

## **South Asia-Central Asia regional Connectivity: Prospects for Pakistan**

**Dr. Muhammad Waris**

*Assistant Professor,  
Department of History & Pak Studies,  
Government College University, Faisalabad*

**Muhammad Asim**

*M.Phil Research Scholar,  
Department of Political Science & International Relations,  
Government College University, Faisalabad*

**Dr. Ali Shan Shah**

*Assistant Professor,  
Department of Political Science & International Relations,  
Government College University, Faisalabad*

**Dr. Mian Muhammad Azhar**

*(C.A)  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of Political Science & International Relations  
Government College University, Faisalabad*

### **Abstract**

*The term connectivity not only refers to the connection of regions with rails, roads and airways but also the people to people contact, cultural exchange, technological exchange, trade and investment and other ways. It's a commitment by the foreign policy of Pakistan to enhance the connectivity of the two regions South Asia and Central Asia. The term connectivity can be defined in the scenario as improvements in transportation, energy sector, trade and logistics. Further, Pakistan has regional, cultural, geographical and religious proximity with Central Asia. South Asian countries having low GDP and economic growth target to have an access towards Central Asian Republics enrich in natural resources especially the hydrocarbons. There are opportunities of trade, economic growth, getting enough energy to meet domestic requirements*

*and much more. Similarly, the land-locked CARs aim to have an access to the shores of Arabian Sea to reach ultimately the Indian Ocean for having excessive trade opportunities. This research paper will explore the potential of the both regions for better connectivity.*

**Keywords:** Regional connectivity, Central Asia, South Asia, CARs,

## **1. Introduction**

Since the break-down of U.S.S.R, the land-locked and energy enriched Central Asian Regions (CARs) are assumed to have significant for foreign policy concerns of Pakistan. Geographical proximity of Pakistan, the political and economic importance of Central Asian region and desire of Pakistan to be gateway to the region have enthused its interest to advance economic and political bonding with region, which comprises five republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Historically, our region had important religious, cultural, political and economic relations. Central Asia had been meticulously linked with people travelling and the Silk-Route, a medium for movement of good, ideas and people across Asia and Europe for centuries. The relations had disrupted in colonist era of British invasion and Russian control over Central Asia. After independence from British, Pakistan couldn't develop closed relations with Central Asian region because of joining anti- communist bloc. Under soviet control Pakistan had not any direct foreign relations with Central Asia and also after disintegration. After 11 September, Pakistan's foreign policy focused on closer cooperation and economic relations with the Central Asian region. Pakistan has serious economic and strategic concerns with Central Asian region. The nature of interests is economic and greatly strategic as well. This research will consider the factors that are seemed to increase or diminish the scenarios for direct strategic collaborations between Pakistan and CARs (Javed, 2016).

Pakistan is situated at significant location of South Asia providing the shortest route to land-locked CARs to reach India

Ocean and rest of the world. Pakistan is providing a land link to Central Asia through Karakoram highway as Silk route among Pakistan, China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan which has direct access to Gwadar port 1600 KM away from CARs. This will reduce the reliance of Pakistan on Saudi Arabia and Middle East as Central Asian regions are searching for rich markets of energy trade for creation of their own identity as supplier of petroleum and natural gas. This geographical location of both regions can give an increase to bilateral trade of finished products and raw material. Pakistan need to build economic and cultural tie with CARs. Through this liberalist view Pakistan will have a strategic depth against hegemonic behavior of India in the region (Adnan, 2015).

Central Asia has excessive geo-strategic, geo-economic and geopolitical importance for the regions to its periphery. The global powers are assumed to consider this region as great strategic interest. The research will focus on the options available for Pakistan with respect to security concerns of Pakistan with economic and strategic perspectives as wider key player of Central Asian region. The research emphasizes to focus the region as most cost-effective energy source for Pakistan as it shares 2.4% in global oil production and 4.2% in gas production. Being member of important regional organizations like SAARC, SCO, and ECO, Pakistan can form multidimensional cooperation between South and Central Asia as it shares historical, economic and socio-cultural perspectives with Central Asia. Despite the historical, religious and geographical proximities, Pakistan still needs to strengthen the relations with Central Asian countries. This research will also highlight the strategic interest of Pakistan with Central Asian Region and challenges to be faced in strengthening the regional cooperation. The land-locked region and even Russia has only the opportunity of Pakistan to use shortest land-locked region to access Indian ocean. Poor law and order condition in Afghanistan impede this opportunity to be availed. Further, the global powers are playing power politics to constrain Pakistan for getting desired results focusing natural reserves of the region and strengthening economic ties. Pakistan, as cross-road of South and Central Asia has an opportunity to enhance its

importance manifold by playing as bridge between regions through mutually beneficial agreements. The appearance of CARs on world map also provides chance to form beneficial groupings extending from Arabian Sea to Western Black Sea (Khan H. U., 2016).

