

GEOGRAPHY OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan comprised of two wings from its birth in 1947 till 1971 which were known as West and East Pakistan. The Eastern part of the country becomes independent as a result of Indian aggression in 1971 known as Bangladesh. At present Pakistan consists of Four Provinces known as Baluchistan, Khayber Pakhtoon Khawa, Punjab & Sindh.

The Sub-Continent has always been inhabited by several nationalities with their distinctive culture and life style. The irrigation of sub-continent depends on two river systems known as Sindh River System and Ganga Jamna River System. In fact these systems divided the whole of the sub-continent in to two separate regions. These regions were distinct from each other in their way of living, thinking, culture and civilization.

Map of Sub Continent before Partition



Location:



The official name of the country is Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Islamabad is its capital. Karachi remained capital from 1947-1959. Pakistan lies between 24 N to 37 N latitude and 60 E to 75.5 E longitudes. The Chinese territory of Sinkiang is situated in the North East of Pakistan and in North West small Border line of Tajikistan is situated. It is bounded to the South West by Iran and South East by the Arabian Sea, to the West by Afghanistan, to the East by India.

Area:

Pakistan is located in South Asia and has a total area of 796096 square km. Out of this 468,000 square km is in the North and West which forms mountainous land and plateau. The remaining 328,000 square km comprising a level plain.

Provinces/ Federal Area	Area in Sq km	%age of Total Area
Islamabad	906 sq km	0.1%
Punjab	205,345 sq km	25.8%
Sindh	140,914 sq km	17.7%
KPK	74,521 sq km	9.4%
Baluchistan	347,190 sq km	43.6%
FATA	27,220 sq km	3.4%

Land:

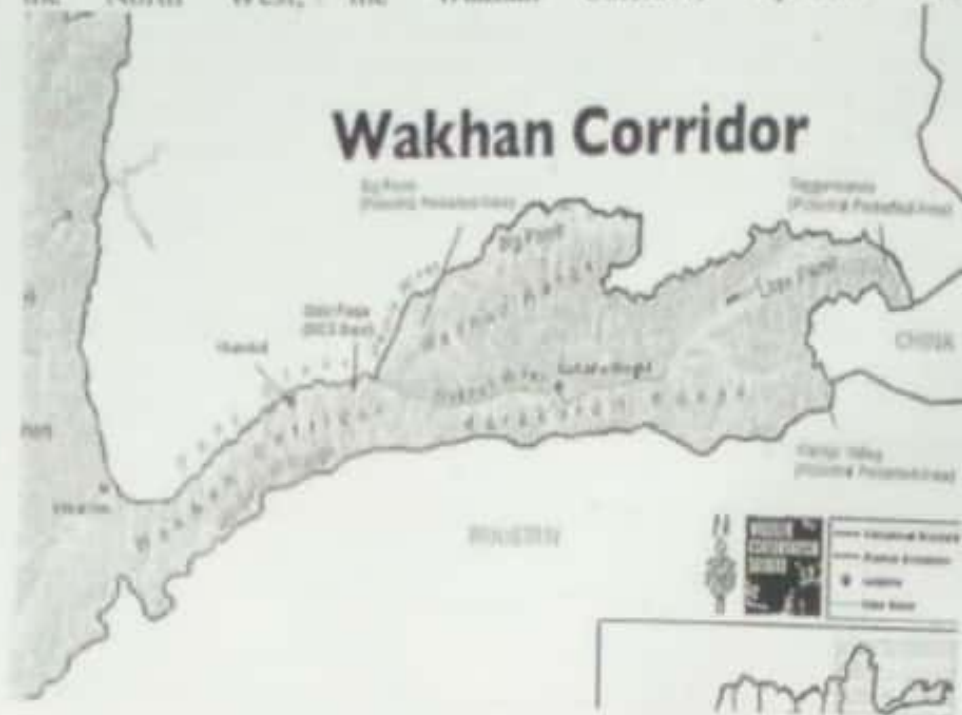
Pakistan is divided in to the following physiographical regions:

- The Northern Mountain Ranges
- The Western Mountain Ranges
- The Salt Range and Potohar Plateau. *پتوہار*
- The Baluchistan Plateau
- The Indus Plains
- The Desert area
- The Coastal Land

The Northern Mountain Ranges.

The northern mountain ranges consists of the Himalaya mountains, the Karakoram mountain and the Hindukush mountains. The **Himalayas** lie towards the north and have an average height of

the North West, the Wakhan Corridor, separates Pakistan and Tajikistan.



The nearest points of the two countries are only 16 to 19 km, and farthest about 80 km. In the West Pakistan has a common border of 2430 km with Afghanistan known as Durand line. To the South of the Durand line, there is a common border of 909 km with Iran. The Arabian Sea lies in the South West with 1046 km of Coastline. To the East of Pakistan is the Indian territory of East Punjab and Rajasthan with a common border of about 2912 km. Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory located between Pakistan and India. Pakistan controls a portion of the territory as Azad Kashmir with 902 km border and Northern areas. While India controls the territory of Jammu and Kashmir with 317 km border.

