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Pakistan-China Relations and Central Asian Republics

Abstract: *Pakistan-China relationship has survived the test of time and denotes the phrase of respect, advantages to both sides, and natural alignment. Both nations provided support for each other at regional and international levels, which not only worked to secure their own interests but is also attracting other regional actors to explore advantages for themselves out of the time-tested friendship of Pakistan-China. Central Asian Republics are also attracted to Pakistan-China as to benefit in multidimensional aspects. The Central Asian Republics desire for access to their energy resources to consumers, while Pakistan and China's objectives in Central Asia have been driven by their diplomatic, security obligations, economic advantages, and their aspiration to become an energy transit corridor in the region. Pakistan-China relations and their targets increase the interdependence environment between all these actors, which also provides an impetus where Pakistan-China rising influence in Central Asian Republics is anticipated. The significance of this article is that it analyzes the two prongs of Pakistan-China's growing influence in Central Asian Republics; the first is based on unilateral efforts of the two countries to explore more areas of cooperation with Central Asian Republics and the second is based in Pakistan-China bilateral relations impact on Central Asian Republics.*

Key Words: Border, Central Asia, Geography, Pakistan, Terrorism, Trade

Introduction

Central Asia

In Asian politics, the emergence of Central Asian Republics as sovereign identities changed the concept of balance of power in entire regional politics. Central Asian Republics, because of their geographical closeness with China, Russia, South Asian States, and the West Asian States, emerged as a unique geopolitical unit. (the U.K. Essays, 2014) Central Asia aroused as a vital region in the center of Asia; It includes five countries: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan,

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The central Asian region went through an incredible struggle throughout its past, yet this region has succeeded in maintaining its unique cultural identity. The Central Asian region was once considered the heartland of ancient Asia because of its pivotal geographical location. Unfortunately, the Central Asian Republics, after getting independence, failed to rise as a stable identities, and even now, they confront the political crisis in different shapes. However, Pakistan-China relations offer them new

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opportunities which can be understood through subsequent heading;

Pakistan's Relations with Central Asian Republics

Pakistan commenced its relations with the Central Asian republic soon after its independence. Pakistan tried to take advantage of its religious similarity with C.A.R.'s, and Pakistan presented itself as an outlet towards the open world. When Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the second time during the 1990s, Pakistan tried to translate such options into practice, as a result, the idea of creating a major trade route from Central Asia to the external world through Pakistan's Sea Ports became the center of attraction and focus. (Cornell, p.8, 2003)

The geographical closeness and the religious and cultural similarities, and centuries-old links between the people of the Central Asian region and the Pakistani region led towards presenting a special place to C.A.R.'s in the foreign policy of Pakistan. Since 1991, high-level visits have been exchanged between Pakistan and C.A.R.'s. They signed a huge number of agreements during such visits, which took in different years, the agreements aimed to promote economic cooperation and encourage tourism and cultural cooperation. Pakistan also established a Joint Economic Commissions (J.E.C.s) with all the Central Asian Republics, likewise, Pakistan in 1992 initiated a STAP-Special Technical Assistance Program for extending training facilities to C.A.R.'s, STAP has been fully funded by the government of Pakistan, it includes courses related to English language, banking, and accountancy. (Haq, p.82, 2006) All such developments have contributed to better understanding and closer collaboration between Pakistan and C.A.R.'s.

Role of Economic Cooperation Organization:

The Economic Cooperation Organization is an important regional organization connecting ten regional States. It was established in 1985 by three Islamic states, i.e., Pakistan, Iran and

Turkey, aimed to promote Socio-cultural, economic and technical collaboration among the particular states. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Central Asian states also got a pivotal position in the region; therefore in the fall of 1992, the Economic Cooperation Organization expanded and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan were included as seven new members of E.C.O. Member states set the common objective of establishing a single market for goods and services. Interestingly, the members of E.C.O. have excessive prospects of promoting regional trade and achieving the goals of economic development, though it's yet to be set up. E.C.O. provides a good opportunity for representatives of Pakistan and C.A.R.'s to meet; through the E.C.O., several arrangements and projects for Intra-regional collaboration has speedily been evolving (Haq, p.16, 2006).