## **2. Research Problem**

The main research problem is to explore whether Pakistan can play its role for the regional connectivity of South Asia and Central Asia or not. And to find the strategic and economic interests of Pakistan in CARs along with the challenges faced by Pakistan in achieving the desired outcomes and goals from CARs. The history of relations between Pakistan and CARs will be examined with current status of diplomatic relations. The economic capacity of the region to develop economic ties with Pakistan are yet to be discovered. Let us assume that Pakistan will have to achieve a well-established strategic and economic position in the region (the connection between South Asia and Central Asia), which will continue to serve the interests of the CARs. This research will seek to find the best ways for pursuing the strategic and economic interests from Central Asian region facing the challenges caused by regional and global actors these interests are explained as: Pakistan expects to develop high-level commerce and trade liberalization with Central Asian region for tactical and strategic reasons. Further, Pakistan seeks to have a position stronger as compare to India in order to abstain it from involving in politicization of region. We need to attain more supportive security measures with Afghanistan, having the closest adjacent border with Central Asia. Pakistan can provide safer and the shortest land route to Central Asia to trade energy and services through sea-routes which Central Asia needs.

There is need for Pakistan to have an access to energy (hydrocarbons) resources in Central Asia which are profitable and cost-effective including oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan. Pakistan can become a partner with Kyrgyzstan through fare connections to Karachi

port and Gwadar that would facilitate Pakistan with a large-scale electricity to overcome electricity shortfall. Thorough bilateral security agreements with CARs specially with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Pakistan will counter terrorism and adverse security condition of the region. Increasing means of transportation from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for enhanced cultural interaction and people to people contact this will make easier for Pakistan to have greater regional cooperation. Pakistan is a country depends majorly on agriculture, seeks to support Central Asian region with agricultural facilities in order to counter Indian interests from the region (Adnan, 2015).

In this way the South Asia can become beneficiary from the energy trade and investments in others important sectors of economy. Pakistan can act as transit for regional connectivity of the both regions. Which will definitely serve for the best interests of the both regions.

**Figure No. 1:** Map of Central Asia and Pakistan



Source: (Khan M. N., 2017)

### **3. Hypothesis:**

H1: “Pakistan is considered as gateway to the Central Asia for South Asia and can play a prosperous role for the regional connectivity of the both regions”

### **4. Historical Background**

Apart from recent inclinations in global and regional political strategic policies, there are many other bases for the relations between Pakistan and Central Asia which are religious past bonds, cultural and trade links and regional proximity. These relations are regarded as great importance. This historical relationship can be found back to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century AD, when religious cultural and economic links were developed by the itinerant people of both areas. Indus civilization of that times now comprises Pakistan which had been the part of Central Asian dynasties. Central Asia observed the supremacy of many kingdoms which recognized their rule in the area ranging from the Caspian Sea to the Arabian Sea having the area of Pakistan in the past. The regional link was first ever developed among the natives of Central Asia and the areas comprise Pakistan in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries when travelers from Central Asian travelled to Pakistan from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Their journey terminated to Sindh travelling through Gilgit and Taxila, leaving their cultural and social impacts there. When the Scythian Tribe came under the Kushan dynasty comprising a huge area between the Caspian Sea and the Arabian sea. During this era, Central Asia and Sub-Continent developed so strong relations that the city currently known as Peshawar became the capital of Kushan dynasty, known as Purushapura (Shaheen, 2011).

Central Asia is known as mostly land-locked region, located in the center of continent Asia. No mutual agreement is found relating the precise geographical position of Central Asia. In spite of this ambiguity, it has been the destination of

popular nomads of all times. It is connected to the world outside it with famous 'Silk Road'. That's why it has been the crossroad among South and East Asia, Europe and Middle East for the transportation of goods, ideas and people. Currently, the region is consisted of five Muslim states known as Central Asian Republics (CARs) got freedom after split of Soviet Union in 1991. Having shared borders with two super powers of the world the region is considered as buffer zone between China and Russia. The region is enriched in natural resources i.e. natural gas, hydrocarbons, uranium, black gold and other valuable minerals. Because of, enriched in energy and suitable geographical location providing land route for the connection of East and West, the region has much importance in 21<sup>st</sup> century international politics. Being a land-locked region, it has to be dependent upon other neighboring countries for the trade of goods and services specially energy, internationally. The energy resources which were majorly exploited by Russia became available for the world outside after the Soviet Union collapse (Edward, 2003).

