



RESEARCH PAPER

Pakistan Strategic Relations with Tajikistan: An Appraisal

Karim Haider Syed¹ Dr Imran Khan²

1. Lecturer, Pakistan Study Center, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Government Graduate College Hafizabad, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO

Received:
March 31, 2018

Accepted:
June 24, 2018

Online:
June 30, 2018

Keywords:
CARCE
CPEC,
Pakistan,
Tajikistan

**Corresponding
Author:**
haider.psc@pu.ed
u.pk

ABSTRACT

The relations of Tajiks with the peoples of Pakistan have a long history and their cultural ties were formed in olden times and the middle Ages. Persian language and literature were widely spread in Pakistan and for centuries it was the official language of the court and state administration in the Muslim rulers of the subcontinent including Pakistan. Although sometimes Arabs, Turks and Afghans ruled the areas of current day Pakistan, their system of government was always Persian or Arabic that is one bone of tie between people of Pakistan and Tajikistan as both nations share and culture and this bond also help both nations to develop close relations with Afghanistan, Iran, Arab countries and a number of other countries.

Introduction

Most of the Sufis who came to the subcontinent to preach Islam came from Central Asia, and especially from Tajikistan. Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh himself belonged to the Khujand region of Tajikistan. The majority of Muslims are followers of Hanfi jurisprudence in Pakistan and this is also because of Tajikistan as Hanfi school of thought reach this region from Tajikistan. This aspect of religious bound is very important in Pakistan and Tajikistan to further strengthen public relations in the fields of defense and military, trade and economics, and education and research. Pakistan and Tajikistan are only 10 miles at a distance at their closest point of borders. Wakhan strip of Afghanistan serving as a narrow Corridor of Afghan territory in northwest of Pakistan that is extended to China and separation point between Pakistan and Tajikistan. This corridor was deliberately developed by the colonial powers; ie Britain and Russian empire(J Bruce Amstutz, 2002).With the colonization of area that comprised Pakistan by Great Britain and Central Asia region in which Tajikistan is important nation by Tsarist Russia, relations between people living in Pakistan and Tajikistan area were declined. Because they were enslaved by the superpowers and could not pursue their own foreign policy. A new period in the history of international relations of

the Pakistan began on August 14, 1947 when the Muslim majority region of Indian-subcontinent gain independence and a new era in the history of international relations of the Tajikistan began on September 9, 1991, ie the day of the proclamation of the Declaration of State Independence from soviet Russia. Since that days both nations in international relations as an independent legal entities have established cooperation with all countries of the world on the principle of "open doors", multifaceted foreign policy, good relations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, protection of national and state interests. After gaining independence, favorable and promising opportunities have opened up in the relations of Tajikistan, and a new stage of cooperation between Tajikistan and Pakistan has come. In 1991, Pakistan recognized the independent status of the Republic of Tajikistan, and on June 6 1992, diplomatic relations were established between the two nations. Pakistan opened its Embassy in Dushanbe in 1993, which started functioning in 1994. Later on the Consulate of the Tajikistan opened in Pakistan in 1997 and the Embassy of Tajikistan in Islamabad started working in 2005 (Zarifi, 2009). Relations between Tajikistan and Pakistan have also been established for mutual interests and respect that has laid the foundation for cooperation between two nations in the field of economic and culture. The bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Pakistan has been dynamically developing thanks to intense efforts of both parties. President of Tajikistan paid state visits to Pakistan in years of 1994, 1996, 1997, 2004, 2011, 2015 and 2017 during the 29 years of the relationship between the two nations. The President of Pakistan also paid visits to Tajikistan in the years of 2002, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2018. Due to civil war in Tajikistan 1992-1997, cooperation did not develop much and Tajikistan faced a decade long economic crisis that raped it in many other linked issues("Relations of Tajikistan with Pakistan | Ministry of foreign affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan," 2018). Pakistan gives hands of cooperation to facilitate the cooperation between the different factions of Tajiks to bring peace in Tajikistan because of its influence on Taliban that was directly involved in war and Tajik community living in Pakistan. During the Peace negotiations the third round of talks between the Tajiks factions was held in Islamabad. Also, the cultural nuance of cooperation was evident in the whole process of this special cooperation of Pakistan. At the beginning of the new millennium, cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan expanded due to the international community's interest in Tajikistan and the announcement of an "open door" policy by the leadership of Tajikistan. Thus, it can be concluded that there are great untapped opportunities in the cooperation of the Republic of Tajikistan with the countries of South Asia. Their effective use can contribute to the formation of a new level of cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the countries of South Asia.

