

Situating Gilgit-Baltistan in growing China Pakistan Interdependence: Post 9/11 Scenario

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Abstract

South Asia is the most pivotal region of the world which always endures with the geopolitical and geostrategic transformation of global politics and its repercussions. Due to the Post 9/11 geopolitical landscape, China-Pakistan has bound into undeniable rapport. Meanwhile the growing US-India strategic partnership enhanced the sense of insecurity in the region which compelled both nations become closer. Gilgit-Baltistan is the region which connects both states by land. This border region also has potential for conflict escalation between India and Pakistan because India claims Gilgit-Baltistan as her integral part and looks its strategic importance for shortest routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Anything happens in Gilgit-Baltistan regarding security concern will affect the Pakistan-China relationship. This paper is aimed at analyzing the significance of the geostrategic setting of GB in China and Pakistan relations.

Keywords: Terrorism, War on Terror, geopolitics, Karakoram, Silk Road, CPEC, Al-Qaida, Gateway, Interdependence

Introduction

Pakistan strategic importance is an undeniable fact but unfortunately this strategic importance has remained a strategic burden due to mismanagement of resources, myopic policies and lack of visionary leadership (Jalal, 2014). Enmeshed between the two most proactive, rapidly rising economic powers, i.e China and India, Pakistan her sound herself trapped in a Hobson choice.

The American factor and Pakistan's explicit disposition towards western backed alliances and security arrangement further aggravates the situation when seen in the context of the U.S-China global competition. The Indian factor given the blood stained history of partition is clearly a security threat and the relationship between the two states has remained acrimonious throughout the history since 1947. The rivalry with India pushed Pakistan to search for a security umbrella which still serves as a justification for its alliance with the American led coalitions and security arrangements. But Pakistan's political affair with the western bloc since her inception has remained tumult and by the ends of 6th decades a list of grievances and complaints and a sense of betrayal is all that has crystalized as an unpleasant memory in the history of bilateral relations. (SEATO, Cento, Afghan war, war on terror , most

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recent letter send by the chairman and Ranking member of the house foreign relations committee of U.S to secretary of State John Kerry sums up the American doubts and preventing perceptions about Pakistan.

In a similar tone, a U.S report in 2014 explicitly expressed its dissatisfaction and frustration over Pakistan's role as U.S ally and its efforts in combating terrorism. The report concludes "Afghan and Indian focused militants continue to operate from Pakistan territory to the determinant of Afghanistan and regional stability. Pakistan uses these proxy forces to hedge against the loss of influence in Afghanistan and to counts Indian's superior military. These relations run counter to Pakistan's public commitment to support Afghan- led reconciliation. Pakistan also seeks sufficient Pakhtoon representatives in Afghan government to prevent Pakhtoon discontent along the Afghanistan and Pakistan's border and limit India's influence.

Such complains and mistrust on Pakistan is not a new development in their bilateral relations. Serious reservations were raised back in 1978 by the U.S. administration over Pakistan's ambitions to get its hands on nuclear technology for military use. In meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador to U.S. Sahebzada Yaub Khan, U.S state department raised the issue of nuclear proliferation and wanted Pakistan to give assurance that it will not pursue nuclear technology which was politely but shrewdly turned down by the Ambassador. Shortly before their incident due to the introduction of Symington Amendments to the U.S. foreign assistance ACT 1961, U.S had to cut off its economic aid to Pakistan. After repeated reports of Pakistan's failure to convince U.S policy makers against the allegations and doubts of U.S intelligence agencies, the U.S publicly suspended and to Pakistan on 6 April 1979.

But these sanctions could not be imposed in true letter and spirit and U.S had to adopt a lenient stance on Pakistan's nuclear program because of the growing soviet interaction in Afghanistan. Pakistan was aware of this development and exploited the opportunity by rapidly advancing its nuclear program.

Pakistan and the US mistrust relations

America was trapped between two conflicts strategies cutting Pakistan's economic and amidst its attempts to get nuclear technology and to strengthen Pakistan and get its help in containing USSR in Afghanistan. America chose the latter and hence in pursuance of its vital national interests it did not take a hard stance on Pakistan's nuclear program. If U.S. was following a policy of preserving and perusing national self-interest, Pakistan also had its own axe to grind. The focus of Pakistan in aligning with U.S from the very beginning has been Indian centric and to avert hegemonic

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designs of India. Hence, Pakistan's strategy was to tap more resources so as to modernize and equip its army with sophisticated weapons in order to deter Indian threats. The centrality of Indian factor in Pakistan's foreign policy is an undeniable fact and its decision to assist U.S covert attempts to expel USSR from Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan asked the Americans for weapons that would be useful in a conflict with India, such as modern aircraft and heavy weapons not needed to protect its border with Afghanistan.

