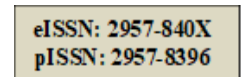


Geo Economic significance of Pakistan: A Strategic Nexus for Regional and Global Dynamic

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan has geography with much strategic importance regionally as well as globally. Pakistan situated at the crossroad of Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia. Pakistan has immense strategic significance due to its geographical location that it connects key regions. This article aims to explore the multidimensional significance of Pakistan's geography, focusing on its role in regional integration, development, and its geoeconomic and geopolitical importance for neighboring and regional countries. It also facilitates strategic and economic routes of the region which make it an important country in region as well as in world. The purpose of this article is to explore the multidimensional significance of the geography of Pakistan and its role in regional integration, development, geoeconomic and geopolitical importance for neighboring and regional countries. By examining Pakistan's connections with countries like China, India, Afghanistan, Iran, and the broader Middle East, this article sheds light on the intricate web of relationships and dependencies that underscore Pakistan's strategic value. The findings underscore the necessity for leveraging Pakistan's geographic advantages to promote regional cooperation and sustainable development, positioning Pakistan as a central player in the economic and political dynamics of the region and beyond.

KEYWORDS

Geography, Geo Economy, Geo Politics, Regional Integration, Energy Project

INTRODUCTION

As Robert D. Kaplan noted, geography acts as an essential "backdrop" for the human drama of ideas, will, and chance. Pakistan has experienced both advantages and disadvantages due to its geographical location. After gaining independence in 1947, the newly established state faced challenges in managing its Eastern wing, which was susceptible to floods and cyclones (Kaplan, 2012).

Pakistan is substantial country for region as well as global peace. Pakistan facilitates economic connectivity with the regional countries and the world. It shows the importance of Pakistan in global economic matters. Pakistan has geography with much geo strategic, geo economic and geo politic importance regionally as well as globally. Pakistan situated at the crossroad of Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia (Baloch, 2014). Pakistan has immense strategic significance due to its geographical location that it connects key regions. It also facilitates strategic and economic routes of the region which make it an important country in region as well as in world. It creates number of opportunities as well as challenges for Pakistan which always keeps Pakistan in vulnerable position (Amir, 2016).

Pakistan covers an area of 7,96095 Square Kilometers consisting deserts, high mountains and open and big plains (Ahmed, Koondhar, Karami, Tag-Eldin, & Ghamry, 2014). Government of Pakistan ministry of statistic division issued a paper in 2017, claimed that the Population of Pakistan is about 207.774 million that is world 6th largest. There are many mountain ranges in Pakistan. These include the Karakoram, Himalayas and the Hindu Kush. K2 is the world's second highest peak. One of the most fertile and agriculturally productive regions of the world is the Indus Plain which runs through Punjab and Sindh. The Thar Desert is located in Sindh Province and the Cholistan Desert in Punjab Province are important because of their traditional lifestyle and unique ecosystem (Baloch, 2014, p. 3). Pakistan has important seaports for sea trade like Karachi port, Bin Qasim port and Gwadar port. Arabian Sea coastline covers an area of about 1050 km long coastline. It consists the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with 290000 sq. km of sea zone. It provides invaluable untapped and unexplored hydrocarbon reserves, minerals, fish stocks and other marine resources (Askari, Tahir, & Shaheen, 2020).

Pakistan provides transit routes to meet trade objectives geographically. Its borders with India, China, Afghanistan and Iran on all four sides make Pakistan an important in state. A Geographical overview highlights Pakistan's strategic position. we will know explore the importance of Pakistan's geography of foreign countries and its impact on wider regional and global dynamics (Askari & Afaqi, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The geo-economics significance of Pakistan is a subject of considerable scholarly interest, primarily due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. This unique positioning grants Pakistan a pivotal role in regional and global dynamics, influencing trade, energy routes, and geopolitical strategies.

1. Geopolitical Context

Pakistan's geographical location has made it a strategic nexus for various regional and global powers. According to Cohen (2013), Pakistan's position next to the Arabian Sea offers a vital maritime route for Middle Eastern oil and gas, making it significant for global energy security. Additionally, Lieven (2011) emphasizes that Pakistan's proximity to Afghanistan and Iran situates it as a critical player in the geopolitics of South Asia, Central Asia, and the broader Middle East, which are regions of ongoing geopolitical contestation.

