

GWADAR AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR PAKISTAN AND REGION

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ABSTRACT

Gwadar is the third but most important port of in the south of Pakistan which is located in the province of Baluchistan along the Arabian ocean further opens in to Indian Ocean. The purpose of writing this paper is to highlight its importance especially in this age of globalization when trade has become a key to the progress and prosperity of nation. As I will discuss in the research paper that the construction of Gwadar port is necessary for

the economy of Pakistan and the underdeveloped province of Baluchistan but will also serve the best strategic interests in the border scope even further it is going to contribute in the progress and prosperity of other nations as well like China, Afghanistan or Central Asian Republics by decreasing their trade and travelling distance and breaking their blockade by offering a new sea port to them in the shape of Gwadar among all this china will need it most for developing its western region for .

Key words: Gwadar, Pakistan, China, Economy, Strategic, region, Port, Baluchistan,

INTRODUCTION:

With the emergence of Globalization not only the importance of old and traditional routes of trade have increased but the emerging nations are in quest of new trade routes on land as well as on vast oceans in order to have access to the new markets for various reasons which range from saving time to higher profits. When we broaden the importance of oceans and seas in the world trade and geography than major coastal cities or emerging coastal regions naturally become part of the debate because all sea trade routes link and end to some important sea port which can be called as the end of the sea route and the beginning of the land trade route (port news 2017).

Pakistan is one of those lucky countries who has a 960 km long and active coast with lots of potential to contribute in the regional and world trade. Among these Port Qasim and Karachi port are fully functional and Ormara port is currently under construction and likely to be functional in near future.(Kashif-2006) where as other important coasts are Bandar, jewni, sonmiani Hingol, keti Bandar, Hingol, Kalamat, Khor, Pasni and Gawadar. But among all these ports Gawadar is going to become a very important trade route and business point in the coming future due to its peculiar strategic location and a leading path way to the emerging markets of the world in which China stands on the top who is very keen to develop its backward northwest autonomous region of xinjiang and other Central American Markets. So in this regard one can say that Gwadar is going to contribute a great role to uplift the broken economy of Pakistan and in the bigger picture it will become a key city for the peace and stability of the region.

Geographical location of Gwadar

Gwadar, THE DOOR OF WIND, has huge potential to be developed as a gateway to the economy of Pakistan. Its presence at the convergence of three most commercially important regions of the world, i.e. Oil Rich Middle East, Central Asia bestowed with natural resources and South Asia having potential for growth, makes it one of the well placed port for the development of global trade. Gwadar is a newly emerging coastal city in the province of Baluchistan. It is a warm water deep sea port with the distance of 460 km on the west of Karachi and more importantly is on the vertex of Arabian sea ,(The News 2013) whereas Kingdom of Oman is the nearest country with the distance of 380 km and the via land or sea border of Iran just is 75 km away. (Hassan 2005) and strategically it becomes more important due to its situation near the strait of Hormuz which is one of the important choke points as well as oil trading route in the Persian gulf.

That was the United States Geological Survey (USGS) who identified Gwadar as a deep sea port but then it was possessed by the Omani government but was later bought by the government of Pakistan in 1958 with the amount of three Million pound sterling. The deal was done by the then Prime minister of Pakistan Mr. Feroz Khan Noon and the Sultan Said Bin Taimur. First time the question of Gwadar was raised by Haji Muhammad Iqbal Baloch that it should be annexed by Pakistan as it had been historically part of Baluchistan as well as geographically is also a part of Baluchistan with the then Prime minister of Pakistan Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan in 1947 after that it went through a long process of negotiations of eleven years in which Mr. Iqbal Baloch played the key role until 1958.

Than in 1964 Government of Pakistan declared it as a deep sea port but due to lack of resources and funding it couldn't come to national service until finally the Chinese government took keen interest in it and invested resources to make it functional for the greater good of the region. (www.wikipedia.org)

Due to lack of resources the government of Pakistan could only build a small port for the local fisherman for business but in the year 2002 its full expended construction was awarded to the Chinese company who completed its 1st phase in the year 2006 and made it functional and it was then inaugurated by the former President of Pakistan Mr. General Pervaiz Musharaf along with the Chinese Minister of communication Mr. Li Shinglin in the 2007 spring. Chinese government is very much interested in its development and expansion to turn it as a Naval Base as well along with a trade route due to its strategic location. The first operational trade started in the year 2008 when a Canadian ship carrying 52000 tons of goods touched the port. (Dawn 2008)

