social and political pluralism in the international hierarchical politics. His affirm believe is that only Sinic world has the tendency to oppose the Western hegemony in Asia with the collaboration of Islamic world. Sinic civilization consists of China, Mangolia, North and South Korea and Vietnam etc. Pak-China economic corridor (CPEC) seems to be the merger of Sinic world with Islamic world of Pakistan and Central Asia.

## **Pakistan Relations with Central Asia**

The disintegration of U.S.S.R. in 1991 and emergence of land locked but energy rich central Asian Republics as sovereign and independent states have changed the

Geo-Political and Geo-Strategic environment of the region. This region has once again become the focus of global interests and attention due to tremendous energy resources and geographical proximity with Soviet Union. CARs have acquired great significance and considerations in the foreign policy of Pakistan since their independence.

Central Asia is situated on the Northern side of Pakistan located on the ancient silk route. Tajikistan is the nearest Central Asian country to Pakistan geographically. Afghanistan territory of Wakan corridor about 16km is located between Pakistan and Tajikistan. Presently Central Asian Republics and Pakistan have close ties and cooperation in the fields of war against terrorism, drug trafficking and combating religious extremism. The geo political and geo strategic importance of Pakistan makes it difficult for CARs to ignore Pakistan. Bilateral relations of Central Asia and Pakistan are broadly based on common History, culture, religion, Ethnicity, values, traditions and geographical proximity. Central Asian and Pakistan are collaborating with each other in numerous area like, Banking, Insurance, Information Technology Tourism, Peace, regional security, development, Economic stability, Trade, Energy cooperation, Pharmaceutical industry, Textile, Agricultural equipment, technical assistance, Education, Infrastructural development Media exchanges, communication networking, Science and Technology etc. Pakistani Government grabbed the opportunity of bilateral relations between CARs and Pakistan just from inception of CARs i.e. December, 1991 when a high level delegation led by Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, Minister of State for Economic affairs visited the CARs with private businessmen, industrialists, Government officials, Scholars and journalists. The variety of fields for mutual Cooperation was identified during the visit and several MOUs were signed for establishment of bilateral relations. In the energy sector cooperation TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India) gas pipeline project and Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission Project known as CASA-1000 are significant projects signed among Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Central Asian Republics.

In the beginning of their independence CARs did not have warm relations with Pakistan. The communist leadership of CARs believes and has fears of Talibanization and fundamentalism which could creep into their region though Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although Pakistan and CARs diplomatic relations were established just after their emergence on the world map but there were many ups and downs in the first decade. Another factor of weaken relations of CARs with Pakistan was Indian factor and influence. India has closer relations with the region under the Soviet Union and their leadership excitedly exchanged the visits to both sides.

Gradually the leadership of CARs realized the need that Pakistan can provided only be the solution of their land locked nature. Afterwards they tried to develop the better relations with Pakistan for their economic progress and development of military institutions through mutual cooperation. Iran and Turkey being the neighbors of CARs and regional players as well have also importance in the CARs

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foreign policy but the economic realm of all states has rated the Pakistan, Iran and Turkey on the same scale for economic partnership.

For the infrastructural development and road linkages of Central Asian region with South Asia a report of Asian Development Bank 2010 has identified 52 potential roads construction to connect Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with five seaports of Iran and Pakistan through Afghanistan. These ports would be Bandar Abbas ChahBhar, Karachi Port Qasim and Gwadar. The estimated cost of the project would be \$5 billion and this road corridor would be 13586 kilometers or 8444 miles. Pakistani ports would be connected with Central Asia by 31 roads with the construction of this road corridor the regional trade will increase by 160%. This road corridor infrastructure will be beneficial not only for Pakistan and CARs but also foster economic diversification for rest of the whole region. Possible transportation routes from Pakistan and CARs can be as follows:

- Karachi - Taftan( Iran) - Zahidan – Tehran – Astara- Baku or
- Taftan( Iran) – Zahidan- Mashad –Badjagirani- Ashkabad
- Karachi - Chaman –Peshawar- Gilgit
- Chaman – Khandhar- Heart- Kushka
- Peshawar- Kabul- Termiz or
- Gilgit- Kunjerab- Bishkek- Alma Ata.

### Following are some useful distance (Approximately in Km)

#### Crow Fly

Islamabad	Karachi		1200
Islamabad	Tashkent (Capital of Uzbekistan)	800	
Islamabad	Dushanbe (Capital of Tajikistan)	640	
Islamabad	Alma Ata (Capital of Kazakhstan)		1040
Islamabad	Bishkek (Capital of Kirghizstan)	960	

#### By Road

Karachi	Dushanbe		2720
Abadan (Iran)	Dushanbe		
3200			
Bandar Abbas (Iran)	Dushanbe		3440
Bandar Abbas (Iran)	Dushanbe (Alternate Route)		2960

#### By Rail Road

Dushanbe	Vladivostok (On the Pacific Ocean)	9500
Dushanbe	Rostov-na-Donu (On the Black Sea)	4200

Source: Central Asia Significance/Political News No.53, p.39

## Significance of Gwadar for China and Central Asia

In the changing paradigm of global politics the sea ports are contemplated as the hubs of economic prosperity and commercial activities. Gwadar is a deep and warm water sea port of Pakistan. Pakistan purchased it from Oman in 1958 at the cost of US \$ 3million. During the period of 1978 to 1992 a small port was developed and constructed. In 2007 it was handed over to Port Singapore Authority (PSA) for further development and construction work. This construction work was cancelled in 2012 due to poor performance by the PSA. Gwadar port was officially handed over to China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) for operations and development on full scale commercial port in 2013. The investment for the development of the Gwadar is expected to be US \$550 million

in next five years.