American engagement in Afghanistan

With withdrawal Soviet Union forces from Afghanistan, the country went into civil strife among different factions which was known as tribal war. In 1996, with the help of foreign assistance especially Pakistan, Taliban became a sole power defeating other Jihadi groups in Afghanistan. Due to the Taliban's socio-economic and gender policies, international community turned against the regime and considered it as harboring the terrorist which was creating threat to global security. Post cold era and the rise of Taliban regime in Afghanistan created impediment for Pakistan in international community. Except Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arab, rest of the world did not recognize the hardliner regime. Afghanistan became a major hub for Islamic militancy and the sanctuaries for Al-Qaida. Pakistan tried to minimize the tense while seeking the Taliban admission in United Nation as well as stressing normalization the ultra-conservative approaches of Islamic state. The 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers of World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in United State twisted the world political scenario. In this calamity 2,996 people died, and over 6000 people were injured. (Plummer 2013). On September 9, 2001, US President George W. Bush in his speech assured to his nation to fight against terrorism.

“America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism... Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened.” (Address to the Nation, 2001 by George W. Bush)

America blamed on Al-Qaeda and its leader Usama Bin Laden for the attack and demanded Taliban regime to hand over Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda leaders or would face a dire consequences. Taliban declined the demand to shut down the terrorist sanctuaries and handover the leaders. American president announced “war on terror” to eliminate and started the bombardment on Taliban sanctuaries in October 2001. Geo-strategic equilibrium of the region had changed. American attack on

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Afghanistan brought a dramatic change in Pakistan foreign policy. Before the September tragedy Pakistan was a staunch supporter for Taliban government in Afghanistan and one of the only countries of the world that established relations with this Islamic state. After the 9/11 American needed Pakistan’s coordination to fight war against terror. Pervez Musharraf, the then President of Pakistan, revealed the US intension about Pakistan cooperation. He interviewed CBS television: "The intelligence director told me that (Mr Armitage) said, 'Be prepared to be bombed. Be prepared to go back to the stone age'," (the Gurdaina ,2006)

This extreme pressure from US site, Pakistan welcomed the Old friend and participated War on Terror as a front state. Pakistan government took a U-turn on its old policy toward Taliban and offered the handshake to United State to bulldoze the Taliban government in Afghanistan. On 16th September 2001, President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf had pledged for support and requested the nation to stand with him. In this way Pakistan entered a new world game, providing full logistic support to America. War on terror brought huge change in the region especially in Pakistan. Terrorist attacks, militancy, religious extremism, attack on civilians, government officials, armed forced are observed. The impact of this war brought a countless destruction to the economy of Pakistan during the last several years.

Last 17 years Pakistan economy has suffered 126.79 billion US\$ which equal to Rs 10,762.64 billion

Years	Billion S	Billion Rs.	% Change
2001-02	2.67	163.90	-
2002-03	2.75	160.80	3.0
2003-04	2.93	168.80	6.7
2004-05	3.41	202.40	16.3
2005-06	3.99	238.60	16.9
2006-07	4.67	283.20	17.2
2007-08	6.94	434.10	48.6
2008-09	9.18	720.60	32.3
2009-10	13.56	1136.40	47.7
2010-11	23.77	2037.33	75.3
2011-12	11.98	1052.77	-49.6
2012-13	9.97	964.24	-16.8
2013-14	7.70	791.52	-22.8
2014-15	9.24	936.30	20.0
2015-16	6.49	675.76	-29.8
2016-17	5.47	572.60	-15.7
2017-18*	2.07	223.32	-62.2
Total	126.79	10,762.64	-

* Estimated on the basis of 8 months data

Source: MoF, Mo Interior M/o Foreign Affairs Joint Ministerial Group

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2017-18

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Pakistan played a vital role as a non NATO-ally. To counter the perception among people of Pakistan about US shifting nature with the end of her strategic relevance in the region, Collen Powel the US Secretary of State on April 2 in Berlin, explaining the US intention regarding Pakistan, he said, “Pakistan is our strongest ally in the fight against terrorism and we want to build up and strengthen its institution.” (Rizvi H.) The status of Major Non-NATO Ally did not endorse military or economic assistance to Pakistan but this term approved the importance of the relations of Pakistan for US. Condoleezza Rize, the US Secretary of state once in a visit to Islamabad assured to the people of Pakistan that “The US will be a friend for life.” (Sattar, 2017)