Majorly, trade and investment make this region attractive for the world. The region is surrounded by the big economies of China, Russia and India playing leading role in the region in terms of investment and trade competition. Now, the big powers of the world are trying to grasp the energy resources of Central Asia towards themselves. The initiatives for pipeline projects have been taken but the international constraints and security conditions did not allow the projects to be completed. Historically, being the part of Russia, the pipelines connecting Europe passing the sea known as Caspian Sea controlled by Soviet Union and after the disintegration under the control of Russia. Competition and geo-strategic constraints in international political regime make the construction of pipelines a complex phenomenon that is even possible financially. Russia has still much involved in CARs and it has solid political, commercial and cultural links with the region. The current energy route progressing the Caspian Sea still controlled by Russia is not sufficient for the current pipeline transiting through the Caspian Sea, for the carriage of hydrocarbons which have grown its production. To release

CARs from the influence of Russia the countries around the Caspian Sea are interested to construct and alternative pipeline. This may decrease the dominance and monopoly of Russia in the region (Afridi, 2016).

## **5. Open Regionalism**

The Concept of Open Regionalism is discussed with broader aspect than regionalism. It not only comprises regional trade and economic integration but also involves political and security dimensions other than economic harmony and trade. It provides open model of economic integration among states of a region and with the states of rest world for advancing trade and economic cooperation. It involves no protectionism from the states outside the region or non-member states. Instead, it offers trade liberalization without any discrimination on the basis of region or membership to different agreements (Moon, 2019).

Although, Pakistan and Central Asia are members with SCO but the concept of open regionalism involves these economic relations because Pakistan is a gateway to Central Asia. This regional transition and open trade intensions apply this concept of open regionalism to these relations. It is expected that not protectionism will be practiced. These relations are important for security dimension as by making Afghanistan a trade partner security threats can be minimized.

## **6. Geo-strategic Importance of Pakistan**

Pakistan is situated on the latitude from 24,50 to 36,75 in the north and between 61 and 75,5 in the east. It is situated at the crossroad of South Asia, West Asia, Middle East and the Central Asia. Pakistan is ranked 6 in terms of highest population level in the world, in the ranking of territory possessed Pakistan is at thirty-sixth number and at twenty-sixth number on the ranking of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in the world. The geographical area and surroundings of Pakistan are much significant strategically, economically and politically in global politics. This area has found the influence and interference of great powers of the great world like the United



States and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War and even in the new world order.

During Cold War, Pakistan became the strategic partner of US for the purpose of containment of Soviet Union which further increased the enhanced geostrategic prestige of Pakistan. After September 11, the booster of global attention has once again bowed to Pakistan, and Pakistan must be at the forefront of the war on terror as non-NATO ally state. Pakistan has nearly 510 kilometers of border with China via Karakoram, around 2250 km of border in West with Afghanistan via Durand line, around 1650 km in East with India, around 909 km in West with Iran and about 700 km of border with Arabian Sea as Coastal Belt. The strategic importance of Pakistan in the world is its own geographic location, the proximity with the opportunities with great world economies such as China, Russia and India, the only nuclear power Muslim country which is a gateway to the land-locked region, the tendency act majorly as transit of trade and economy through Gwadar, the adjacency with the Persian Gulf, which have capability to produces 65 percent of the world's oil, the proximity of the Hormuz Strait, where half of the world's oil trade takes place (Javed, 2016).

Regarding CARs, the geostrategic location of Pakistan is much significant. Pakistan and Afghanistan can offer crucial and closest way for region to approach the sea. The region of Central Asia can become more attractive economically and strategically in case, Pakistan offers road and air ways for convenient trade across the region and act as transit for trade. The Karachi port can be used as nearest one for almost all capitals of CARs, such as Tashkent, Bishkek, Dushanbe and Ashkhabad. With strengthened links between Pakistan and CARs, future political stability in terms of security and regional economic cooperation can be enhanced. For Pakistan, the significance of CARs cannot be unnoticed in any way. Understanding this importance Pakistan has recognized that the CARs and the stable government of Afghanistan are in the interests of Pakistan just because Pakistan's policy is to get approach and strategic access that area (Wasi, 2002).

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif spoke about the main elements of Pakistan's foreign policy, which are regional interconnection and economic integration during a visit for two days to Turkmenistan in Ashgabat on 25 November 2016. During discussion a two-day conference on Global Sustainable Transport in Ashgabat,

*“In the emerging global and regional environment Pakistan is happy to play its role as gateway to Central Asia. Peaceful neighborhood has remained the norm of Pakistan's foreign policy and no development policies can yield fruit without peace and security. Pakistan is fully committed to its responsibilities as a partner in regional and Economic integration. He said with projects like CPEC and One Belt One Road Pakistan has enhanced its geo strategic location into a geo-economic advantage. CPEC is a package of multiple infrastructure and development projects and will boost connectivity within the region and integrate China, Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East. The 21st century is the century of connectivity and without adequate internal and regional communication networks countries will lag behind in progress. With mutual understanding and collective endeavors, we will be able to deliver on the promise of peace, prosperity and development of our peoples. Pakistan is joining the Ashgabat Agreement and Lapis Lazuli Corridor. He hoped that the agreement will prove milestone in achieving the dream of peaceful co-existence through integration of economies, markets and cultures in South Asia, Central Asia and beyond”* (Javed, 2016).

