

---

# GEOSTRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF PAKISTAN

---

## Contents

1. Introduction: .....	2
2. Geographical description of Pakistan: .....	2
3. Political importance:.....	2
4. Geostrategic importance of Pakistan:.....	3
a) Proximity of great powers:.....	3
b) Gateway to central Asia-(oil and energy game): .....	3
c) Bridge between South Asia and South West Asia; .....	4
d) Only Muslim Country with Nuclear Capability .....	4
e) Natural Resources:.....	4
f) Significance as a Transit economy:.....	5
I China-Pakistan Economic Corridor .....	6
II Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) .....	7
III Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline .....	7
IV Pakistan shares Marine Border with Oman .....	8
V Important link in the chain of Muslim countries:.....	8
5. War against Terrorism: .....	8
6. Analysis/Conclusion:.....	8
7. References: .....	9

## **1. Introduction:**

Geo means "the Earth" strategy means "planning, tactics and policy" and significance means "importance".

Geo strategic means the importance of a country or a region as by virtue of its geographical location. The term was first used by Frederick L. Schuman in his 1942 article "Let Us Learn Our Geopolitics". Geographical attributes of a state bring it both, some opportunities to avail and some risks to evade. Pakistan availed the opportunities from its geography but could not escape the risks it posed. When a state learns how to exploit its geography to the best of its political and strategic interests the study which comes in shape is called geostrategic and geopolitics.

## **2. Geographical description of Pakistan:**

Pakistan's geography where brought the country countless material benefits there its unwise exploitation also invited the chaos in the region. Pakistan is located in South East Asia. 24.35 North and 37.05 North latitude and 61 East to 78 East longitude. Its area is 796096 sq km stretching over 1600 km from North to South and about 885km from East to West.

In 1947, possessing a unique geographical location, Pakistan consisted two distant parts; the West Pakistan, in the Indus River basin and the East Pakistan (later on became Bangladesh in December 1971) located more than 1000 miles (1600 kilometers) away in the Ganges River delta. Separated from each other, these two wings had 1000km wide Indian territory between them.

Pakistan is a land of plains, mountain ranges, deserts and coastal belt. The country shares its Eastern Border called 'Radcliffe Line' with India. On its Northern side, it has Sino-Pak Border. Its Western fronts include the boundaries of 'Durand Line' with Afghanistan and 'Gold Smith Line' with Iran. The Arabian Sea has limited the South of the country. With the total area of 7,96096 km square, Pakistan emerges to be one of the most significant geographical patches of Asia. In the West, Pakistan borders with Afghanistan, whose one kilometer narrow Wakhan strip kept the defunct Soviet Union away from Pakistani frontiers. To the North, she has the Peoples Republic of China. Geography has also placed Pakistan at the mouth of the strategic Persian Gulf where 65% of world's oil is produced. Western nations, including the United States, are drawn geographically to Pakistan because of their keen interest in keeping the Arabian Sea open for the Persian Gulf oil shipments which make up a major part of their energy supplies. The oil rich heart of the Persian Gulf region—Iran, is in the northwest of Pakistan. In the South, the Arabian Sea, the northwestern extension of the strategically important Indian Ocean washes Pakistan's coastal shores. Khunjerab Pass links Pakistan and China. Pakistan and Iran borders meet at Koh-i-Tuftan. The narrow strip of Wakhan separates Central Asia from Pakistan. Towards east, Punjab-Rajasthan borders which is 1650 km long. The Pakistan-Afghanistan border is 2250 km (Durand Line). Coastal belt is 700 km. Being the gateway to Central Asia and a suitable route of access of World Powers into land-locked Afghanistan, the geography of Pakistan suffered from the side effects of the 'New Great Game' and the 'Global War on Terrorism'. But things are in transformation today. The Northern border with China where gets ready to bring billion dollars investment in the wake of CPEC there the Western border with Afghanistan is seeking TAPI Gas Pipeline. Similarly, the South Western boundary with Iran will sooner or later be flexible for Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline.

## **3. Political importance:**

US interests in the regions to contain the Growing China, nuclear Iran, terrorist Afghanistan, and to benefit from the market of India. Security and Business are two main US interests in the region while

Pakistan is playing a front line role against terrorism. Today the political scenario of the region is tinged with pre-emption policy and US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear program, India's geopolitical muscles (new strategic deal with US) to gain the 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 tanks have repeatedly accepted that war against terror could never be won without the help of Pakistan. Pakistan has rigorously fought, and ongoing military operation in Waziristan is also targeting the suspected Taliban in the bordering area. Main threats to Pakistan: Balochistan and Waziristan conflicts are posing threats to any economic project like IPI gas pipeline. Negative role of India, US, Iran in this conflict-ridden area. Kashmir is flash point, accelerating nuclear race in the South Asia. Instable governments in Pakistan have contributed in weakening the strong position.

