

Gwadar Port Pakistan; Implications for Region

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ABSTRACT

Changing pattern of world's politics brought Gwadar port under the limelight of policy makers. The port located on the confluence of important regions, emerged as regional hub of energy and resources transportation. The port and its related infrastructure is a way to integrate these economies which would ultimately cause regional integration. Major objective of the study is to expose economic and strategic importance of Gwadar port and to find out its impacts on region's integration. To achieve the mentioned objective empirical, descriptive, analytical and predictive methodology is applied. This research concludes that cooperation among the concerned states and peace in Afghanistan would bring economic integration in the region which would automatically be followed by political harmony among the regional countries. One important recommendation in this regard is that Pakistan has to formulate such policies to avoid confrontation of major players and all the related players especially the potential powers should accommodate each other's interests in the larger interest of the region.

Keywords: *Gwadar, Region, Pakistan, Integration, CPEC, China*

Introduction

The port at Gwadar is located at the confluence of two main regions, the oil rich Central Asia and emerging consumer market South Asia. The port is located on a point which provides a strategic depth to Pakistan against her adversaries. The port has the ability to check Sea Lanes of Communication during war and peace. Due to geo-strategic importance of the port all regional and extra-regional players have keen interest in the project. Central Asia hopes to export its riches through it while United States of America with diverse demands wants to ensure its presence there. Each player has its own objectives with different approach to accomplish. Having tremendous importance the port has become a flash-point and Pakistan has to reconsider the situation in terms of its priorities.

China and USA, under the paradigm of their policies, are promoting their interests in the region and there will be collaboration in future. Generally economic integration is outcome of an evolutionary course of regional cooperation. In order to bring regional countries on a single platform different steps like free trade zones, tax relaxation are taken by the respective governments, these would be followed by steps like open border system common currency and extended people to people contacts in the region in future. CPEC is the best example of these steps, Iran; a strong competitor wants to be a part of the project. TAPI, IPI and TAP are

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the proposed projects which when materialized will bring integration to the regional countries.

History of the port:

“Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This Ocean is key to the seven Seas in the twenty first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters” stated US Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan. This indicates geo-strategic importance of Indian Ocean. Pakistan is located on the Indian Ocean which connects the landlocked Central Asian Republics with the Sea. Gwadar is a coastal town of Baluchistan province of Pakistan which remained a part of Oman for more than 150 years i.e. 1784 to 1958. Later on due to its significance it was bought back by Pakistan with payment of £ 3 million. The city came under the limelight of Pakistan’s policy makers due to 35 % of international oil transportation in its neighborhood. It was visualized as a hub port for the region when it became part of Pakistan, but financial and technical issues prevented the dream to be materialized. The project remained in papers until China promised to provide financial assistance. The former president of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf during his visit to China in May 2001, requested Chinese government to help in the project. On 22nd March 2002, the project was inaugurated by Pakistan’s president Musharraf and Chinese Prime Minister Wu Gang Guo. The port was then handed over to Port Singapore Authority on 6th February 2007 after its completion in 2006. Port Singapore Authority failed to upgrade the port on promised lines that’s why on 18th February 2013 the port was handed over to Chinese Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC).

Location of Gwadar port:

The Gwadar port is situated at a position which may be termed as a gate way to Persian Gulf. It is about three hundred and ninety NM eastward of significant Straits of Hormuz, eighty km from the border of Iran, two hundred and thirty four NM from Karachi (Pakistan) and Cape al-Hadd (Oman) is 320 km from Gwadar. It is also in a close proximity with Chahbar and Bandar Abbas. It is situated outside the sensitive area of Strait of Hormuz which adds to the strategic importance of the port because this Strait is a significant route for the transportation of energy in the region. It attracted the consideration of the world during first Gulf war. The war caused serious issues to shipping lines (Zaheer, 2016). The road distance between Gwadar and Karachi is 653, Chaman 1066, Ratodero 892, and that of Quetta is 966 km. strategically it connects three important emerging regions Gulf, Central Asia and the South-west Asian region (Daily the News, 2009).

Implication of Gwadar port on regional integration:

“International integration is a process by which countries remove the barriers to free trade and the free movement of people across national borders, with the goal of reducing the tensions that can lead to international conflict” (Caporaso, J. 1998)

How to define the concept, much discussions was there in the literature when there were early integration theories developed. Discussions on integration was made that whether it’s refers a process or to end product. Definitely both can be combined. It could be define as a process which leads to a firm state of affairs. According to Karl Deutsch integration is “The attainment within a territory, of a

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‘sense of community’ and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a ‘long’ time, dependable expectations of ‘peaceful change’ among its population.” When groups of people or states integrate in this manner they form a “security community” this amalgamation in other words refer by Karl Deutsch and this follows to “the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government” (Deutsch et al, 1957).

