

## PAKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN REGION: CHALLENGES, HURDLES AND A WAY FORWARD

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### ABSTRACT

Having better relations with Central Asian Region is an urgent need of Pakistan because Pakistan requires energy resources which are found in Central Asian Region in huge quantity. Central Asian Region also wants Pakistan because the countries of Central Asian Region are landlocked and Pakistan can provide them access to sea ports for conducting business with the whole world through seas and oceans. Particularly, Pakistan can provide this facility to Central Asian Region through Karachi Port and Gwadar Port. Central Asian Region is blessed immensely with energy resources. The energy requirement of Pakistan can be fulfilled by Central Asian Region very easily. Both Central Asian Region and Pakistan can revolutionize business and trade in the whole of Asia and can benefit and support each other tremendously. Since Pakistan does not have any border connections with Central Asian Region and has to pass through Afghanistan. The unstable Afghanistan is one of the major hurdles for Pakistan to have access to Central Asian Region. The other hurdles for Pakistan include Indian negative competition and dirty politics, American involvement, Russian and Chinese influence, Iran's role, authoritarian regimes in Central Asian Region and ill organized policy making by Pakistani Policy makers. US is giving a lot of financial aid for reformations in politics but this aid is being used by Central Asian authoritarian regimes to suppress their masses. They do not use that financial resources for improving their state institutions and to alleviate poverty from their societies. There is a fear that Afghan Taliban will enter the Central Asian Region and destroy the peace of the region. All the external forces that are competing for supremacy must think of positive competition and cooperation and this attitude will benefit the Central Asian Region and the whole of Asia and the rest of international community.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Central Asian region, Afghanistan, resources, America, China, Russia, landlocked, authoritarian regime, sea-ports, trade

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Five Central Asian Regional States (Central Asian Region) with majority of Muslim population were liberated from the Communist Soviet Union after its collapse. This Region has always been a focus of attention due to its geographical location, cultural and ethnic diversity and sources of conflicts. A great game was played by British and Russian Empires in this Region for a whole of 19th Century and

ultimately the great game was won by the Russian Empire. The disintegration of Soviet Union, independence of several countries of Central Asian Region and discovery of great reserves of natural resources has started a new great game between regional countries and several international powers. Several countries of Asia, Europe and the Americas. American involvement in Central Asia Region and particularly in

Afghanistan is going to have very serious implications for Central Asian Region and its neighboring countries and USA is going to face a very strong reaction from these countries and their neighbors in the Region of South Asia, Central Asia and Far East Asia. Soviet Union has had enormous powers in the world in the past, but the role of present Russia in the region and its former states of Central Asian Region is not going to be less important in anyway in future as well. That is because Russia has geographical proximity and its vested interests in the Region so it is going to have a lot of power and is going to play a significant role in the Region in future as well. China is also bordering with Central Asian Region and has been able to make a place for itself in the Central Asian Region and is going to play a very important role in Central Asian Region in future. Central Asian Region is joining hands with China to fight against ethnic divisions and intolerance and Talibanization i.e. religious extremism and terrorism. (Jaffry Q. R. 2016).

A newly born region Central Asian Region is very important in the eyes of the international community due to its richness in natural and oil and gas resources and it has become especially extremely important for countries like Pakistan which do not have energy resources and needs these resources for its industries etc. The geostrategic, geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the region is very important for the whole of Asia and Europe and rest of the world. The region is going to be a very important focal point for internal business and trade in the near future. In addition to the great reserves of energy resources, the region is also going to be a great tourist attraction for the whole world.

Pakistan needs to be very vigilant for policy making for developing relations with Central Asian Region to have sound and permanent deep trade, business, political and military relations with Central Asian Region. The region of Central Asian Region is going to be a great battle field for competitions, conflicts and possible wars to gain supremacy, have political, military and economic hegemony and to grab natural resources of the Central Asian Region. The region can be provider of cheap energy resources to the Asia and several other regions of the world.

Although Pakistan has very close historical and religious and to some extent cultural relation with Central Asian Region but especially after the independence of the Central Asian Region from the Soviet Communist Rule has not been able to make much progress in developing political, economic and military relations with Central Asian Region. Pakistan can be very beneficial and useful for Central Asian Region because Central Asian Region is a landlocked region, it does not have any access to the sea ports for conducting business and trade with rest of the world and Pakistan can provide shortest route to have access to Pakistan's Karachi Port and newly constructed Gwadar Port in Baluchistan. Pakistan's relations with Central Asian Region are not progressing mainly due to war in Afghanistan because this country comes in the way of Pakistan when it wants to reach Central Asian Region. The NEW GEAT GAME between the major world powers going on in Central Asian Region is also creating problems for Pakistan to improving relations with Central Asian Region. Then there is laziness and lack of vigilance on the part of Pakistani Policy makers which is causing delay in progress in developing relations with Central Asian Region. So due to these factors, Pakistan is not able to benefit from the energy resources of the Central Asian Region. While analyzing the laziness and attitudes of the Pakistani policy makers, ||