#### **4. Geostrategic importance of Pakistan:**

When Pakistan emerged on the map of the world as a sovereign and independent state in August 1947, it was like a baby in ICU with hardly any prospect of survival, on account of its extremely vulnerable defence and fragile economy. However, despite numerous setbacks, crises and turmoils of gigantic magnitude, it has so far been able to survive and make some progress due to several factors, perhaps the most important of which is its strategic geographical location and its particular ideology.

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. The geographic location of Pakistan makes it a junction of the three important parts of the world: South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia.

Pakistan is thus located in one of the most sensitive regions of the world where global rivalries of great power, accentuated by local rivalries came into conflict with each other and serve to heighten Pakistan's security concerns. Safeguarding its security is, therefore, a principal aim of Pakistan's foreign policy even under normal circumstances. In today's troubled times, it has become foremost preoccupation. Pakistan's geostrategic position is such that since its creation, it has faced a succession of challenging situations. In recent years, the problems in the region have multiplied in a way that has focused world's attention on Pakistan.

##### **a) Proximity of great powers:**

Pakistan is located at the junction of great powers. In its neighbors 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.

##### **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, Pakistan through Arabian Sea is linked with the Muslims Countries of Persian Gulf. All of them are rich in oil. In Karachi Bin Qasim and Gwader are important seaports of Pakistan

#### c) Bridge between South Asia and South West Asia;

Iran and Afghanistan are energy abundant while India and China are lacking of. China finds way to Indian ocean and Arabian Sea through Korakoram. China with its fastest economic growth rate of 9%; is developing its southern provinces because its own port is 4500 km away from Sinkiang but Gawader is 2500 km away. Pakistan offers to CARs the shortest route of 2600 km as compared to Iran (4500 km) or Turkey (5000 km). land locked Afganistan now at the phase of Reconstruction, finds its ways through Pakistan. Gawader port with its deep waters attracts the trade ships of China, CARs and South East Asian Countries. Iran is struggling to export its surplus gas and oil to eastern countries. Qatar Pakistan and Turkmenistan Pipeline projects highlights the position. Pakistan would get 400 million dollar annually if IPI gets success. Mountain Ranges: Himalayas, Hindu Kush in the North are plentiful in providing water and natural resources.

#### d) Only Muslim Country with Nuclear Capability

Pakistan's strategic position in the world has been considerably increased ever since it has achieved nuclear capability, which has made it the only Muslim country armed with atomic weapons. Pakistan is a poor country confronting countless problems and facing grave energy shortages but even then, its nuclear power has significantly elevated its importance in the international community.

A historian has perhaps rightly said that "In almost 80 years since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, if any work mentioning incident took place in the whole Muslim world, it was May 1998, when Pakistan carried out its nuclear explosions.

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.

Reduce Indian Hegemony In Arabian Sea and Indian Sea: India has a shared interest with the U.S and NATO in the subjection of Pakistan as they consider Nuclear weapons of Pakistan as a thteat to Indian national security, NATO operations in Afghanistan and Israel. Pakistan have nuclear deterrence since 1998. Pakistan named its nuclear bomb as "Islamic Bomb" tht made it centre of attention in world politically. The U.S, NATO, Israel and India want to neutralize such a strategic and factional threat from emerging in Pakistan.

#### e) Natural Resources:

It is believed that they most vital factor which can be helpful for any country is the natural resources. And Pakistan is a world's populous country due to its natural resources. Pakistan has the world's fifth largest gold mine in Baluchistan, world's second largest salt mine in Punjab and world's sixth coal mine also in Punjab. Pakistan has three of the biggest mountains of the world. It is said that these mountain

ranges serve us safe from Siberia winds. The huge glaciers supply water in the rivers. Our huge market makes it an avid hub for export of the commodities by our neighbours.

#### **f) Significance as a Transit economy:**

In the changing dynamics of global architecture, the sea politics is getting complex with more focus on commercial activities and economic prosperity.

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 Gwadar 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. Gwadar port is the warm water and deep sea port of Pakistan. It is situated at the mouth of Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and holds 2/3 world oil reserves. Historically, it was purchased by Pakistan in 1958 from Omani Sultanate at the cost of US \$3 million. During its construction phase, from 1988-1992 small port was constructed. In 2007, General Musharraf inaugurated the port. From 2007-2012, Gwadar port remained under Port Singapore Authority (PSA) but due to its poor performance, the port was handed over to China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) in 2013. Since then the construction work has been done at a rapid pace. Gwadar port with its deep waters attracts the trade ships of China, CAR and South East Asian countries, also the coastal belt of Baluchistan can provide outlet to China's western provinces to have access to Middle Eastern markets with the development of coastal highways and motorways. China finds way to Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea through Karakorum Highway.

