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# THE PAKISTAN FACTOR IN SOUTH ASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS

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## Abstract

This article discusses the multilateral relations between Pakistan and Central Asia. Pakistan's experience of unstable development is the result of our over-reliance on foreign aid and exogenous factors. To ensure a stable and sustainable trajectory of high growth, we focus on endogenous factors of growth such as domestic resource mobilisation, tax reforms, science, technology and innovation, stimulating export growth and we attract foreign direct investment. Remittances have provided significant support for our financial needs, but their true potential has not been realized. We will introduce reforms to increase remittances by offering incentives. Nevertheless, in order to achieve this long-term goal, we need to build a solid and self-sustaining platform using external funding sources in the medium term.

**Keywords** Pakistan, South Asian regions, contract, culture, enlightenment, civilization, energy, projects.

## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan and Central Asian countries, being important players in South Asia, have established various cooperation and partnership relations. Both parties see each other as attractive partners and make various attempts to deepen the relationship. However, it can be said that the main driving force in a relationship is energy. It is known that the Russian-Ukrainian war and the subsequent energy crisis attracted the attention of many countries to the energy resources of Central Asia. However, in terms of energy resources, the region was important not only last year, but also in the past period. Therefore, there are various projects and cooperation agreements in the direction of Central Asia and South Asia.

Pakistan is an energy-hungry country, and at the current stage, it attaches great importance to relations and energy partnerships with the countries of the region. It also plays an important role in the access of the countries of the region to

the Asia-Pacific region and, therefore, to the oceans . Pakistan's position as an energy corridor is an important issue of interest for cooperation. Therefore, the parties have important reasons to strengthen their relations. The agreements and joint actions reached over the past years also show that all the countries of Central Asia are satisfied with their relations with Pakistan. In this sense, regional communication projects come to the fore. Today, Pakistan is participating in several projects in cooperation with Central Asian countries.

1. Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Power Grid Connection Project (TAP), Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline Project and Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) important steps have been taken. Islamabad and the capitals of Central Asia have become one, opening the way for new initiatives. TAP envisages the construction of a 500-kilovolt power transmission line between Turkmenistan,

Afghanistan and Pakistan with a length of about 500 kilometers. Upon completion of the project, up to 4,000 megawatts of electricity is expected to be transferred from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. New negotiations are being conducted between the parties regarding this project.

2. TAPI aims to supply Turkmenistan's natural gas to Pakistan and India. Thus, on the one hand, Pakistan will be able to supply natural gas; on the other hand, because it is a route country, it will be able to use the toll. However, Turkmenistan aims to facilitate Pakistan's access to the world by using the ports of Gwadar, Ben Qasim and Karachi. In fact, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Pakistan, Atajan Movlamov, said in November 2022 that Turkmenistan wants more access by sea because it is landlocked. Movlamov also noted that Turkmenistan can help meet Pakistan's energy needs. Consequently, it can be said that the energy relations on the Ashgabat-Islamabad line will go beyond TAPI and TAP and will develop further.

3. CASA-1000 is a massive renewable energy project that will deliver 1,300 megawatts more electricity from Central Asia to South Asian energy markets through new energy infrastructure. The project is aimed at creating favorable conditions for stable electricity trade between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and between Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a country with chronic power outages, this project is of great importance for Pakistan. As it creates a common regional electricity market, it is known to be a win-win initiative. Although the issue of energy is an important need of Islamabad; It is also one of the main export strengths of the Central Asian countries. For example, Kazakhstan and Pakistan agreed to focus on cooperation in the field of energy as part of the energy agreement signed on October 5, 2022. The deal is important to meet Pakistan's energy needs .

However, it can be said that this is not the end of the matter. Pakistan is the gateway for Kazakh energy products through Gwadar. Therefore, it is clear that this agreement will pave the way for closer cooperation in the future. It is known that bilateral and regional cooperation and international initiatives are effective in the process of rapprochement between Central Asian countries

and Pakistan. At the moment, the international conference on "Central Asia, South Asia: regional connection: problems and opportunities" is a clear example of this.

In 2023, the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan discussed the issue of transport links with Pakistan and the construction of joint corridors designed to connect South Asia with Central Asia to the borders of the region. He paid special attention to the Trans-Afghan road construction project. On February 2, 2021, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan reached an agreement in principle on the construction of the Mazari Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway and signed the "Roadmap" for this project. . It is planned to attract loan funds in the amount of 4.8 billion dollars for the implementation of the project, and the implementation may last up to 5 years. Russia, China, and the United States of America supported this project, and representatives of AIIB, EBRD, IDB, World Bank, ADB, European Investment Bank approved and expressed interest in participating, thus recognizing its strategic importance.

The Trans-Afghan route Termiz - Mazari Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar, according to Uzbek experts, will benefit 15 million regional units by connecting the signaling system of South Asia with the signaling system of Central Asia and Eurasia. The track will be fully electrified and electric vehicles will not be driven. The production capacity of the road will increase to 10 million tons per year, and the prospective capacity will increase to 15 million tons per year. The main thing is that shipping from Pakistan to Uzbekistan takes only 3-5 days, not 35 days. In turn, this allows you to reduce the cost of 20-pound containers of mail and 3 times the cost of transportation at the same time. In the mountains, a Pakistani company has created a ready-made transporter to transport goods from Pakistan to Kazakhstan and back on a shorter route. Now the parties met in Astana for serious changes and initiatives to develop trade and logistics cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. The Pakistani ports of Gwadar, Karachi, Qasim are of great interest in Kazakhstan to facilitate the export of their products to the markets of Pakistan and South Asia, and to increase the attractiveness

of the country's transit potential. It can be used as an example of several land routes to organize mutual deliveries. The central event in the development of cooperation with South Asia is intended to form a political and expert platform for multilateral discussion of a mutually beneficial strategic communication model for mutual cooperation between Central and South Asia.

