

The New Great Game and Pakistan's Foreign Policy

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The interdependency of the states to meet the oil and gas needs reaches at the apogee with the industrial revolution. This provides impetus to the regionalism. Big nations combine to form big blocs in order to enhance the economic and political activities. Thus, Caspian region, fulfils the above statement..This region is enormously rich in oil and gas reserves. Its geography and Muslim ideology is distinct on its place. Let us see how this region is affecting world oil politics and future perspective for Pakistan.

In 1991, after dissolution of Soviet Union, Caspian and Caucasus region came into being. The former became the part of New Great Game. This term was coined by a journalist, Rashid Ahmad in order to emphasis on the importance of the region. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkme-nistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are also called central Asian republics or CARs . The region shares its boundaries with Russia, China, Afghanistan, Iran, and Caspian Sea and also with Pakistan which is a narrow strip of Wakhan away from the borders of Tajikistan.

In 1960, OPEC was established to provide the protection to the oil exporting countries. Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran formed this organisation. Presently, they constitute 70% of the world oil export so these countries have a huge monopoly on the oil production. However, the central Asian republics are expected to have 200 billion barrels of oil and 463 trillion m3 of gas. Hence, this region has a potential to neutralise the effect of OPEC.

United States is the only country in the world which constitutes just 4% to the world population but consumes 25% of the world energy reserves. Her oil consumption is over 11 million barrels per day which is largest in the world. US energy reserves are depleting very fast. That is why, US is importing oil from the Middle East, Venezuela and Canada. It is said that Saudi Arabia would exhaust her oil reserves in next 75 years as her daily oil production is over 10 million barrels per day. US wants good relations with CARs. US established her military base in Kyrgyzstan in 2001 in order to have a check on Russia as well as on China. Afghanistan invasion also strengthen the importance of CARs for the US as Afghanistan shares boundaries with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. This is the reason behind that US applied for the Shanghai Corporation Organization (SCO) membership in 2005 which was denied by China.

China is an emerging power in the world. China is enormously needing oil and gas to fulfil her domestic needs. In this regard, CARs are the natural allies of China. This was the rational of constituting Shanghai 5 to Shanghai Corporation Organisation. China is facing terrorism problem in her country in Xinjiang province which is one-sixth of the total country area. It is allegedly said that these terrorist activities are controlled from Turkmenistan. Therefore, SCO can provide a forum to curb these activities.

Pakistan too enjoys a considerable importance in the region. Its geo-political significance creates a remarkable prestige in the region. Wakhan in Afghanistan divides Pakistan from Tajikistan. CARs are Muslim countries, thus have common ideology. Pakistan's total oil production capacity is 349 million barrels which is very low indeed. Therefore, she has to rely on external sources. Recently, Pakistan signed a gas pipeline deal with Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and India. This means that this region is having an enormous potential to change the world politics.

Currently, Pakistan is having an observatory status in the SCO. But, the latter is in dire need of having permanent membership in SCO. The need is justified on these grounds. Firstly, Pakistan is a natural ally of the member countries. China and Tajikistan (crossing Wakhan strip) shares border with Pakistan. Secondly, Pakistan satisfies the objectives of

SCO, i.e. to eradicate terrorism from the region. Thus, Pakistan fulfils the needs of the organisation.

Thirdly, Pakistan is the only country which gives a sea route to the CARs throughout the year. Thus, no one can deny the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan and the member states can also enhance the bilateral trade between them.

In doing so, Pakistan should keep in mind the sensitivity of China in Xinjiang province. It is allegedly said that the wrongdoings in region is controlled from Pakistan. The terrorists have some connection from Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan has negated such elements of involvement in the province.

In a nutshell, CARs have a great potential in the economic as well as political domain. These states must utilise their power to accomplish their goals with sagacious will. The US, China and Russia are tilting their heads with full commitment. Pakistan in this regard should come one step forward to join their hands. If Pakistan could curb the militancy in the country, it would have deep impact on the SCO members also. Pakistan's geo-strategic location, Islamic ideology, and common interests are the manifestation of their future consideration for CARs.