Literature Review

Central Asia and Its Asian Neighbors: Security and Commerce at the Crossroads is very important work of Rollie Lal on the potential and relations of central Asia. Pakistan is one of the important nations of Asian region. Central Asia have historic links with south Asian region and also has strong interests in the

nations of this region. Looking at the neighboring nations of this region Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Iran and India are precarious players in the field of security and economy. Economical and security issues are going to determine the future of Central Asian region. All of the states of central Asia are of importance to Pakistan where Tajikistan is very important nation due to its cultural and geographical links with Pakistan. Due to the economic relations, war on terrorism, or other reasons central Asian region is important for the all surrounding nations. Pakistan, China, and Iran have all bellicosely sought to shape trade relations to and through this important region of Central Asia, and also strengthened security collaboration. But international community is worried about the state of affairs in Afghanistan, which according to them can spillover of fight onto their territory, and they also fear the prospect of influence and activities. In establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia the prime interest of china is security in the region. This work evaluates the common interests of the states of the Central Asian with their nations of other Asian and studies the effects of these interests for other nations. So this monograph is very important work that has a comprehensive overview on the relation of Pakistan and Tajikistan (Lal, 2006).

Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam by Lena Jonson is very important work that explore the role of Tajikistan in the region. In the 21st century Central Asian region has become the battlefield for the main tussles of the great powers. This game of interest is being presented by the west as a struggle between secularism and radical Islam. More precisely this struggle in the central Asia is also being observed as a race between identity politics and authoritarianism but can better be said struggle to control the resources of the region between western powers and emerging power of the East. These conflicts are more outspokenly demonstrated in case of Tajikistan. Currently Tajikistan is surrounded in the area that is oil-rich area of Central Asian region including Tajikistan its own resources, and it is bordering with the war-torn Afghanistan that can become a gateway to Pakistan a country that has deep sea ports for trade and economic activities. Tajikistan live in a geo-strategically essential location in the central Asian region. It is also a chief transportation hub for the traders of central Asia currently being used to smuggle opium. This book is very important work of Lena Jonson who has examined the foreign policy of Tajikistan in the post 9/11 atmosphere. The author of this book has shown the internal paradoxes of a state in every sagacity at the intersections, integration its blood-spattered past of civil war within. Author in her work has assessed the influence of regional changes on the movement of reforms in Tajikistan, and in turn observes how variations in society of Tajikistan has a potential to affect the region. There are lot of issues and mutual interests involved in Pakistan and Tajikistan relations and this book has given brief insight on the relations of these two nations (Johnson, 2006).

Hypothesis

The nature of relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan has changed after the end of civil war in Tajikistan and elements of mutual respect and cooperation are leading factor in the development of relations between these two important Muslim nations.

Importance of Tajikistan

Very important area of the former Soviet Union is called Central Asia and in this region there are all Muslim countries, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. All of these areas are inhabited by ethnic Turks and languages are spoken alike with different accents and words that are also a means of communication between people of the region. Tajikistan is one of the Central Asian countries. Tajikistan is one of the most beautiful Central Asian states in the world with an area of 10,100 square kilometers, about 70% of which is mountainous, with the Pamir Mountains Range. The capital of this Islamic country is Dushanbe, which is a modern city with its great historical heritage. Tajikistan, which in Tajikistan is called as Des, is located in the south of Central Asia (Cykolovec, 2003). It is bordered by Uzbekistan to the northwest, Kyrgyzstan to the east, Afghanistan to the south and parts of the eastern border to China, while the Pakistani Gilgit-Baltistan region is separated from Tajikistan by the Wakhan Strip. Pakistan, Russia and Uzbekistan were the key nations tried to play a constructive role in resolving the civil war in Tajikistan and Pakistan converted a 13 million dollar loan to Tajikistan into a grant (Department, 2010). Expanding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan and Central Asian states will not only bring major geographical and political change in the region, but also give Central Asian countries cut off from the world access to hot water and the US and India's influence in the region almost will be reduced. Lowry Tunnel project is being viewed as a major possibility of land access to Central Asian countries. This is the only and safest way to reach the Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. The air distance from Chitral to Tajikistan is only half an hour. Tajikistan's land distance from the Lowry Tunnel via Chitral, Bonny, Mastuja, Yarkhon, Brugel and Wakhan is less than 300km. The road to Bruges, Wakhan and Tajikistan is smooth and completely safe. The Silk Road can be connected to the Tajikistan Road via Gilgit, Shandor and Mastuja, which can also be used as an alternative route ("Lowari converted into road tunnel," 2009). Vast reserves of gas and electricity will be able to reach the global market, which will change the economy of Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Pakistan in CAREC