Strategic Importance of Pakistan

Stephen P Cohn describes the importance of the geostrategic location of Pakistan,

While history has been unkind to Pakistan, its great geography has been its greatest benefit. It has resources rich area in North-West.

The geostrategic location of Pakistan in the biggest continent of Asia has given it a unique position in the world. Pakistan due to its geographical location has assumed a decisive role to play in keeping balance of power in Asia and particularly between the super powers. The following discussion throws light on the importance of Pakistan's location.

1. Location:

Pakistan is situated in a region of great economic, political and military importance. Among its neighboring countries are China and Russia which are considered to be among the countries recognized as super powers.

7000 meters. Nanga Parbat is the highest peak of this range with a height of 8126 meters (26660 feet). The Karakoram mountains guard the western side of Pakistan. K-2 is the highest peak of this range with a height of 8611 meters (28250 feet). Renowned Karakoram Highway which connects Pakistan with China passes through this range. The Hindukush mountains cover the North West side of Pakistan. Its major portion lies in Afghanistan.

The Western Mountain Ranges.

Pakistan's Western mountain ranges consists of Koh-i-Sufaid, Waziristan Hills, Sulaiman Moutains and Kirthar Hills.

The Salt Range and Pothwar Plateau.

A broken highland region, the Salt Range lies on the west bank of river Jhelum and runs from Bakralla hills to the Sulaiman Range.

The Baluchistan Plateau.

The Balochistan Plateau lies west of the Sulaiman and Kirthar hills. It has an average height of 600 to 900 meters.

The Indus Plain

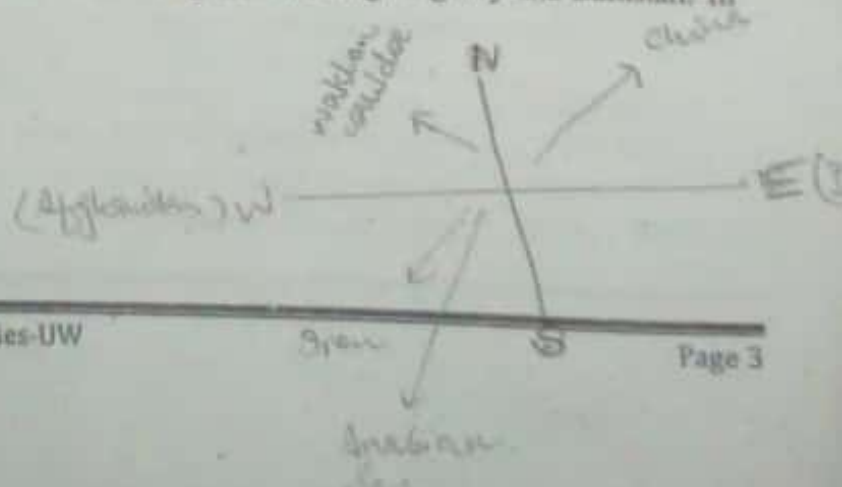
The Indus Plain consist of the belt which stretches from the salt range in the north to the Arabian Sea in the South. This plain is irrigated by the Indus River.

The Deserts areas are (Tharparker, Thal, and the Cholistan) in the southeast. Thal desert lies between the rivers Indus and Jhelum, while Cholistan and Thar deserts occur on the south-east of the country.

Coast line consists of Bin Qasim Port (Karachi) and Gawader Port Balochistan.

Neighboring Countries and Borders:

Pakistan occupies a historic and significant position in Asia. Peoples Republic of China and the Central Asian States are its immediate neighbors. In the North-East it has a common border of about 523 kms. with Peoples Republic of China along with its Gilgit Agency and Baltistan. In



2. Sea Ports of Pakistan:

The industrial progress of the Western countries depends upon the oil of the Gulf States. This oil is carried through Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Karachi is an important Port of the Arabian Sea. Gwadar port with its deep water also attracts the trade ship of China, CARs, and South East Asian countries.

3. Pakistan as a Center of the Muslim World:

If we look at the map of Muslim countries, Pakistan occupies a central location Pakistan is situated in the center of the Muslim World. To the west of Pakistan, starting from Afghanistan and Iran lays a chain of Muslim countries passing through Asia and terminating at the Eastern coast of the Atlantic Ocean i.e the Middle East, Gulf and Africa. To the East of Pakistan, starting from Bangladesh lays another chain of Muslim countries while to the North there are six Muslim countries which gained independence from Russia in 1991. Thus it can actively participate in the activities of Muslim world-economic development, transport of resources and above all combat terrorism.

4. Control over Warm Water:

The seas of Russia are mostly snow capped and are not fit for navigation for the larger part of the year. To take active part in international trade, Russia dreams to have control over the warm water of the Indian Sea. But Pakistan is a hurdle in its way and thus enjoys an important position in the scene of international trade.

5. Position in Third World Countries:

Pakistan is a great supporter of the unity of the third World countries.

6. 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 balance of power in the region.

9. Significance as a Transit Economy:

Pakistan has the potential to develop transit economy on account is its strategic location, land locked Afghanistan now at the phase of reconstruction finds its ways through Pakistan. China's 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 Baluchistan can provide outlet to china's western provinces to have access to middles eastern markets with the development of coastal highways and motorways