Shahid Ahmed Hashmat concludes his research that Pakistan's only geographical position on the Chinese threshold, CARs, South Asia and Western Asia titled it as an important transit route and destination for economic and cultural activities and future commercial endeavors. Given the numerous security hazards that plague the whole region with presence of global

super powers that complicate the environment, a very key role can be played by Pakistan for fulfilling the South Asian power needs along with East. East will assist to strengthen the regional stability. Pakistan can serve as the most straight and the shortest route path for India and the countries from the other regions for having an access to the energy reserves of Central Asian region, which will help further to have more interactions like trade and economic concerns. Thus, Pakistan's strategic importance to Central Asia, both politically and economically, is of great importance (Hashmat, 2007).

Geographically Pakistan is located in South Asia and considered as ideal entrance for Central Asian region, it is adjacent to Arabian Sea which offers a route path to the Middle East countries to enter the region. The future economic tycoons of the region and the world are situated in the neighborhood of Pakistan, India and China. Pakistan has been blessed with uncountable gifts from nature and the most important one is its geographical location which is ideal with respect to strategic point of view. There is a need of optimum utilization of strategic position, which bring growth and development economically for the people living in Pakistan and it can become a central hub for trade and investment globally (Sabir, 2011).

### **6.1. Prospects of Economic Connectivity**

Pakistan's significant geostrategic location provides a straight route to the landlocked CARs to the other parts of world and Indian Ocean. Pakistan can serve as a conduit among East Asia, West Asia and Central Asia. Pakistan is connected with China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan through the Karakorum highway, ancient Silk Road. The port of Pasni, Gwadar and Karachi are approximately 1600km away from Central Asia that is the straight trading route. If appropriately utilized, it can certainly boost up the bilateral trade relationships and exports and imports of manufactured and raw material goods (Adnan, 2015). It may also provide a gateway to Central Asia to world energy market place. Although, there is no geographical contiguity between Pakistan and Central Asia but transit-trade

associations are established via China and Afghanistan as those countries whose borders are adjacent to CARs (Shaheen, 2011).

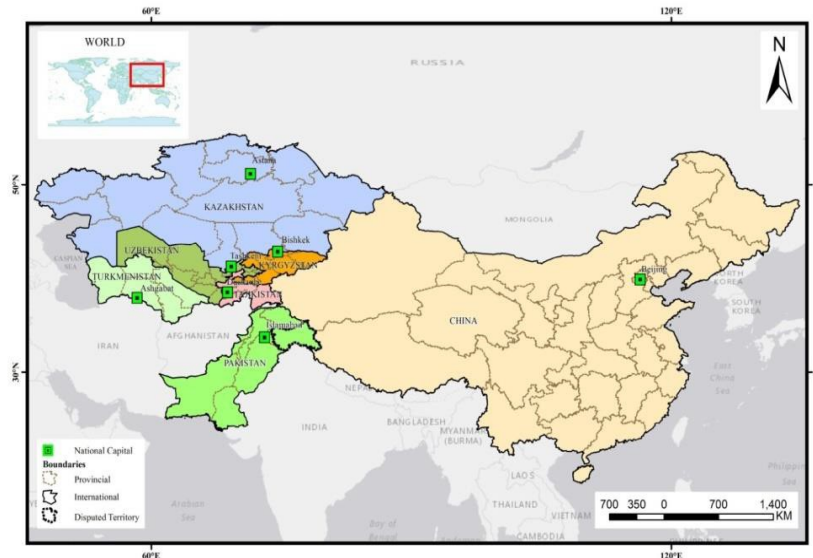
As land routes are concerned, Pakistan and Central Asia have subsequent options to access Pakistani seaports:

1. Road from Salang Pass, Kabul, Jalalabad, Peshawar, to Karachi and Gwadar.
2. Via Karakorum Highway; Kashgar (China), Gilgit to Karachi and Gwadar.
3. Road from Tajikistan through Badakhshan, Peshawar to Karachi and Gwadar (Adnan, 2015).

## **6.2. Geo-Strategic Importance of Central Asia**

The Central Asian region consists of five countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which aroused to the world map after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The approximate Central Asian population is around 66.5 million (World Meters, 2019). Geopolitically, this area is a key area for the Asian continent. Historically, the region is remembered as Middle Asia, which had been at the crossroads of several early civilizations via Silk Road, linking West Asia, East Asia, West Asia, Europe and South Asia.