2. Economic Corridors and Regional Integration

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the most discussed aspects of Pakistan's geoeconomic significance. As part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC aims to enhance connectivity between Pakistan and China, providing China with a direct route to the Arabian Sea, thereby reducing its dependency on the Malacca Strait (Wolf, 2019). This corridor is not only expected to bring significant economic benefits to Pakistan in terms of infrastructure development and foreign investments but also to alter regional trade dynamics significantly (Kugelman, 2020).

Pakistan's role in the economic integration of South Asia is also notable. According to Ahmed (2016), Pakistan's participation in organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) highlights its potential to facilitate regional trade and cooperation. However, regional tensions, especially with India, have often hindered economic collaboration.

3. Energy Security and Strategic Resources

Pakistan's geoeconomic significance is further amplified by its role in regional energy dynamics. It serves as a critical juncture for multiple proposed gas pipeline projects, such as the Iran-Pakistan pipeline and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan India (TAPI) pipeline. These projects are seen as vital for meeting the growing energy needs of South Asia and potentially reducing regional energy insecurities (Stevens, 2018). However, geopolitical challenges, including US sanctions on Iran and regional instability, pose significant obstacles to these initiatives.

4. Geostrategic Alliances and Rivalries

Pakistan's alliances and rivalries significantly impact its geo-economics, and geopolitical significance. Its long-standing alliance with China is a cornerstone of its foreign policy, balancing against its historically contentious relationship with India (Fair, 2014). Furthermore, its role in the Afghan conflict and its alliance with the United States in the war on terror have also highlighted its geostrategic importance (Rashid, 2008). Pakistan's relationships with Iran and the Gulf countries further illustrate the complex web of alliances that underscore its strategic value in the region.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

While Pakistan's geostrategic location provides numerous opportunities, it also faces several challenges. According to Hussain (2017), issues such as political instability, economic underdevelopment, and security threats, including terrorism, have often undermined its potential to fully leverage its geoeconomic significance. Additionally, Pakistan's relations with its neighbors, particularly India and Afghanistan, remain fraught, impacting regional stability and economic cooperation (Riedel, 2011)

DISCUSSION

Geographical Significance of Pakistan with Respect to Its Neighboring Countries

Geographical significance of Pakistan lies in its geostrategic significance. It shares borders in east with India creating a pivotal point in the geopolitics of South Asia. China is the second largest economy and first largest military in number located in the north of Pakistan. Chinese energy dependence keeping it closer to Pakistan due to the shortest energy route via Pakistan. Pakistan shares its boarders with Afghanistan and Iran in West which influences the geopolitics of Central Asia and West Asia. It provides key trade routes and energy pipelines.

India

India is the seventh largest country by land size. It has diverse landscape as well as rich cultural heritage. According to the UN's World Population dashboard, India's population now stands at slightly over 1.428 billion, edging past China's population of 1.425 billion people, as reported by the news agency Bloomberg 1. It stands as the first most populous country globally. Its rapidly growing economy ranks among the top in terms of GDP, driven by sectors like technology, agriculture, and manufacturing. It is the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power

parity (PPP); on a per capita income basis. Given its size, population, and economic prowess, India wields significant influence regionally and globally, shaping geopolitical dynamics and trade relations (IMF, 2022).

Geo strategic and geo economic significance of Pakistan increases with respect to India due to their shared boarder, natural resources and strategic location. Pakistan and India share a boarder of 3,323 kilometers. This long boarder includes contentious regions Jammu and Kashmir with mountainous regions like Himalayas and Karakoram ranges further stretches long and fertile Indus plain. All mountainous regions are significant for military perspectives (Butt & Butt, 2015).

A vast fertile land of Indus plain divided into both Pakistan and Indian Punjab. Those lands are vital for the agriculture and economies of both countries. Indus River system irrigated these lands. This system originated from Tibet and flowing throw India into Pakistan. It has great importance for both countries with the its outlets. This system is very important for irrigation, drinking water and hydropower generation in both countries. Both countries share this river system. It is regulated by the Indus basin agreement between the two countries signed in 1960 (Khetran, 2015).

