



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS),
Islamabad**

**Tajikistan as Gateway for Pakistan to Central Asia:
Prospects for Mutual Collaboration**



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Abstract:

Tajikistan is geographically Pakistan's closest neighbor to the landlocked region of Central Asia, endowed with enormous reservoirs of hydrocarbon and natural energy. Pakistan has offered the shortest conceivable route to Tajikistan



to become an important doorway to Central Asia. Pakistan and Tajikistan share land borders with China, which support the transit trade between Pakistan and Central Asia through BRI. There are untapped prospects for collaboration between Tajikistan and Pakistan in the industrial, economic, agricultural, defense and energy sectors. Tajikistan is the largest hydroelectricity generating country in the world. Pakistan desires to import cheapest electricity from Tajikistan to fulfill its energy needs. This research approach used in this study is qualitative as well as explanatory.

Introduction:

Tajikistan is the closest neighbor of Pakistan to Central Asia (Abdullaev and Akbarzaheh 2010). Geographically, the Wakhan strip, a 16 km wide belt, separates Pakistan and Tajikistan (Faheem 2020). The landlocked region of Central Asia is endowed with enormous natural resources of energy (Syed and Khan 2018). Pakistan provides the direct conceivable economic and trade corridor to Central Asian Republics (CARs) to produce



enormous volume of revenue and enhancing the spheres of trade and economic outreach. (Satti 2014).

Pakistan and Tajikistan share terrestrial boundaries with China, and both are a partner in the grand project, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Karrar and Mostowlansky 2020). China's BRI provides opportunities for Pakistan and Tajikistan to enhance and strengthen their economies (Rashid, Iqbal and Nawab 2021). China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a joint flagship venture by China and Pakistan. It can connect Tajikistan with Pakistan via Gilgit-Baltistan by using Karakorum Highway, which is essential for the Geo-economic future. (Faheem 2020) Once operationalized, it will support the transit trade between Pakistan and Central Asia (Abdullaev and Akbarzaheh 2010). CPEC provides many opportunities for Tajikistan to increase its economic outreach through Gwadar port (Faheem 2020).

Prospects for Economic Collaboration:

There are huge prospects for reciprocated collaboration between Tajikistan and Pakistan in the fields of industry, economy, defense, energy and education (Syed and Khan 2018). Tajikistan imports foodstuff merchandise from abroad, which can be fulfilled through Pakistan at a much cheapest rate (FCCI 2014). Pakistan has been ranked 3rd for the production of cotton in the world. Therefore, the country is capable of sharing knowledge and agricultural expertise with Tajikistan in this domain. (FCCI 2014). Tajikistan imports clothing and textile supplies from the international market. In this aspect, Pakistan has a huge opportunity to enhance trade with Tajikistan by exporting quality textile products

(Khaliq 2011). Pakistan has been exporting a good quantity of cement to Tajikistan, another major product of trading (Satti 2014). Tajikistan and Pakistan have a cultural, spiritual, and religious legacy. In this aspect, both countries can start joint ventures to enhance people-to-people contacts and reviving centuries-old religious linkages. The construction of highways, railways and corridors under the CASA-1000 project would pave the way for future cooperation between Tajikistan and Pakistan (Faheem 2020).

Prospects under Energy Cooperation:

Tajikistan is one of the most energy-enriched and power-generating countries globally (Satti 2014). Moreover, Tajikistan is one of the biggest and (Faheem 2020) the world's third-largest producer of hydroelectricity (Satti



2014). Pakistan has been facing energy challenges; thus, (FCCI 2014) Tajikistan can assist Pakistan through energy and power generation projects. (Syed and Khan 2018). CASA-1000 can provide an annual 1300 MW of surplus electricity export to Pakistan (Syed and Khan 2018). The realization of this landmark project will exhibit incredible collaboration among Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan for regional cooperation (Satti 2014). Tajikistan and Pakistan along with other Central Asian



Republics could work jointly to build an energy corridor that benefits the entire region (Rashid, Iqbal and Nawab 2021).

Conclusion:

Tajikistan is Pakistan's nearest neighbor, hence a gateway for Pakistan to Central Asia. A shared-forward looking spirit is required to make a framework of cooperation in order to commence grand projects for sustainable economic progress. A mutually beneficial relationship would pave the way for smooth execution of plans and completion of signed agreements and projects.

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