



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS),
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Pakistan-Tajikistan Relations:
A Roadmap for Shared Future



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Fraternal relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan are expected to shape the future cooperation of the South Asian and Central Asian region. This research aimed to highlight the significance of bilateral relations between both



countries and how this cooperation could be translated into a prosperous future.

TAJIKISTAN: AT A GLANCE

Tajikistan is one of the most captivating Muslim states among five Central Asian states. It was the part of the former Soviet Union that got independence in 1991. It is a land lock country bordered by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, China and Pakistan. Interestingly, both Pakistan and Tajikistan are separated by a narrow strip called the Wakhan strip. The total area of Tajikistan is 143,100 km² and about 70% of the country is surrounded by Pamir Mountains Range. Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe is one of the beautiful cities home of old heritage. For both Pakistan and Tajikistan, there exists a religious, cultural, and spirituous bond. The history of Tajikistan witnessed the rule of Turks and those areas of the subcontinent are now part of Pakistan. In these areas, for a long time, Persian was the official language as well as the language of communication.

In the subcontinent, Sufis played an important role in preservation of Muslim heritage and true essence of humanity. In this regard, the name of *Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh* was prominent and belonged to the Khujand region, a part of Tajikistan. In Pakistani literature,



the Persian language has imprinted vibrant marks. For instance, the major portion of Allama Muhammad Iqbal's poetry is based on the Persian language. Although this linguistic bond was ancient but still there exists its relevancy. This strong bondage was the reason that Pakistan was the first country to recognize Tajikistan after its independence. Thus, the diplomatic relations between both the countries were started in 1992. and Pakistan opened its embassy in Dushanbe in 1993.

SIGNIFICANT CONTOURS OF PAK-TAJIK BILATERAL RELATIONS:

Glancing at the history of thirty years of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan, it is clear that both states have realized the potential and prospects of cooperation. There are numerous reasons that identified the significance of vibrant Pakistan and Tajikistan relations. Tajikistan is a land-locked country which highlights the need to access to warm water. In this regard, Pakistan holds a vital geostrategic location. Thus, impediments can be resolved by signing agreements with Pakistan in specific areas to enhance trade. (RFERL, 2021)

Over the last two decades, the dynamic leader, President Emomali Rahmon, has visited Pakistan twice. These high-level visits are hallmarks in the relationship between both countries, as during these visits' multiple agreements on trade, defence, energy, security, infrastructural development and cultural cooperation were signed (IPRI, 2015).





Likewise, the Pakistani government has signed an agreement with Tajikistan to install the CASA-1000 project and the Joint Commission on Energy aimed to overcome persisting energy crisis. Furthermore, the Tajik government is also willing to establish a Pak-Tajik Joint Ministerial Commission and joint business councils to facilitate state machinery and the business sector. Additionally, Tajikistan has proposed and established an inter-governmental Joint Economic Commission (JEC) to foster social, cultural, economic, technical and political cooperation. Moreover, CPEC and Gwadar Port connect Pakistan with Tajikistan via Gwadar-Peshawar-Kabul-Kunduz-Dushanbe, Chitral-Eshkhahim-Dushanbe and Khunjrab-Kalasu-Murghab. By using these land routes, Tajikistan's trade activity will upgrade multifold. (CGSS, 2017). Tajikistan is keen to utilize its full economic potential as the country is blessed with more than forty rare metals which are found nowhere. That is why Tajikistan and Pakistan have signed agreements in the fields of exploration, extraction and mining.

HIGHLIGHTING PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION:

The cordial relations with Tajikistan are a pre-requisite for a prosperous future for both Tajikistan and Pakistan. As Tajikistan is a gateway to the other Central Asian States as well as Europe, deep relations based on mutual benefit will open new avenues of cooperation. In the backdrop, the functioning of Kulyab-Khorug-Kulma-Karakoram highway and the opening of the Istiqlal Tunnel of friendship as well as the construction of Dushanbe–Nurabad–Jirgatal-Saritosh and Dushanbe-Qurgantepa are significant projects for



revitalizing regional connectivity. All these projects will facilitate Tajikistan to access Gwadar port.

It is noteworthy that both countries also facilitate each other in every international forum. Pakistan has offered the full support to Tajikistan to become a member of the Quadrilateral Transit Trade Agreement (QTTA), which was signed by China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. On the flip side, Tajikistan is accommodating Pakistan's businesses. In this aspect, around 50 Pakistani companies will be registered in Tajikistan by 2021. This development will catalyze the economic activities in Tajikistan and Pakistan. Also, Tajikistan is the third-largest producer of hydroelectricity in the world. Cooperation in the field of energy sector between Pakistan and Tajikistan can fulfill the burgeoning energy need of Pakistan. In this regard, the CASA-1000 project will be a game-changer for the entire South Asian and Central Asian region. This \$1.7 billion project will undertake the construction of 1, 270 kms of electricity line that will connect Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. This project will benefit all parties involved as it will bolster the electricity market and serve as an essential tool to overcome the energy needs of South Asia. (DAWN, 2021)

Evidently, all the ongoing projects such as CPEC, CASA-1000, PATTA, and other hydroelectric projects that include Santuda, Sunguta and Rongon will not only benefit Tajikistan and Pakistan but the entire South Asian and Central Asian region. Apart from this, international bodies such as IMF, World Bank. and UNDP have assured financial assistance for constructing transmission lines between Tajikistan and the Pak-Afghan



border for trade from Tajikistan. Lastly, the way for more integration between both states is the eradication of communication as well as land barriers. The total air distance from Pakistan to Tajikistan is only about half an hour. In this aspect, Pakistan's government should take vibrant steps for the people. By enhancing people-to-people contacts, more opportunities can be opened for regional cooperation. (Karim Haider Syed, 2018)

Relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan are based on mutual respect and joint collaboration. There are extensive opportunities for cooperation between both countries in the field of energy, industry, defence, economy, tourism and economy. The ongoing projects are expected to strengthen the economic and geopolitical standing of Tajikistan and Pakistan and serve as the engine for regional integration and connectivity between the South Central Asia.



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