The direct air services between Pakistan and Uzbekistan through their national airlines provided a chance for travelling through faster and easier means from Pakistan in the Central Asian region. Similarly, Pakistan, in spite of its economic problems, provided loans to the Central Asian States aiming to encourage the trade relations. (Haq, p.16, 2006)

Pakistan has specially focused its economic relations with C.A.R.'s because it is the best area where it can offer maximum advantages to C.A.R.'s, particularly by serving as a transit trade route between C.A.R.'s and the external world. (Haq, p.16, 2006)

Although currently E.C.O. is not a customs union nor common marketplace or a close economic bloc, but with the passage of time there is a possibility of the ECO-which is basically an economic association of regional Islamic countries-may try to assume a political responsibility and later may also seek to the option of geopolitical role. In any such case, the growing collaborations and understanding between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and C.A.R.'s from the stage of E.C.O. can't be denied, and it will improve in scope and significance in coming years.

Role of O.I.C.

OIC-Organization of Islamic countries is the 2nd largest organization after U.N. in terms of its members. Since its foundation on September 25th, 1969, membership has increased from twenty five to fifty seven. The member states of O.I.C. spread over four continents of the world. The basic goal of O.I.C. is to strengthen unity and harmony among the member nations. As an important member of O.I.C., Pakistan always has played a vital part in the consolidation of collaboration between Muslim countries through its active involvement in the programs and deliberation of O.I.C. ([Haq, p.16, 2006](#))

Similarly O.I.C. platform remained credible and solid diplomatic and economic source of assistance to Pakistan. ([Haq, p.16, 2006](#)) O.I.C. became a gateway to Pakistan to strengthen its ties with the C.A.R.s and win their goodwill who gradually became members of this forum after their independence. Pakistan not only extended its support to the Central Asian state's membership in the O.I.C., but has been supporting similar views with C.A.R.s on a variety of areas. Pakistan and Central Asian states firmly believe in the charter of O.I.C. which is based on subsequent objectives of "Islamic solidarity among member States, Cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields, the struggle of all Muslim people to safeguard their dignity, independence and national rights, Safeguard the Holy Places, elimination of racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism, Create a favorable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding between Member States and other countries." ([Haq, p.16, 2006](#))

They also share similar views on the "O.I.C. Charter's principles governing its activities, namely: Full equality among the Member States, Observation of the right to self determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States, Observation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each State, peaceful settlement of the dispute that might arise among Member." ([Haq, p.16, 2006](#)) Thus O.I.C. has played a commanding role by resulting in the similarity of views between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics which will

always play an important role in their diplomatic relations and understanding.

Pakistan's Geographical Location

The geostrategic locations of Pakistan increase the political and economic importance of the country. " Pakistan serves as a junction between China, South Asia, Gulf region and Central Asian region. The world is facing an energy crisis and Pakistan Geostrategic location offers the options of the route for transportations and energy supplies." (Koolfree, 2014). In changing global scenario Central Asian region became the center stage of the new Great games. After the disintegration of the USSR, a new quest started among various states for Oil and gas. However, one of the biggest barriers in un-taping Central Asian state resources is the landlocked status (Koolfree, 2014) in this regard since 1991, because of the geostrategic location Pakistan present itself the most feasible outlet for the Central Asian Republics. To make it more attractive and relevant for C.A.R.'s, Pakistan constructed Gwadar port and has offered numerous proposals for creating trade and transport corridors through its land and ports. The basic aim of Pakistan is to access the market of the Central Asian region through improving its commercial ties with them because in this way Pakistan can explore maximum advantages at the same time facilitate the C.A.R.'s in the economic sector. (Khan)"In the realm of economic relations with C.A.R.s, a fast growing market offers tremendous potential for our consumer goods, textiles and light engineering products. Some estimates even suggested that the region had a potential market of \$80 billion, and if Pakistan secures even 5 percent of this market, it could earn up to \$4 billion a year" (Khan). Thus, Pakistan location and the regional and international energy requirements provided Pakistan an opportunity to catch its geographical location and increase its significance for C.A.R.s.

