

Strategic Importance of Gawadar Port in Central Asia

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Keywords	Abstract
Geo Strategic, Gwadar, China, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia, Iran, Pakistan	<i>The paper evaluates the geo strategic importance of Gwadar, expectation of economic corridor, opportunities of Industrial development and the economic benefits via Gwadar port. Gwadar is not only going to play important role in the Pakistan's economy but is also probably to influence other neighboring countries of the region like China, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia, Iran etc. The forecast trade of Gwadar port is based on the transit potential of cargo activities to Western areas of China. Central Asia and Afghanistan in addition to flow of natural resources from Central Asian Republics, cargo transshipment and the domestic cargo import and export activities. In Near future competition of the regional ports within different level is also examined. Pakistan is seen as a window of strategic opportunity for the regional trade. Throbbing economy of China may be demanding more than supply line. Central Asian natural resources to the south are considered as gravitate to Pakistan. Pakistan presents a very important corridor of the Indian Ocean and Gulf to Central Asia. Pakistan requires to be address all the concerns issues to develop Gwadar as regional energy corridor. Gwadar port has great trade value and it is growing importance of Pakistan in the region.</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's demography, geography and strategic technology have a very good combination. The development of infrastructure in South and West Asia is for the competition to get geographical control by regional powers to secure and enhance markets and resources. The Indian Ocean enhances strategic competition between the nations because of its geographical importance. The Ocean is also one of the Nicholas Spykman's maritime highways of the world. On the other side, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf have no clear balance of power while the U.S.A. has been reducing its military capabilities in the region. This ongoing competition has positive and negative consequences.

Pakistan's demography, geography and strategic technology have a very good combination. Currently, two ports are being developed in the region. Gwadar port in Pakistan and Chabahar in Iran have respectively strategic alliance between Pakistan and China and between Iran and India (Daniels, 2013).

i. Gate Way to Central Asia

Central Asia or center region of Asia is bounded on the north by Russia and on south by Afghanistan, Iran and China. It is extending from the Caspian Sea in the West to the border of western China in the east. These states are former Soviet republics Uzbekistan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. The history of relations of the subcontinent with Central Asia dates back to the prehistoric past when various trade routes connected the two regions, and, at times, were part of the same States. The historical heritage of Central Asia surely ranks as one of the most powerful economic centers in the region. The new trends in regional and international markets offer initiatives for Pakistan especially in Central Asia but the significance of ties between Pakistan and Central Asia has always been strong mainly because of religious, cultural and commercial bonds (Asif, 2011). The independent states of Central Asia have strong religious, cultural and economic relations with countries of South Asia especially Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Central Asian states are very rich in natural resources as well as human resources but not good in economic conditions. Geographical location is the major reason behind its poor economic condition. All Central Asian countries are land locked and all states do not have opportunity to the outer world to boost their economy by utilizing sources. Pakistan has very good geographical location having well developed ports and coastal area spread over thousands of miles. Pakistan can provide shortest route to all land lock countries of Central Asia. Now Pakistan is becoming gateway for the people of Central Asia. It will help increasing foreign investment in the country besides enhancing trade of goods, energy pipelines, railways and transmission lines within the region. While Central Asian States land significance in the minds of all geo-strategy thinkers, recent strategic development at Gwadar is a unique decision. Big land mass of the Central Eurasia, Afghanistan, Southern Russia and South West China are joining at Gwadar (Hamid, 2013). This is based on geography, history, demography and economy. In a twist of Irony, Pakistan which countered the Soviet Union in Afghanistan should now activate its transit, trade and investment on its deep sea port of Gwadar.