their non-ness, Shagufta Bano and Mohammed Sohail have written that: "However, Tareen laments "directionless government of Pakistan" for "equally directionless and haphazard policy" towards Central Asia which is "against all reasons". He severely criticizes American immoderation in our policy making and becoming a "proxy state of America". He asks, "How can we realistically hope for a trade link with Central Asia when the easiest, the most feasible and economically viable route passes through Afghanistan is blocked". Pakistan is right now entwined in severe energy crisis but according to Tareen she is for the "second time n history losing a golden opportunity next door and lagging a country thousands of miles away to bail us out." This critical situation is being faced by us, again due to American indulgence. Tareen

says, "We have allowed Americans into our electricity and power would be far more expensive per unit than which can be made through our local hydel power projects or for that matter by improving power from Tajikistan which according to experts would not only have been feasible but cheaper than locally generated electricity". The landlocked Central Asian Region is also in horrific need to get an access to the out world. For this reason, Pakistan may be proved to be one of the finest options due to its specific geographic location. Pakistan is located at the junction of South Asia and Middle East, with a substantial exit to the Arabian Sea". (Bano, Shagufa and Sohail, Mohammed (2014).

Central Asian Region gained too much importance in the eyes of world community right after the independence of this region from the Communist Soviet Union. The main factor of importance of the region was its richness in natural resources and oil and gas reserves. According to Dr. Qasim Raza Jaffry:

"Independence after over 80 years of direct rule by Moscow has created a strategic power vacuum in the Central Asian Region that has unleashed rivalries among large neighbours and distant superpowers. A multitude of countries has shown interest in the Central Asian Region. They include Russia, China, US, EU, Japan, Israel, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India. With the end of Cold War, geostrategic environment had undergone major twists and turns. The impact of these changes influenced the interstate relations of all the countries of the world in general and Central Asian Region in particular. Eastern European countries broke their alliance with Soviet Union which was itself dissolved once Central Asian Region gained independence in 1991. US has been recognized as the only superpower in post-cold war scenario. Historians, who warned once about America's decline, now gush about an age an age of unrivalled dominance." (Jaffry, Q.R. 2016)

All kinds of dirty and clean, healthy and unhealthy politics is going on among the competing countries and regions who want political, economic, cultural and military supremacy and hegemony in the Central Asian States.

The competing powers in the Central Asian Region are pressurized and have increased their military presence in the Central Asian Region. Imperialism increased in the Region for grabbing more and more lands and geographical territories between 17th and 19th centuries. A similar geopolitics and rivalries have reemerged between the international powers. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and American invasion of Afghanistan, the American attention has been diverted from Russian Communism to the militant Islam in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asian Regional States. So now the industrialized West with highly sophisticated technology has to deal with militant Islam in South and Central Asia. The Central Asian States were quite worried with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan with the support of Pakistan and played the role of frontline states in the American war on terror against Afghanistan and all the Central Asian States provide air and military bases to the American forces for carrying out air strikes against Taliban forces. (Jaffry, Q.R. 2016).

As far as the new great game in Central Asian Regional State is concerned, this time the only difference is that this time the competitors and players in the new great game are many as compared to the past. Therefore, this research evaluates the historical background and current situation and progress in the relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Region, the prospects and problems faced in this regard, the problems being created by international powers for improving these relations and the economic and political impacts and implications of improving relations between the two sides. The study will focus on the importance of Central Asia Regional States as a great source of energy resources and the need of Pakistan for these resources.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Why international community and neighboring countries have major interests and concerns in Central Asian Region?

**RQ2:** What are the major political, economic and military interests of Pakistan in Central Asian Region?

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- To study the challenges, hurdles and issues involved in obstructing the relations between Pakistan and Central Asian States.
- To study the role of other neighboring countries between Pakistan and Central Asian Region, the conflicts and cooperation by them.
- To make recommendations for improvement in the relations between Pakistan and Central Asian States.
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### 1.3 Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative type with historical, descriptive and analytical research method. A convenient approach is adopted according to the requirement of research work. The data collection was made through Government documents, observational discussions etc. Secondary sources include data collection from books, journals, articles, newspapers, internet search, magazines, research papers and dissertations.

#### 1. Geostrategic importance of Central Asia for Pakistan and Rest of the World:

Central Asian Region has become extremely important for not only Pakistan but also for rest of the world due to its geo-strategic location and natural resources. It is located at the junction of three great civilizations i.e. Islamic, Christian and Buddhist. It is also a junction for Europe, Middle East, Asia and Far East Asia. According to Hussain: "Geo-Strategic Significance of Central Asia to trace the strategic rivalry between India and Pakistan over Pakistan, one need to first understand the geo-strategic significance of Central Asia from the regional and global perspective. Central Asia occupies a very important geopolitical position in the world system. Strategic importance of Central Asia makes it a region of attraction for major powers of the world. Arnold Toynbee once described Central Asia as a region "where routes converged from all quarters of the compass, and from which routes radiate to all quarters of the compass."<sup>4</sup> Geo- strategically and geo-economically, Central Asia is of utmost significance. Its significance is not likely to end in the distant future as the

requirements of world energy are growing every day. It occupies a unique location in the world map by being at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It is located in a very crucial position that connects east with the west and West Asia with Europe. It is this very geo-strategic India-Pakistan Clash of Geo-Strategic Interest in Central Asia | 239 significance and geo-strategic locations that has without any doubt attracted the attention of the world's major powers including India. That today the region has become an arena of the 'big power-small power' syndrome comprising of Europe, US, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India.<sup>5</sup> Given its strategic location, Central Asian republics can be vital trade links between Europe and Asia. Given the amount of oil and gas reserves, the region will play a very important role in fulfilling the energy demands of various countries" (Hussain, M. S).

