PAK-RUSSIA COOPERATION LEADS TO MITIGATE NONTRADITIONAL SECURITY THREAT OF ENERGY CRISIS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The concept of unconventional security threats has jeopardized both state and human security, necessitating a significant shift in our security approach. Pakistan is currently grappling with an energy crisis that has stemmed from a variety of domestic and global issues that have yet to be effectively resolved. Energy security has become a critical factor that affects a state's economic, foreign, and security policies due to the strong correlation between energy and economic activities. Fortunately, Pakistan has several regional energy options to consider, with Russia emerging as the most promising candidate for energy imports. Pakistan and Russia have collaborated on two major gas-related projects, namely the Iranian offshore gas pipeline and the Pakistan Gas Stream Project, in addition to their oil negotiations. Additionally, Russia's interest in participating in the TAPI project is a positive sign for Pakistan's energy security. This article delves into the Pakistan-Russia energy relationship and its significance in addressing Pakistan's energy crisis.

Keywords: Non-traditional security, Energy security, regional players, North-South gas pipeline, IP, TAPI

INTRODUCTION

During the late 20th century, the concept of "national security" began to be used in a broader sense. National security in the twenty-first century involves more than just military might. In order to provide complete national security, it takes into account non-traditional security threats as well. These nontraditional security threats are based on economic, political, and social aspects of human living in a (Newman, 2010)

Pakistan has been dealing with a number of nontraditional security threats that have had a significant negative influence on the country's growth, development, economic advancement, and political stability for some time now. Pakistan is trying to address non-traditional security threats including environmental deterioration, food and water scarcity, unprecedented population expansion and inability to deal with energy insecurity.

Maintaining economic development has been and continues to be a major focus area for developed country governments, whereas developing country governments are significantly more impacted by energy security concerns. Efforts to provide reliable access to energy are being made on a global scale. In the past few years, the disproportion between the demand and supply of energy has slowed Pakistan's progress and increased fear related to energy security. Constant and reliable energy security is essential for technological innovation and continued existence Although the world recognizes that natural reservoirs and energy sources are not limitless, current trends suggest that over the next thirty years, more than half of the world's mineral wealth will be exhausted. (Aleklett, 2003)

The global energy decisions have repercussions for economic growth, as well as the local and global ecology. Since the commencement of the industrial revolution, the primary source of economic growth has been nonrenewable natural resources derived from the lithosphere. In the past few centuries, fossil fuels have provided a cheap and abundant source of energy to power industries. However, in the 20th century, fissile fuels like uranium were introduced but were only used on a small scale. Meanwhile, alternative energy sources such as biomass, wind, and hydropower have been largely ignored by wealthy countries. While energy was once viewed as purely an economic matter guided by market forces, foreign policy experts now recognize the importance of considering the security implications of energy politics and resource management.

Pakistan, like many other developing nations, is experiencing energy shortages due to its burgeoning population and correspondingly high energy demands. The country has vast untapped hydropower, significant lignite coal deposits, undiscovered hydrocarbons, and enormous solar and wind potential for cheaper energy production. Nevertheless, there are a few shady spots that prevent the full realisation of these energy possibilities and so lessen energy sector independence. This has long-term repercussions for the dynamics of both energy security and national security. The purpose of this article is to use a holistic security framework to evaluate the present dynamics and concerns surrounding Pakistan's energy security, as well as their influence on national security.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