The region has its borders stretched to Russia in North, and adjacent to Afghanistan in South, with China in the East and its borders are linked with Caspian Sea in the west. All the states of Central Asia are enriched in natural reserves, power and energy, but they do not have access to the sea. Central Asia having strong strategic position and proximity with the super powers like China and Russia make this area significant part of new great game. The thirst of China for grasping power and energy reserves and Russia's control over the Central Asian pipelines and energy transits have boosted the importance of this region in global political regime (Javed, 2016).



Source: (Javed, 2016)

Central Asia is at huge geostrategic crucial location for India and Pakistan. It is a meeting place and at the crossroads of several early civilizations via Silk Road, linking West Asia, East Asia, West Asia, Europe and South Asia. It does not have a direct terrestrial route for approaching international waters. It is bordered with East China, Western Russia and the Transcaucasian Republic of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. On the north side there is the snow that connects Western Siberia with Taiga and South Asia south of Afghanistan and Iran (Pant & Jain, 1996).

CARs have been of great importance to Pakistan's foreign policy and the region had been the point of consideration for Pakistan since independence. Central Asia is located north of Pakistan along the old Silk Road. Tajikistan is closest country to be connected with Pakistan geographically. The Wakan corridor in Afghanistan, of length around 16 km, makes a connection between Pakistan and Tajikistan. At present, Pakistan and the CARs have closely tied and have an atmosphere of cooperation in the fight against regional and

global terrorism, drug and human trafficking, illegal smuggling across the borders, and religious extremism. Pakistan's geopolitical and geostrategic significance makes it hard for Central Asian states to overlook Pakistan diplomatically. Mutual relations between Central Asia and Pakistan are largely grounded on same history, cultural similarity, religious concerns, ethnic origin, values and norms, traditions and proximity at geographic level (Javed, 2016).

## **7. Projects of Great Worth for Regional Connectivity**

Pakistan has been signed various projects with CARs which have huge importance with respect to an economic boost and energy trade and regional connectivity of South Asia and Central Asia.

### **7.1. TAPI Gas Pipeline**

Turkmenistan and Pakistan have authorized the final version of the "Host Government Agreement" for the TAPI gas pipeline network in Islamabad. The TAPI pipeline originates from the enormous Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan, costs about \$ 9.6 billion and involves energy companies from four countries and will carry 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year (Siddique, 2019). TAPI is a long-term mutually favorable solution of regional collaboration, particularly among Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. The hostility among these three countries can be curtailed by enhancing economic interdependency. If India and Pakistan find it convenient and are at ease in working jointly on TAPI then Indian interference in Baluchistan can also be abridged. It will be quite usual that such economic reliance on each other will compel India to restrict from supporting and creating any devious law and order condition in Baluchistan, in order to acquire a sound supply of gas. It may escort the both countries to discover a mutually appropriate solution for other controversial issues between them, counting Kashmir (Khateran & Rafique, 2018).

Turkmenistan is sanctified with sixth huge natural gas reservoirs of the world. It merely has access to Iranian, Chinese

and Russian markets. Gas meager neighboring countries like Pakistan, India and Afghanistan would consequently be considerable profitable markets. Afghanistan necessitates an assured energy resource to boost capacity to produce electricity and the current electrification rate from 20 per cent to 33 per cent. Power shortage of Pakistan is about 5000 megawatts (Husain, 2017).

This scheme of regional conformity will not only encourage economic development through augmented trade and investment, but will also aid to uphold energy deficit in these states. It will consequently be a remarkable step to instigate regional security and stability by aligning the interests of four countries. Electricity generation by using natural gas will also lessen the harm to the environment, as 43% lesser carbon is emitted in natural gas consumption than in coal consumption (Khateran & Rafique, 2018). During his visit to Pakistan, Mr. Amanov (CEO of TAPI Project Company Ltd. TPCL) started his address by introducing TAPI in an overview which was formerly devised in the 1990's. He uttered about a variety of aspects of the project and explained that the Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field, one of the world's largest gas field, would transport natural gas through 1,814 km long pipeline to Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Mr. Amanov also added that the TAPI pipeline project was not only a much desirable energy project, but also crucial for regional connectivity and economic development. In this respect, he appreciated the all three hosts governments who continuously, strongly supported the project and narrated that TAPI would participate in a crucial role in not only overcoming the energy demand of the region, but also would assist in integration of the region.