Since ancient times, Central and South Asia have been closely connected in terms of trade, culture and civilization, and several times were within the framework of common state structures, as well as a single political, economic and humanitarian space. At that time, trade relations between Central and South Asia were also established with Iran, Arabia, the Ottoman Empire, China, Russia and other countries. Ancient trade routes have been important for thousands of years. However, the development of the sailing fleet and the great geographical discoveries led to the decline of continental trade along the Great Silk Road.

It can be seen that the fact that Central Asia is behind Russia, South Asia is behind Great Britain and Afghanistan has become a buffer zone between them has cut off close ties between the two regions for a long time. The formation of independent states in Central Asia helped to restore the previous interest in expanding cooperation between South and Central Asia .

The conflict in Afghanistan, which began more than 40 years ago, is still an obstacle to realizing its full potential. According to the UN classification, South Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. South Asia covers an area of 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup> (10% of Asia and 3% of the world's total land area), but its population is 40% of Asia's population and 22% of the world's population. Currently, Central Asian countries are actively cooperating with India and Pakistan within the SCO. In addition, India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the CIS and a Preferential Trade Agreement with Uzbekistan, which includes Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In 2020, the total trade volume of Central Asian countries with South Asian countries was 4.4 billion dollars, or 3.2 percent of their total foreign trade turnover (142.6 billion dollars). The

largest shares were taken by Kazakhstan (52.8%), Uzbekistan (31.2%) and Turkmenistan (10.4%). Afghanistan, India and Pakistan are the main trade partners of the Central Asian countries among the South Asian countries .

At the same time, the countries of Central Asia have the most active trade and economic cooperation with Afghanistan due to their geographical proximity, as well as the high dependence of the Afghan domestic market on imports of food, industrial goods and energy. A comparative analysis of the composition of exports of Central Asian countries and imports of South Asian countries by the Center for Economic Research and Reforms showed that the import of South Asian countries for the same types of products is about 560 billion dollars. This indicates that there is a large unused potential in mutual trade. . For example, in 2019, South Asian countries exported 8.6 billion dollars worth of chemical fertilizers, and Central Asian countries exported 384.3 million dollars worth of chemical fertilizers to the foreign market, of which only 32 million dollars worth of chemical fertilizers were exported to South Asian countries. dogs exported.

In 2019, Uzbekistan exported mineral fertilizers worth 135.9 million dollars, of which only 24.9 million dollars went to South Asian countries, mainly to Afghanistan - 24.1 million dollars, India - 0.4 million dollars and to Sri Lanka - 0.3 million dollars. million dollars. CERR's analysis showed that there is an unrealized potential for Central Asian countries to increase their exports of food products to South Asian markets, particularly wheat, fruits, vegetables, mainly legumes and nuts. Therefore, the expansion of trade and economic relations of the Central Asian countries in the southern direction is very promising for them.

Pakistan's strategic policy towards Central Asia has five broad objectives: trade and connectivity, strong political ties, investment and energy cooperation, defense and security, and people-to-people ties. Since independence, Central Asia has made many efforts to access Afghanistan due to the precarious security situation; this plan did not work out. While changes are taking place in Afghanistan, Islamabad sees a ray of hope for safe

access to Central Asian countries.

On the other hand, Pakistan is the shortest, easiest and most economical connection to the Arabian Sea for the Central Asian countries and especially for Uzbekistan. Islamabad is ready to help Central Asian countries in sea trade. Similarly, Uzbekistan and Pakistan can participate in various fields, including trade, tourism, education, health and energy projects.

In addition, Pakistan's focus on geoeconomics can strengthen Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations. At the same time, to this end, peace in the region, particularly in Afghanistan, is essential for any trade, investment and communication initiatives. Similarly, China's Belt and Road Initiative is supposed to connect Pakistan to Central Asia and beyond, bringing the two countries closer together.

The main principles of Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan include strengthening people-to-people ties, deepening trade and transit relations, implementing joint communication and energy projects to strengthen economic integration, working together to establish peace in Afghanistan, non-interference in internal affairs, etc. to prevent the respective territories from being used against each other. Establishing close cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority of Pakistan's foreign policy and an important component of our vision of a peaceful neighborhood. Pakistan continues its efforts to establish friendly and good neighborly relations with Afghanistan based on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

### **CONCLUSION**

Focusing on the current state and prospects of Uzbekistan-Pakistan relations, first of all, it should be noted that the bilateral cooperation between our countries is steadily strengthening in all areas. It is in the interests of Uzbekistan to comprehensively expand multifaceted mutually beneficial cooperation with Pakistan. Currently, it is at a new historical stage of its development. It is worth noting that the regular high-level dialogue held in recent years serves to further flourish bilateral relations and fill them with concrete content. The steady development of Uzbekistan-Pakistan relations not only meets the interests of

our countries, but also has a positive effect on the strengthening of security, development of trade-economic, communication and humanitarian relations in the entire region. Both Uzbekistan and Pakistan call on the international community to provide humanitarian aid to the country, taking into account the current political, economic and humanitarian situation. Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations have been developing recently, and cooperation between the two important countries of South Asia and Central Asia is increasing.

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