Gwadar is ideally located on the South-western part of Pakistan about 700 km from Karachi near the key Shipping route. It is situated on the mouth of Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf which hold 2/3 oil reserves of the world. Its proximity to the landlocked Central Asian republics and Arabian Gulf is unique. Gwadar port has the capacity to become transit shipment and trade route for almost twenty countries of the region including China, CARs, UAE, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Iraq and Oman and others. The salient features of Gwadar port are that it is not located in the Gulf which reduces its chances of being blocked, Tran's shipment of bulk cargo, export processing and industrial zone; it provides shortest access to China, landlocked Afghanistan and CARs, and its proximity with other ports of the Gulf. Economically and strategically Gwadar port holds great significance due to its location and junction of international oil trade routes and sea shipping. Gwadar port development project will not only boost up economy of Pakistan but also will attract the FDI in trade, tourism and hotel industry. Pakistan will be able to oversee Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) from the Persian Gulf to Strait of Hormouz.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The strategic proximity of Central Asia, makes it hub of Middle East, South Asia, Russia and China nexus for trade and pivotal for its future development. Pakistan is ideally located among the three regions of Asia, Central, South and West. Pakistan can provide Shortest Sea route to landlocked Central Asian and Western China. The unique position of Pakistan can help inter regional cooperation in energy transactions and trade linkages. Being the member of ECO, SAARC and observer of SCO, Pakistan offers the strategic communication, regional, economic, cultural integration, connectivity, overland routes, and trade hub approximately more than twenty countries of the region. The development of Gwadar port with the help of China can eventually provide Industrial, port warehouses of oil tankers trade with 2, 00000 tons facilities to all the regional countries. The Gwadar port development, up gradation of KKH (Karakorum Highway) opening of four road links through Khunjerab pass, connection of eight road links with China, enhancement of trade routes and initiatives of bus Service among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan can reduce 500km distance for Central Asian republics from Pakistan and will promote people to people contacts.

Pakistan has always been desirous to serve as a gate way for land locked Central Asian Republics. Political Scientist at the end of 20th century were of the opinion that 21st century will be "century of Central Asia" but this prediction could not be materialized in success due to political and economic instability in CARs, Unrest in Afghanistan, 9/11 terrorist attacks and ongoing war against terrorism. Pakistan being situated on the Southern belt of CARs, as the third country that has clear stakes in Central Asian States. Pakistan's foreign policies

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makers believe that Pakistan can provide not only the strategic depth to CARs but can also work as economic and trade corridor for Central Asian Republics.

The decision of signing China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and economic integration with China and Central Asia is based on rational decision making model of foreign policy. In this model cost and benefit analysis is carried out and decision making is done as steering wheel process. In rational model of foreign policy decision making the key determinants are to identify the problem or opportunity, gathering information, analyzing the situation, developing options, evaluating options, selecting a preferred alternative and finally acting on decision taken.

Pakistan relations with CARs cannot be effective unless and until infrastructural linkages are strengthened. Pakistan has the capacity of four land routes for the communicational linkage to the Central Asian Republics. Dushanbe the capital of Tajikistan is 4200 km away from the black sea port O'dessa to the Mediterranean, the Iran's port Bander Abbas is 3000km, while the Karachi port is only 2200km away. Thus Pakistan could provide the shortest trade route. Pakistan has signed agreements with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for the construction highways and for infrastructural developments.

China Pakistan economic corridor worth of \$51.5 billion is almost 3,000 Kilometers long networks to connect Kashgar of China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar of Baluchistan province, a deep water Sea port through roads, railway lines, optic fiber and energy pipelines. This project has great potential and caliber to inject life line to the economies of the region and predominant for china's initiative of one belt, one Road (OBOR). It also has tendency to safeguard and to transform Pakistan's geostrategic significant into geo-economics strength. The CPEC project promises economic and geo-strategic rewards not only to Pakistan and China but countries of South and Central Asia as well. Accomplishing the substantive nature of CPEC the Iranian president Hassan Rowhani during his meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif intend to become the part of multibillion dollar project of CPEC in a sidelined meeting of UN General Assembly in September, 2016. He also lauded the Nawaz Sharif's vision to translate CPEC into reality and reiterated that Gwadar and Chahbghar ports both have prospect to become hub of regional trader in the decades to come. Gwadar port has started to resume its functioning and first shipment of trade good through CPEC to Gwadar had been launched. While addressing the inaugural ceremony Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said"