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are the smaller states. Kazakhstan is the bigger state in North. Southern Russia is just located in the North of Central Asia, the line of many cities like Moscow, Irkutsk, Omsk and Kyrgyz lies in Southern Siberia bounded in the east by Chinese Xingjian. Central Asia is rich in natural resources but not good in material wealth. Russia retaining influence in CARs and China has also been enhancing its influence. Energy pipelines and trade transit need outlets from that vast landlocked, landmass. Russia is also a big energy player in this region (Ghaleb, 2009). East-West Corridor was also appreciated that would be need of time between Iran and Pakistan. Feasibility study of these projects was undertaken by Asian Development Bank. Once developed connection with Central Asian States, it could be extend to Moscow.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Geostrategic environment is considered as one of the important elements that influences the development of a society. The location of Pakistan at a region which has great economic, political and strategic significance will definitely play a role in the prosperity of the country. Gwadar is strategically located at the crossroads of natural resources of CARs and Middle East. Gwadar is at the shortest route to the western parts of Chinese region. It is equipped with facilities of modern cargo handling to meet the new challenges of growing global trading activities. Economically boosting China, stable Pakistan and gradually opening new consumer markets of CARs will create a substantial portion of global trade in near future. The area of Gwadar is facing provocations which can be local, regional and beyond the region as it is excellent project with long and short term local and regional impact.

1.2. Objectives

- Gwadar has potentials of regional hub and trans-shipment port to China and Central Asia.

- Dominant position of Gwadar for Gulf region is a part of great game.

2. METHOD

The paper is based on secondary sources and Primary data collected through a different types of articles that published in different journals, both economic/business, minutes of meeting, news sources, internet sources, many previous articles based on that framework which provides better understand to the readers and subject also.

One more reason using that method of research in the case of deep sea Gwadar port because of some elements in this case scenario, some being conformed about particular area. Researchers of social sciences experience two types of research, one is deductive approach and other one inductive approach, because this is qualitative case of study in this paper so inductive approach implemented in qualitative study, which is based on findings and observation.

De Riencourt (1982) about strategic position of Balochistan. In recent times Hamid Hasan written about Gwadar port significance and his implications. Most of the research was done before the actual start of the project, which does not suggest trends or indicators since most of the results would have been theoretical and hypothetical sufficient precision. In addition, due to the lack of availability of data and other facts, much research is qualitative. There's a lot of numbers and of relevant data to quantify the attributes of the harbor or provide a conclusion decent level of success or failure. A serious lack of availability of information to all navigation data, and all related costs, fees or relevant variables is missing.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is always considered as the most important part of research work. It is an evaluation of reading, analyzing, evaluating and summarizing the relevant material to one's selected area of topic. It proves helpful for saving time and money. Literature review should be theoretical base that helps you identify the nature and area of research. The major focus of my study in hand is to evaluate and find out the Significance of Gwadar port and how this port becomes the new economic hub for the regional level.

Most of the available material discusses the Chinese energy supply through Gwadar as well as central Asia, Iran etc. Researchers are ignoring the domestic progress in Balochistan and Western China. One more thing I do not see in different papers is the hurdles of the project being faced by the government of Pakistan. Researcher are focusing the Sino-Pak economic alliance.

The literature on the coverage of Pakistan, China, and central Asia, Gulf region, Iran and other stake holders includes a plethora of information and research. After deep study i found that the study of international relations by the researchers and scholars is the combination of two disciplines of international relations and political science. The study discusses how Gwadar has mass strategies for economy. It is not only for the particular region but for the central Asia as well as Africa and Eurasia which is the entrance of Persian Gulf. It is estimated that 40% of world oil trade is passing from that route. Chinese economic alliance with Pakistan is center point of the study. According to Walt (1989) Alliances are very important and central role in theories of international relations, alliances seen as integral part of statecraft. Alliances are important research work in theories of international relations. Description of alliance as a process of statecraft of international organizations Fedder (Defense Politics of the Atlantic

Alliance, 1968). According to Lipson (The evolution of cooperation, 1984) political economy of international affairs is renowned not only by its important focus but also consideration to cooperative, these collective understanding explaining as world economy by Krasner (1983).