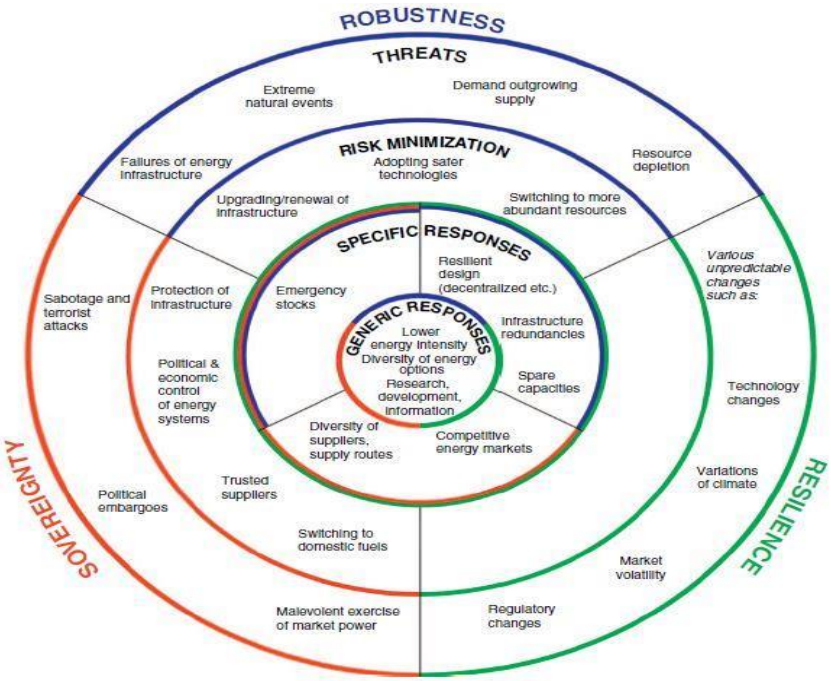
Energy security, according UNDP, "the availability of energy at all times in various forms, in sufficient quantities and at affordable prices, without unacceptable or irreversible impact on the envir (UNDP, 2014). Sustaining these conditions over an extended period is of utmost importance. Energy security is a crucial factor that interrelates economic, environmental, and national security, and encompasses various areas, including economics, governance, planning, global energy markets, and diplomacy. In a world where energy is scarce, energy security acts as a focal point that links economic, environmental, and national security. (Council, 2016).

Reliability, independence, and adaptability are the pillars on which energy security is built. Reliable, uninterrupted, affordable, and environmentally sound energy services, with an emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation, are the only way to alleviate the many complex elements of energy security. Energy security is defined by the United Nations Development Program as "the continual availability of energy in a variety of forms, in sufficient volumes, and at accessible costs

without unacceptable or permanent environmental consequences," and this definition must be true for the foreseeable futur (Cherp, 2011).

An ever-growing part of national interests is ensuring a steady and abundant energy supply for world powers and their allies. States are engaging in geo-influence due to the shortage of oil and gas resources throughout the world. If today's global conflicts are dissected, we can learn important lessons about how to ensure our energy future

Figure-1: The Energy Security Multiverse



Source: Aleh Cherp and Jessica Jewell, The Three Perspectives on Energy Security.

The concept of "national security" pertains to the capacity of an autonomous state to make autonomous decisions without external influence. A nation may also give priority to other forms of security, including human, economic, food, military, non-military, environmental, and energy security. The discovery of hydrocarbon resources, such as oil, gas, and petroleum products, during

the 17th and 18th centuries was pivotal to the industrial revolutions in Europe and America. European nations employed colonialism as a means of gaining control over energy and raw material sources in Asia and Africa. (Srikant, 2014).

The Suez Canal and several energy pipeline initiatives, including the Yamal-Europe pipeline that spans over 4,196 kilometers, were established with the aim of ensuring a reliable energy supply to keep up with the growing demand. This has led to the evolution of the concept of energy security, which encompasses the availability of a sustainable, cost-effective, environmentally friendly, secure, dependable, and obtainable energy resources. As a result, a new energy security paradigm has emerged, emphasizing the need for a continuous, low-cost, sustainable, secure, reliable, and accessible supply of energy resources within a state.

PAKISTAN ENERGY SECURITY DYNAMICS

Due to its placement at the crossroads of global energy resources, Pakistan holds a strategic position. Pakistan is not energy self-sufficient and relies significantly on imports, hence the country's energy condition is not ideal. The import cost keeps going up because of the increased demand of energy and the fluctuating price of energy. Pakistan has been facing a persistent energy crisis for several decades, leading to frequent power outages, soaring tariffs, and gas rationing, as well as an intermittent fuel provision. This situation has given rise to energy insecurity, which poses a significant threat to the country's safety (Asif, 2012).