Significance and maritime advantages of Pakistan increase due to its proximity to the Arabian Sea including major ports like Karachi Port and Gwadar port. These ports not only serving Pakistan's trade needs but also offer potential access point for India's trade with Central Asia and beyond emphasizing the strategic maritime significance. India can have access to gas pipeline project from Pakistan to Iran but it could not be implemented just because of rivalry between Pakistan and India. This is the reason that India and Iran have to make another gas pipeline contract. The 4.5-billion-dollar pipeline is set to pump 31.5 million cubic meters (mcm) of Iran gas to India's Western Gujarat port (Ali, Ahmad, Sabir, & Shah, 2021).

Pakistan has geo-economic for India due to its geo-strategic location in South Asia and its vital role in energy routes and regional trade. Stability of Pakistan and economic strength has directly impact on regional security and economic interests of India due to the neighboring country of Pakistan. Pakistan has much potential trade routes for India, especially efficient access to Central Asia, if bilateral relations improve between both countries. It will enhance regional connectivity and economic benefits for both countries. Like China and Japan both countries can improve bilateral trade relations and decrease political tensions. Agricultural and industrial sector of Pakistan can get more benefits due to elimination of trade barriers. However, historical conflicts and geo political tension usually overshadow these economic opportunities and prospects, affecting the realization of full potential of economic benefits (Jose, 28 May 2016).

China

China is the third largest country in terms of land area. It has second largest population after India that is 1.4 billion. The country shares land borders with 14 countries. China is the first largest country in term of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and second largest country in term of GDP in the world. Gwadar port is facilitating trade and energy transport from China to Pakistan. There is a major road connecting the two countries called the Karakoram Highway, which strengthens political and economic ties. Karakoram highway is considered the eighth wonder world. Pakistan's western regions are closed to China than to Arabian sea provide a distinct and robust pathway (Chan, 2019).

Pakistan holds vital geo-economic importance for China due to its geo-strategic location and its pivotal role in energy routes and regional trade. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The CPEC provides China secure and direct access to the Arabian Sea. This secure route is reducing the China's reliance on the more vulnerable and longer sea routes through the Malacca Strait (Islam & Cansu, 2020).

China has to major problems; first, it imports 80% petrol of its needs from Middle East that is about twelve thousand kilo meters away from China. Second, China's Western Areas are underdeveloped and China is developing this region brining heavy industry. China will export its products via Pakistan to Middle and Africa. Even, China is adopting shortest route for its energy from Middle East via Pakistan. The CPEC facilitates energy and trade transportation between two nations and will boost economic ties. Furthermore, the Gwadar Port's development enhances the strategic maritime presence of China and economic influence of China in the region (Askari & Afaqi, 2022).

Byond these flagship projects, both regions are exploring further avenues for cooperating, including joint ventures in renewable energy, cross border electricity trading and infrastructure development, understanding their commitment to fostering sustainable energy partnerships and regional connectivity (Butt & Butt, 2015).

Afghanistan

Afghanistan and Pakistan's strategic routes and connectivity, highlight the geographical importance of Pakistan with respect to Afghanistan. There is a border between the two countries known as the Durand line distance is 2,670 km. One of the most famous mountains passes in the world is Khyber Pass which act as an important connectivity route between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Geographical position of Afghanistan is landlocked that provides access to international market for Afghanistan. The entry of the Hindu Kush Mountains into Pakistan demonstrates the interdependence

between the two countries and the ability to manage mutual resources (Khan & Shirazi, 2021).

Pakistan is really crucial for geo-economic landscape of Afghanistan. It provides essential trade routes and access to international markets. Karachi and Gwadar ports serve as vital conduits for imports and exports of Afghanistan and enhance the trade efficiency. Additionally, this strategic location facilitates major energy projects like the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline with the purpose to deliver natural gas to energy-starved regions and Central Asia South Asia (CASA-1000) electricity project from Central Asia to South Asia. Further, cross boarder trade and infrastructure projects promote economic integration and stability in Afghanistan. By supporting economic development of Afghanistan, Pakistan is contributing to regional prosperity and peace. Thus, Pakistan highlights its significant role in geo-economics of Afghanistan (Khaydarov, 2022).