Butt, et. al (2021) while discussing Gwadar port told us few years before that Pakistani government decided to develop the new port of Gwadar with the help of neighboring country China. Gwadar is a pearl of geography. The coastal development project of Gwadar was conceived in the year of 2000. The further study of Butt et. al reveals that the concept of Gwadar port was announced for the better future of Pakistan. Gwadar has potential to change the scenario of the economic, political, strategic elements of the region that will convert Pakistan as multi regional state actor. This is the transit route to central Asia through Afghanistan, China and the states of Gulf region. Strait of Hormuz is 400 Km away from Gwadar port that is the important gateway of oil route. The new Global concept based on share of peace, shared wealth, shared globalism, Gwadar will help in all aspects. Qaiser and Shahdan (2013) says that Government of Pakistan decision development of small fishing village to international trade route and hub, also refers to under developed region to bring the economic growth and regional development. Mir (2013) while presenting the last decade writes that world has become more globalized in terms of sharing relationship. Countries are designing different strategies to secure their economic interest.

Its northern high mountains called Mackinder's Heart land. Sir Halford Mackinder gave that concept in 1905 and its southern coastal line is Rimland by Spykeman's. It's all about global dominance. Heartland attached or the littoral lands of Rimland that were more difficult to global dominance. We see on the global chess board, the global powers are the original players of this game. Ports contributions and input-output model is used in quantitative methods. Khan (2005) while analysing the strategic importance that Gwadar port is located at the natural resources of the CARs and Middle East and it is also the shortest route of south province of China. Civilizations are always developed and emerged on the coasts of oceans and seas. Khan says the importance and the role of the coastline in the development of human beings cannot be overemphasized, the majority of the populations of the world are located within 100 km of the shores of the seas. Seaport plays a very important role to give strength to the national economy and contribution towards the success of the nations.

Zahid in his paper (2009) told us that in modern world Geographical environment is considered as the most important element and is also influencing the human society. Just like a railway junction, Gwadar port will serve as a sea junction for multi sea routes. Mutual relations of both the countries will depend on the new economic corridor of Gwadar to Xinjiang. Ahmad (2013) discussing Pakistan's issue of facing the massive lack of energy stresses that new route will help the energy transportation and trade activities. This discussion about the significance of Gwadar port and Kashgar city.

The part of western china is under developed and landlocked, geographical position of Pakistan relatively to western china. Important reason of relationship between the two countries is the strategic partnership. Pakistan needed the foreign investment from china, development of basic infrastructure, regional trade, transit revenues, energy transit, and employment opportunities at local level. Iran, Pakistan and Kashgar proposed gas and oil pipelines generate revenues and employment and also solution of Pakistan energy crises. Ahmed further discussing that Gwadar to Kashgar proposed rail line between the two countries. Gwadar port will serve Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through Afghanistan that was initial plan due to geographical position now Kashgar connected to Gwadar via roads. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan will also server through Gwadar.

Gwadar needs of Pakistan to develop port as soon as possible. Next to the mouth of gulf in Arabian Sea, Largest province in term size, Machkinder's rim land (Alaxander, 2009). Exploiting Balochistan is the part of new great game by the international colonial powers viz killing of Chinese engineers, Durand line issue, "Greater Balochistan, helping rebellious movement, Terrorism.

CGPS (2014) analyzing Chinese interest that President Xi Jinping announced the beginning of new relations in region, Central Asian past at Astana, Kazakhstan, Chinese massive economy demanding more energy. Government of china working on energy plan to meet the solution of future. Myanmar to china pipeline, Kazakhstan to china, these are the new energy projects. Railway lines, roads are developing infrastructure with Pakistan, Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project facing international sanctions. Pakistan economy, industry badly effected by energy crisis. Iqbal, (1992) in his research presenting that India decided to build road in Afghanistan to Tajikistan that roads will passing through Herat, Mazar e sharif, Sherkhan, border and up to china. Iran and Afghanistan developing friendly relations in Hamid Karazi period. In his opinion the American attacked over Iraq that was starting of first gulf war. It was said by the many think tanks was considered oil game. Economic development of third world countries changing the whole scenario. Pakistan is going to become the new player of energy game, Pakistan itself needed energy and unique location of coastal line that makes Pakistan cornerstone of the energy game.