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) is joint Program of cooperation by eleven development partners and nations. They are working together to promote development through collaboration, leading to reduce poverty and enhance economic growth. "Good Neighbors, Good Partners, and Good Prospects." is vision behind this initiative. The program is a preemptive

results-based regional schemes, facilitator of useful and policy initiatives serious to maintainable economic growth and mutual prosperity in all over the region. Since its commencement in 2001 and as of the date, CAREC program has organized \$39.2 billion in investments that have facilitated launch multimodal transport networks, augmented energy trade and security, simplified free movement of people and consignment, and laid the foundation for economic corridor improvement. Pakistan has been enthusiastically observing for new techniques to overcome barricades to development and to place Central Asian region at the heart of Pakistani trade and commerce in gradually incorporated global markets since it has been joining the CAREC Program in 2010(Asian Development Bank, 2017). It was very important for Pakistan in 2013 when it CAREC transport corridors. This project was officially extended to Pakistan and aim was to provide Afghanistan and the Central Asian region along with the People's Republic of China the access to the Pakistani ports of Karachi and Gwadar to open the trade route through the Arabian Sea. CAREC Corridor project 5 was the name of project that was extended to Pakistan along N55. China and Afghanistan was very happy to get the access to the Arabian Sea. China wanted to connect its Xinjiang province to nearest sea and landlocked nations in Central Asian region through the shortest trade route to sea and Karachi Port was chosen that time as CPEC idea was not developed till that time. Improving CAREC Corridor 5 was projected as great opportunity to Pakistan as it was going to enable it to realize the very important and potential economic benefits as by accelerating the trade with surrounding nations. This project in the context of other central Asian nations was very important as Pakistan was also refining its national roads through this corridors. Any such move and initiative of Pakistan has made it the center of the routes to the south Asia and Middle East and South Asian region. These corridors were eventually the part of a rationalized network of land transport that was stretching from the west from Azerbaijan, to the east in China and Kazakhstan in north and beyond. The importance of CAREC can be expressed in Pakistan and Tajikistan in the following aspects:

1. Use of Pakistan technological potential in the development of information technology and programming in Tajikistan.
2. Strengthening cooperation in the field of education and science for the exchange of students, trainees and undergraduates, the organization of language internships among students of the countries and the implementation of art and cultural programs. To study the opportunities for strengthening cooperation between countries in this sector.
3. The use of the regional area of cooperation (within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (hereinafter SCO)) to strengthen cultural, scientific and literary cooperation.
4. The depth of scientific and cultural cooperation to study the treasures of Pakistan and the conduct of extensive scientific research in this field.

5. The need to develop cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan using bilateral, regional templates (hereinafter referred to as the Economic Cooperation Organization (hereinafter ECO), SCO, Cultural and Civilization Organization - hereinafter referred to as the OIC) and internationally.
6. Strengthening cultural cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the purpose of developing exchanges in the field of education and prevention of extremist movements (A Perfect 10 for CAREC, 2017).