The port holds great strategic and economic significance for Pakistan. It is third important deep sea port of Pakistan after Karachi and Qasim ports. It is located at cross junction of international sea shipping and oil trade routes. Gwadar can act as an international trade hub for Pakistan. Gwadar port would connect three regions, i.e. Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East. It would open new job opportunities and help in the development of Baluchistan. Pakistan would be able to explore minerals, hydrocarbons, oil and gas resources of CARs. The port will attract foreign investment and tourism. It would provide foreign reserves and free trade zones and special economic zones (SEZ) that would help in the economic prosperity of Baluchistan and Pakistan. It would help to increase Pakistan's trade and commercial activities particularly in Baluchistan province, so provincial grievances will be addressed.

Gwadar will help Pakistan to monitor the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) originating from the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Gwadar will be able to control the oil sea routes and trade links among regions such as South Asia, Africa, Central Asia, Gulf and Middle East. It will provide strategic leverage to Pakistan vis-à-vis India, as the port is far from Indian reach as compared to other two Pakistani ports. Gwadar will increase job opportunities for Pakistani people and help in economic development through transit trade fee and foreign exchange reserves. Gwadar will boost up co-operation of Pakistan with other countries in oil and energy sector. Tourism, trade, hotel industry and state revenue will increase which will strengthen country's economy. Gwadar offers tax free investments and trade, thus attracting large number of foreign investors to open new development projects and economic plans.

Asia, being the largest region has many landlocked countries and their access to sea via their own land route is very costly. Such countries look out for shortest routes for the purpose of international trade. China is an example whose western part is thousand kilometers away from its Eastern seaports.

Gwadar port is the nearest warm-water port to energy-rich Central Asian Countries Bought from Oman in 1958, Gwadar has been developed into a warm-water seaport which now operated by a Chinese company named 'China Overseas Port Holding Company' under a 43 years agreed lease. The port is the soul of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Being the nearest deep-sea port to the landlocked Central Asian Republics, Gwadar is another manifestation of Pakistan's geographical importance.

## I China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Pakistan benefits from its strategic location and China is taking advantage of that. Around 80% of China's trade and energy imports travel through the pirate-swarmed Strait of Malacca and Indian Ocean, both patrolled by the United States and Indian Navies.

These possible chokepoints at Malacca Strait are a security issue for China, particularly regarding oil as 40% of china's general consumption passes through the Malacca Strait. Any conflict could block the China's energy supply, as a result, supply ships would need to travel an extra 500 miles to avoid the Malacca Strait, currently the fastest route from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. China is aware of this vulnerability and is looking to Pakistan to provide a shorter and safer alternative.

Currently China import 80% of its oil through this narrow stretch of sea passing through Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

The CPEC would not only be the alternative to Strait of Malacca but also provide China with an entry point to the Persian Gulf. Strategically some countries are worried that the China is broadening its geopolitical influence and possibly its military presence in the region. For example, some Indian intellectuals suspect the Gwadar port will serve as a Chinese Naval facility, and it only comes at a cost of about \$46 billion. The Pakistan-China Economic Corridor will move from KHUNJERAB PASS into Pakistan in the mountains down Karakorum Highway. At an altitude of more than 15,000

feet, outnumber cargo trucks will be crossing over Pakistan's border with China. The initial outlines of this corridor are already visible, where the highway snakes past mountains, glaciers, and rocky valleys. From central Pakistan, more roads will be built to provide access to Gwadar Port in Baluchistan.

The donkey-trails from the original Silk Route is visible, where traders traveled for more than 600 years before the 15th century. China spends millions of dollars on the upgrading of mountainous Karakorum highway that is one of the world's most dangerous roads. Chinese engineers are drilling through mountains to build dozens of miles of tunnels to make it safer, some of which are celebrated with the phrase "Pak-China Friendship Tunnel". They are adding bridges, guardrails and concrete overhangs to funnel landslides and avalanches away from travel lanes. For example, Attabad Lake is created as a result of a landslide in 2010, which blocked the Hunza River and caused flooding the Karakorum Highway and surrounding villages. China has recently built four large tunnels on the south end of the 13-mile lake to reopen the highway that also benefits the water locked local villagers. The \$46 billion 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor' scheme, which is being demonstrated as a 'Game-Changer' is more than a network