#### 2. Prospects for Pakistan and Central Asia

Central Asian States are blessed with natural resources like oil and gas and have excellent infrastructure. It also has great reserves of gold and other minerals. It is a great producer of energy resources and developed economies like US, Russia, China, Europe, and developing economies like India, Pakistan and South Asian countries need the energy resources of Central Asia badly. Developed and rich countries like US, Europe, Russia and China are having their eyes on the natural and human resources. The geo-political location is not suitable for Pakistan only but it is also ideal for Japan, India and Iran. Many countries of the world are competing for getting hold of the resources of the Central Asian States. All the competing forces and countries a want to eat up the whole cake and do not want to share the resources of the Central Asia in a friendly and peaceful manner. The world is going to face serious energy crises in future so all the countries, especially rich countries and neighbours of Central Asia are making efforts so that they can have bigger share of energy and natural resources of Central Asia. Power game is being played in Afghanistan and Pakistan to have better and easy access to the Central Asian States. World community can benefit a lot from the Central Asia and its human and natural energy

resources in they all join hands in promoting peace in the region and stop using dirty politics and dirty games against one another. Central Asian Region have great strategic locations - this region shares border with great powers and is super rich with natural resources and minerals. Pakistan can benefit a lot from the natural energy resources of the Central Asian States and can boast its own economy and facilitate boast up in the economies of the countries of Central Asian Region. (Reetz 1993).

Pakistan's geostrategic location makes it very important to play a role to facilitate the whole region for have bilateral business and trade relations. Pakistan and China have constructed CPEC and are also upgrading Karakoram Highway. Both the countries have decided to more highways through Khunjerab pass. This way China and Pakistan will have a total of 8 road links. The following four countries i.e. Pakistan, Kazakhstan, China and Kyrgyzstan are going to launch a bus service which is going to promote business and trade in the region and also going to promote tourism and cultural, political, economic and religious collaboration and cooperation between people of Pakistan and Central Asian Region. Pakistan can earn a lot of revenue by providing overland routes and linkages to all the countries of the Central Asian Region and the whole of Asia. Pakistan's participation in development projects like roads, highways, dry-ports, airports, electricity and power projects, tourist spots and oil and gas pipelines will promote enormous financial, business, trade and socio-cultural, politico-economic, military and anti-terrorist activities in the region of Central Asian Region and the whole of region. The road and infrastructural links will also promote historic links between people of Pakistan and Central Asian Region. These projects and connectivity between Pakistan will also help alleviate poverty from Afghanistan, promote peace therein, help in eliminating terrorism and drug production in Afghanistan and the whole of Asia.

### **3.1 Pakistan Interests in Central Asian Region**

According to an analyst there are three dimensions of Pakistani interests in Central Asia: Pakistan has the advantage of having a

relationship of Islamic brotherhood with the Central Asian Region. Pakistan has a wonderful geostrategic location and it will make its best efforts to take benefit from this facility. The Central Asian Region are landlocked and do not have access to any ocean or sea and Pakistan can facilitate Central Asian Region to access sea routes through Karachi and Gwadar Ports to conduct international trade. Pakistan hopes to benefit from the natural resources of Central Asian Region with the help of its experienced. Pakistan's main interests are to find a market in the region for its economic activities and to benefit from the natural resources of the Central Asian Region. Pakistan's main interests in the region are: To increase trade and business in Central Asian Region; Pakistan is a victim of terrorism and also a threat to the peace and security of Central Asian Region. Uzbek tribes are part of terrorist activities and Pakistan wants to curb terrorism with the help of the Central Asian Region. Pakistan has signed many bilateral trade agreements with the CENTRAL ASIAN REGION. Pakistan is also building gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. This pipeline will finally reach India. (Fatima, Q and Zaffar, S. (2014).

Pakistan's main interests are to have business and trade relations and freedom to conduct business and trade with Central Asian Region. Pakistan also wants to have a stronger position militarily to keep India away from the region. Pakistan wants to have a stronger position in this region in terms of the military services in order to keep India's less involvement in this region. Pakistan wants to provide shortest approach to the sea route to Central Asian Region which this region lacks. Pakistan is making efforts to have good relations with Kyrgyzstan to provide the region with sea route and to benefit from the cheap electricity and energy resources like oil and gas of the region.

Pakistan has several kinds of interests in Central Asian Region which include strategic, economic, religious, political and military. But the main interests of Pakistan are strategic because it can boast its trade and business and provide it economic, political and military depth to it in Central Asian Region. This most important aspect of relations with Central Asian Region was

realized by Pakistani strategist's right from the beginning of the independence of Central Asian Region. Pakistani public was excited to have close religious relations with Central Asian Region who had formed Islamic kingdoms in Subcontinent hundreds of years ago.