But with the passage of time the neologism ‘non-NATO ally and friend for life’ became withered. Once again the traditional attitude of US toward Pakistan appeared the surface. Differences arose between Pakistan and United Sate on Afghanistan policy when US expanded the war on terror in tribal areas of Pakistan. In 2004 ‘Drone’ attack started on Pakistan soil to target high profiles of Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements. It was believed that the Durand line region and FATA were the nucleus and safe reserves of Taliban militants. Due to the US pressure, Pakistan had to accept the demand to deploy the army on wester borders. This transformation of forces from Eastern border generated threats to security of Pakistan. During Obama regime US-Pakistan relations become deteriorated. In 2008 Pakistan had become part of the US’Afpak policy, in which Pakistan was treated as a single threat for insecurity with Afghanistan. The relations observed more worsened in 2011. On January 27, a youth in Lahore was killed by Raymond Davis that created a diplomatic wrangle between Pakistan and US. In May, the most wanted gentleman Osama bin Laden was killed by a secret CIA led “Operation Neptune Spear” near Pakistan Military Academy in Abbottabad. The most heinous event happened in 2011 was the US-led NATO airstrike opened fire at the Pakistan’s military check posts near Slalala, Afghanistan border, which killed 24 Pakistani forces. (Sattar, 2017) These events struck the relations into blows. Pakistan always remained a hankering for a longstanding relationship with United States but proved futile. According to Moeed Yusuf, the associate vice president at the Asia Center at the United States Institute of Peace, ‘the relations between US-Pakistan and their interests were built on false and negative paradigms. In historical perspective Pakistan and US had become close on the security concern pacts or agreements rather than based on humanitarian developments in the field of education or trades etc. So when the strategic interests and values end the leverage of relations do not remain elongation. (Interview to GeoTv)

The national interests of both countries have contradictory in its nature. In 1950s, the relations developed on security base-imperatives; South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). For US the main objectives of these pacts were to curtail the expansion of communism while Pakistan wanted the leverage of this agreement to secure its external security threats from India as well as to strengthen its flagging economic conditions. This looming feature has observed in Afghanistan. In 1980s, with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, United States unwrapped its door and helped Pakistan in opened-handed. Nevertheless, the relations had collapsed after USSR fall in 1990s.

India US Relations and their role in Afghanistan

Today, the relations between Pak-US once again became a stain. The US strategic interest shifted and saw India as a natural friend. This tilted US strategic policy reduced the importance of Pakistan in Afghanistan. Pakistan was blamed a double game and deception by new US-administration and demanded to do more for eradication the extremism and terrorism in its soil. Pakistan used to see Afghanistan as a strategic depth for its national security concern but the things have been changed in Afghanistan the post 9/11 scenario. India, the natural rival, is ready to play a major role in Afghanistan. India has been developing a significant strategic soft role to perceive its national interest. She is busy to develop a soft Indian image among Afghanis while carrying on multi- dimensional projects in Afghanistan. India have been spent billions dollars for socio-economic, civil and military infrastructures in Afghanistan. India has spent 710 crore INR (US-115\$) to construct the new building of Parliament for war-torn nations. She invested US\$100 million in Southern Iranian port ‘Chabahar’ which provides access to Sea port for the landlocked country. Both countries have signed a Strategic Pact in 2011. The pro-Indian Afghani government had permitted to open its consulates nears the borders of Pakistan. These developments in Afghanistan are considered real threats by Pakistani policy makers. India has enabled to encircle Pakistan by both ends. In this stage US role in the region added insult in jury and disappointed for Pakistan. Notwithstanding, to appreciate the role of Pakistan and her indefinable cooperation in war against terrorism, which resulted socio-economic and political instability as well as hundreds casualties of Pakistanis people, US blamed on Pakistan for sponsorship for militancy and terrorism and see India a major players in regional context and a true strategic partner. In 2006, US granted a special status to India and signed the ‘‘123 Agreement’’ which is known ‘US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement’. On the other hand, Pakistan had rundown from

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the bonanza of nuclear deal. US ignored the demand of Pakistan for equal status with India.

In the presidential election 2016, political administration changed in America. Republican nominated candidate” Donald Trump won the election and seized the Oval Office for next four-year terms. The Pak-US relations have become odder in his regime. The military and security aids reduced due his stern attitude towards Pakistan. In first January 2018, he gave Pakistan a New Year gift as labeling the title to Pakistan a ‘deceit’ and ‘safe haven for terrorist’ state. He tweeted;

“The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!” (BBC , January,1 2018)