He intricates that the project would be execute in two phases. In the first phase, the pipeline would be built and the second segment would comprise of assemblage of 6 compressors. He further gave an overview of timeline about pipeline project and explained the particular route that pipeline would get. He accentuated that all the noteworthy intergovernmental treaties had been settled along with the whole of survey toils in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. He

conveyed that it is in the final stage of completion, in Pakistan. In the first quarter of 2019, the phase-one monetary close will be completed (Khan A. , 2018). Asian Development Bank has been a transactional counselor to the TAPI project, since 2013, it has granted more than 4 million USD for security research, risk analysis, pre-feasibility studies, market scrutiny, alleviation and legal advice. The bank approximate that the sponsorship of the TAPI project will comprise of equity debt and capital financing and loans supplied by bilateral, multinational and regional expansion agencies commercial financial societies and export credit agencies. (Khan K. , 2018). Turkmenistan and Pakistan endorsed the final report of the Host Government Agreement on TAPI Gas Pipeline system on 12 March, 2019 in Islamabad. The contract was signed by the Chief Executive of TPCL Amanov and Secretary Petroleum Mian AsadHayauddin. Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister R. Meredov appreciated the Minister initiative in his government to ensure that deadlines were met. The active participation and concerns by the Pakistan on continuous basis on TAPI were appreciated by him. The purpose of the TAPI pipeline project is to transport natural gas through Galkynysh and adjacent gas fields to Turkmenistan in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India (Radio Pakistan, 2019).

## **7.2. CASA-1000 (Central Asia, South Asia-1000)**

Pakistan is seeking to improve its relations with Central Asia, and especially with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as the importance of CARs is increasing worldwide. As a result, commercial revenues between Pakistan and Tajikistan have gradually increased from \$ 18 million to \$ 89 million, from 1998 to 2014. These two countries are cooperating mainly in the energy sector, where Pakistan is facing the crisis. CASA-1000 is basically a collaborative project to overcome the energy gap between two countries. But due to the ambiguous security condition in Afghanistan, CASA-1000 is not a priority system for both parties (Khan M. N., 2016). An important proposal combining Tajikistan and Pakistan into one of the CASA-1000 projects (Electricity Trade and Transmission Program for Central Asia and South Asia), one of the direct interactions between Central Asia and South Asia. CASA-1000 is a



milestone in the pursuit of energy exports by Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan (two Central Asian countries and two in South Asia) (Mishra, 2017).

Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic are two Central Asian countries with some of the world's most powerful hydroelectric power stations utilizing the water flow in the rivers in summer gifted from ranges of mountains. The two states have surplus electricity throughout the summer. Nearby Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Asia endures chronic electricity short fall. Pakistan cannot satisfy its citizens' electricity demands, particularly in the sweltering summer months which lead to recurrent power cuts that upset industrial yield, occasionally small businesses do close, and hence lead to job losses. For the moment, millions of people still live without electricity altogether (CASA-1000 Project, 2017). All the necessary energy production infrastructure required by CASA-1000 has already been delivered. In fact, most of the excess electricity available for the CASA-1000 is created with water. Upon completion, the entire CASA-1000 transmission network will carry high-voltage electricity between Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic (the first 477 kilometers) and Tajikistan to Pakistan and Afghanistan (next 750 kilometers). Without new energy production in the Central Asian states, there is enough extra electricity to export these transmission lines.

The CASA-1000 dream comes, true thanks to the high level of the Intergovernmental Council and, at the start of the project, regional cooperation was admirable. Member States cooperate through the Intergovernmental Council when deciding on common policies and standards, on the implementation and operation of projects, and on the consistent usage of safety, technical and environmental values. They also plan public hearings and a broad plan for sharing benefits to the community.

The CASA-1000 project will include:

- 750 km High Voltage DC Power Transmission line from Sangtuda (Tajikistan) to Nowshera (Pakistan).

- 500 kV AC line between Datka (Kyrgyz Republic) and Sugd-500 (477 km away, Tajikistan)
- 1300-megawatt DC-AC conversion station at Nowshera
- 1300-megawatt AC-DC conversion station in Sangtuda (Tajikistan)

Pakistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the Kyrgyz Republic have drawn up an extraordinary agenda to make CASA-1000 a reality: The Intergovernmental Council. In addition to cooperation with these four countries, the CASA-1000 is backed by the Islamic Development Bank, the State Department of US, World Bank Group, United States International Development Agency (USAID), United Kingdom Department of International Development (DFID), Australian International Development Agency (Aus-AID), and other donor communities(CASA-1000 Project, 2017).

The CASA-1000 transmission line project is based on the electricity potentials from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are approaching Peshawar via Afghanistan. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are in disagreement over Tajikistan's Rogun hydroelectric power plant plan. The CASA-1000 project is worth about \$ 970 million. Tajikistan will contribute \$ 270 million, Afghanistan will allocate \$ 300 million, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan will add \$ 200 million for the project. The Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank have planned to fund Pakistani share of worth \$ 200 million for the project. Russia is also fascinated for the funding of the project. Other voluntary donors to the project are USAID, IFC and ADB (Javaid & Rashid, 2015).

Tajik Ambassador to Pakistan, Jononov visited Pakistan and said in his speech at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce (RCCI) that Tajikistan was well versed in Pakistan's energy requirements; Electricity will be supplied to Pakistan through the Central Asia-South Asia energy project (CASA-1000). He said that the Rogun Dam began to work and that Tajikistan is ready to offer Pakistan clean and cheap

electricity to overcome its future energy needs. According to the communication, the CASA-1000 energy project should be fully functioning by 2020 (Tribune, 2018).