But mainly Pakistan is eyeing on the energy resources and electricity from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

"The primary strategic goal of the United States in Central Asia is to see the development of independent, democratic, and stable states, committed to the kind of political and economic reform that is essential to modern societies and on the path to integration and to the world economy. The strategy that we follow is based on simultaneous pursuit of three related goals. The first of these goals is security. Our counterterrorism cooperation bolsters the sovereignty and independence of these states and provides them with the stability needed to undertake the reforms that are in their long-term interest. However, in order for these nations to be truly stable over the long term and to be fully integrated into the international community, to achieve their potential, they must allow for greater transparency, respect for human rights, and movement toward democratic policy. Finally, the development of Central Asia's economic potential, including its extensive natural resources, requires free market economy reforms and foreign direct investment. This is the only way to improve the well-being of the region's people, diversify world energy sources, and facilitate the movement of these countries into the world economy." (Blank, S. (2007).

Pakistan is facing serious energy crises but this unfortunate that it is not able to avail the opportunity of benefiting from the energy resources of Central Asian Region and is seeking help from countries which are located thousands of miles away to help us build up our economy. According to some analysts, Pakistan will have to buy and is buying very costly energy resources due to American involvement in Central Asian Region. But if we buy electricity from Tajikistan then we are going to have very cheap electricity. The landlocked Central Asian Region are also in need to have access to sea routes to conduct

business and trade with Middle East, Europe, Far East and rest of the world because Pakistan is a junction of all these world economic regions.

#### **4. Problems and Hurdles for Pakistan**

##### **4.1 Anarchy in Afghanistan as the Biggest Obstacle**

Afghanistan and Pakistan have had a long history of relation spanned over the past many centuries. Both countries are not only next door neighbors, but also have historical, religious, cultural, language, trade and ethnic commonalities. The major issues involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan which created hostilities are the Durand Line, the issue of Pakhtunistan, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban, American attack on Afghanistan, Indian involvement in Afghanistan, American withdrawal from Afghanistan and the perceived dangers to Afghanistan from Pakistani side. (Sultana 2015). In 1979, Afghanistan launched an Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union with the military support of Pakistan and the Jihad was funded by America and Saudi Arabia. Collaboration between Soviet Union and India was seen by Pakistan with hostile eyes. US and Saudi Arabia funded this Jihad and financially supported Pakistan with trillions of dollars because Soviet Union and its Communist political-economic system was seen by all the three countries as a common enemy. Hundreds of thousands of jihadis from Pakistan and many other Islamic countries were trained by Pakistani ISI and American dollars and this collaboration was able to defeat the Red Army in a decade or so. Pakistan had to bear the brunt of tolerating the biggest migration of refugees from Afghanistan into Pakistan. The refugees from Afghanistan further destroyed and had negative implications for poor economy of Pakistan and also created problems of population security for Pakistan.. Even after the Soviet withdrawal, American attack on Afghanistan, Pakistan has constantly supported Taliban and it had also helped Taliban to takeover Afghanistan after the Soviet expulsion. But after 9/11, Pakistan supported international community against Taliban. (Sultana 2015). (Malik, Z.U.A. and Zhilong, H. 2018)

But things are not as simple as show by different

forces. Many outside actors have continued and continue to support not only Taliban but several other groups involved in war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan does not have common borders with Central Asian Region. Afghanistan comes in way of Pakistan when it has to approach to Central Asian Region by land. Pakistan cannot reach Central Asian Region unless this anarchy in Afghanistan stops.

Pakistan's security in the region is interlinked with Afghanistan because both the countries share a border which is 2430 kilometers long. But unfortunately this common border has had very serious negative implications for Pakistan and militancy, extremism and terrorism has increased in Pakistan. This border between the two countries is very unstable and movement of people from one side to the other is very easy because sometime half the village is located in Afghanistan and rest of half in Pakistani territory. So far so that in many cases half the house of a family is located in Afghanistan and the other half in Pakistani territory. Most of the time people of both sides move from one side to the other and they do not bother about getting a visa because these tribal people have shared the hilly are for thousands of years. Afghanistan is a very brutal society and even some of the sports are also very brutal and violent for instance buzkushi. The violent culture of Afghanistan also has impacts and implication on Pakistani society. (Malik, Z. U. A., & Zhilong, H. (2018).

Pakistan's weak economy, instable political conditions and uncertain foreign policy had not allowed Pakistan to be proactive in advancing its relations with Central Asian Region whereas other actors like Russian, China, Iran, India, Turkey and USA have acted more vigilantly in this regard.

Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan has changed the situation in the region. Afghan people initially welcomed Taliban because they controlled armed groups and brought some peace to the war torn Afghanistan. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognized Taliban government and supported it financially.

According to some analysts, American war on Terror in Afghanistan is a major hurdle in the way of Pakistan's approach to Central Asian Region

because Afghanistan is the shortest land link of Pakistan to Central Asian Region and it cannot avail and use this link till there is peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is badly trapped due to its insecurity on its borders from many sides. On the East, its border is insecure due to threats from India. On the Western side its borders are insecure from Afghanistan. Pakistan also continues to have tensions on its borders with Iran. But the most serious threats comes from India and Afghanistan.

Frequent movement of terrorists from Afghanistan into Pakistan has serious security problems for Pakistan. So Pakistan has been demanding the neighboring countries and the international community to build a fence on the insecure border of Afghanistan so that a free movement of smugglers and terrorists could be blocked and Pakistan has done a lot of work on the border to build a fence for this purpose.