The new transformation in international political scenario, US policy makers dignified India as a natural strategic partner for promotion peace and stability and the guardian her strategic imperatives in the regions. Both countries have mutual interests especially regarding Chinese growing power. The growing geostrategic cooperation helped to booster in various sectors. India and US bilateral trade crossed more than US\$ 100 billion. New Delhi and Washington are believed to blister it a new milestones. The US administration showed its support for India to admit the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which will deliver the remunerations to India for nuclear trade. The Trumps administration proved an Aladdin lamp for India due to his antagonistic campaign against Pakistan and China. Both states entered different strategic and defense deals like the Civil Nuclear agreement, the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP), Defence Cooperation Framework Agreement, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communication Interoperability, and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). (Iqbal, 2016)

Pakistan Choice: China a trusted Guardian

The recent development in the geo-strategic political landscape both Indo-US brought closer. This radical transformation is characterized due to the common interest in the region. India got more critical position in American South Asian’s foreign policy. Afghanistan has become Indian’s handier friend to safeguard her interests in the harbor of Central Asian region and Middle East. Pakistan shares its longer border (2900 Kilometers) with India. The relations between both countries have been remained hostile and unfavorable. Kashmir Issue triggered undying hostility between

Pakistan and India which molded mistrust, conflict, wars, and skirmishes in the regions. India blamed on Pakistan for sponsored militancy and cross border terrorism in Indian occupied Kashmir and other region. After ‘the 26/11 Bumbai attack’ in 2008 and its lingering circumstances had been experienced a colossal devastation to the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. India fostered a foul-mouthed and intimidations while deploying her army on Pakistan’s Easter border. Both nuclear states once again stationed on bordered which created sever security threat for Pakistan existence. This sensation of insecurity and anxiety, Pakistan has only a Hobson’s choice of China as for its security custodian. Chinses sponsored Pakistan China Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is a wakeup call for India and the US. This projection has multiple economic and strategic values which are contradicted the strategic interest of the US-India in the regions. (Khan, 2017)

The relations between Pak-China have proved a long-lasting friend for Pakistan. The geopolitical landscape of global politics after the 9/11 attacks which fetched up massive obstacles and hurdles for Pakistan’s foreign policy as well as her international situations. Among all its neighboring states, Pakistan has experienced a very smooth, cordial and “an all-weather friendship” with Chinese Republic, the state bordering the Region of Pakistan’s Gilgit Baltistan region. Pakistan has reciprocated in the like manner and the mutual friendship has been labeled as, “stronger than steel, higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans and sweeter than honey” It is worth mentioning that the region which serves as the only gate way to china, the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan is no less than a political puzzle.”

“Pakistan considers it as a part of Kashmir dispute and is administering the region till the solution of Kashmir issue as per U.N resolutions on Kashmir. On the other hand India has showed serious concerns over the future of region and claims it as her part. Indian stakes in the region are very high because of her dubious relations with china who has been involved in various developmental projects in that region. India perceives a threat of encirclement by China in the region and hence considers Gilgit-Baltistan as an important factor when it comes to regional and global power rivalry. Besides this India and china have emerged as major trade partners in the region, if the Gilgit puzzle turns in Indian favors in any way, it would be the most desirable scenario for India.” While such a turnout would deprive direct Sino-Pak contact, grudging Pakistan of any military support from her most trusted friend in case of war against India, it will naturally bring china and India more closer, enhancing mutual trade and cooperation. New avenues of trade towards the Central Asian region are an incentive related with Gilgit-Baltistan that equally attracts India, Pakistan and China.”

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Gilgit-Baltistan; Gateway for Pakistan and China

Geography

Geography reflects the landscape of an area, its topographical features and the dwellers of that region. Geography has potential to divert the strategy and policy of a nation. The location of Gilgit-Baltistan and her geographical contiguity with emerging nation gives her a unique place in the world. Gilgit-Baltistan covers an area of 28,174 miles (72,971 square kilometers). The population of this region are estimated around two million (2016). Chitral and Kohistan the region of Khyber Pakhtoon-Khaw (KPK) province borders with Gilgit-Baltistan from western side. It shares Xingjian the autonomous western province of China in the Northeast, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor to the North West. Indian occupied Kashmir is situated of its east and southeast border meanwhile, the Pakistan's administration Azad Kashmir touches it from southwest boundary. In a broader perspective it is the vicinity of China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States. A narrow strip, approximately 16-60 kilometers, which is known 'Wakhan belt' is the main hinders to direct geographical connection with Tajikistan. (Dani, 2001)