China's Increasing Influence in Central Asia

Since 1991 China has been taking various initiatives to achieve its goals in the Central

Asian region some of them are as under;

Border Disputes Resolution

Western China shares a long and common border with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Since independence, China has remained insecure because of its western border with the Soviet Union (Dwivedi, 2006). However, when C.A.R.'s got independence, China resolved its border disputes with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan through relatively easy and peaceful means (Peyrouse, 2009)

On May 10, 2002, China and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the Demarcation of the border. The treaty followed the features of the ancient agreement concluded in the 18th century between Russia and the first Qing Dynasty of China.

Similarly, between the period of 1996-and 1999 both China and Kyrgyzstan signed two Protocols for defining their border. Under the 1996 agreement China got “30,000 of hectares” territory, and under the 1999 agreement, Kyrgyzstan, further ceded “95,000 hectares” of its land to China. Both agreements started a new phase of Kyrgyzstan-China relations and they became very friendly toward each other. (Dwivedi, p.147, 2006). These agreements also later got ratification from the parliament of Kyrgyzstan (Dwivedi, p.147, 2006).

Likewise, China and Tajikistan also signed a boundary agreement during May 2002 during. According to the agreement, China withdrew its claims on “28,000 sq.km” and in return got “1000 sq. km” from Tajikistan (Dwivedi, p.147, 2006). China and Tajikistan boundary agreement of 2002 also got ratification in 2005 from the Parliament of Tajikistan.

China- Central Asian Republics Growing Trade Relations

The trade turnover between China and Central Asian republics was quite limited during early 1990's, however, it started growth in the 21st century and only from 2008 to 2013 the trade growth between China and Central Asia claimed to be around 40 billion U.S. dollars. China also has emerged as a leading source of finance for

the Central Asian regional development and infrastructure projects. China has promoted the idea of financing infrastructure to connect the region with Chinese border areas and has supported the creation of a new regional development bank (Cooley, 2012). Similarly, in addition to the two high profile multibillion-dollar energy for loans deals with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan focus on power generation, transmission and news transport projects (roads and railways). China is now the major Public goods provider in the Central Asian region, whose infrastructure remains in a state of chronic disrepair and Chinese focuses towards contributing to the improvement of trade and cross regional border links (Ibraimov, 2009) The Central Asian region has rapidly transformed into a raw material supplier for China, while China on the other hand has emerged as a supplier of the finished product in the shapes of machinery, chemicals and Hi-Tech equipments for Central Asian Republics. In addition, presently, several free economic zones have been established for the promotion of trade activities between the two sides aiming at mutual advantages. This trade relation is still in its initial phase of progress, in years to come, it's expected to rise with the fast pace for commercial advantages of China and Central Asian Republics.

Chinese Increasing Military Assistance to the Central Asian States

After the disintegration of the USSR, military collaboration progressed between China and Central Asian Republics, which mainly focused the Chinese technical support and training. “Given a strong growth of trade between China and Kazakhstan, the latter remains the preferred partner of Beijing in the region. Since 2000, both countries have signed agreements for Chinese material and technical equipment worth one million dollars, intended in particular to buy Kazakhstan’s struggle against Uighur separatism and religious extremism” (Peyrouse, 2010). Kazakhstan has been receiving received military equipments and military assistance in the shape of aid from China since 1997. Similarly, both states also initiated numerous joint military exercises with the objective of dealing the

terrorists and drug traffickers in their sphere of influence.