Unfortunately, Pakistani support for Afghan Taliban for occupying Afghanistan and toppling elected Afghan government of Ashraf Ghani and even in the past Pakistan supported Afghan Taliban did not cooperated with government of Hamid Karzai. Taliban never participated in the democratic process, they never contested elections and always believed that they will take over Afghanistan by force and they have done so on 30<sup>th</sup> of August, 2021.

US has been blaming Pakistani ISI and Pakistani army for providing financial support, weapons and manpower to Afghan Taliban for carrying out terrorist operations in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Pakistan blamed Afghan government of supporting Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan for carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistani territory with the support of Indian agents. For carrying out terrorist operations in Pakistan, India had set up many consulates on Pakistan border on the territory of Afghanistan.

Since all the stake holders involved in Afghanistan are not working honestly for peace. Hence, some of the analysts have commented and suggested deliberately that:

"The circumstance in Afghanistan needs stern and honest approach for restoration of peace. The fire raging in Afghanistan is now warming the

enthusiast specters also, and is spreading each and every moment in each and every direction Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan are right on its way. They should, therefore, think more to extinguish the fire inside Afghanistan, rather than fanning it, and let the people heave a sign of relief. Then they should think of the transit facilities, and the pipelines to flow down the oil and gas of the Central Asia to the warm water, and convince the Afghans that these actions would be beneficial to all of them. Let us hope that Afghanistan does not become the starting point of another, and the final, World War, and pray for an end to this conflict to ensure an era of peace and rehabilitation of the heart of Asia." (Bano, Shagufta and Sohail, Muhammed (2014)

While discussing the paralysis caused to Pakistan by the war and turmoil, anarchy and chaos in Afghanistan, Dr. Qasim Razza Jaffry says that:

"Therefore, Pakistan is handicapped because of geography and the instable situation in Afghanistan as the lack of its direct access to any Central Asian country puts Islamabad in a difficult situation. The narrow Wakhan Corridor, which is part of Afghanistan, denies Pakistan direct geographical linkage with Tajikistan. Otherwise, had Pakistan been in control of that corridor, its geographical predicament in Central Asia wouldn't have existed. The question of gas and oil pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan or electricity from Kyrgyzstan would have become a practical possibility had the situation in Afghanistan remained normal." (Jaffry 2016)

Therefore, Pakistan cannot live in peace due to Afghan situation and it also cannot cross over Afghanistan to have access to Central Asian States for carrying out business, trade, import energy resources which are badly needed by Pakistan. Pakistan does not have political and military relations with newly independent states of Central Asia.

#### **4.2 Baluchistan and FATA Situation**

Poor law and order situation in Baluchistan and FATA are also a major obstacles to bring oil and gas pipelines to Pakistan and its neighboring countries. Baluchistan has been a troubled province of Pakistan for the past many decades. There have been military actions by different

governments during the past 7 decades and the major one was by Z.A. Bhutto regime.

Basically, the real issues are that Federal Governments have been neglecting and ignoring the rights of the provinces. Most of the development funds were spent by almost every government in big cities like Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Multan, Faisalabad and like. Rural areas of Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khaibar Pakhtun Khawa (KPK) formerly known as North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) were totally ignored by the central and the provincial governments. A feeling was also promoted by the anti-Pakistan forces among Sindhis, Baluchis and Pathans that Punjabis were ruling Pakistan and they were eating up all the resources and they were usurping the rights of the ethnic communities like Pathans, Sindhis and Baluchis. Tribal leaders (sardars) wanted to have total control over their province of Baluchistan and they promoted a hatred among Baluchi people that it was not worthwhile to live together with Pakistan because Punjabis were treating them as their slaves. So some of the tribal leaders launched their separatist movements with support from external and internal enemies of Pakistan. Some of them dreamed of making Baluchistan into a "Greater Baluchistan) by having part of Baluchistan which was under the control of Iran and joining it with Pakistani Baluchistan for their dream called "Greater Baluchistan".

Thus, the separatist movements which are being operated by their leaders based in India, Afghanistan and London are keeping the province of Baluchistan in a constant anarchy and is causing problems for Pakistani to have good relations with Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asian Region.

Pakistan has been blaming India and Afghanistan for the separatist movements in Baluchistan that India has set up consulates on the Pakistan border in Afghanistan and the separatist movements are being supported with money and weapons by both India and Afghanistan.

Pakistan must pay attention to the issue of development projects for the Baluchi common people so that their hearts can be won and they do not feel like strangers. Some work was done in this regard by the Musharraf government. He



inducted thousands of Baluchi youth in the army, police and other departments and he also set up military academies in the province of Baluchistan. But a lot more needs to be done in this regard. Government must distribute vacant lands of the province among Baluchi youth so that poverty and unemployment could be alleviated from the province and a feeling of ownership among Baluchi youth could be developed.

Same situation was repeated in FATA commonly known as tribal areas of Pakistan. These areas were also ignored with regard to their development and main focus of development was the big cities of Pakistan. Tribal areas were ignored and remained backward so the people of those areas relied on smuggling, poppy cultivations, joining terrorist groups etc. These areas were close to Afghan border so they easily became home of smugglers and terrorists. These areas are a heaven for terrorists and smugglers and all kinds of criminals who commit crimes in Pakistan and run to these tribal areas to take refuge.