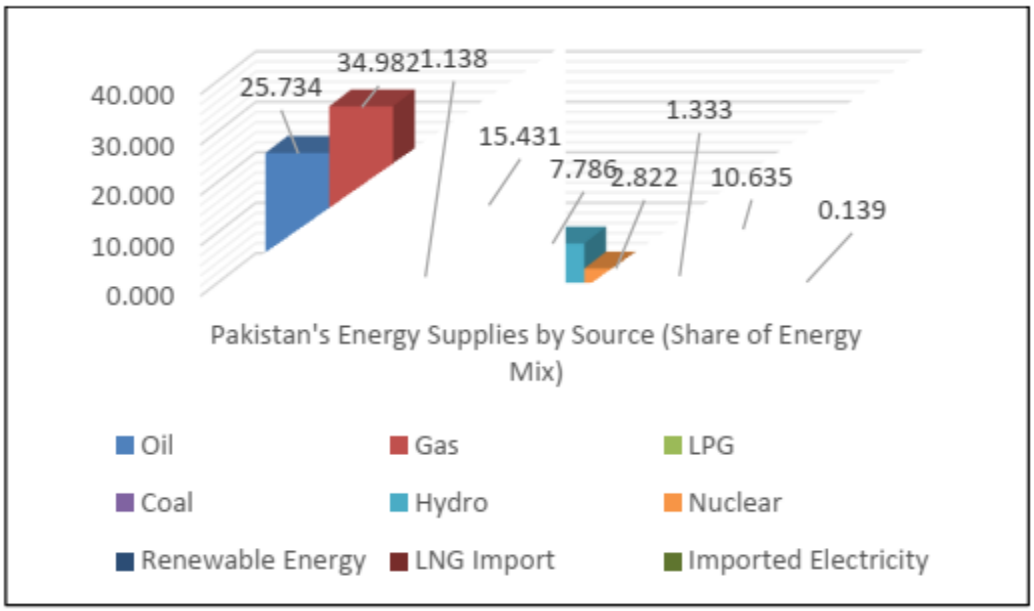
Pakistan's economy remains vulnerable due to its heavy reliance on energy imports, coupled with the unpredictable nature of the global market. Regrettably, the matter of energy has not been given sufficient attention, as interim solutions are implemented to tackle the issue, and the country continues to depend on imported oil and gas. (Ahmad Bilal Awan, 2012). In order to achieve sustainable development, policymakers must prioritize investing in various efforts. These

include investigating indigenous reserves, developing hydropower, and promoting the use of renewable energy sources. By doing so, we can ensure that our future generations have access to a healthy and thriving planet. It is crucial for policymakers to recognize the importance of these sustainable efforts and make them a top priority in their decision-making processes.

Given that, the geopolitical importance of energy security to national sovereignty, Pakistan's independent foreign policy has been adversely affected by the energy crisis. While foreign providers offer a stable energy supply at competitive prices, they often impose conditions that damage the country's standing. This has resulted in a lack of investor faith in the nation, impeding its industrialization and economic self-reliance. Additionally, Pakistan has been unable to meet its citizens' most fundamental energy requirements, resulting in a loss of trust in the government.

PAKISTAN'S ENERGY FRAMEWORK

Pakistan's diverse energy portfolio comprises various sources such as natural gas, oil, hydropower, coal, nuclear, and renewable energy, with a limited proportion of imported electricity. In fiscal year 2018–19, Pakistan's primary energy supply stayed at 83.81 MTOE, growing at an annual rate of -2.8%, as reported by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Secretariat, 2022).



Source: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, 2020.

As seen in Figure 2, oil and gas account for 61% of the total energy mix. Pakistan generated 46 MTOE of energy domestically and imported 41 MTOE in 2017-18, representing 54 percent and 46 percent, respectively, of the country's total energy supply of 86 MTOE. Pakistan relied on imports of oil (including crude and processed goods), natural gas (20%), coal (82%), and liquid petroleum gas (41%) (Year Book 2019-2020).