Likewise, since 2007 China agreed to equip the army of Turkmenistan with reliable and modern equipment. China also offered a “\$ 3 million loan” for fulfilling the requirements of the army of Turkmenistan. Soon after such arrangements Turkmenistan started providing “30 bcm (billion Cubic Meters) of gas to China.” That made Turkmenistan more important for China and it became more interested to upgrade the army of Turkmenistan as to prevent any serious terrorist attacks against the energy supplies connecting Turkmenistan with the China. (Peyrouse, 2010)

China also tried to strengthen its military collaborations with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Since 2005 Beijing signed various military cooperation documents with Dushanbe. Both states have been sharing intelligence information in the various areas of drugs smuggling, terrorism, and planned the crime (Peyrouse, 2010). China showed her commitment to provide a chain of fiscal aid sets for the Tajikistan army modernization and up-gradation. China has also extended its mechanical military support to Kyrgyzstan, China has been delivering military Hi-Tech military equipment and hardware to the Kyrgyzstan. China relations with Uzbekistan, relations seem composite, “In 2000, China made the first step on to the Central Asian arms market, delivering sniper rifles to Tashkent. In 2009, the two countries signed a new agreement whereby Beijing provides \$3.7 million to the Uzbek authorities to equip its border crossings with mobile scanning systems.” (Peyrouse, 2010)

To conclude the C.A.R.'s takes the Chinese military equipments as a substitute of outdated Soviet hardware (Peyrouse, 2010) and they take the Chinese military training facilities as exposure and opportunity towards exposure and a chance for upgrading their military skills.

China's Role Towards the Oil and Gas Sectors of Central Asia

In 21st century China asserts the economic growth as its most important objective through which it can sustain the diplomatic and socio-cultural stability of the country. It seems that the

economic security of China depends on the balance of two elements, i.e., economic development, and its energy security, however, assuring its energy security became a more important component of the Chinese national security organizations (Peyrouse, 2010).

Since 2003, China has been one of the largest oil consumer state and since 2004 it has become one of the major oil importer state after the Japan and U.S.A., moreover, since 2006 China begun to import L.N.G. as well (Peyrouse, 2010). However, the Arabs spring in the 21st century and the U.S.A. around the Malacca strait through which around eighty percent of Chinese oil import pass became alarming signs for China. Thus China started to explore the alternate options in case of crisis, and as a result, it led towards reshaping of the foreign policy of China towards Central Asian Republics. (Peyrouse, 2010)

Main Chinese oil and gas exploration companies start working through heavy investments for exploring oil and gas in the Central Asian Region. In specific, China has been investing heavily in Kazakhstan; roughly China has got a control over “about 15 percent of Kazakhstan's” total oil output. The discovery of one of the largest oil fields of the world, i.e. Kashagan oil Kazakhstan” in 2000 encouraged China to recommit to construct a China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline (Fazilov & Chen, 2013).

China-Kazakhstan energy collaboration will bring better prospects in the whole region. “Kazakhstan and China have considered three opportunities. The first is to prolong the existing pipeline between cities of Uzbekistan-Bukhara and Tashkent to Almaty, then through Taldikorgan to Alashankou. The second is the gas pipeline connecting Ishim (western Siberia) and Alashankou and the one going through Astana and Karaganda. The third is a variant of constructing a pipeline from Shankar (western Kazakhstan) and one coming through Kizilorda until Shimkent, with connection to the pipeline Bukhara-Tashkent-Almaty.”

“Turkmenistan is one of the world's largest natural gas exporters and looks set to double its energy supply to the P.R.C. in the near future. The Central Asia–P.R.C. gas pipeline-spanning

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and entering China through the border town of Horgos in Xinjiang-had the capacity to transport 40 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year when it was first built. But given the P.R.C. plans to increase its gas imports from Central Asia five times over by 2015, the pipeline's capacity will soon expand to 55–60 bcm per year.” (Fazilov & Chen, 2013).

In the same way, China set up more than 380 ventures in Uzbekistan through its investment. China also established representative offices for sixty five large Chinese companies in Uzbekistan. Both states brought fast pace in their relations through China-Uzbekistan gas pipeline, which started its supply towards China in August 2012. (Fazilov & Chen, 2013).