Gilgit-Baltistan: A Political Puzzle

“Politically, this region remained under the rules of the various Empires, kingdoms, Rajas, Maqpoon. In the medieval history Gilgit-Baltistan went under the rules of local dynasties and whole region was divided among various ruling families. In 1840s Dogra of Jammu invaded in Gilgit-Baltistan and defeated the local rulers and sized power. In 1870s, during Great Game, Gilgit-Baltistan went under the consideration of British. To curtail the Russian's expansion, British decided to establish Gilgit Agency in 1877 and reestablish in 1889.” In March 1935 the control of Gilgit was given to British as a 60 year lease by Maharaja Hari Sing. In 1947, the political scenario had been changed in Sub-continent. British India had divided into two independent states; Pakistan and India, while the 562 princely states (Native States) had been given choice to join either with Pakistan or India or remained autonomous by the Indian Independence Act 1947. The Princely State of Kashmir remained outside from this partition but later through 'the Instrument of Accession' on 26, October 1947, Maharaja Hari Sing agreed to accede to India which was against the will of its people. From 1947 to present Kashmir has made the bone of contention between Pakistan and India. After defeated the Dogra, the People of GB decided to affiliate with Pakistan but due the Kashmir issue this region remained unconstitutional and disputed. . (Madhok, 1992)

”During the Partition Gilgit –Baltistan was ruled by Dogra rule of Jammu. “The Local peoples with the help of Gilgit Scout defeated Dogra armies and seized the power under the local commander and declared as an Independence state in November 1st, 1947 and Raja Shah Raees Khan was made its first president but this newly born state could not maintain its status because after sixteen days of its independence it was afflicted with Pakistan by local rulers and Mirs on the desire of the people in November 16, 1947. Pakistan had sent an administrative officer Sardar Alam Khan as a political agent and representative of Pakistan who captured the power and declared the Frontier Crime Rules (FCR) law in Gilgit Baltistan. For affiliation many actors played important roles. This affiliation was happened in three stages: Firstly the local new ruler and its administration along with commander of Gilgit scout connected the leadership of Pakistan and requested to send representative of Pakistan to take over the government.” Lt. Col.(Retd) Sikandar Khan Baloch (2004) mentions in his book” “ In the wonderland of Asia Gilgit and Baltistan” about the affiliation process as;

“A military cabinet was set up which was headed by a civilian, Raja Shah Rais Khan as a caretaker president. It was purely a temporary arrangement before the Government of Pakistan could take charge. A special messenger was rushed to Pakistan to apprise the government of the situation and with request to send her representative as soon as possible”

Further he mentions that

“Back at Gilgit, repeated telegrams was sent to the Govt. of Pakistan to send her representative. On 16 November, a Harvard landed near Gilgit, out o which emerged the first Pakistani Political Agent, Sardar Mohammad Alam Khan. Amidst cheers and slogans of Pakistan Zindabad, he was escorted to the Agency House, where he was handed over keys of the treasury. He took over the civil administration.” (Baloch, 2004)

And the second and third level of affiliation took place when the rulers of princely states of Hunza, Nigar, and people representatives of Dareel, Tangair , and Chilas decided to annex their territories with Pakistan. In 2009, Gilgit-Baltistan was given a new political setup by Pakistan People Party government which introduced provincial setup with limited power. Gilgit-Baltistan: Key for Kashmir Plebiscite

Kashmir is the bonne of contention in South Asia. After partition the First Indo-Pakistan war (1947-48) was fought over Kashmir which made the situation more perilous. On 1st January, India took the Kashmir issue to the Security Council for discussion. She filed a complaint against Pakistan for intervention in Kashmir and

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requests the Council to stop Pakistan giving assistance to the intruders. On 13 August 1948, UNCIP approved a triangular suggestion for solution providing “a ceasefire order by India and Pakistan, a truce agreement, and plebiscite” (Sattar, 2016)

Although Gilgit-Baltistan got freedom from Dogra Raj but the region put in straw under the Kashmir issue. Pakistani policy makers and statesmen thought that Gilgit-Baltistan has not only important geographical position but also has a pivotal role in the settlement of Kashmir if the plebiscite would happen because majority population of Gilgit-Baltistan are Muslims and a staunch supporters of Pakistan would be a key player in the plebiscite as it was order by the United Nation resolution.

Trade and Link with China and Central Asian States

Gilgit-Baltistan has imperative value for Pakistan to set up its relations with India and Central Asian States. The relations of China and Pakistan had started in 1960s after the border agreement of Pakistan and China in 1963. The relations become stronger when both nations constructed a friendship road: Karakoram Highway, in 1970s It opened new opportunities for both countries. In recent years, China and Pakistan converted this road and economic corridor and given the appellation “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” which is considered a game changer for both nations especially for Pakistan. All these activities are possible due to Gilgit-Baltistan because this region serves as host to Chinese import and export and provides easiest road of connection to both nations.

