

Geo-Strategic Significance of Pakistan

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1- INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan is located at a region which has great political, economic and strategic location. It has been hub of activities of great powers for last 20 years. It has witnessed intervention of three great powers i-e Britain, USSR, and USA. Its significance was further enhanced during cold war when it becomes ally of US policy of containment of USSR and now the post cold war era has witnessed its significance particularly after the events of 9/11.

2- PAKISTAN GEOGRAPHICALLY LOCATION:

Location: Southern Asia lies between 24 and 36.75 northern latitude and between 61 and 7505 eastern longitude.

Area: 7, 96000 sq.km.

Towards north apart from the state of Kashmir is china. It shares 400 km long boarder with china.

Towards north Tajikistan though no boarder but a narrow strip as Wahkhan strip separate the two.

Towards east, Punjab-Rajasthan borders which is 1650 km long

Towards west, Afghanistan and Durand line of 2250 km.

Towards south, Arabian and Indian sea. Coastal belt is about 700 km.

Pakistan significance is enhanced as it lies near the Persian Gulf where

65% of the world's oil is produced.

3- STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE:

a) Proximity of great powers:

Pakistan is located at the junction of great powers. In its neighbor's one world power Russia and the other emerging power China lies. Any alliance among world powers enhances its significance. This factor has been utilized by Pakistan after 9/11. Security and business are two main US interests in the region while Pakistan is playing a front line role in the war against terrorism. Apart from this US interest in the region to contain the growing China, nuclear Iran, terrorist Afghanistan and to benefit from the market of India. Today the political scenario of the region is tinged with preemption policy and US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran's nuclear program, India's geopolitical muscles (new strategic deal with US) to gain hegemony and to counter the rise of China. Which has earned all the qualities to change unipolar world into bipolar world? In all these issues, Pakistan is directly or indirectly involved especially after al-Qaeda operations. The American think tank has repeatedly accepted that war against terrorism could never be won without the help of Pakistan. Pakistan has rigorously fought and an ongoing operation in Waziristan is also targeting the suspected Taliban in the bordering area.

b) Gateway to central Asia-(oil and energy game):

Central Asia is the center stage of new Great games. Western quest for resources- oil and energy resources in the central Asia. After USSR decline, new quest started which is as manifested by politics of oil. Pakistan is located very close to the oil rich Middle Eastern countries. The belt started from Iran and extended to Saudi Arabia. Thus, Pakistan can influence shipment of oil. Iran is struggling to export its surplus gas and oil to eastern countries, Qatar, Pakistan and Turkmenistan pipeline projects highlight the position.

In the energy scarce world, Pakistan is located in the hub of energy rich countries i.e Iran and Afghanistan: both are energy abundant while India and China are lacking. China finds way to Indian Ocean and Arabian sea through Karakoram highway,

c) Significance as a Transit economy:

Pakistan has the potential to develop transit economy on account of its strategic location, landlocked Afghanistan now at the phase of reconstruction finds its ways through Pakistan. China with its fastest economy growth rate of 9% is developing southern provinces because its own part is 4500 km away from Sinkiang but Gwader is 2500 km away. Moreover, Pakistan offers central Asian regions the shortest route of 2600 km as compared to Iran 4500 km or Turkey 5000 km. Gwader port with its deep waters attracts the trade ships of China, CAR and South East Asian countries., also the coastal belt of Balochistan can provide outlet to China's western provinces to have access to Middle Eastern markets with the development of coastal highways and motorways.

d) Important link in the chain of Muslim countries:

If we look at the map of Muslim countries, Pakistan occupies a central location. Towards west of Iran, China extends to North Africa. Thus it can actively participate in the activities of Muslim world-economic development, transport of resources and above all combat terrorism.

e) Only Muslim country with nuclear capability:

In the region Pakistan is the only Muslim country having nuclear capability which has great influence on the political, socio-economic activities in the region and the maintenance of status quo in the region.

4- CONCLUSION / ANALYSIS:

Geo strategic means the importance of a country or a region as by virtue of its geographical location. Stephen Cohn describes this importance "while history has been unkind with Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit."

Pakistan is a junction of South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia; a way from resource efficient countries to resource deficient countries. The world is facing energy crises and terrorism. Pakistan is a route for transportation and a front line state against terrorism. Moreover Pakistan has been traditionally ally of emerging economic giant; China. So in the view of any

change in world politics, Pakistan's geo-strategic significance would further be enhanced.