David Scott (2008) focused on the Recently Pakistan's role as 'land corridor' for China, Chinese up gradation of land to the central Asian countries. In 2004 China and Pakistan joint military exercise first time on the land Xinjiang. India working in Afghanistan in many fields, road infrastructure, supplying of army equipment, political affiliation with Hamid Karzai government. Pakistan dislikes Indian presence in Afghanistan and claim that India disturbing Pakistan province Balochistan and KPK province from Afghanistan side. Kashmir issue between both the countries still unresolved and that is big cause of tense relations. China is 3rd silent partner of Kashmir.

i. Theory of Heartland and Rimland

Democratic Ideals and reality" he wrote the masterpiece in 1919. Halford Mackinder, he indicated the northern central core and gave the name of "Heartland" that was Eurasian landmass, Pivot Area another name of Heartland. It is landlocked region of central Eurasia Geographical position of Pakistan is unique. Its mountains of north and its proximity of Mackinder's Heart land. Machkinder gave that concept in early 20th century as the key of world domination. It's a geopolitical region which is populated, well-armed and systemic powers could bid for a world dominance. Heartland is central Europe east of the Baltic and Black seas to the east of Siberia, Mongolia. Some part of north east of China, and all of Central Asia (Brzezinski, 2007). Mackinder identified that a land empire which controlled the Heartland could use the central geographical position and natural resources to dominate Eurasia and established a powerful navy that threatened the powers of Japan, England and the United states.

ii. Turkmenistan-Afghan-Pakistan and India (TAPI) and Heartland theory

Balochistan is great gateway of energy, it is an open fact. TAPI considered as Turkmenistan-Afghan-Pakistan and India proposed energy pipeline. TAPI project was examined of Former Soviet Russians and liberation of Central Asian states. Afghanistan was

facing insurgency in Taliban Era so she postponed the project. International energy company Unicol worked for the project to come through (Niazi, 2006).

iii. Central Asian Republics/Russia

The land of fairies and fables lies in Afghanistan's north. The geography is charming and rich in natural resources waiting to be tapped. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are the small states in the south, Kazakhstan is bigger state in the north. In the north of Central Asian Republics lies South of Russia, one line of the cities Kazan, Omsk, Moscow, Kyrgyz, and Irkutsk. Kyrgyz steppe lies of Siberia's South edge in the east by China's Xingjian. Southwards lies Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Caspian Sea with Baku plus Russia, Turkey and Astrakhan towards south west. Central Asia not good in material wealth but rich in energy resources (Mir, 2013). Russia retain her influence in Central Asia, China also increased its influence. United States has some vital interests "Mr. Brzezinskis stress on Eurasia and CARs has influenced American geopolitics." Energy and trade transit pipelines very much need outside from its vast landlocked. Russia is also a big energy player, conduit to Europe. Iran and Middle East have huge assets of Hydrocarbon and exports of these assets.

The best available route in the South via Afghanistan to the Pakistan's coast. As mentioned out three transit roads and pipelines are available. In Central Asia the major center point, though on the south fringe runs via Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. This is running from Almaty, Tashkent and Ashgabad. This route travel to Iran. It reaches Chabahar/Bandar Abbas which is located at mouth of Gulf. Secondly Mai via west of Afghanistan, passing via Balochistan it's also reaches Gwadar. The third available option for Pakistan's new Economic Corridor from Gwadar/Karachi to the north of Pakistan at sust border. After crossing into Kashgar in China it turns into Central Asian States (Mir, 2013).