Energy and Water Resources

“Pakistan’s economy is much depended on agricultural because agriculture is the main source of income and for agricultural development water is pivotal element of it. In this regard Gilgit-Baltistan has possessed vast fresh water as well as glaciers, mountains, peaks, lakes and huge waters resources. The Indus River which is called the backbone in the growth of Pakistan agriculture and food productions and this mighty river passed from Gilgit-Baltistan where many tributories and stream like Shyok River, Shigar River, Gilgit River, and Hunza-Nigar River added it contribution to give well water to the plain of Punjab and Sindh. Gilgit-Baltistan is blessed of five of the “eight-thousanders” and to more than 101 Peaks over 7000 meters, 5100 Glaciers, 2200 Sq. miles of Snow Covered Areas.” (Baloch n.d)

Gilgit-Baltistan: Pakistan's Energy Security

“Pakistan is facing severe energy crises since 2000s. The demand of energy is rapidly increasing every year especially during summer the gap of demand and production of energy has increased. There are five to six thousands short fall have been recorded in the demand and production in every year. These crises brought the economic decline in Pakistan because many foreign investors transformed their investments from Pakistan which put negative impacts on the economic growth of Pakistan. Gilgit-Baltistan has a huge potential for hydropower generation. The Diamer Basha Dam and Bonji, Stak Dam, and other power projects will be helpful to eliminate the power crises from Pakistan. It is believed that Gilgit-Baltistan is very important for Pakistan's energy security.”

Gilgit-Baltistan: Pakistan' Security Importance

The unique geography of Gilgit-Baltistan and its natural boundary of highest peaks and mountain ranges secure the northern frontier of Pakistan. Militarily this region is very vital because its geographical evaluation and setting give a supreme position during war. As the neighbor of the emerging superpowers China and India and Central Asian countries this region has military significance for Pakistan. Northern Light Infantry (NLI) regiment is an important and bravest regiment in Pakistan Army based in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Tourism as a beneficial factor in National Economic Development

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is the most amazing region of Pakistan in terms of its topography, scenic exquisiteness and amusing culture. Here three great mountain ranges of the world: the Karakorum, the Hindukush and the Himalayas meet. World's second highest peak K-2 and some of the largest glaciers outside Polar Regions are also located in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Gilgit-Baltistan: Gateway for Afghanistan and CARs

India geo-strategic and economic interest in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) have reshaped in recent decades. The geo-political position of world scenario has been rapidly changing since 9/11 tragedy. China and India's rising as an economic giant's transformed world into multi-polar characteristic. The geographical position of Pakistan is a great disadvantage for India to secure its national interest in Central Asia. Pakistan is hindrance direct access to Afghanistan. Afghanistan and CARs are landlocked countries, mostly depends on third one for their economic activities. Same course for India, it depends either Iran or Pakistan to access central Asia. The relations

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between Pakistan and India have been remained hostile since their independence. Sino-India war in 1962 on border issue brought Pakistan and China proximity that undermined the strategic interest of India in Gilgit-Baltistan. In history many Central Asian or western Asian invasions and influences took place in India through this region. The Sino-Pak nexus and China unabating diplomatic, logistic, military, financial and physical assistants to Pakistan has made the situation more deteriorating for Indian security point of views because it facilitated Pakistan to firm its grip over Gilgit-Baltistan the strategic northern frontier. As this strategic frontline remained a meeting place during 19th century in the shadow of the Great Game between British and Russia. During Dogra Raj , British policy makers took special consideration on this region and used the topography of this highland for its strategic motivation with monitoring the Russian movements in Central Asia and the adjoining areas; Pamir, Wakhan and Xingjian region. For this purpose British took control for 60 years leased of Gilgit-Baltistan from Dogra Raj. The British influxes in this region had extended its strategic position as E.E. Knight (1905) mentioned the importance of Gilgit in his famous book ‘Where Three Empires Meet’ that

“...the value of Gilgit to the Kashmir State, commanding as it does the Indus Valley and the mouth of the Hunza River, and so holding in check the unruly tribes in either side. Gilgit, the northernmost outpost of the Indian Empire covers all the passes over the Hindoo Koosh, from the easternmost one —the Shimshal, to those at the head of the Yasin River. Possession of the Gilgit valley affords a direct communication through Kashmir territory to the protected state of Chitral”.

The trade value between Central Asia and India reached its height during 1920-21, but this flow could not maintain due to the communist regime’s annexation of Xinjiang and closed the trade routes. Subsequent events such as people movement against Dogras, affiliation with Pakistan, and Sino-Pakistan diplomatic relations made the Indo-Central Asian connection impassible. So the government of India and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru were aware the geo-political position of Gilgit-Baltistan as only India’s overland corridor to Central Asia. On 20th August 1948, the first Indian Prime Minister Nehru wrote a letter to United Nation Commission for India and Pakistan, which had authority to ceasefire covenant, proclaiming the ownership of Kashmir over Gilgit-Baltistan, He wrote:

“The authority of Govt. of J&K over the sparsely populated and mountainous region of the J&K State has not been challenged or disturbed, except by roving bands of hostiles or in some places like Skardu. The Commission resolution, as you agreed in

the course of our interview on the 18th, does not deal with the problem of administration or defense in this large area. We desire that, after Pakistan troops and irregulars have withdrawn from the territory, the responsibility for the administration of the evacuated areas should revert to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and that for defense to us. We must be free to maintain garrisons at selected points in this area for the dual purpose of preventing the incursion of tribesmen, who obey no authority and to guard the main trade routes from the state into Central Asia.” (Report of UNCIP, 1948).