The electricity will be exported to Tajikistan in the cold weather through the same weather because Pakistan has less energy consumption in winter, as in the Power Purchase Agreement, for the purpose of reverse electricity flow clause is included. The energy department will soon take on its counterpart in Tajikistan. According to the agreement, the official assured that when the CASA-1000 project is completed, Tajikistan will export 1,000 MW of electricity to Pakistan at 9 cents per unit for the period of 5 months May to September during the summer season, but now in the, Islamabad establishment has been trying 1,000 MW of energy export to Tajikistan through the same project in the winter to Tajikistan because hydro energy production in Tajikistan becomes zero in winter (Mustafa, 2018).

### **7.3. CPEC as Flagship Project**

With respect to the discussion of the regional connectivity of Central Asia and South Asia the importance of the CPEC project cannot be denied and Pakistan is signatory and focal beneficiary of the project as well as provides a transit for regional connectivity. CPEC is a project connecting Western China to Pakistan's ports on Arabian Sea. The project is crucial for economic connectivity and regional integration of Central Asia with South Asia as it has been fascinating a number of states including CARs.

Taking into account the geostrategic conditions of the area, the CPEC presents the actual explication for joining Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it connects directly China and Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the road, dismissing the confidence in the traditional view that all of Pakistan's roads pass through Kabul or Wakhan to Central Asia. President Mamnoon Hussain was persuaded that the CPEC project will help the improvement of the connections between the CARs and the rest of world. The system of route

paths developed under CPEC would provide the shortest sea path reaching connecting Kyrgyzstan with Gawadar. Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's planning minister also gave his remarks about the desired outcomes from China and development in the infrastructure built in the Pakistan economic corridor (Ahmed, 2019).

Center for Global & Strategic Studies reports it is detailed that by 2050, Asia will subsidize 52% to world GDP that will make it the continent of the future and billions of people will walk out of poverty as well as it will provide opportunities, for not only our space but also for global economy growth. Pakistan is uniquely positioned with three engines of progression around it, located at the juncture of China, South Asia and Central Asia. So, Pakistan can offer the opportunity to link them all. CPEC offers two trading routes, the Pakistan-Kabul-Tajikistan route, and the Gwadar-Quetta-Herat-Turkmenistan, as part of their plans to connect to CARs and extend the routes to Russia. CARs are also pleaded to deliberate easy visa programs and permit private airlines to make direct flights between Islamabad and CARs destinations, together with education plans and free and open media, to bring the populations of both regions closer (Iqbal, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

As the political scenario has been shifted greatly towards economic concerns of the states and the regions, the dire need is generated for the regions to be connected with trade, investment and economic alliances. The prosperity of the regions greatly depends upon the connectivity. Most importantly, the atmosphere of harmony is much needed to restore the peace of regionally and globally which is mostly possible through the increased interaction among states. The interaction may be based on economic concerns, trade, investment, tourism, people to people contact, technological exchange across the borders, mobility of labor force, high level visits or any other way. In this paper it is considered to explore the channels and resources vital for connectivity of South Asia and Central Asia. Pakistan is being discussed as major player in

this context being the part of major projects connecting the both regions. Further, it can act as transit for the states of both regions to create an interaction. The energy requirements of South Asia can be fulfilled resultantly and energy can be traded further with European Union (EU). As EU considered energy as a major concern for cooperation with Central Asia (European Commission, 2019). Pakistan's geographical position is much important in this context because of its spacious ports on Arabian Sea. CARs seek to build relations with South Asian states for growing trade and have an access to the markets.

Efforts are being made for mobilization of public support but actualization is not much an easy task. There is a need to settle the disputes among the big players specially India has to reconsider its policy towards China and Pakistan to be the crucial partner of CPEC to connect the both regions potentially. Afghanistan is always posing threats due to alarming security position and political instability as Afghanistan's location is important for regional connectivity. Other impediments for strong cointegration of the regions are trade and non-trade barriers, political conflicts, psychological trauma, territorial conflicts and economic disruptions. One Belt-One Road project may be materialized to connect both regions if the impediments are handled and overcome. The role of China must be further characterized with indifferent with all the states to join this great project.