Tajikistan in CPEC

One Belt, One Road basically consists of 2 sections, one of which is to rebuild the old Silk Road land route while the Road is not really a highway but a route of several sea lanes. The China Development Bank said in the third quarter of last year that 900 projects have been inaugurated so far for the construction of the strip and highway, at a cost of 900 billion (Rs. 900 trillion). The Silk Road was an ancient land route that connected merchants and tourists from Europe and Asia to China, Iran, and the Roman Empire. China's new Silk Road project now includes several economic corridors and a 'Silk Road', as well as gas pipelines, oil pipelines, railways and other projects. China is making the largest investment in its history in the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) of 46 billion dollars. The project is a game changer in a way that balances the balance of power between Pakistan and China. The wars are being fought economically at the moment and in the near future the weight of the country whose economy will be strong will be heavy. CPEC project is the largest economic project in the world. China's interests are more than the interests of Pakistan in CPEC (Debnath, 2017). China wants to become a superpower and economic king in the world without the construction of CPEC it will be costly for China. By the participation of Tajikistan in CPEC the products of all the nations can reach Central Asia, Africa, the European Union, Turkey, Russia and Arab countries in the shortest possible time and at the lowest possible cost. The standard of Pakistan's economy will be equal to that of the developing countries of the world just because of transit fees. The 2000 Summit of SCO in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) signed memoranda to oppose intervention in other countries and protecting human rights. In addition, China and Russia signed a 20-year agreement (2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship). The agreement was primarily an agreement to protect the political and economic interests of China and Russia. China, with its economic superiority and easy access to Central Asia, has decided to expand the SCO to improve its economy. In July 2015, the SCO decided to make Pakistan and India regular members of the SCO (Monaghan, 2015). Pakistan and India sign Memorandum on Accession in Tashkent in June 2016 that bring Tajikistan, Pakistan and China on a single agenda of cooperation. OBOR's land road (SREB) runs from the central Chinese province of Shaanxi to the northwestern provinces of Urumqi and Korgas and enters the northern part of Central Asia. From here, the road passes through Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Central Asia, Iran in West Asia and Turkey. Turkey is geographically located at the northeastern end of the Mediterranean Sea in southeastern Europe and southwestern Asia. From here it enters Russia. Russia is geographically a Northern Eurasian country that stretches east to Europe and north to Asia. From Russia it enters North Western Europe and goes to the Netherlands. It then travels to Southern Europe, Italy. For Pakistan and Tajikistan there are lot of opportunities in this project and both nations can develop economic relations with all over the world being the part of OBOR. Pakistan and Tajikistan share common membership in various multilateral organizations. As Muslim majority countries, both are part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); it is a core element of Pakistan's foreign policy to develop fraternal bonds with Muslim countries. The two countries are also members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul process. Such shared groupings between Pakistan and Tajikistan allow numerous opportunities for interaction to take place between the leaders, delegates, and diplomats of both countries on the sidelines of various summits (Small, 2015). This is thus a contributory factor to the cordial relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan. Tajikistan should use the prospects providing by Pakistan's seaports and present transit systems to increase trade at the area level" given that Tajikistan is a non coastal state. "Road towards strategic partnership for regional solidarity" is greatest declaration in the history of Pakistan and Tajikistan relations. The Tajikistan and Pakistan are working to control narcotics in the region and Tajikistan has expressed frustration over Afghanistan's illicit trade in Afghan opium. The overall decline in drug trafficking was encouraging, the abundance of drugs in Tajikistan was affecting the youth in this regard Pakistan announced its full support for drug prevention in the region. Looking at the approach of Pakistan and Tajikistan the positive results of the fraternal relations between the two countries would soon come to light (Fingar, 2016). Pakistan held unilateral meetings for the said purpose with other countries in the region, including Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Pakistan wanted to connect the region and in its first priority connection with Tajikistan through is visible as Pakistan wanted to start ML-1 rail project. There are three phases of the ML-1 railway project, talks are underway with China to provide security. ML-1 would improve Pakistan's economic status and connect Pakistan with Afghanistan and Tajikistan by rail.

CASA 1000

Casa-1000 is an energy transfer project from Central Asia to South Asia that will transport electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan over a distance of 1,250 km. The implementation of the Casa-1000 project will allow Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to export 1,300 megawatts of surplus electricity annually to Pakistan through Afghanistan. The implementation of this project will pave the way for electricity trade and the creation of an electricity market between the two major regions of the world, Central Asia and South Asia.