Iran

The shared border of Pakistan and Iran is 959 km. There is a mountainous border between two countries, which includes Baluchistan province from Pakistan and Sistan and Baluchistan from Iran. These areas are of great importance for security, pace, trade and cultural exchanges in both countries. Energy issue such as proximity of Pakistan to oil and natural gas in Iran make Pakistan a key partner in corporation. Pakistan and Iran governments-initiated gas pipeline project in 2011 containing 2770 k m (124 miles) for transmission in Iran – Pakistan Gas pipeline. Pakistani pipeline side is yet under construction while Iran has completed its side. The port of Gwadar is located near Strait of Hormuz which is an important point for global oil shipments. The possibility of better relations between Pakistan and Iran through regional initiatives such as Economic Corporation Organization (ECO) which could provide strategic and existing trade routes through the Makran coast (Qadir, Kasi, Bhutto, & Nizamani, 2019).

Geographical importance of Pakistan in South Asia can be estimated from the act that Pakistan acts as a bridge between South Asia and Central Asia. South Asia, Central Asia and East middle Asia showing country as a player in political. Pakistan shares borders with three South Asian countries, including India, Afghanistan and Iran. This proximity allows Pakistan to scale political and economic corporation with south Asian allies that affect regional stability and security dynamics. Karachi is a strategic port city to serve a maritime hub and connect trade routes (Khetran, 2015).

Geo-economic importance of Pakistan is significant due to their shared border and strategic location in South Asia. Both countries have this opportunity to enhance their trade

relations and Pakistan can serve as a gateway for Iranian goods to the markets of South Asia. Additionally, Gwadar Port complements Chabahar Port of Iran which providing alternative trade routes and reducing dependency on traditional maritime chokepoints. Energy cooperation between two countries particularly in natural gas pipelines, can further enhance and strengthen ties and serving Pakistan as a transit route for Iranian gas to South Asia. Improving economic relations between two countries can stable the region and enhance economic growth (Ali, Ahmad, Sabir, & Shah, 2021).

Middle East

The Middle East is rich in oil, natural gas, precious mineral resources such as copper and uranium. There are some ports that are important for international trade. Such as the port of Red Sea and Port of Jabal e Ali. Pakistan shares a maritime border with the non- Arab major shipping and waterways connecting the middle East to South Asia and beyond. Provide access to maritime trade routes. Pakistan 's Gwadar coast located on the Arabian Coast serve as gateways for the trade between East Asia, central Asia and China. Pakistan has cultural ties with the Middle East and plays an important role in the region (Askari & Afaqi, 2022).

Pakistan holds special geo-economic importance for the Middle East and serves a crucial link between South Asia and Central Asia. The establishment of Gwadar port which is the vital part of CPEC, provides an alternative trade routes to Middle Eastern countries and giving access to global market. Pakistan is also facilitating energy cooperation, with pipelines and energy projects connecting Middle Eastern resources to South Asia. Additionally, a large Pakistani workforce is providing their expertise in Middle East and contribute in to economic ties and remittances, bolstering both regions' economies. This link and interconnectedness underscores Pakistan's pivotal role in Middle Eastern trade and energy dynamics (Minxing & Sayed, 2022).

Central Asia

The world's largest natural resources, First Asia is including oil. Central Asia deposits of mineral such as uranium. The geographical importance of Pakistan in terms of natural gas and minerals lies in the fact countries western for the middle that is the gateway to the markets surrounded by the land. The country shares its border with Afghanistan an important hub for trade and energy between Central Asia and south Asia acts as roots.

Pakistan has vital geo-economic significance for Central Asian States. Pakistan is playing its role as a crucial gateway for the landlocked region to access global markets. The CPEC provides an opportunity to Central Asian States with a direct trade route to the Arabian Sea through Gwadar Port. This road to sea connectivity facilitates the export of Central Asian energy resources, minerals and other goods boosting regional trade. Furthermore, strategic location of Pakistan enhances energy cooperation with potential projects like transnational gas pipelines and electricity supply projects from Central Asia

to South Asia. By fostering economic and trade integration, Pakistan plays an important role in the economic growth and diversification of Central Asian economies (Rauf, 2021).

In central Asia led to a project called CASE-100 to facilitate the export of electricity to energy deficient south Asian countries, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is a historic step. The project was launched in 2006. A high and short transmission lines connecting 1200 km to match with the transmission Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan up to 300MW of electricity from. The corridor will enable the transfer of central Asia to South Asia contribute to addressing Pakistan's present energy shortage. This includes promotion of regional corporation, energy security there is enormous potential for expansion (Mekhdiev, 2018). TPI pipeline is another project started in 2015. Aimed at facilitating the transportation of natural gas from Turkmenistan's rich gas Fields through Afghanistan to energy deficient regions in Pakistan and India, spanning over 1,800 KM. The pipeline is one of the longest and most ambitious in the world. The projects hold significant promise for all participating countries. Offering a reliable and diversified energy source fostering regional stability through economic cooperation and supporting infrastructure development along its routes (Amir, 2016).