ENERGY RESOURCES OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan's total installed power generation capacity is 38,719 MW as of June 30, 2020, there are now 35,735 MW connected to the NTDC system and 2,984 MW connected to the KEL system (WAPDA Annual Report, 2018-19).

a) Gas and Oil Resources

Pakistan's primary energy sources are oil and gas In the 2018-19 fiscal year, the majority of Pakistan's energy supply came from crude oil, refined petroleum products, LNG, LPG, and natural gas. Specifically, oil made up 25.7%, gas including LNG made up 45.6%, and LPG made up 1.1%. Unfortunately, most of this energy is imported, and domestic exploration and production

are not being developed despite the country's enormous potential. The Annual Compound Growth Rate (ACGR) of gas and oil in Pakistan was only 5.1% in FY2018, and natural gas output decreased by 0.8% during the same year. Despite having 254 oil fields, 70 associated gas fields, and 240 unassociated gas fields, the majority of them are minor and diminishing. The depletion of the Sui field, which supplies 25% of the gas, only exacerbates the issue. The gas deficit is projected to reach 6,611 Bcf/D by 2029-30, while consumption continues to rise. (Muhammad Yousaf Raza, 2021).

b) Coal Resources

Pakistan boasts an impressive reserve of coal, amounting to a total of 777,755,500,000 tonnes. Despite this abundance, only 4.3 million tonnes are currently being produced. This is concerning, as the country's average consumption is approximately 17.9 million tonnes per year. Unfortunately, Pakistan's coal potential has remained untapped for decades due to a combination of limited funding, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of modern technological expertise. Furthermore, the coal found in the Thar region is not cost-effective for power generation, presenting a significant hurdle to overcome. Coal pollutes the environment in a way that no other fuel does, thus the expense of its environmental pollution will exacerbate the already grave danger to safety (Sheikh Ghulam Jilani, 2021).

c) Hydropower Resources

Pakistan's historic primary source of energy has been hydropower. Pakistan has around 60,000 MW of hydropower potential. Pakistan has barely exploited 11 percent of its overall hydropower capacity as of June 2020. In Pakistan, hydroelectric power generation has a total installed capacity of 9,861 MW, which is connected to Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO) / NTDC. This capacity has been developed by the Water and Power Development Authority

(WAPDA) and Independent Power Producers, and currently makes up around 25% of the country's total installed power producing capacity. Despite this, there is still significant potential for the construction of small-scale run-of-river hydropower plants that hasn't been tapped into yet. In the past, hydroelectric power generation accounted for 65% of the total power generated during the 1960s and 1970s, while thermal power generation accounted for 35%. However, due to the lack of mega hydroelectric projects, this ratio has now nearly reversed. (Muhammad Sibtain, 2021).

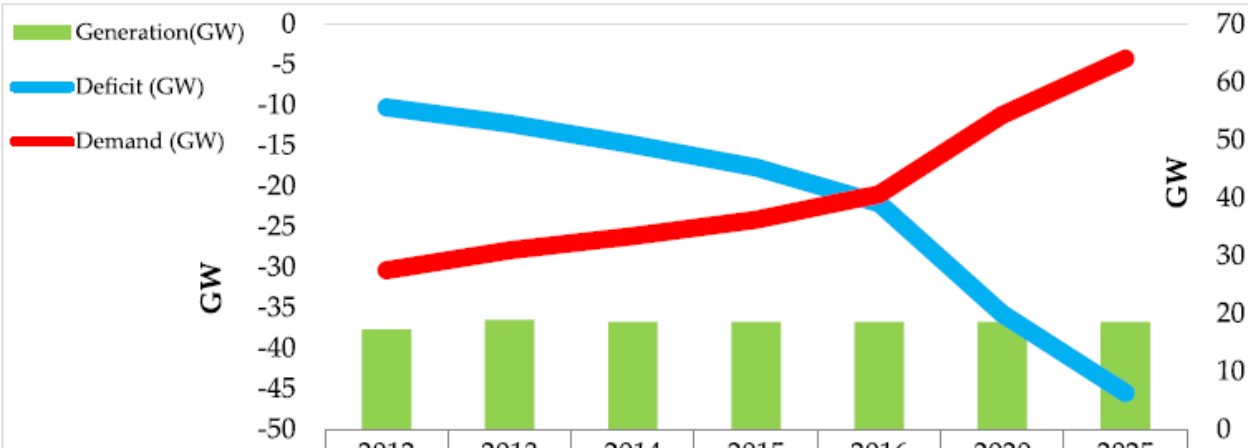
The imbalanced allocation of hydropower and thermal energy has given rise to a heightened demand for imported fuels, which has significantly impacted the country's foreign exchange. The high tariff rates imposed on independent power producers (IPPs) consume a substantial portion of revenue and have contributed to an overall increase in energy tariffs. The lack of political determination and politicization of hydroelectric projects has led to the neglect of hydropower project development. The controversy surrounding the Kalabagh dam has further impeded the progress of other hydroelectric projects.