Main concentration of regional integration during early times was the establishment of ‘European Coal and Steel Community’ and European Economic Community. In his classical study of Ernst Haas define integration as the process through which many political actors of different nationalities are convinced to change their political activities, loyalties and expectation to new center, institutions of which demands jurisdiction over the existing nation state (Haas, 1958). In the political diminuendos of European economic integration Lindberg define integration without special reference to end point, to him political integration is firstly, a process through which a nation sacrifice conduction of major domestic and foreign policies of each other independently, looking for the replacement of joint decision making or even delegation of decision-making to new central organs. Secondly, the processes in which political actors in diverse settings are convinced to divert their political activities and expectations to new center (Lindberg, 1963). The concept of Lindberg is more cautious than that of Haas. Central to it was “the development of devices and processes for arriving at collective decisions by means other than autonomous action by national governments” (Lindberg, 1963).

Both Lindberg and Ernst Haas has developed spill-over concept, “refers to a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action, and so forth” (Lindberg, 1963).

Advantages of integration in South Asia:

There are many advantages to all south Asian states to launch efforts to escalate integration. Variety of advantages can be tack of integration depending political position and stages of development. Some most common incentives to all countries of South Asia are follows.

- I. Trade facilitation: studies highlighted (Pohit, S. & Taneja, 2000). That trade among India, Bhutan and Nepal is affected by complex transit and custom procedures. Custom clearness caused delay which increase cost and compel parties to switch formal trade, cause loss in revenue collection to government. SAARC countries signed agreement to form South Asian regional Standard organization which would help to reduce the work load of custom. Possibility of regional block is another incentive. The harmonized standard would bring South Asia into international marketplace. More integrated South Asia will play influential role in multilateral standard setting bodies. Regional cooperation will improve infrastructure and transport linkages, ultimately make trade easy and will open new venues for cross border trade Gwadar port and CPEC project would facilitate such integration.
- II. Cost reduction and consumers benefits: with regional integration South Asian nations would be able to get benefit from international trading,

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technology and investment opportunities. With reduction of transportation cost price for consumer will also reduce. With regionalism there will be direct market access which will reduce price. The port at Gwadar is an opportunity to connect the region.

- III. Access to larger market: studies show that integration of South and East Asia will benefit both the regions. World Bank's research showed that regional trade will be beneficial for south Asian countries than that of their trade with other regions (Bank, W., 2010).
- IV. Poverty Reduction: 40 percent of world's poor population is in South Asia and 29.5 % of this population is earning less than one dollar a day. Though the region is home of quarter of world's population but its GDP is only 3%, export is 1.9% and FDI is 1.7% of total of the Glob (Bank, A. D., 2009). Poverty is common problem of the region which can be eliminated through trade integration. Liberalized economies and embracement of stabilized macroeconomic policies would provide favorable investment environment which will lead to growth. Improved growth rate will reduce poverty and will enhance life standard. Integrated economies would eradicate impediments to economic growth. Dynamic manufacturing sector would its superior capability create enormous opportunities to pull out several South Asian from poverty. Gwadar port is potential enough to integrate economies and its infrastructure has the ability to facilitate the entire regional trade.
- V. Energy: the region's energy need is growing with day. Nepal and Bhutan is viable option for hydro power while Afghanistan, newly inducted, is essential for its energy resources. Furthermore the region can import energy from Central Asian states as will. Gwadar port project is most viable option for energy transportation.

India's ambition to secure a seat in UN Security Council and China's growing interest in South Asia, she asked for SAARC plus one meeting recently which compel India to have stable relations with its neighbors and to promote integration. Like other countries of South Asia Pakistan is also eager to have new markets for its exports. In this regard she signed ECO with Iran, Turkey and recently extended to CARs and Afghanistan. Gwadar is a port which provides the opportunity to Pakistan that she can unify all the regional players on a single point. Though it is difficult for Pakistan to access the market but it is true for the region that economic interest can unify all these countries. (*Standard*, B., 2004 August 6.).