Shanghai-Five

Shanghai Five forum also played a significant role in bringing China closer to the Central Asian Republics and leading them towards similarity of opinions and interests on a wide range of areas aiming to explore common interests. The first meeting of Shanghai Five was held in 1996 in Shanghai-China. The Shanghai-Five the predecessor of the S.C.O. was established which focused particularly on the stability and peaceful environment on the Chinese common border with Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. After the settling the peace on the borders, the major target of Shanghai-five became an assured good neighborly attitude along with the spirit of friendship and cooperation among the state. The weakness of C.A.R.'s and the rise of new threats, the agendas of the Shanghai-Five progressively started to expand into multidimensional ways (Dwivedi, p.150, 2006).

“The top leaders of the five countries on Shanghai Five forum exchanged views on bilateral and multilateral cooperation and other regional and international issues of common interest” (World: Shanghai Five, 2015) in cultural, military, trade and security affairs. The member states agreed to “hold anti-terrorism and anti-riot maneuvers within the five-nation framework and it was affirmed that every member of the Shanghai Five” would not permit

any activities in their territory which in any way can challenge the stability, sovereignty and national integrity of another member state. Similarly the five states also agreed to follow the agenda of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other (Dwivedi, p.150, 2006). They also opposed the use of force option in international relations which lacks the backing of the United Nations. In addition, the five nations agreed in the promotion of mutual trusts through negotiations, and they agreed to strengthen their cooperation for sustaining peace and stability in the region (Dwivedi, p.150, 2006).

Pakistan-China Relations: Increasing Role in Central Asian Republics

Pakistan-China relations, increasing role in Central Asia can be understood through following headings;

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

“Shanghai-Five was renamed as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (S.C.O.) after the joining of Uzbekistan on 15 June, 2001” (Khan, p.57, 2013). Surprisingly, the “Shanghai Five framework” enhanced comprehensive peace and harmony in the region. The Shanghai Five contributed for resolution of border disputes among the member countries in a surprising manner, it also ends the ended the geostrategic and economic differences between China and Russia and China in Central Asian region. The convergences of interests among the member-led towards feelings of upgrading the organization for promoting regional unity (Khan, p.59, 2013). for maximizing advantages.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization comprised of “China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan,” whereas “Pakistan, India, Mongolia and Iran” as observer countries. *Pakistan is desirous of becoming the permanent member of the S.C.O., and in this regard, China is facilitating it. Pakistan's entry into S.C.O. also brought a positive impact on Pakistan-Russian relationship. Both states initiated a new phase of their relations based on the spirit of respect and cooperation, the tense relations which were there between the two states, particularly during the*

cold war, transformed into more friendly relations (Khan, p.64, 2013). Shanghai Cooperation Organization seems to provide better opportunities in Pakistan and Russia to further strengthen their ties as to achieve more meaningful and productive regional targets. "Islamabad helped Russia in getting an observer status at the Organization of Islamic Conference (O.I.C.), and, Moscow reciprocated by helping Pakistan in getting similar status at S.C.O." (Khan, p.60, 2013). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, aroused as a valuable forum for both Russia and Pakistan for maturing their bilateral relations and forget the misunderstandings of past.

The S.C.O. has been merging the Russian and Chinese interests at regional and International level at with great pace. It has made both actors as strategic partners rather than strategic competitors or rival on a wide range of areas. The Russian-Chinese nexus via S.C.O., raised concerns before American think tanks which views "the S.C.O. as a challenge to American interests" (Khan, p.60, 2013). at regional and international levels. On the other hand, the all weather friendship between Pakistan-China and close collaborations between U.S.A. and India are leading towards the possible emergence of nuclear power troika of Pakistan-China-Russia. It will not only surpass the other actors, including a U.S.A. role in the region, but through economic and defense capabilities of their own and natural resources of Central Asian Republics they can alter the regional and International politics towards new directions by opening new military, economic and resource-rich poles in the world.