f) Nuclear Energy

Nuclear power is competitive relative to other energy production choices, but its construction and operation require substantial initial expenditures, a vast industrial infrastructure, and advanced technical competence. Pakistan has been actively pursuing nuclear energy since the 1960s, and currently generates 2,481 MW of nuclear energy, which accounts for approximately 6% of its total installed power generating capacity. Of this, 1,467 MW and 1,014 MW are generated by the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant–II (KANUPP-II). Furthermore, the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant–III (KANUPP-III), with a capacity of 1,014 MW, is expected to be operational by 2022. Pakistan aims to increase its nuclear power production capacity to 8,800 MW by 2030. (Kamran Yousaf Awan, 2012).

ENERGY DEFICIT RATIO

Pakistan has a diverse portfolio of energy sources and both renewable and nonrenewable energy sources are very open to it. Nevertheless, Pakistan is unable to effectively use these resources. Now, there is a 3000 MW energy deficit. 22000 MW of installed power-producing capacity is available, but 25000 MW is needed. In 2010, almost 40% of the population had insufficient electricity. There are about 20 organizations that work in the power sector in the nation, including WAPDA, PEPCO, PPIB, GENCO, etc. Yet, there is government inefficiency in the power sector. The energy sector does not receive adequate funding for research. Over time, nonrenewable sources have received greater attention than renewable ones. When furnace oil is imported, the majority of power is dependent on imports. Because of this, changes in worldwide prices have an impact on domestic energy sector production (Imran, 2020)



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2020	2025
Generation(GW)	17.23	18.87	18.54	18.54	18.54	18.54	18.54
Deficit (GW)	-10.27	-12.27	-14.85	-17.67	-22.11	-35.74	-45.5
Demand (GW)	27.5	30.94	33.39	36.22	40.64	54.32	64.04

There are multiple options available for Pakistan in its neighborhood to fulfill this energy deficit. The cheap, safe, and abundance of energy resources from Russia can help Pakistan

overcome this critical situation. Russian interest in building energy relations with Pakistan is already evident in NS gas pipeline, TAPI, and IP projects.

PAKISTAN AND TAPI:

In the contemporary era, sustainable energy sources play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life for all. A consistent energy supply is a cornerstone of a nation's development and prosperity. Several studies have indicated that providing affordable energy can foster optimal human development. (Anzar Mahmood, 2014).

Pakistan's strategic location in the global energy nexus presents a competitive advantage. However, the country's energy position is far from ideal. Pakistan's heavy reliance on energy imports and limited resources hinder its ability to achieve self-sufficiency. As energy demand rises and costs fluctuate, import expenditures are rapidly increasing. For several decades, Pakistan has been facing a significant energy crisis, resulting in frequent blackouts, rising prices, increasing gas load-shedding, and erratic fuel supply. Considering the importance of energy to national security, Pakistan is currently experiencing energy insecurity.

Pakistan is currently exploring the possibility of partnering with its neighboring countries to improve its energy efficiency. Although it has traditionally relied on Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait for its oil, LNG, and other petroleum products, the country is now considering the economic benefits of exploring countries like CARs, Russia, and Iran. There are already several initiatives underway, including IP, TAPI, and CASA1000, all aimed at achieving this goal. TAPI, in particular, is one of the largest energy cooperation initiatives between states on a global scale. Currently, the completion of TAPI is one of the primary issues for addressing the nation's energy deficit.

Pakistan is eagerly anticipating the imminent launch of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Natural Gas Pipeline (TAPI) project. With the world's fourth-largest gas reserves, Turkmenistan will supply a total of 1.4 billion cubic feet of gas. The pipeline will begin in Turkmenistan, passing through Chaman and Multan, and connecting to the network of Sui firms in Pakistan.