"Today we have gathered to witness the dream of CPEC turning into a reality, further strengthening bilateral ties between China and Pakistan which have stood the test of time. CPEC is the fusion of President Xi's concept of 'one belt and one road' project which integrates trade activities of various regional countries through enhanced connectivity, thus transforming Pakistan into a major hub of commerce," Pakistan enjoys a unique geostrategic

location at the crossroads of three major engines of growth – South Asia, China and Central Asia – and by serving as a major trade hub, would change the fate of region's three billion people. He reiterated that CPEC would open a world of opportunities for China, Pakistan and the region. Terming Gwadar port the 'jewel in the CPEC crown', he expressed confidence that due to its prime geostrategic location, it would play a pivotal role in future trade and cargo activities”.

As Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has unfolded the key pillars of foreign policy of Pakistan which are regional connectivity and Economic integration during a two days visit of Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on November 25,2016. While addressing the two days conference on Global Sustainable Transport in Ashgabat he said,

“In the emerging global and regional environment Pakistan is happy to play its role as gateway to Central Asia. Peaceful neighborhood has remained the norm of Pakistan's foreign policy and no development policies can yield fruit without peace and security. Pakistan is fully committed to its responsibilities as a partner in regional and Economic integration. He said with projects like CPEC and One Belt One Road Pakistan has enhanced its geo strategic location into a geo Economic advantage. CPEC is a package of multiple infrastructure and development projects and will boost connectivity within the region and integrate China, Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East. The 21st century is the century of connectivity and without adequate internal and regional communication networks countries will lag behind in progress. With mutual understanding and collective endeavors we will be able to deliver on the promise of peace, prosperity and development of our peoples. Pakistan is joining the Ashgabat Agreement and Lapis Lazuli Corridor. He hoped that the agreement will prove milestone in achieving the dream of peaceful co-existence through integration of economies, markets and cultures in South Asia, Central Asia and beyond”.

As far challenges for CPEC and regional integration are concerned, India is strictly opposing the CPEC for strategic and political reasons. Narendra Modi Prime Minister of India during his recent visit to China has raised objections and reservations over the corridor route by saying that this project is unacceptable to India, because it runs through Gilgit Baltistan. India claims that part of Indian part of Kashmir. The strategic reasons are that through CPEC China would be able to get permanent access to Indian Ocean and to China's string of pearls. The other fears of India are that the construction of Gwadar port and development of

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infrastructure like roads, rail, energy pipelines optic fiber etc. will permit China to establish naval bases and facilities to encircle and contain India. The recent wave of LOC ceasefire violations, atrocities in Kashmir by Indian occupied forces and major incidents of terrorism in Baluchistan are explicit examples by India to sabotage and incapacitate the CPEC.

CPEC has become a little bit controversial due to its routes, which are Eastern, Western and central. KPK government and opposition parties do believe that Punjab has more shares in CPEC projects as compared to other provinces. They also have certain reservations about western route, infrastructural linkages and industrial processing zones. KPK government standpoint is that western routes of CPEC may be started on priority bases and it should not contain only roads networks but all other benefits including industry and processing zones as well. During the months of October the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Sun Weidong met with Mr. Imran Khan Chairman PTI and clarifies the basic facts about CPEC saying that China is very much determined to develop gigantic economic corridor for the Socio economic growth of Pakistan. He expressed his views He expressed his views that not only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but all of Pakistan would get advantages of CPEC.

According to an official statement issued by Minister in Senate Federal government is very much ambitious to hire 17,280 strong forces individuals along with twenty two additional wings of civil armed forces to ensure the security of CPEC. There are a series of statements issued by ISPR and COAS to protect CPEC project at any cost. The ongoing successful operation, Zarb-e-Azb against militant groups, terrorist activists and insurgent elements of Balochistan is proving a milestone for the peace and stability of the country and region as well. COAS Gen. Raheel Sharif remained very much desirous to execute CPEC project has provided many time assurances to provide full security to CPEC project and Chinese national as well. The new COAS Gen. Qamar Bajwa should not only continue the operation Zarb-e-Azb but government should support him in all regards for peace and stability and of not only to Pakistan but the whole region as well in order to grapple the huge benefits of gigantic project of CPEC.

Prime Minister Nawaz Government should not only show its character of seriousness towards CPEC by taking all the Political parties on board by settling their reservations on routes of CPEC but should also appoint full time Foreign Minister to peruse pragmatic and vibrant approach to tackle the enemies of CPEC. Despite the irritants for CPEC Government looks desirous, committed and dedicated to topple all the challenges in order to improve security situation by curbing extremist elements, generating economic activities and overcoming energy crisis. Government should also ensure the TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) gas pipeline project even without the involvement of India as TAP project in order to meet gas shortage, because a lot of work has been completed in this regard. CPEC has a lot of potential to be a real game changer for the whole region and Gwadar could probable a gate way to integrate Pakistan, China, and Central Asia to the rest of the world if peace and stability of the region



is ensured.

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