Geo-Economic Importance of Pakistan for the Rest of the World

Pakistan's global geopolitical and geo-economic implications are significant due to its strategic location, geopolitical influence, and economic potential. Pakistan situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Pakistan serves as a key player in regional and global affairs. Diplomatic relations of Pakistan with major global powers including the United States, Russia, China European Union shape its international influence and standing. Pakistan participates in multilateral forums like the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) allows it to voice its interests on the global stage and seek support for its policy objectives (Amir, 2016).

The establishment of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) enhances global trade routes by providing a direct access between China and the Arabian Sea. It facilitates faster and more efficient trade route not only for China but also for all Asia, Africa and Europe countries to get shortest way. Furthermore, rich natural resources of Pakistan including energy reserves, minerals and present lucrative investment opportunities for multinational companies make it more attractive for global actors. Additionally, the large and growing population of the country offers a substantial market for consumer goods and services. The role of Pakistan in regional security and stability impacts global economic and political dynamics and make it a key player in international affairs (Minxing & Sayed, 2022).

RESULTS

The analysis of Pakistan's geo-economics significance reveals a complex interplay

of opportunities and challenges that shape its role in regional and global dynamics.

1. Strategic Connectivity and Economic Opportunities:

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): The development of CPEC has emerged as a game-changer for Pakistan, significantly enhancing its economic prospects through improved infrastructure, increased foreign investments, and enhanced trade routes. It provides China with a crucial alternative to the South China Sea and Malacca Strait, highlighting Pakistan's strategic importance in global trade and energy supply chains.

Regional Trade and Integration: Pakistan's location at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East positions it as a natural hub for regional trade. However, geopolitical tensions, particularly with India, continue to limit the full realization of this potential.

2. Energy Corridors and Security:

Pipeline Projects: Pakistan's participation in proposed pipeline projects such as the Iran-Pakistan pipeline and the TAPI pipeline underscores its role in regional energy security. Successful implementation of these projects could significantly alter regional energy dynamics and reduce energy insecurities in South Asia. However, geopolitical factors and security concerns continue to impede progress.

Strategic Maritime Routes: Access to the Arabian Sea and the proximity to the Strait of Hormuz further emphasize Pakistan's geoeconomic significance in global energy routes, making it a vital player in global energy security.

3. Geopolitical Alliances and Challenges:

Alliances with Major Powers: Pakistan's strategic alliances, particularly with China, and its historically complex relationship with the United States, reflect its importance in regional geopolitics. However, these relationships also come with challenges, particularly in balancing relations with neighboring countries and managing internal security issues.

Regional Tensions and Stability: Ongoing conflicts and tensions with India and Afghanistan significantly impact Pakistan's ability to serve as a stable and effective hub for regional integration. These tensions not only affect regional stability but also hinder economic cooperation and development.

4. Internal Challenges:

Political and Economic Instability: Internal challenges, including political instability, economic underdevelopment, and security threats, remain significant barriers

to leveraging Pakistan's geo-economics potential. Addressing these challenges is crucial for Pakistan to fully realize its strategic and economic significance in the region and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The geographical significance of Pakistan is no doubt undeniable as it serves as a pivotal player in the regional affairs. Pakistan situated at the crossroad of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan's geostrategic location offers its immense geopolitical and geoeconomic importance.

It's relations with neighboring countries like India, China, Iran and Afghanistan is very important in regional stability and connectivity. Pakistan's geographical influence extends far beyond its borders. Pakistan has taken initiative such as the China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) and the development of Gwadar port. It's potential to become key economic hub in the region.

Furthermore, Pakistan corporation in counter terrorism efforts and its diplomatic engagement with the major global powers contribute to global security and diplomacy. However, challenges such as internal security threads Pakistan's survival. Further Pakistan's political and economic in stability also provide a great hurdle in Pakistan's economic and political development as well as making it as a key regional actor.

Overall geostrategic significance of Pakistan offers both opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan can play a constructive role in shaping the future of the Asia and the world by leveraging its strength, managing its relations with neighboring country and actively participating in regional and global initiative.

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