#### **4.3 Indian Conspiracies**

India is not happy with growing influence of Pakistan in Central Asian Region. It is making efforts and conspiracies that Pakistan's economic and military relations and Pakistan's influence should not grow in Central Asian Region. Competing interests of Russia, China, Iran and India have also been an obstacle for Pakistan. India needs Pakistani territory to have access to Central Asian Region. India developed close relations with Afghanistan to access Central Asian Region and both collaborated to fight against extremist Taliban and other terrorist groups and drug trafficking as their common enemies. India has done this very smartly and by taking advantages of its presence in Afghanistan. India is also working on the plan of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through China to India. A project of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan Afghanistan, Pakistan to India is already under process, but progress is rather slow due to hostile relations between India and Pakistan. Both the countries i.e. India and Pakistan and whole of the region can benefit from natural and energy resources of Central Asian Region if relations can

be smoothed between Islamabad and New Delhi.

Indian claim of Non-alignment policy is the fundamental principle in her relations with other countries therefore, "Indian diplomacy has found it relatively easy to build good all round relations with the newly emerging nation-states of Central Asia". Therefore, India has established very close relations with the region since Soviet era. "India had enjoyed close political links with the region for decades and still retains much of its prestige as an old friend of the Soviet era". Reetz confirms the view saying: "For India it was natural to deal with the Central Asian region in the first place as part of the former Soviet Union. It was still tied to the post-Soviet states by many links. India hoped to recoup whatever it could from the old relationship, looking for new opportunities". India still desires for increase in Russian influence in Central Asia and if so happens "Russia's agenda of economic and political reform would be welcomed by Indian businessmen", because "the newly emerging political class in Russia is taking a strong interest in India's economic management experience of what they call a 'mixed economy' which includes both private and public enterprise" (Reetz: 223). Even the South Asian leaders are also 'favorably inclined to India' and look ahead to get 'advice and practical help' in economic and political fields. However India is in difficult position of not having direct entrée to Central Asia. Her "Central Asian policy also suffered from incoherence, neglect and ignorance" (Bano, Shagufta and Sohail, Muhammed (2014)

#### **4.4 Russian Role**

A vacuum was created in Afghanistan after the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and this gave an opportunity to Pakistan to take a stronger position and dominant position in Afghanistan. Afghan Civil War made Afghanistan a centre of drugs production and its exports and smuggling of consumer goods to Central Asian States and Pakistan. The support of neighbouring countries to opposing factions in Afghanistan further aggravated the situation. For instance Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan and Russia etc. began supporting different factions. This external support and

interference further messed up thinks in Afghanistan and further cut of Central Asian Region from the other countries in the region. Pakistan was mainly supporting Pashtun Taliban and Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan and Russia were supporting Northern Alliance because they did not want supremacy and dominant position of Pakistani supported Pashtun Taliban, Russia was supporting anti- Taliban forces because it want to take a revenge on Pakistan for playing an active role in Afghan Jihad with American dollars.

Russia has been the main funder and donor of the Central Asian States even after their independence from the Soviet Union because the economies of these states have been very weak and they were not able to manage their governments and run their state institutions with their own national GDPs/budgets. Therefore, they had to depend on the Russian financial support to pay for the expenses of their state expenditures and to meet their annual deficits. Russian influence will never go away or vanish from the Central Asian politics. Most of the Central Asian rulers still continue and they will continue to have their authoritarian style of administration and rule. Secondly, they think that Russian style of authoritarian rule is the best way to deal with the local militant Islamist extremist organizations. They all believe and have a lot of trust in Russia that their former master, owner and mentor Russia will continue to provide them budgetary support and will protect them in time of any kind of crisis including foreign aggression and militancy by the Islamist groups and a threat from Afghan Taliban. In return, Russia is benefitting from the natural resources, energy resources and human resources of the Central Asian States for its growing industry and economy.

#### **4.5 US Interference in the Central Asian Region**

Presence of NATO and USA in the region and collaboration between several states for getting rid of extremist groups like Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISSI have also created problems for Pakistan. According to some analysts US policies in Central Asian Region are working against the interests of not only Pakistan but also against the

interests of Central Asian Region by supporting terrorist organizations in the region. There is a possibility of positive impact of American involvement in the Central Asian Region that it will bring technological progress in the region, but if authoritarian regimes in the region refuse to bring reformations in their societies then social upheavals and anarchy could rise within those societies. This will continue instability in the region and harm the interests of not only all the regional and international powers and also of the US in the areas of business, trade, military supremacy and greater political involvement in the region.

Some critical analysts have also criticized too much interference of US in Pakistani policy making and have said that Pakistan has almost become a proxy state of the USA. Anti-terrorists cooperation has dominated US security activities in Central Asian Region since 9/11 but inter-state rivalries have created much bigger threat to the peace of the region. For instance Al-Qaeda and ISSI have become a major threat to peace in the region. US must tackle sources of instability, conflict and terrorism in the region of Central Asian Region to promote stability, peace, political stability and economic, social, technological, cultural development, business, trade and tourist activities in Central Asian Region. It should also pay attention to the issues like management of water resources in the region, border disputes, influx of refugee into neighbouring countries, issues related to environmental problems, and drug trafficking from Afghanistan via Pakistan and India. There is a fear that US is giving more attention to Uzbekistan which is a key partner in anti-terrorism coalition and is ignoring other regional countries like Kazakhstan and is not providing any security aid and assistance to other countries of the region. This has promoted rivalry between the two countries i.e. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan has been encroaching on the borders of Kyrgyzstan in the name of anti-terrorist activities. US must make a choice of working for multilateral collaboration to fight against terrorist groups instead of working for self-defense and preemptive attacks which will be seen as a selfish move on the part of the US. This will also deprive