Quadrilateral Trade Agreement

Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in 1995 signed a Quadrilateral trade agreement-transit trade agreement, which was later signed by Tajikistan as well. "The quadrilateral trade agreement stipulates effective utilization of the Karakoram Highway (K.K.H.) for trade between Pakistan and S.C.O. member states via Kashgar. This agreement will also help cross Russian border for trade directly via Xinjiang or via Kashgar, Pakistan and Kazakhstan with

relatively less freight" (Khan, p.165, 2013). Although there have been several pending issues related to issuing the permit to the goods vehicles for transit, however all countries through their homework are trying to develop consensus e.g. in March 2011, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, decided to revive a transit trade agreement, signed in 2004 between "Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan," in a bid to strengthen regional economic collaboration. (Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan to revive, 2011). "The former Prime Minister of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, who met his Kyrgyz counterpart Almazbek Atambaev following a round of talks in same month i.e. March 2011, agreed to remove all obstacles for a smooth and effective functioning of the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement" (Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan to revive, 2011). Although the agreement is still going through a transitional phase but in years to come its scope and significance will be expanded and it will attract more countries towards itself.

Kashgar Economic Zone as a Bridge between Pakistan and Central Asia:

"China has started developing two special economic zones in Xinjiang i.e. Kashgar near Pakistan's border with China and Horgus at China-Kazakh border. Under the program, Kashgar, an ancient Silk Route town that borders Pakistan through the plateau of Pamir will become a regional logistics center, a financial and trading hub and a key processing center for internationally traded goods" (Khan, p.166, 2013). Interestingly "Kashgar would serve as an economic engine for backward Xinjiang as well as for Pakistan and Central Asia because it connects Central Asia and Pakistan for trade via K.K.H. Kashgar is a platform and serves as a bridge to promote trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan, China and Central Asia. Prospects of investment in the two major projects, i.e., Pakistan-China railway (Kashgar to Rawalpindi) and Kyrgyz-Uzbek-China railway have increased, which will make Kashgar a regional trade hub and consequently provide an opening to the landlocked Central Asia and western China via Pakistan" (Khan, p.166, 2013). Kashgar economic zone will provide opportunities to businessmen of Pakistan, China,

and Central Asian Republics; it will also extend the trade activities between those actors which will have a valuable impact on their economies.

Pakistan-China Relations: An Easy Outlet for Central Asia

Chinese investment in these areas has increased the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan who can now offer an outlet C.A.R.s.

“China has provided an all-out assistance for the development of Gwadar Deep-sea Port in Pakistan thus strengthening the vital Geo-strategic ties with each other in an expanding global village” (Malik, p.61, 2012). Chinese assistance in the development of Gwadar port marks another significant step towards strengthening friendship and understanding between Pakistan and China. Through Gwadar deep Sea Port, the trade advantages for Pakistan will multiply and this port offers shortest routes for trade to China and Central Asia. In Central Asian Republics the expected production of dry cargo is more than liquid cargo that increase the larger ship requirement and for that purpose Gwadar deep-sea Port will offer it as a better choice. Particularly Gwadar port will serve as the best option to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan dry cargo through its shortest access towards warm waters. Likewise, liquid cargo of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and can also be exported through Gwadar, it will be a shorter route from Central Asian Republics towards warm water (Malik, p.64, 2012). Thus, Gwadar will surely bring prosperity in this region. Beside Gwadar Central Asian states can also utilize Karachi port and Port Qasim of Pakistan and via them, they can find outlets towards more open world. In order to access the Gwadar Port, Port Qasim and Karachi port Pakistan and China have been collaborating to upgrade the roads and rail tracks under CEPC in particular, this will further improve the mobility for China and C.A.R.s via Pakistan.