of roads to link Chinese city of Kashgar with the Gulf States via Gwadar of Pakistan. CPEC is a complete package of energy projects and trade opportunities for Pakistan. It is the most cherished fruit of Pakistan's geographical importance the country ever had. However, some credit also goes to the foreign policy makers of Pakistan who always kept into considerations the Sino-Pak mutual interests. Through Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC), China would benefit from the nearest Gwadar port. Kashgar is 4500 Km while Gwadar is 2800 km from the Port of Shanghai. The port would provide China an access to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). The Strait of Malacca can be blocked by India but Gwadar would provide an alternate sea route. Gwadar can act as an alternative route to Indian Ocean or South China Sea routes. Presently, India is using all tactics to counter the development of Gwadar port. It is heavily investing in Iranian port Chahbahar, with the investment of US \$85 million. After lifting of economic sanctions on Iran, India is keener to work on Chahbahar as it considers Gwadar port as part of Strings of Pearl strategy aimed to encircle India. India wants to reduce Chinese influence in the region. India is attempting to reduce economic importance of Gwadar. It has built roads from Afghanistan to connect with Chahbahar for instance, Zaranj-Delaram road. It clearly indicates that India would try its best to hinder the construction of silk route from Pakistan. It has already raised serious security concerns on the construction of CPEC. However, Pakistan seriously needs to address these challenges and expedite its work on Gwadar Port which is a key to economic prosperity, regional connectivity and maritime development for Pakistan.

China link to Middle East: Pakistan is the only direct and shortest link between China and the Middle East. In development of this link, Pakistan plays an important role by making Gwadar a fully functional port with support of China. Gwadar will prove instrumental in promoting trans-shipment essentially of containerized cargo besides unlocking the development potential for hinterland.

## II Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI)

The Asian Development Bank's funded project of TAPI is the name of a gas pipeline which aims to supply natural gas from the Caspian Sea to the four countries mentioned above. Pakistan due to its geographical nearness to this Central Asian Republic is seeking benefit from the project. It also reflects the dependence of India on Pakistan for having access to the natural resources of Central Asian Republics. The construction of the project commenced in December 2015, and it will be functional by 2019.

## III Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline

Also known as the 'Peace Pipeline' the project is another fruit of Pakistan's geographic importance. The pipeline project was formally inaugurated in 2013, but it's far from being operational due to several controversies. Particularly the anti-Iran stance of the USA influenced Pakistan to abandon the project. Things, however, have changed after the US-Iran Nuclear Deal and Iran is no more under enormous sanctions. Pakistan at the same time never utterly gave up the project. Good omens are apparent for the future of this project.

#### **IV Pakistan shares Marine Border with Oman**

Pakistan and Oman settled their maritime under an agreement in 2000; adhering to the International Law of Sea. This sharing of a maritime boundary with the brotherly country of Oman can interpret Pakistan's geographical importance in the sense of access to Oman's undersea energy resources. The sea route can also be used to have access to the Persian Gulf and its littoral states.

#### **V Important link in the chain of Muslim countries:**

Geographically, Pakistan is located at the centre of the Islamic countries of Asia and Africa. It is linked to these states thorough land and sea routes and thus not only its ideologically background, but its geographical centrality necessities that it supports the unity of Muslim World. Prior to cessation of East Pakistan, it was the largest Islamic State and naturally was in the vanguard of the movement for Islamic Unity. Even afterwards, it actively works for the mutual alliance and unity of Muslims.

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.

#### **5. War against Terrorism:**

The world is facing a huge problem of terrorism. Pakistan is a route for transportation and a front line state against terrorism. Afghanistan which is now the focus of world's attention is generally regarded as the breeding ground of all the international terrorism. Now, the US and Nato troops fighting in Afghanistan are well aware that they are heavily dependent on Pakistan for winning war in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has other neighbours also such as Iran, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, but Pakistan provides the easiest route for the provision of NATO Supplies to the forces in Afghanistan.

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.

#### **6. Analysis/Conclusion:**

There is no doubt that Pakistan has a great importance in the world. But it is the fact that Pakistan is a developing country and has many issues like energy crises, terrorism etc. the famous American Scholar Stephen Cohen while demonstrating on the thought pattern of most of the people of Pakistan, point out that The establishment is prone to thinking that someone will always come to Pakistan rescue because of its location. This kind of thinking must be shed away and we have to learn to rely on our own resources which proliferate in Pakistan. While history has been unkind to Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit. It has resources rich area in the northwest, people rich in the North East.

## 7. References:

<http://www.ipripak.org/significance-of-gwadar-port/>

<http://www.sheir.org/geostrategic-and-geopolitical-location-geography.html>

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/11/25/geostrategic-importance-of-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>

<http://www.cssworld.com.pk/showthread.php?469-Geo-Strategic-Importance-of-Pakistan>

Afnan Ullah Khan, Pakistan: The Way Forward, October 2014, p.187 .

Facts About Pakistan, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Films and Pu