



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad**

2020: Pakistan as the Gateway to The Rise of Asia

Where We Stand and Where we Can Grow



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Pakistan, a land of opportunities, is located at the Geo-strategic location in the Asian region. It is the epicenter of a continent venturing its way through to the top into the changing world order: The Rise of Asia. With its intrinsically perfect strategic position, it is the hub of regional connectivity, transit trade, shuttle diplomacy and the center of co-operation and rapport for all its neighboring countries. As we move

into 2020, there are several opportunities that we have a chance to tap into, to make Pakistan the Glorious State it has always had the potential to be.

Pakistan's role in China's Belt and Road Initiative:

China treads forward with its global development strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative, Pakistan presents itself as the 'buckle in the belt' providing China access to the Indian Ocean through the Gwadar Port. China being the world's biggest importer of Petroleum and Energy (accounting for 25% of the energy usage of the entire world) will be able to utilize the smallest route possible from the Indian Ocean to Kashgar (2700kms) for importing the driving force of BRI (Petroleum & Energy) from the Persian Gulf. The Belt & Road Initiative, in turn, ensure a promising future for not only Pakistan, but all countries involved. It is an ambitious infrastructure development project: It is a revolution in the connectivity and integration of the world as a whole. Not only does it ensure unimpeded trade, but also long-term peace between countries in the BRI as they co-depend on each other for their collective economic and strategic advantage.

As states co-depend on each other for peace, they do so for the collective well-being of the planet as well; In that regard, China will play an enormous role in tackling the most predominant issue of the present day that is Climate Change. With the construction of Sustainable Energy Sources with the likes of Sachal Wind Farms and Quaid e Azam Solar Park under BRI in Pakistan and the popping up of similar projects around the Belt of BRI, the world will move towards green energy at a much faster rate than anticipated. Pakistan is at the forefront of this mission of producing green energy with China has been able to gain respect of the international community and

hence, holds leverage to negotiate befitting policies in regards to trade and industry internationally.

Co-operation in trade with the Central Asian States

Pakistan's geostrategic importance is sharing its part to strengthening regional connectivity. Other than its importance in the BRI, it also serves as the most convenient means of trade and the most efficient energy transit corridor for the landlocked Central Asian States: This is due to Pakistan's geographical ability to provide the shortest route to the Indian Ocean. With the completion of the Gwadar Port, Pakistan is presented with an immense challenge to use its strategic position effectively. While Pakistan can provide the Central Asian States access to the world market through the Indian Ocean with its geographical proximity, it can utilize the energy resources of the central Asian republics to overcome its energy deficit. Turkmenistan has reserves of 19.9 trillion cubic meters of gas and hence can prove to be the most efficient in terms of distance and cost for Pakistan to import. Furthermore, in a world where every pinnacle of life is moving towards a digital environment, it is high time for Pakistan to address its electricity problem. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a potential of 26000MW and 40000MW respectively. Importing electricity from these countries along with the set up of sustainable energy sources such as wind and solar energy farms would make it possible for Pakistan to eradicate its electricity crisis in the very near future.

Furthermore, bilateral trade ties can also be built by the export of Pakistani garments, textiles, cotton, leather, pharmaceutical industry etc. which have made a name for themselves in the international market. The existing demand of Pakistani

apparel in Central Asian Republics owing to the globalized world of the internet can be brought into play by the Foreign Direct Investment of giant textile companies of Pakistan in the CARs. Not only would it benefit Pakistan economically, but it would play a significant role in cultural diplomacy.

Engagement of Youth in Socio-Economic Uplift of Pakistan:

In the present day, 64% of Pakistan's population comprises of the youth. This youth bulge presents a make or breaks situation for the future of Pakistan. It is to be acknowledged that the youth can play a vital role in the socio-economic uplift of the country, and the government is presented with an enormous challenge to provide them with the befitting means to do so.

The engagement of youth can only be fruitful if appropriate education is provided according to the respective fields. Specialized and skilled education is the need of the day and investment in such programs can be extremely fruitful. Investment in government universities for specialized technological science education can also provide the local youth leverage to be important stakeholders in the technology-driven world.

The youth can also play an integral part in the strengthening of relations of Pakistan with Central Asian States. Student exchange programs can be set up which would be of utmost importance in promoting the country's real image. Furthermore, it would also give the youth exposure to the markets the country holds future interests in.

Conclusion:

Pakistan is a country with innumerable resources combined with a copious workforce. Two of these combined together are a combination which if tapped into effectively, have the power to transform a Nation and ensure an immensely promising future. The essence of succeeding is to realize the potential one has; Once realized, the key is to utilize the resources to maximum efficiency. Pakistan along the years has been a tool for superpowers. However, with the emergence of a new decade and the age of self-awareness, it has almost become inevitable for it to become the Great Economic Power it has always had the potential to be. To reach the greatness it is destined for, it is important for every Pakistani to realize that each and every citizen of this Great Country has a responsibility on their shoulders to do their part in the progress and flourishing of the state since Pakistan is more than just the land encircled with a border: Pakistan is every man and woman who resides in it.