Regional Trade:

During twenty first century the Indian Ocean becomes vital strategic field. One of the most important reasons is growth in the economies of Asia and its growing need for raw material and energy from Middle East to boost its economic growth. Trade is dual-way Street and Asian nations contribute consumer goods, labor and capital to rich Arab countries. With the end of cold war and crisis in Afghanistan and Iraq reduced the significance of Atlantic Ocean and boost up that of Indian Ocean a channel of western military supplies. As a result, security concerns regarding traditional maritime sector become more significant. All maritime powers take security of strategic chokepoints i.e. Indonesian straits, Straits of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb. Bab-el-Mandeb's piracy and Persian Gulf's conflict is major concerns. Striates of Indonesia are secure due to police patrolling

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territorial waters. The need of SLOCs protection increased in the same way as there is a broadband connection between Asia and Europe and then to US under Oceans. Sea lanes and cables remain matter of concern for Asian countries because long before British and recently US shoulder the responsibility of its protection. The growing local powers are eager to show their strength now.

Indian Ocean's importance enhanced with the formidable extension of infrastructure projects in Asia. Construction of new ports, pipelines, airports, rail systems and roads cross Asia from West to East and connecting Eurasia to Indian Ocean will produce commercial traffic and strategic competition. Construction of Gwadar port in Pakistan by China is a case in point. Current geo-economic situation signified sea ports, because of sea ports Dubai became hub of world's economy particularly of the Gulf. Due to crisis which took place in Gulf region, need for an alternate matured, which would serve the world with oil supply even in worst political scenario. Karachi port may be an option but the load capacity will divert attention to Gwadar which isn't only in the great interest but in the greater interest of the region as well.

Significance of Gwadar Port for region:

Hub port is sol point rigorous point of trade collection (MunaiTas, n.d). Studies prove the relationship between trade and growth (MunaiTas, n.d). Geography of Gwadar port is strategically important as it connect resources rich Central Asia and Middle East to resources hungry South Asia and China. The port is well equipped with modern equipment to deal with growing world trade especially with containers (Gorst, 2006). A UN study of 2008 proposed that the container traffic of about 300 million TEUs would be doubled in 2017 (Argus, 2008). Boost in Chines and Indian economy, sustainability in Pakistan, steady opening of Central Asian market and growth in South Asian population would generate sizable share of world trade in future.

Gwadar provide the shortest possible access to Afghanistan and land-locked CARs. Which make Gwadar a conjunction of Middle East, South and Central Asia that are highly active economic regions. To have a key role in the port India, U S, China and other player are trying hard. The port and its relevant infrastructure would change the entire region. The port was constructed by Chines and under an agreement on 6th Feb 2007, handed over to port of Singapore Authority (PSA) who has expertise of running 22 ports in 11 deferent countries. Under the agreement PSA will pay 9 % of its income to GDA.

Coastal highway which connects Gwadar with Karachi was built in 2004 while another road, known as Kalat-Gwadar road is more significant for regional development which connects Gwadar with Iranian border. Khuzdar-Rattodero road connect Gwadar to national highway, will reduce distance between Gwadar and KP and Punjab. M8 motorway will link Gwadar to Turbat, Khoshab and Panjgur will connect Gwadar to rest of the country. Gwadar port is most cost effective and shortest outlet to Central Asia, Afghanistan and Xinjiang (China). Transit trade facility to Afghanistan and free export zone was included in its master plan.

From a sleeping small fishing town, Gwadar is going to be a mega trade Centre like Singapore, Dubai and Mumbai (Mehdi, 2009). Pakistan is eager to use the port as transportation point of energy and trade for Central Asia, Afghanistan and China. Proposed railway line parallel to silk route to Kashgar would not be a milestone in bilateral trade but also cause regional economic integration between South and Central Asia. Quadrilateral trade agreement which is functional since

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2004 can be used for promotion of regional economic and trade integration. Central Asia's main imports consist of garments, consumer goods and electric items and exports listed as Oil and gas, machinery, cotton, and metal ores.

Transit of Oil and gas and land to sea trade through Pakistan is estimated about \$ 1000000 annually (Port, E. S. G., 2009, November 10). Initially vision about Gwadar was that it would serve Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan via Afghanistan because of geographical nearness (Takreem, 2013) but with the establishment of Kashgar economic zone it will also serve Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Due to its nearness to straits of Hormuz, trade hub and major shipping point Gwadar port, provide economical access to Central Asia, Afghanistan, China and rest of Pakistan.