The transit routes, two or three of them operate simultaneously. Pakistan can help of the Iran, China, Afghanistan and Russia for all three routes. The goods, containers reaching in Gwadar, would be picked up north to Central Asia. Railways can also be more integrated. Central Asia is not developed, needs investment, industry, port and technology. Economic corridor would not only lead to exchange of goods, trade, but CARs Tajiks, Uzbeks and others would be reaching in massive numbers via Afghanistan (Once Peace prevailed) into Iran and Pakistan (Shanghai Daily, 2006). Pakistani services could reach sources rich but services deficient CARs.

"The concept had suggested a transit highway from Gwadar, to Dalbandin, onto west of Kandhar, Grazing Herat onto Mari in Turkmenistan. From Mati it would link west to Ashqabad and north to Tashkent and the main branch to Almatay in Kazakhstan. A Parallel one would go through the Karakorm highway, through Sinkkiang border Tajikistan onto Bishkek and then Almatay in Kazakhstan in the land of Kirgiz Steppe, South of Siberia" (Mir, 2013).

CARs occupies 'Central Strategic Position' between Russia, Europe, Iran and China, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the south. The Central Asian States never developed as west of Russia during the time of USSR. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan hold huge energy assets. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have small energy assets, while Uzbekistan is self-contained. Investment from foreign is coming. Pakistan and Central Asia need improvement in their development. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan had agreed on a north south corridor. It was also acceptable that East and West corridor would also be needed between Pakistan and Iran

till Turkey. The Asian Development Bank were agreed to provide funds for these projects and feasibility reports was undertaken (UNCTAD, 2006).

It is important to estimate the growing need for energy worldwide. It is estimated that gas demand will continue to increase by 2.75% a year for the next twenty years. Improved from 3.5% the maritime shipping of crude oil and oil requirements remain constant for many years (Anwar, 2006). Increasing needs of global energy markets will need more resources and more alternative routes for their business activities. The natural resources of Central Asia becoming increasingly important in this scenario and the port of Gwadar is one of the future paths for their access to world energy markets.

iv. Turkmenistan-Afghan-Pakistan and India (TAPI)

Balochistan is great gateway of energy, it is an open fact. TAPI considered as Turkmenistan- Afghan-Pakistan and India proposed energy pipeline. TAPI project was examined of Former Soviet Russians and liberation of Central Asian states. Afghanistan was facing insurgency in Taliban Era so she postponed the project. These energy connections further delayed the project because of American invasion in Afghanistan. Moreover United States of America supports this route because US Sanctions on Iran, Pakistan and India proposed gas pipeline. Now the TAPI project stating again international oil company of US had been given the contract of TAPI. Four thermal power houses and two oil refineries were also part of the project (Khan, 2010).

Other ongoing projects, TAPI pipeline was a bright hope to help revive Afghanistan economy. This pipeline could bring in \$300 million as royalty to the Afghanistan (Abbas, 2002). The influx of foreign investment and money could help stabilize the country's economy and the development of its structure. It can be identified, a government pro United States in Afghanistan will facilitate the involvement of US companies in the pipeline project. Already Afghanistan trade was handled through Karachi port, and after the completion of the Gwadar port will handle the Afghanistan trading activities. Afghan finance minister (Now President) offered Afghanistan support for development of the port of Gwadar (Dawn, 2003). Pakistan needs to be keep Afghanistan peaceful for better economic performance of the region.

v. Trade Potential

The Caspian Sea has huge reserves of natural resources estimated at US \$4 trillion. CARs will have for more than 80% if the United States oil. One of the shortest route available for Central Asia is port of Gwadar. Turkmenistan to Gwadar gas pipeline of TAPI, 1,400 km length can pump the Turkmen gas to global market. This idea is, however, directly linked with peace in Afghanistan (Jehanzeb, 2006). The possible assets and proven energy reserves of the Caspian Sea region between 17 and 49 billion barrels are comparable to the proven oil reserves of Qatar on the low end and to the U.S on the High end. Same as, the Natural gas assets are evaluated at 232 trillion cubic feet, which are approximately to the gas assets of Saudi Arabia (Jehanzeb, 2006). The volumes of these reserves presents gainful source to be tapped by the world's energy markets.