In a December 2022 interview with Musadik Masood Malik, it was confirmed that the TAPI project is moving forward and is expected to cost $34 million. The pipeline will transport natural gas from the Galkynysh Gas Field in Turkmenistan through Pakistan and Afghanistan, ultimately reaching India. To execute the project, the TAPI Pipeline Company (TPCL) was established in November 2014 by Turkmengaz (the largest partner with an 85% stake), Afghan Gas Enterprise (5%), Inter State Gas Systems (5%), and GAIL (5%). Construction of the project began in Turkmenistan on December 13, 2015 Back in February 2018, a momentous ceremony was hosted to celebrate the launch of the Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline project, commonly referred to as TAPI. This ambitious project is poised to provide affordable gas to Pakistan and India, as well as offer transit payments to Afghanistan and Pakistan while creating an energy market for Turkmenistan. The benefits are far-reaching, with consumers enjoying cleaner and more cost-effective energy, leading to an improved economy and reduced inflation. Additionally, TAPI is set to generate profits that can be directed towards enhancing vital social sectors, including housing, healthcare, education, and clean water. (Bhatti, 2022).

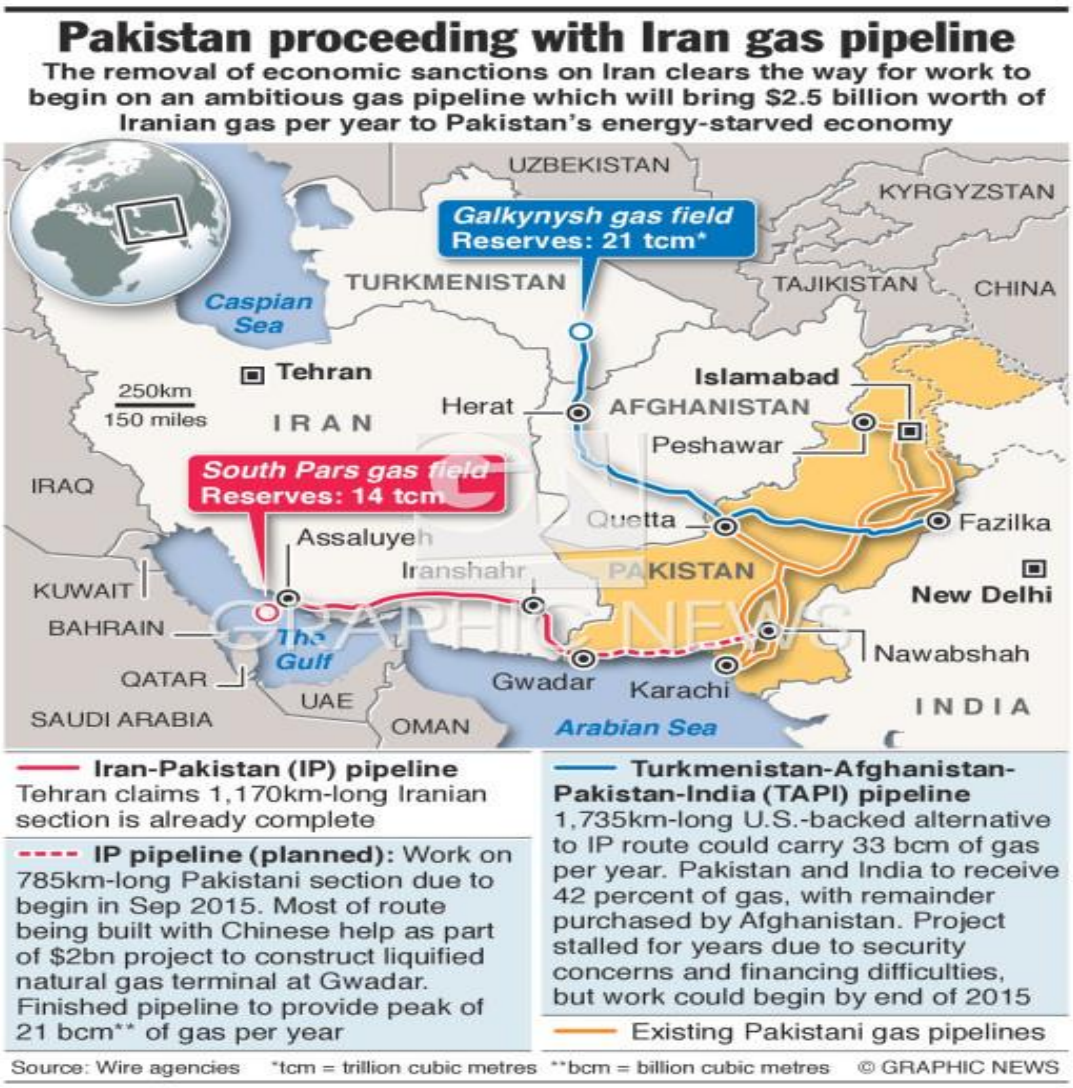
The TAPI initiative has set its sights on enhancing sub-regional economic cooperation and maximizing the utilization of natural gas resources, with the ultimate aim of reducing poverty. By promoting economic activity, the project is poised to create numerous employment opportunities.