As per master plan it is proposed that Gwadar port will capture about 25 % of import and export national market by 2002 while 15 % of Central Asian transit trade, 12 % of Xinjiang and 40% of Afghanistan (Takreem, 2013). It would encourage interdependence in region which will emerge direct stakes in stability and prosperity of each other and making economic partnership in neighborhood. In the eyes of Felipe Fernandez Armesto historically sea routes remain more important than that of land routes. It can handle more goods cheaply. "Whoever is lord of Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice". On the ground of the city's wide trade with Asia, one can take the 15th century's saying "If the world was an egg, Hormuz would be its yolk."

In his visit to China in Feb 2006, Musharraf express his desire of Pakistan's entry as permanent member in SCO which would further boost up its economic tie with China. Pakistan is taking this serious that both China and Russia want to include India's military capacity in SCO's counter terrorism exercise without Pakistan (India Daily, 26 August 2005). No developments took place in SCO meeting of May 15, 2006 to grant full membership to Pakistan. An Indian analyst is of the view that Pakistan want balance power status in the region that's why she is eager to induct China into SAARC, which is very significant for South Asian geopolitical context (Sridhar, 27 February 2006). Both India and Pakistan got full pledge membership in 2016 (The Diplomat, 2016, May 26).

China is going to build 90 km road which will connect China's side of Karakoram highway to Russian build road network, already linked with Central Asian states. This network of highways would link Gwadar to Central Asia through Xinjiang (Chaturvedy, 2006). Both KKH and coastal highway are significant trade routes and further extension of Ratodero-Khuzdar road will be the shortest road link Gwadar to Western China (Chaturvedy, 2006). The port and associated infrastructure will integrate Pakistan to Chines economy. He port will serve Chines trade through road network via KKH (Niazi, 2006).

Development of the port and road network by Pakistan will not only make it hub for regional trade but will also cause boost in domestic economic and affect the geo-strategic setting of the region as well. The port is an outlet to enormous resources of Central Asia and in return Pakistan will get sizable amount as transit fee and huge investment to Baluchistan. Opening of the port to international business will provide new opportunities to Afghanistan and would cause normalization in Pak-Afghan relations. The port is source of good relations of Pakistan with its neighboring region (The Dawn, 2006).

After all the road and rail links developed, Gwadar will be the major dispatching focus and after it connection with surrounding region, will be transform to

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exchange Centre and would up left Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian region. A road from Gwadar to Saindak is the shortest between Central Asia and Indian Ocean. Pakistani business community is eager about Gwadar port, to be commerce and fare handling zone. Gwadar port is situated on important geographical location. It is in west of India and near to Strait of Hormuz. It is located on a slit piece of area extended out from the coastline of Pakistan; make it perfectly focus for rocket or air strikes.

“Look east” policy of Pakistan and “Go West” policy of China bring both countries together. China’s investment in Pakistan’s infrastructure is to develop its western region Xinjiang. Proposed connection of Gwadar port through Kashgar about 414 km from Pak-China border will connect to Central Asian Republics Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. To utilize land routes for trade quadrilateral trade agreement was sign among China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. In 2004 when a Pakistani entrepreneur used KKH to transport goods to Almaty for the first time, the agreement became operational. from Gwadar to Kashgar road distance is 2627 km. Gwadar-Turbat-Ratodero road cost Rs 18 billion and completed in 2012 (Dawn, 2012).

IPI when came under crisis was proposed to converted into IPC (Iran, Pakistan and China) pipeline and trans Afghan pipeline was if materialized, can be stretch to China. Chen Xuguang secretary of communist party Kashgar discussed that railroad and other linkages from Gwadar to Kashgar will be materialize soon, will transform Chines oil transportation from sea lane to road and pipe (Yan, 2012 February). In order to convert Gwadar into energy corridor the oil refineries would be connected to Kashgar. Shifting of admin form PSA to Chines port holding authority has attract world’s attention because of its geo-economic importance. China imports its oil from Saudi Arabia through Gwadar and KSA asked Pakistan in 2006 repeatedly to help in extension of its oil export to China (Dilwalatv, 2013). China is building a dry port at Lhasa, Tibet with a cost of \$ 14 million. In view of Andrew Small who is specialist of Pak-China relation, Gwadar port, because of high level trust between the two, would developed by Chines (Dawn, 2013).