Since 2004 Pakistan and China have been planning to construct a railway line to connect the two regions. China has already accomplished the feasibility homework for building a railway track from Khunjrab to Abbottabad. Once the railway track gets constructed, it will assure better trade connectivity between China,

Pakistan, Central Asia and even Russia in future (Malik, p.64, 2012). In addition, China plans to upgrade the railway network of Pakistan, the Asian Development Bank has also offered assistance in the constructing railway track between Gwadar to Chaman, it will later be connected with Kandahar, Kabul, Herat and then with central Asia. Apart from “that there are also plans to connect the Kashgar-Rawalpindi rail track to the proposed Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway line. To develop rail links with West Asia, the energy resource rich Middle East, India has been consulting Pakistan and other neighbors. Pakistan's participation is crucial for any plan that links India to the Middle East, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Two rail lines have already been in operation between Pakistan and India. One between Karachi and Jodhpur and the second one connects Lahore and Amritsar. These rail lines can be instrumental not only in regional trade, transportation, but also in carrying energy where pipelines have not been built” (Khan, p.165, 2013).

Similarly, through a road network Pakistan-China will not only offer outlets to C.A.R.s but to Russia towards warm waters as well, through K.K.H. even Iran can access China via land route of Pakistan, it can also provide an opportunity for India to access Afghanistan, C.A.R.s and Iran via Pakistan. Understanding the importance of up-gradation of road routes specially the K.K.H., “the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for its up-gradation was signed between Pakistan and China in 2006. Currently 70 per cent of the work has been completed to widen and rebuild the 335 km long section of K.K.H. from Raikot bridge to Khunjrab pass of the total 1300 km long highway.” (Khan, p.172, 2013). Similarly, “Pakistan and China also plan to connect Gwadar Port via Indus Highway (Ratodero) with the K.K.H. which leads to Kashgar-around 414 km from Post-Tashkurgan (Pakistan-China border) and further reaches to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The up-gradation of the K.K.H. is a China-Pakistan initiative to create a north-south and east-west trade corridor in response to other proposed trade and energy corridors in the region” (Khan, p.172, 2013).

Fight against Terrorism

The religious misinterpretations, Conspiracy theories, non-State actors, injustice and economic imbalance resulted in raising the risk of terrorism and their activities in Central Asia, China, and Pakistan. Terrorist forces not only became the major threat to peace and stability of these countries, but it has emerged as major fence before the development of the whole region. After 9/11 tragic event the security situation in Afghanistan continues to be the subject of serious concern for all regional actors because it can threaten them in one way or the other. A need of regional and international cooperation for curbing terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan was the need of hour after 9/11, ([Commander William, 2012](#)) therefore all regional actors, including China, Pakistan and Central Asian republics showed their commitment for supporting the war against terrorism.

The real threat to China, Pakistan and Central Asian Republics in regard of terrorism has been from Afghanistan.

“The Xinjiang province is strategically important for China, It is considered to be a key transit route for energy-starved China. Xinjiang is considered to be the largest province of China. The violence in this region is not just related to one ethnic group, but there many other ethnic groups who are sometimes involved in violent activities against each other.” ([Commander William, 2012](#)). This is one of the reasons that have brought them closer to the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Xinjiang province holds huge reserves of Oil and Gas. Most of the Oil deposits were discovered its Tarim Basin. Discovery of huge reservoirs of Oil in Xinjiang would reduce China’s dependence on other countries. China would never compromise on this area. This is the reason that China is concerned about the security of Xinjiang” ([Commander William, 2012](#)) and seeking solutions to curb any uprising and terrorist activities in this area.

On the other hand, increased militancy and violence Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan has brought FATA into focus, the Pakistani government has taken several measures based on political dialogues and military operations seeking to find a solution of

the problems underlying the political and social situation in FATA. The militancy in FATA is not threatening sign for Pakistan, but it can have huge impacts on Xinjiang, Afghanistan and even Central Asia, therefore Pakistan measures of eliminating terrorism are not only assuring internal peace of the country, but has also been assuring the stability in the whole region ([Larson, 2012](#)). Pakistan's role in this regard is admirable, both Pakistan and China know the fact that assurance of writ of government in FATA, Xinjiang, and Afghanistan will assure peace and stability not only in these countries but in the whole region, ([Larson, 2012](#)). It will open new avenues for Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asian states and even Russia in social, economic, political and cultural sectors in a stable and peaceful environment. Therefore, both Pakistan and China seem to be uncompromising in elimination of terrorism and their networks in their own countries.