## References

8. Adnan, M. (2015). Strategic and Economic Interests of Pakistan and India in Central Asia. *South Asian Studies*, 30(2), 187-200.
9. Afridi, M. I. (2016). New Great Game in Central Asia: Conflicts, Interests and Strategies of Russia, China and United States. *The Dialogue*, 12(3), 231-232.
10. Ahmed, W. (2019, May 30). CPEC to provide impetus to Pak-CARs relations. The News. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/323064-cpec-to-provide-impetus-to-pak-cars-relations>
11. Asif, F. (2011). Pakistan's ties with Central Asian States Irritants and Challenge. *Conflict and Peace Studies*, 4(1), 1-8.
12. *CASA-1000 Project*. (2017). Retrieved from [www.casa-1000.org: http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php](http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php)
13. Edward, M. (2003). The New Great Game in Central Asia. *Survival*, 45(2), 32-36.
14. European Commission. (2019, May 15). Central Asia - Energy. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/central-asia/eu-central-asia-energy-cooperation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/central-asia/eu-central-asia-energy-cooperation_en)
15. Hashmat, D. S. (2007). Central Asia's Energy Resources and Strategic Importance of Pakistan. *Pakistan Defence Review*, 21(1).
16. Husain, K. (2017, April 18). *Electricity shortfall soars to 5000 MW*. Retrieved from [www.dawn.com: https://www.dawn.com/news/1327624](https://www.dawn.com/news/1327624)
17. Iqbal, A. (2018, March 21). A Land of Opportunities for Central Asian Republics. Ministry of Planning

- Development & Reform. Retrieved from [https://www.pc.gov.pk/web/press/get\\_press/172](https://www.pc.gov.pk/web/press/get_press/172)
18. Javaid, U., & Rashid, A. (2015, January-June). Oil and Gas Potentials of Central Asia Republican and Relations with Pakistan. *South Asian Studies A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 30(1), 127-148.
  19. Javed, U. (2016). China Central Asia Relations and opportunities for Pakistan. *A Journal of South Asian Studies*, 31(2), 541-559.
  20. Khan, A. (2018). *Implementation of TAPI Pipeline*. Institute of strategic studies.
  21. Khan, H. U. (2016). Pakistan's Economic Interests in Central Asia: Prospects and Challenges in Regional Perspective. *Central Asia Journal*, 1(79).
  22. Khan, K. (Ed.). (2018). Pakistan: A Land of Opportunities for Central Asian Republics. (pp. 1-84). Islamabad: National Security Division, Government of Pakistan & Center for Global & Strategic Studies.
  23. Khan, M. N. (2016). Pakistan's Relations with Central Asia: Prospects and Challenges. Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Retrieved from <http://www.ipripak.org/post-event-report-of-the-lecture-on-pakistans-relations-with-central-asia-prospects-and-challenges/>
  24. Khateran, S., & Rafique, N. (2018, March 19). TAPI: A RECIPE FOR GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION. 2.
  25. Mishra, A. (2017, August 7). Tajikistan: Pakistan's Gateway to Central Asia. *The Diplomat*.
  26. Moon, C.-i. (2019). Economic Regionalism. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved June 1st, 2019, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-regionalism>

27. Mustafa, K. (2018, December 5). *Pakistan to export electricity to Tajikistan in winter through CASA-1000*. Retrieved from [www.thenews.com: https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/401881-pakistan-to-export-electricity-to-tajikistan-in-winter-through-casa-1000](https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/401881-pakistan-to-export-electricity-to-tajikistan-in-winter-through-casa-1000)
28. Pant, G., & Jain, P. C. (1996). *Contemporary Iran and emerging Indo-Iranian relations*. (1st, Ed.) Delhi, India: School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
29. Radio Pakistan. (2019, March 12). *Pakistan, Turkmenistan sign final version of Host Govt Agreement on TAPI Gas Pipeline network*. Retrieved from [www.radio.gov.pk: http://www.radio.gov.pk/12-03-2019/pak-turkmenistan-sign-tapi-gas-pipeline-network](http://www.radio.gov.pk: http://www.radio.gov.pk/12-03-2019/pak-turkmenistan-sign-tapi-gas-pipeline-network)
30. Sabir, D. M. (2011, February). *Jahangir's World Times*. Retrieved from <http://jworldtimes.com/jwt2015/magazine-archives/jwt2011/feb2011/geo-strategic-importance-of-pakistan/>
31. Shaheen, I. (2011, October). *Importance of Pakistan-Central Asia Relations: Opportunities and Constraints*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(14), 218-225.
32. Siddique, N. (2019, March 13). *Pakistan, Turkmenistan sign final version of Host Government Agreement for TAPI pipeline*. Retrieved from [www.dawn.com: https://www.dawn.com/news/1469209](https://www.dawn.com/news/1469209)
33. Tribune. (2018, November 21). *CASA-1,000: Project to start functioning by 2020*. Retrieved from [tribune.com.pk: https://tribune.com.pk/story/1851505/2-casa-1000-project-start-functioning-2020/](https://tribune.com.pk/story/1851505/2-casa-1000-project-start-functioning-2020/)



34. Wasi, N. (2002, October). Pakistan's Interests in Central Asia. *Pakistan Horizon*, 55(4), 15-26. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/>
35. World Meters. (2019). Central Asian Population. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/central-asia-population/>