To overcome the issue of unequal economic development, government announced two SEZs at Kashgar and Horgus. Kashgar, will become trade and financial hub, major processing Centre for global traded goods and regional logistic Centre. Pakistani Businessmen have granted with opportunity to invest in Kashgar. Up gradation of KKH is due to SEZ of Kashgar which ultimately promotes regional integration. Kashgar SEZ would not only develop Xinjiang but also Pakistan as it’s connecting it with Central Asia. 50 sq km SEZ will not only boost economy of Xinjiang but also of adjutant areas of the region like Pakistan, as mentioned by the deputy director of China’s National development and reforms commission (EEO, 2010).

Kashgar region still have the traditional Sunday biggest in the world where nearly 150000 people from entire Central Asia come and exchange goods with their Chines colleagues which will help Pakistan to establish links with Central Asia. China’s sources says that investment in two mega projects, Sino-Pak Railway line, from Kashgar to Rawalpindi and China-Kyrgyz-Uzbek railway would convert Kashgar to regional trade hub and provide these outlet through Pakistan. Multi billion project of SEZ at Kashgar would conduct its trade through Arabian Sea Pakistan. It is sign of new silk route where camel caravans will be replaced by trucks and trains to bring trade to Indian Ocean.

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An important development took place when Gwadar was handed over to China, it would place it on the position of critical geo-strategic competition. The port has the potential to promote ship repairing industry, trans-shipment of bulk cargo, petrochemical and export of minerals, oil storage, export processing and industrial zones and refinery. After its full fictionalization Gwadar port would benefit the adjoined landlocked states of the region. New regionalism in the region is emerging because of energy and economic integration. Chinese president Mr. Xi Jinping in Astana Kazakhstan declared significance of the new regionalism and economic past of Central Asia. Shanghai is 9000 mile away from Strait of Melaka while it is just 3000 mile from Gwadar port Pakistan. Significance of the port can be exploited as hub of energy corridor and broadening mutual interaction (CPGS, 2014).

Conclusion

The fact in point is that economic development is agenda number one of all the regional countries. Once Gwadar port project would start delivering the promised benefits, it would integrate regional economies, ultimately leading to regional integration. Super powers are working to neutralize intra-regional differences among South Asia's states. South Asia's public is eager to be united on the pattern of European Union which would cause peace, harmony and prosperity in the region. Integration doesn't come overnight it takes centuries as it took centuries in Europe. Integrating model of the region is peculiar in nature.

These societies have their own characteristics i.e. heterogeneity, based on diverse values and religious beliefs, democratic setups, colonized heritage and developing economies. Developing nature of economies needs uninterrupted flow of trade leading to integration. The former Prime Minister of India Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated regarding South Asian Union that having potential to eventually introduce open border, common currency and common security cooperation in the region is creditable. There is no opposition to this dream of integration in South Asia even Pakistan has carefully declared the dream of Vajpayee feasible (Shahid, 2004). In international relation it's very common that small neighbors always live under fear when their large neighbors have tendencies of expansionism. Upcoming mutual agreements in the region would help to accelerate integration in South and Central Asia.

China a gigantic economic power, is eagerly working on regional integration and she is playing a very active role in this regard. SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) is part of such activities that is integrating economies of member states. Further China invest huge amount in infrastructure development especially in South Asia. To finance Asian countries and prevent them from any foreign clutches China proposed AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) in 2013 and the idea was materialized in coming years. On the basis of such rapid development most of the scholars declare Asia the future of the world and that world's leadership would shift to Asia. All these development indicate that there would be economic integration in the region that would lead to political Integration.

Pakistan's membership and association of the regional organizations namely SCO, SAARC and ECO lends the country a unique position to facilitate inter-regional cooperation. CARs agreed to initiate a bus service that would not only enhance trade but also be an important tool to promote people-to-people contacts between these countries. Pakistan offers the critical overland routes and connectivity for

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mutually beneficial trade and energy transactions intra-regionally and inter-regionally. Pakistan's participation in these projects will symbolize the return of the Indus valley to the central place in region-wide economic and cultural interaction. In fact for India the shortest route to Central Asia is via Pakistan and for China Pakistan has emerged as the preferred access point to the Indian Ocean. China is observer in SAARC and Pakistan and India are observers in SCO converting into full membership. The South Asian and Central Asian Regions are integrating and resuming historical connections and this development is benefiting the two regions and underscores the convergence of interests between Pakistan and China particularly regarding Afghanistan's crisis. The overall regional scenario underscores the geostrategic importance of Pakistan.

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