US of support from Russian, Chinese and other countries in the region and rest of the international community as well. This will promote unity among militaries and political governments of Central Asian Region to fight against militant and terrorist groups present in the region. US also must work for intelligence sharing and providing training to the military forces of Central Asian Region. USA is also vulnerable keeping in view the 9/11 experience, therefore, USA must keep in mind that it cannot fight terrorism without support of the Central Asian Region and rest of the international community. US will have to redefine nature of regional security interests and related political, economic and security problems in the Central Asian Region.

But the US interference in the Central Asian States is not unwanted or uninvited at all. This interference is need, requirement and desire of the Central Asian States as well. Central Asian States are facing a threat from their local militant extremist Islamic groups which are being promoted by some foreign countries with Saudi money and the major threat to these countries is from Afghan Taliban. Therefore, when USA attacked Afghanistan and overthrew Taliban regime in 2001, all the five Muslim countries of Central Asian Region which include Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan provided their air bases, military bases and logistic support to US to facilitate its war on terror against Taliban, who are their own Muslim brother because they see Taliban and Talibanization as a major threat for their countries.

#### **4.6 Role of Iran**

Iran is also playing a vital role and increasing its influence in the Central Asian States. Iran sees a lot of scope for itself in the Central Asian States. It is eyeing on the natural/ energy resources and human resources. Also because Iran does not want to leave the fields vacant for its chief rival USA. Iran is in fact making its best efforts to get US out of the region because it looks at US as biggest evil in the world and US sees Iran as biggest Satan of the globe.

#### **4.7 Problems of Reconstruction of National Institutions Due to Extremist Groups in the Region:**

In many regions of the world with large Muslim populations, including Central Asian Region, many Muslim groups are turning to militant Islam to take over the control of their societies. Such groups do not believe in participation in the democratic takeover of government through political participation because they know that they will never win democratic elections. Islam continues to be the most powerful mobilizing force despite of Soviet rule for more than 70 years. Some Central Asian States have more militant groups than others. As the extent and level of extremist militancy among Islamist movements differs in these societies, so does the level and style of authoritarianism. Analysts and observers have not been able to explain as to why is so much difference in the extent and extremism in the Islamic militant movements in different countries of Central Asian Region. The analysts must pay attention to understand the issue of level of Islamic militancy not only in Central Asia but also in Africa, Middle East and the West. Some historians have said that Islamic militancy in Central Asia is a reaction to the globalization of Western Culture and the local leadership of Central Asian States says that the Islamic militancy has been exported by countries of Middle East, Iran, North Africa, Western countries and Pakistan and other countries of South Asia. This is a partial analysis and complete answers to the question of difference in levels of militancy in different states of Central Asia has not been given so far. The question is that: Why Islamic militancy is more severe and on a very large scale in Uzbekistan than Kyrgyzstan? Analysts believe that three factors have played important role in spread of militant Islam which are: invasion of foreign Western cultures; foreign missionaries, and foreign financial support from countries which want to spread Islam by force through Talibanization. But mainly Islamic militancy is a reaction to authoritarian rules of Central Asia. If the West continues to support the national autocratic and authoritarian leadership of Central Asian Region, the Islamic militancy is going to be very popular among to masses of the

Central Asian Region. (McGlinchey, E. M. (2005).

Thus the main challenge before the leadership of the Central Asian States is to reform their national institutions in such a manner that these institutions operate in such a democratic manner that they look absolutely different from the style of the authoritarian style of administration of the Communist Soviet Union.

Secondly, the leadership must think about tackling the issue of religious extremism and how to neutralize the militant groups in their countries so that Talibanization on the pattern of Afghanistan does not get repeated in Central Asian Region and life for women, children, liberals and religious minorities does not become hell.

People of Central Asian Region are also badly divided in ethnic, sectarian and regional groups. The richness in economic resources and geostrategic location of these countries attracted many countries to this region. But this region was not much anti-Soviet Union even until the late 80s. That is because the populations of these societies had been loyal to the kings and sultans and did not have the courage to launch or join any anti-state uprising or movement. The national leadership of these countries took some measures to stop politicization of religion and control religious institutions. But import of militants and funding from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan have played a serious threat to promoting Talibanization in the Central Asian States. Since the states of this region were not able to provide educated moderate and enlightened religious leadership and Islamic Scholars, therefore, this vacuum was filled by the fundamentalist Islamists imported from neighbouring Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. The increase in number of mosques and madrasahs in the region has increased fear of Talibanization, Islamic militancy and terrorist activities in all the republics of the Central Asian Region.