As with the visible bright future the government understanding its worth has declared it a free economic zone as well as a duty free shop. Due to its extremely important strategic location the government has declared its close vicinities as "sensitive defense zone". So this project vividly indicates that it will emerge as a hub for trade and will turn to beneficial for the entire region. (Noori 2002) if plans regarding the development are designed and executed properly by considering the interests of the entire region and interest groups related to it than no doubt it will prove to be a catalyst for the economic boost of Pakistan (Economic survey 2002-2004). Billions of dollars are expected in the terms of investment and

profits as millions of job opportunities will come with that as well. (Daily times 2007) this project will turn Gawadar in to an energy hub as well as will link central Asia via Afghanistan to the broad world(Gauhar 2005) no sooner it becomes a hub of economic activity it will become bear and generate all its expenses through it.(Amir 2005)

In the year 2013 Pakistani erstwhile president Mr. Asif Ali Zardari met with the Chinese Premier Mr. li Keqiang and discussed the viability of Gawadar port to the development of China as Chinese Premier also showed great interest to construct an economic corridor latter called as China Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC). In 2014 finally Chinese Premier finally discussed multibillion dollar projects of energy and infrastructure to finance the CPEC with the current government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (Zaman 2005).

Chinese interests and the Announcement of CPEC

China is one of the closest friends of Pakistan as with the very famous slogan “Pakistan-China friendship is higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel”. And in all difficult times both the nations have stood by each other in support of each other whether that is the recognition of Peoples republic of china or the extreme criticism by Chinese Government against the Indian aggression against Pakistan in 1965 war or the Chinese technological support in the Nuclear program of Pakistan (Khalid 2001).

On 15 April 2015 Chinese President visited Pakistan and concluded with his warmest statements regarding CPEC with these words that “This will

be my first trip to Pakistan, but I feel as if I am going to visit the home of my own brother.” And in the same year a \$46 billion agreement with the Pakistani government which is roughly the size of 20% of the total GDP of the Pakistan. Infact the Chinese government included CPEC in to its 13th five year plane. (CNN 2015).

In November 2016 first successful test transport of 250 containers came from china to Pakistan in order to export some Chinese commodities to different countries via Gawadar port this clearly marks the importance of Gawadar as a the future trade route.(Dawn 2016).

The Gawadar port has successfully been linked with the Chinese vision of “One Belt One Road” as well as its “maritime silk road”. Under this vision about \$one billion projects will be developed around the port of Gawadar.

In 2004 the Chief of Pakistan navy declared Gawadar as the third most important naval base after Karachi and Ormara due to its strategic position.(daily times 2004) Karachi port and Port Qasim were also considered as the important ports but far less than Gawadar by different shipping companies due to various reasons. Which are

1. Distance from major shipping and trade routes.
2. Draft limitations.
3. As compared to Gawadar they have a longer turn around.

The development at Gawadar port will also lead to the huge cost of Makaran which will further lead to the development of the deprived and poor province of Baluchistan and in length its further benefits will be felt in the development in the Sea line of Control in the Indian

ocean as well as in the most busy oil route of strait of Hormuz. (Kashif 2006) and will help Pakistan to extend its influence in the Indian Ocean and to the important choke points in it.

Economic potential of China and strategic and trade opportunities in Gawadar

Gawadar is deeply important and topically included in the string of pearl strategy of China. (CSIS 2014) Gawadar is too close to the western regions of China which will not only give it an economic leverage by saving the time and cutting the long distance short to have access to foreign markets as well as will also be able to import crude oil, gas, and other commodities in less time via Gawadar. So Gawadar will greatly create various opportunities for China in the coming future which are as follows.

- At present China is just an economic power so in order to expend this power China needs a big naval power in the Indian Ocean to protect its national interests and tackle the wild expansion of Indian naval force in the region so for this Gawadar becomes too important in the region (Kapur 2003).
- As Chinese trade and economic activities and interests are increasing so in this regard China must need to monitor its supply routes as well as create and preserve new trade routes for safer trade in the future due to growing tension in the world so in this regard provides much safer trade route as compared to strait of Malacca which carries 80% of Chinese all trade supplies.

- As Eastern china is much developed as compared to the western china which attract not only millions of people from across China to the coastal cities for economic prosperity but has also left the western region in to underdeveloped region so in order to develop theses western regions, which is also called go west policy, it is too difficult and costly as it needs to cover about 3000 km distance whereas Gawadar reduces this distance to only 1500km so choosing Gawadar for developing eastern regions is a natural choice by the Chinese government. (Hassan 2002).
- China after constructing CPEC projects will have access to the markets of central Asian Republics in future via Pakistani roads and railway lines. This will make Gawadar more diverse and important in the world arena for trade purpose.(The Nation 2002).