While the pipeline was originally slated to begin operations in 2021 and run for 30 years, it has faced some setbacks. Nevertheless, the pipeline is anticipated to transport around 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. This endeavor is regarded by many as a modern-day extension of the Silk Road, and Pakistan has sought to enlist the cooperation of countries like Kazakhstan in this endeavor. Similarly, Russian officials demonstrated a strong interest in participating in this project and supplying Turkmenistan with pipes for the completion of the project's initial phase.

According to TASS Russia announced its intention to participate in the TAPI gas pipeline project. The Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, expressed his views on the "Rossiya-24" television network in January 2023, "Russia will participate on the condition that this proposal is made by the project's partners," he stated. Kabulov further emphasised that Russian President Vladimir Putin signaled his willingness to participate to such a process many years ago. "This is an intrinsic aspect of the Russian policy of reorienting towards Asia, and its economic component, thus we are eager to participate in this [project]. Russia has consistently backed this endeavor, Important not only for Afghanistan but for the entire vast Asian continent, which is witnessing a growing lack of hydrocarbons, stressed Kabulov.

This gas pipeline project, which has received a lot of attention and has faced multiple delays, has been met with various obstacles. In March 2022, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) halted all processing and due diligence activities until the United Nations and other international powers recognize and legitimize the Taliban administration. The increasing influence of the TTP and the deteriorating relationship between the Pakistani government and the Taliban may hinder the timely completion of TAPI (Bhatti, Islamabad Post, 2022).

Consequently, TAPI member nations are concerned about the escalating unpredictability of the security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan's changing area.



PAKISTAN AND PSGP & IP:

On December 5, 2022, Musadik Malik, Pakistan's State Minister for Petroleum, revealed that private Russian companies are currently discussing the possibility of purchasing liquefied natural gas (LNG). He also mentioned that Islamabad is communicating with Russian federal LNG producers, which has led to substantial progress in pipeline project discussions with Moscow.

Additionally, the Russian Foreign Minister emphasized their commitment to exporting crude oil to Pakistan.

However, the energy standoff between Russia and Europe, which began when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, has caused the situation to deteriorate. In May 2022, Gazprom reduced the flow of gas through the Yamal-Europe pipeline that runs through Poland, just 44 hours after Ukraine accused Russian forces of interference and halted the flow of natural gas into Europe. As a result, sanctions were imposed on EuRoPol GAZ, Gazprom's parent company, leading to a significant reduction in energy supplies. Consequently, the current energy situation in Europe is the worst it has been in years.

Traditional warfare is costly, and even if a state wins militarily, it loses economically. It is evident that Russia is anxious to resume gas and oil supplies and investigate Eastern potential in addition to meeting western demands. And this is where its interests converge with those of Pakistan. In order to regulate the supply and demand of oil and gas for local customers, Pakistan seeks less expensive and more readily available alternatives due to its energy problem and rising inflation. Pakistan has been called upon by Moscow to fulfill its pledge to the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP), a project aimed at linking Karachi and Lahore in Punjab. In response, the Pakistani administration has modified the PSGP's project model. Nonetheless, the Russian side asserts that the government-to-government (GtG) model for the project has already been chosen, with only a few ownership agreement provisions remaining to be resolved.

The North-South gas pipeline, also referred to as the Pakistan Stream gas project, holds immense importance for the economic development of Pakistan. The pipeline's construction involves the participation of Russian companies and has been subjected to prolonged delays. In 2015, the governments of Pakistan and Russia reached a consensus to erect a 1,100-kilometer (680-mile) pipeline that facilitates

the transportation of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Karachi, situated on the Arabian Sea coast, to power plants located in Punjab, the northeastern province of the country. (Bhatti, Pakistan Today, 2023).