The Pakistan-China relations

“Sino-Pakistan relationship is labeled as “deeper than the ocean, higher than the Himalaya and sweeter than honey” this attractive metaphor extensively use in Pakistan. Pakistan was the first Muslim and third non-communist country, recognized the People Republic of China than established bilateral relations, and later on Sino-India war 1962 and Pak-Sino Border Agreement 1963 provided a stalwart foundation.

India has emerged as economic power in South Asia. Its hegemonic attitudes and historical antagonistic relations with China and Pakistan have further strengthened Pakistan and China’s friendships. To maintain a balance of power in South Asian region, China has assisted Pakistan’s conventional and non-conventional weapons, warfare arsenals, and military apparatus, since last fifty years. Pakistan.(Curtis& Scissors, 2012). China needs more energy and resource to sustain it economic growth. China’s energy most depends on Middle East states. For this purpose China launch ‘One Belt One Road Initiative’ to revival the old silk routes. China Pakistan economic corridor CPEC) is an essential part of this great strategy to link China western region from maritime through Gawadar port.” This will help China to boost up its economic activities and short trade road for International market. To understand the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) importance for China it is vital to know how China secures its interest in Pakistan because Sino Pakistan trade activities are happened through GB. Sino-Pakistan agreement 1963 was turning point to reshape the bilateral relations which bestowed China to access Karakoram. India reserved about this settlement because it thought that China illegally took large portion of Gilgit Baltistan region into her administration. (Kumar, 2006)

Karakoram Highway

“The Road and highways is indispensable for socio-economic development for a nation. The remote, rugged terrain, high mountain region of Gilgit-Baltistan was a gateway for ancient civilization. Despite being of the bull’s eye of the world greatest

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giants most times this region remained socio- politico-economic and culturally cut from of the world and thanks to the great game in 19th century this secluded region got recognized.(Dani,1995) After Sino-Pakistan border agreement in 1963 which delimited the frontier dispute along the Gilgit-Baltistan and the autonomous region of China Xingjian province, both countries took impressive strides in improving the relations constructing the “Friendship Highway” which connected China and Pakistan through Gilgit-Baltistan. (Sering, 2012) This brought a great socio economic and cultural revelation in this remote and retrograde area, and opened the door of opulence and prosperity to this mountainous locked nation. The Karakorum Highway (KKH), also refers world eight wonder, starts north end from Kashgar, Xingjian Uyghur Autonomous Region China and crossing Khunjarab Pass (4, 733 meters high) enters Gilgit-Baltistan (Hunza, Gilgit, Chilas) then Thakot, Mansehra, Abbottabad to south-end Havellian (100 Kilometer from Islamabad) Pakistan .” This mighty highway was started to build in 1959, completed and opened for public to the since 1978 and its length is about 1300 Kilometers (800 miles) , Pakistan sharing 887km while Chinese part is 413km. more than 2500 Pakistani and Chinese Engineers, mechanics , road-builders and workers participated to breached this mountainous steel wall which took over a period of ten years for its accomplishment but this wonderful and gigantic construction gave a number of bereavements and heavy casualties of both sides , Pakistan lost about 810 while around 200 Chinese lost their lives.(Kreutzmann, 1991) On the eve of Karakoram Highway inauguration in June 1978, the Chinese’s Deputy Prime Minister Keng Piao said in his speech that:

“It has always been our view that the presence in the South Asia sub-continent of a strong Pakistan firmly adhering to a policy of independence is an important factor for peace and stability in this region... Our Pakistani friends may rest assured that whatever the vicissitudes on the international arena, the Chinese Government and people will remain your reliable friends in your just struggle to build and defend your country.” (Singh, 1981)

When the KKH construction started in 1960s, India showed strong protest accusing China of “Military expansionism” and Pakistan for “Causing threat to the peace and tranquility of the region. Earlier Indians had viewed that this road had possessed a serious military and security threat to India and thought any development of this region would led Chinse involvement in its region. Indian Minister for External Affairs, Dinesh Singh, expressed such an apprehension in Loc Sabha. He said:

“This road will help to extend the Chinese road network in the Tibet-Sinkiang (Xinyang) area into Northern Kashmir. It will give easier access to Chinese troops from the areas under the illegal occupation of China in North-East Kashmir and from Tibet into the Gilgit area in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which lies to the north of the cease-fire line. The military significance of this road is, therefore, self-evident.” (Singh, 1981)

For economic and commercial as well as security perspectives this road network facilitated to raise the living standard of two far-flung and remote regions of China and Pakistan, it also opened a new trading mart for countries. The Karakoram Highway provided China a short and safe road to the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and African continents. It also helped to diminish the turmoil situation in western province Xingjian. The linkage with China through KKH facilitated Pakistan to protect its political, strategic and security interests and enabled to expand its internal communication and transportation linkages to far-flung areas. It has been proved that Central Asian Republics have a 236 trillion cubic feet gas reserves and 200 billion barrels oil reserves and these landlocked countries need road and infrastructures to expand its economy. Karakoram highway is safest and short route ready to serve for this purpose. (Sereng, 2012)

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Brunner (2013) defines “Economic corridors connect economic agents along a defined geography. They provide important connections between economic nodes or hubs that are usually centered in urban landscapes.” The CPEC is the most important part of the Belt and Road initiatives. Through different channels like roads, railways, highway pipeline, it connects Chinese autonomous territory with the Gawadar port which provides China direct access to Arabian Sea. Balochistan shares its western border with Iran where India invested more than US\$100 million in the construction of Iranian Chabahar port. Chinese government invested more than sixty million in this project which has helped to promote economic, bilateral trade, cultural exchange between Pakistan and China as it has potential to boost up the connectivity, regional harmony and stability. In 21st century, for the growing Chinese strategic and economic ambitions this economic corridor provides opportunities to shortest connection to the deep water port in the Arabian sea which makes easy the interaction with the energy rich region of Arabian peninsula, Middle East. “This economic corridor crosses snow-capped highlands, narrow strip valleys, lush green fields, desert, dry hills while to reach its destination it passes around 2,700Km long through the terrain of Pakistan. CPEC is not just a route for container or transit points but it is a

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collective name for several developmental ventures that enhance the regional cooperation among stakeholders.” Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway of this economic corridor. Thus this mountainous region has vital for both countries.

Conclusion

The heinous 9/11 accidents transformed the geopolitical landscape of global politics. In this attack three thousand people lost their lives and six thousand injured. Al-Qaida and its leader Osama bin Laden was labeled as the main culprit and mastermind of attack. In October 2001 America attacked on Afghanistan to dismantle the power of terrorist activities of Al-Qaida and its safe sanctuaries in the region, which changed the strategic and regional politics as well. Pakistan the immediate neighbor was called for cooperation in war against terror. Meanwhile, Pakistan was the sole country who not only recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan but also trying to get admission in UN membership. With the pressure of International community and geostrategic paradigm, Pakistan adopted a U-turn Policy against Taliban, joining the American-sponsored war against Terror as a major-Non NATO ally. After the collapse of Taliban government in Afghanistan, a new administration was installed by American which proved antagonistic for Pakistan. The new governments led by Hamid Karzai inclined toward Indian, gave her major role to develop her strategic interest in Afghanistan. India is playing a soft role in Afghanistan, making roads, infrastructure, uplifting socio-economic conditions of the war-torn nations. These assistances and bending approach are the real threat for Pakistan security. The situation has been become more deteriorated for Pakistan because United State shifted its strategic setting in the region and now she looks India as a key player. Indo-US relations reached on its pinnacles. Both signed economic and strategic and defense agreements to safeguard the mutual interest in the region. Pakistan has lost its strategic in-depth in Afghanistan. Now policy makers in Pakistan look China as major guardian for its politico-economic assistant. Historically both countries showed positive gestures in their cooperation. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered a game changer in the region. It will serve China as a shortest land route to access the Arabian Sea while for Pakistan’s perspective; CPEC will be helpful for her socio-economic developments. Gilgit-Baltistan is situated on the north-eastern border of Pakistan, which serves as a gateway for Pak-China interactions. The only economic corridor enters China through Gilgit-Baltistan. Notwithstanding, political ambiguous state of Gilgit-Baltistan is the major threat for national interest of Pakistan because the region remained an imbroglio since its deliverance with Kashmir dispute.

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This longstanding interval for rights has created a sense of deprivation among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Now it is a staunch need to give the due share to people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Government should take step to solve the longstanding issue of their political status according to their demand. Until the resolution of Kashmir problem, an autonomous status or interim-representation in Pakistan's parliaments are the best options for Gilgit-Baltistan political ambiguous status.

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