vi. Tajikistan Transit Trade Distances

Geo strategic position of Gwadar port has potential to develop transit economy after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. Afghanistan is at the new phase of

rebuilding. Economy growth of China is now rated at 9 percent and Chinese are developing their Western areas but its own coast is 4500 km away from western areas. Gwadar has shortest route of 2600 Km from Central Asian States as compared to Turkey's 5000 km and Iran's 4500 km distances. Deep sea port of Gwadar deals the trade ships of China, South East Asian States and CARs (Jabeen, 2008).

Due to the geographical proximity and location, Gwadar has three main players as competitors for transit trade with Central Asia, Chah bahar, Bandar Abbas and Karachi. The distance and proximity advantageous/ disadvantageous Gwadar port with each of these neighboring ports with respect to Central Asian republics are as follows (Ahmed, 2013).

Turkmenistan, joining the shortest road links from Gwadar to Ashgabat, the port of Gwadar facing a distance disadvantage of about 260km and 165km from the port of Iran Chahbahar and Bandar Abbas respectively. "Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent using the shortest road link form Gwadar to Tashkent, Gwadar faces a distance advantage of 265km and 195km with Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar respectively." Dushanbe of Tajikistan has a distance advantage of 280km and 210km with Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar respectively (Jehanzeb, 2006). As pointed out, Gwadar distance advantage over Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over its regional competitors ports of Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar in the region. Despite the port of Karachi have remote advantage would not concern it works with its full volume. Thus, the Gwadar port is the most important and viable option available with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan regarding road links.

vii. The expected trade potential of CARs via Gwadar is as follows:

Uzbekistan Transit trade may import and export, mainly from / to East Asia. Imports of future transit via Uzbekistan Pakistan are US \$ 160 million, while exports of cotton, containing the enormous share of exports, would compete with Pakistan. Turkmenistan transit trade should be limited because of its established trade routes via the Caspian Sea (Niazi, 2006). Tajikistan transit trade will be important if Tajikistan is diversifying its trade partners. This would increase the commercial potential of Central Asia via Gwadar. Moreover, in the long terms of the port of Gwadar could be another route for the demand and supply of abundant oil and gas resources of Central Asia to markets worldwide.

3. CONCLUSION

Geo-strategic environment is considered as one of the important element that effective towards prosperity and location of Pakistan at a region which has economic, political and strategic significance. Sea is most critical element of the environment of world, which occupies almost three- quarters of the surface of the world. It was instrumental to the political changes as result of approach of powerful nations to occupy the underdeveloped and comparatively poor countries that is occupation of India by British Government through East India Company. Even the discovery of United States by Columbus also became possible through navigation over the Sea. Geo strategic position of Pakistan is unique. It is the confluence state of South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, China and Indian Ocean.

The prospects of revival of the old silk route to improve trade relations between Pakistan and China have become very prominent in this context. Gwadar was very small port in Pakistan and Kashgar is situated on a hilly area almost neglected for a long period. Since the industrial development in Kashgar dire need was realized by Chinese government to have shortest route

for imports and exports for economic zone of Kashgar. Pakistan being a friendly neighbor offered the route of Gwadar port for easy access of imports and exports to western parts of China as well as Middle East and Central Asia. This new scheme would be contribute to the economy and prosperity for both the countries. Thus Gwadar port vital in terms of importance for region and south Asia.

Currently, trading activities of transit from Afghanistan and CARs countries will not be a vital trade facilitator. In the light of such developments, when the economic corridor will potentially show up progressing movements of import and export activities. Furthermore development of industries is a jackpot to sustain and promote effectively development at Gwadar's port. Prospective of Gwadar's port shows, in the longer run to, become a powerhouse and strength of industries contributing to our economy and extending benefits over its competitors at regional level. Development of industry will accelerate trading activities of the country via Gwadar port and strengthen the economy of Pakistan.

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