The Casa-1000 power line runs through 23 districts in Kunduz, Baghlan, Panjshir, Kapisa, Kabul, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces, where all residents will be able to use the electricity. Out of a total length of 1250 km, 562 km of this line passes through Afghanistan. Understanding the project, Afghanistan will receive \$ 45 million in electricity transit fees from Pakistan each year. In addition to the crossing, 300 megawatts of electricity will reach Afghanistan through this line that is too much for Afghanistan. Meanwhile Recognizing Afghanistan as a credible partner in regional development is one of the benefits that has a direct impact on Afghanistan's transit relations. Afghanistan's right to be taxed on energy transfers from its territory to Pakistan is one of the key benefits that can help the Afghanistan's economy and it very important project in the line of development of relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan (P K Singh, Sharma and Khanjo, 2017).

Conclusion

Fraternal relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan are based on common interests, peace and prosperity. Pakistan and Tajikistan share a common position in regional and international forums. There are opportunities to increase trade between the two countries. Pakistan attaches great importance to the timely completion of the CASA 1000 project, Tajikistan can increase its trade from Pakistani ports, including Gwadar, Pakistan wanted to start direct air flights for Tajikistan. Pakistan is located in South Asia but its direction is towards Central Asia. Due to its geographical proximity, there are many opportunities for cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan in the fields of economy, industry, energy, defense and other areas. Pakistan, as the sole Islamic nuclear power, has full economic and defense capabilities. Pakistan's growing influence and despicable Indian intentions are part of a failed conspiracy to downplay Pakistan's importance. However, due to the policies and priorities of Tajikistan and a few other reasons, Pakistan may not be as important to the world as it really should be. Whether it is Sino-US relations, the Afghan war, the US war on terror, China's One Belt One Road project, or China, Russia and the landlocked Central Asian countries intentions to reach out the warm waters of the Arabian Sea, every major policy in the region revolves around Pakistan, on the other hand, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan has prompted Tajikistan to use China as a gateway to trade routes to Central Asia. A network of roads and rail tracks is being set up between China, Pakistan and Tajikistan, which could contribute to the development of all countries in the region. Pakistan views Tajikistan in the context of its Strategic Depth Policy that is a Positive Sum policy that will benefit both countries. Under this policy, Pakistan will be able to compete with other countries in the region economically, politically and defensively by strengthening its relationship with Tajikistan. Pakistan wants to work with Tajikistan and other Islamic countries to promote peace in the world Central Asian countries are rich in natural resources, Pakistan is facing a crisis in the energy sector in this context, Central Asian countries Good relations, especially with Tajikistan, can help deal effectively with this crisis.

References

- Amstutz, J.B. (2002). *Afghanistan : the first five years of Soviet occupation*. Honolulu, Hi.: University Press Of The Pacific. P296
- A Perfect 10 for CAREC. (2017, November 18). Retrieved January 7, 2018, from CAREC Program <https://www.carecprogram.org/?feature=turkmenistan-pakistan-become-carec-members>
- Bank, A.D. (2017). *CAREC 2030: connecting the region for shared and sustainable development*. ADP. PP 187-209
- Debnath, M. (2017). *Strategic implications of the china-pakistan economic corridor*. OUP. PP 120-132
- Department, A. (2010). *Tajikistan: first and second review*. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund. P34
- Fingar, T. (2016). *The new great game : China and South and Central Asia in the era of reform*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. P 45
- Jonson, L. (2006). *Tajikistan in the new Central Asia : geopolitics, great power rivalry and radical Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Lal, R. (2006). *Central Asia and its Asian neighbors : security and commerce at the crossroads*. Santa Monica, Ca: Rand Corp.
- Lowari converted into road tunnel. (2009, October 29). *Dawn*.
- Monaghan, H. (2015). *Strategic implications of the evolving shanghai cooperation organization*. Rutdulge.P 83
- Singh, P.K , Sharma, B. K., Khanijo, R. (2017). *United Service Institution of India strategic year book, 2017*. New Delhi, India: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd.P198
- Relations of Tajikistan with Pakistan | Ministry of foreign affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. (2018, January 1). Retrieved January 7, 2018, from Mfa.tj website:<https://mfa.tj/en/main/view/23/relations-of-tajikistan-with-pakistan>
- Small, A. (2015). *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*. Oxford University Press. P98
- VadymCykolovec. (2003). *The butterflies of Tajikistan*. Brno ; Kyiv: Tshikolovets.P 12
- Zarifi, H. (2009). *Tajikistan diplomacy : the past and the present*. Dushanbe: Irfon. pp 18