Oil and Gas Pipelines

Pakistan-China relations are viewed as important for trainees-oil and gas pipelines in the region. Currently Pakistan-China emerges as two important actors for TAPI, which is a project of around 1,680 km natural gas pipeline, stretching from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan then Pakistan before ending at the India. The abbreviation comes from the first letter of these countries and is seen as a modern continuation of the silk route. The original project started in March 1995 when as an inaugural memorandum of understanding between the government of Turkmenistan and Pakistan for pipeline project was signed. The new deal on the pipeline was signed on December 27, 2002 by the leaders of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2005 the Asian Development Bank submitted the final version of feasibility study designed by British Company Pensen. The Asian Development Bank in 2005 announced to participate in building the gas pipeline, India also showed its interests in the project and in 2008 she formally got incorporated in it. Energy hungry India and Pakistan have joined hands with Afghanistan and struck a deal with Turkmenistan to build a gas pipeline at a cost of \$10bn. Construction on the project started in

Turkmenistan on 13 December 2015. The pipeline is expected to be operational by 2019.

In a strategic move, China has shelved a plan to be a part of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline that faces the threat of U.S.A. sanctions and has come up with an offer to join the TAPI gas pipeline to meet its growing energy needs. According to sources, Beijing plans to lay a pipeline under a TAPI project from Gwadar to China, which will turn Gwadar port into energy corridor. On the other hand, Bangladesh has already approached Turkmenistan, which will export gas from its vast reserves, and other countries that are part of the project, seeking to be a part of TAPI to meet its energy needs. (Gas import: China abandons I.P. project, 2014).

China is planning to set up an oil refinery at Gwadar. The crude oil processed and refined at Gwadar Oil Refinery can be exported and transported to Urumqi (Capital of Xian Yang) through the shortest possible route to China via Dubai-Gwadar-Urumqi which is about 3600 kilometers. For this oil pipeline will be laid through the envisaged Energy Corridor up to Western China via K.K.H./Khunjrab bypass ([Bhutta, 2013](#)). This can also be connected with a crude oil pipeline of China-Kazakhstan, if it can happen then India will be attracted towards that and via Pakistan, even India can be linked with it. "Impediments like high altitude, freezing temperature and difficult terrain could be overcome through certain technological advancements since many countries had successfully completed such pipeline projects under extreme conditions and high altitude such as Trans-Alaska Pipeline, Trans-Asia Gas pipeline" (Gas import: China abandons I.P. project, 2014).

Any such project will further increase the significance of Pakistan-China in the region and

will give them a chance to grow their links further with C.A.R.s and other regional actors.

Conclusion

Pakistan-China has a durable partnership that is certainly growing and has always been considered as unique because it has emerged between the strongest Islamic State-Pakistan and rising superpower state-China. The bilateral relations have not only sustained the shifts in regional and international politics, but have remained unaffected because of changes of governments and leadership in their own peripheries.

Despite the different ideological, political, socio-economic and religious factors, Pakistan and China have established and maintained good relations because their national interests do not overlap and they see each other as a source through which they can survive and explore the advantages. Pakistan-China relations generate new pole to small and weak states of the region, particularly for C.A.R.s who have been seeking for opportunities to play a vital role in regional dynamics.

Pakistan's geo-strategic location, China's economic and military strength became the source of attraction for C.A.R.s towards Pakistan and China. Likewise, the commencement of China-Pakistan economic corridor further makes Pakistan-China relations significant for C.A.R.s in different perspectives, which attained the focus of different regional and international players as well. The CPEC is a significant venture in the history of Pakistan-China relations and it is seen as the Silk Road Economic Belt overland network joins the Maritime Silk Road in Sea this ultimately will lead to emergence of unique zone with vital importance where Pakistan-China along with Central Asian Republics will have pivotal positions.

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