While mentioning the remarks made by Assef Ahmed Ali, the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan after his visit to the Central Asian States, Reetz said that Assef Ahmed Ali warned that all must be careful in making a hurry to having

relations with Central Asian States in the name of Islam because the rulers of these states do not have much likeness for Islamic way of government because they might lose their authoritarian regimes and powers. (Reetz 1993)

#### **4.8 Poor Performance of Pakistani Policy Makers due to ill organized Foreign Policy and Political Instability:**

Some analysts have deplored the attitudes and behaviour of Pakistani policy makers that they are being very lazy and unvigilant regarding making and pursuing policies of pro-activeness with regard to Pakistan's relations with Central Asian Region. After Z.A. Bhutto, Pakistan was never blessed with a wise leadership and there was lack of political instability and lack of consistency in the foreign policy of Pakistan. Most critical analysts believe that Pakistani foreign policy is not made and run by the politicians, political leadership and foreign ministry of the country. Pakistani foreign policy is rather controlled, formulated and managed by the military leadership. Another factor that has a pressure on the foreign policy formulation and management is the issue of security and economic poverty faced by Pakistan. Pakistan is known to be exporting terrorists to the whole world and this is not appreciated by the whole world and why should the international community have relations with such a country which faces problems like political instability, economic poverty, inconsistency in foreign policy, lack of political leadership and a home to terrorist training schools.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Pakistan and Central Asian Regional States share a common historical, cultural and religious background. Central Asian Region are landlocked region and Pakistan can provide access to sea ports to Central Asian Region for international trade and business via Karachi port and Gwadar port. Pakistan needs energy resources i.e. gas and oil and Central Asian Region can fulfill Pakistani energy needs because Central Asian Region are blessed with plenty of Oil and Gas. Both Pakistan and Central Asian Region can revolutionize business and trade in whole of Asia. Since Pakistan does not have any common borders with Central Asian Region and

can reach Central Asian Region only via Afghanistan. Hence, Afghanistan is a major hurdle in the way of Pakistan to reach Central Asian Region through land. International powers and regional countries are competing to supersede their rivals in building up their relations with Central Asian Region and none are working for promoting peace in Afghanistan and in the region. Anti-Pakistan Indian policies and conspiracies are also a major hurdle in progress of Pakistan's relations with Central Asian Region. Conflicts and tensions and a kind of cold war between India and Pakistan is harming the interests the business and trade interests of these two countries and of the rest of the Asia as well. Poor economy, political instability, poor foreign policy of and laziness on the part of Pakistani policy makers has slowed the progress in the promotion of relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Region. There is a fear in the minds of many analysts that US involvement in Central Asian Region will support extremist and terrorist organizations in the Central Asian Region and financial from the US will be misused by the authoritarian regimes of Central Asian Region to perpetuate their authoritarian regimes and will suppress their masses with that financial support and will not use this financial aid to uplift their societies and alleviate poverty from their societies. There is a fear that Talibanization with Pakistani support will enter the societies of Central Asian Region and will destroy peace of the region. Anarchy and separatist movements in Baluchistan were initiated by Baluch tribal leaders and a feeling of hatred and anger was promoted among Baluchi youth because Federal governments did not pay attention on doing developmental works in rural areas of Baluchistan. Thus a movement for separatism was launched and was supported by India and Afghanistan.

#### **6. Recommendations**

Both the countries i.e. India and Pakistan and whole of the region can benefit from natural and energy resources of Central Asian Region if relations can be smoothed between Islamabad and New Delhi. International community must work together for peace and development in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the main hurdle in

the way of Pakistan's land approach to Central Asian Region. Therefore, Pakistan must balance its support for Taliban and must work for bringing a combined government which has representation from all sectors of Afghan population i.e. Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Turks, etc. A power sharing and having a mutual combined government will be a definite guarantee for peace and progress of Afghanistan and the whole region and Pakistan's blind and full and only support for Afghan Taliban which are mainly Pashtun will not be acceptable to Northern Alliance and will also jeopardise the rights of non-Pashtun population i.e. Uzbek, Tajik, Turks and others and will also deny the rights of women and religious minorities. International community must join hands to bring peace in Afghanistan to benefit the whole region in promoting business and trade. India and Pakistan must come to terms and make up their minds to live peacefully as good neighbors so that both can benefit from the natural energy resources of Central Asian Region and promote business and trade in the region and alleviate poverty from their countries. Negative tactics, unhealthy competitions and conspiracies and dirty politics will not get these two countries anywhere and they will harming not only their interests, but also the financial interests of Central Asian Region and the whole of East, West and South Asia. The positive involve of US would be to provide border security to Central Asian Region to block drug trafficking and export of terrorist elements and make sure that countries of Central Asian Region do not misuse American support to perpetuate their authoritarian regimes to suppress their masses. US and other outside actors should not involve military approach in the region and work for eliminating anti-peace elements. The US and other international community members should make joint efforts to make local state institutions both democratic and military so that they can watch the interests and security matters of their countries on their own by being self-reliant and self-sufficient. International community must allocate resources to help Central Asian Region in their social, economic, political, cultural and infrastructural development to help local communities to become economically prosperous and developed.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, China and India must form an alliance for peace building in the region of Asia and say goodbye to unhealthy competition and dirty politics of gaining dominance so that all the neighboring countries can benefit from the energy resources of Central Asian Region and help Central Asian Region to build up democratic institutions and get rid of authoritarian style of governance and alleviate poverty from the Central Asian Region. To smoothen things in Baluchistan, Government must distribute vacant lands of the province among Baluchi youth so that poverty and unemployment could be alleviated from the province and a feeling of ownership among Baluchi youth could be developed.

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