Along with the string of pearls Gawadar provides china a very safe passage for supplies as it is known that the growing tension with U.S.A over Taiwan may lead to and serious conflict as China does its 80% trade from strait of Malacca and opposite powers may not create supply challenges Gawadar port provides and offers a great safe passage for all sort of supplies along with monitoring the U.S Naval bases in the Persian Gulf. (Khalid 2002). When Gawadar for newly initiated the then President General (rtd) Pervaiz Musharaf commented about it that “Pak-China friendship journey from Karakoram to Gwadar depicts very truly the relationship that Pakistan and China enjoy which has led from Karakoram in the north of Pakistan as the symbol of this relationship and has reached

all the way through Pakistan on to the coastline at Gwadar” (Musharaf 2002).

Now there is no doubt that Chinese investment in Gwadar will not only bring economic prosperity but will open a new era of friendship for both the nations.(Dawn 2002).

Gawadar and its geographical significance for the region

“Gwadar will soon be a hub of trade and commerce in the region and it holds key to bring together the countries of Central Asia and lending a new impetus to Pak- the China relations. Gwadar project had very significant and strategic importance for China adding that nearly 60% of China’s crude oil was imported from the Gulf countries which would increase in the next decade.” (Khan, 2013) Asif Ali Zardari)

The importance of Gwadar is not only due to its trade route but its peculiar location in the center of four very important regions of the world which are mineral rich Middle East, heavily populated South Asia, emerging energy markets of Central Asia and rising giant china. This emerging sea port has a great significance due to its route links with U.A.E, Persian Gulf, Cars, North West India and East Africa. So if the coming investments and resources are just fully utilized and all the stake holder groups are successfully satisfied with their due share and demands than it is easy to predict that this small port will turn in to a giant metropolitan city carrying all sort of prosperity opportunities in it and will rank the other great coastal cities like Singapore, Dubai and Hong Kong and may replace them in the future due to its perfect location and adjacent to the

Strait of Hurmuz which carries 40% of world oil will also make it an energy center of the all regions. (Dawn 2006)

Via trade and shipping it will bring a huge development in Baluchistan as well as in Pakistan which will increase its weight in terms of economy, trade in the region in particular and the world in general.(Kashif 2002).

As it has been already predicted by different Newspapers and research generals or independent intellectuals about its emergence in future like a prominent Daily newspaper once said that

“The port emerges as a place of great strategic assessment, giving tremendous boost to Pakistan’s importance in the whole region, lengthening from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean to the Southeast Asia and the Far East.(The Nation, 2002)

All sort of Facilities will not only be utilized by Pakistan but will be offered And utilized by the different neighboring nations as well for trade purpose (khan 2016) and as we know that Pakistan has a tense border with India so in the time of military conflict it will work as the third naval base against the blockade as well as the trade will flow safely (kashif 2006) knowing the importance of the port the daily newspaper well commented over it by commenting that “The port emerges as a place of great strategic assessment, giving tremendous boost to Pakistan’s importance in the whole region, lengthening from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean to the Southeast Asia and the Far East.”(The Nation, 2002)

In the year 2003 a small consensus was made that said that some 1288 direct and 11000 indirect jobs will be created in the initial stage of Gwadar

port excluding CPAC which far more exceeds in its claim saying that it will create 100000 jobs for the Baluchistan region (Dawn 2016) And 75% of them will be enlisted from Baluchistan (Frontier 2016)

CONCLUSION

In the present scenario Gwadar port and its strategic and economic significance cannot be ignored at any cost specially when China is emerging as a super power in the near future, U.S has occupied Afghanistan and included India as her strategic partner in Indian ocean, and security conditions from Afghanistan to Middle East are almost chaotic and uncertain. Pakistan is a poor country with lots of challenges from economy to political stability, energy, trade and security so in this regard if Gwadar becomes a successful port than no doubt it will provide a big boost to the economy of Pakistan as well as will lay foundation for the peace and prosperity of the entire region when the neighboring countries will also indulge in the economic activities in it and will benefit it so in the long perspective one can predict that a flourished Gwadar will lead to a prosper and progressive Pakistan which will further lead to prosper and integrated south and central Asia.

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