Pakistan has encountered certain challenges in the implementation of two major gas-related projects, namely the Pakistan Gas Stream Project and the Iranian offshore gas pipeline (IPI). These projects have been a joint effort between Pakistan and Russia for a considerable period, but have been put on hold due to opposition from the United States. Initially, Russia had planned to build the pipeline using the build, own, operate, and transfer (BOOT) approach, with Moscow funding 85% of the project before transferring it to Pakistan's Inter State Gas Systems (ISGS) after 25 years. Russia had selected RT Global, while Pakistan had chosen ISGS to assist with the realization of the project. Unfortunately, the US imposed sanctions on RT Global shortly after the agreement was reached. Russia then began working with other firms to commence work on the project, but there has been little progress made thus far. During the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) administration, the gas pipeline project's framework was revised, and an agreement was reached between Pakistan and Russia in which Pakistani firms would hold 76% of the shares, and Russia would hold the remaining 24%.

Back in 2017, Gazprom and the Pakistani Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGCL) solidified their partnership with a second agreement, in addition to the Pakistan Gas Sales Purchase Agreement (PGSP). This agreement aimed to explore delivering gas to Pakistan and other countries, while also developing hydrocarbon projects. In 2018, Gazprom and Pakistan signed a hefty $10 billion deal to conduct a feasibility study for an offshore pipeline between Iran and Pakistan. Furthermore, Russia pledged $14 billion in investments for the North-South Pipeline Project and underground gas storage facilities in Pakistan in 2019. However, it's worth noting that other market participants may also play a role in these decisions. Currently, Pakistan largely

imports crude oil from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, with Saudi Arabia providing crude oil and Kuwait supplying refined petroleum products. Some of these goods are transported by spot freight. The oil market in Pakistan has been predominantly influenced by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, while the petrol market has been primarily dominated by Qatar. According to authoritative sources, it is possible that Pakistan and Russia might establish an energy agreement under the prevailing circumstances, thereby enhancing their strategic relationship. In order to provide virtual support to the Pakistani team during their visit to Russia for negotiations, the government has established a high-level committee primarily composed of CEOs from state-owned oil corporations.

Moscow intends to establish a presidential decree that will impose restrictions on the sale of oil by Russian merchants and enterprises exclusively to governments that actively engage in the system aimed at regulating the price of Russian oil. Pakistan's ability to engage in oil trade with Russia is contingent upon its dependence on a No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by the United States. The current geopolitical situation in Ukraine has resulted in a temporary suspension of energy projects between Islamabad and Moscow. However, discussions are underway regarding a potential trade agreement specifically focused on oil and gas. Additionally, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar are also engaged in participation.

PAKISTAN AS RUSSIA'S NEW ENERGY CLIENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA:

Russia is frequently referred to as an "energy superpower" due to its status as the largest global provider of natural gas and the second-largest exporter of oil. Since the 1970s, it has been the primary supplier of petroleum and natural gas to the European Union. Russia will be need to diversify its energy export markets due to the European Union's European Green Deal, which advocates for the utilisation of renewable energy sources and the mitigation of greenhouse gas

emissions. The occurrence of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022 has resulted in significant alterations (Bhatti, Pakistan Observer, 2023).

It is also clear that the EU is concerned about becoming overly dependent on Russia to satisfy its energy needs. Several EU nations were impacted when Russia halted gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006, 2009, and 2014 owing to pricing conflicts and political differences. In January of 2020, Russia and Belarus were embroiled in a contractual disagreement that led to the suspension of oil delivery

These events illustrate the bloc's "structural scarcity" and Russian preeminence in energy security. In an effort to minimise its reliance on Russia, the European Union has been expanding its network of trading partners and constructing new energy infrastructure.

Russia's energy exports to the European Union fell from 60.8% of the country's total exports in 2016 to 55.3% in 2020. Although Russia remains the EU's primary supplier, its overall proportion of the EU's key energy imports has fallen.

In its quest of energy security, the European Union (EU) will have a hard time breaking free of its geopolitical entanglements. long before Ukrain crisis, The United States, Ukraine, and Poland have all been vocal opponents of the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, and their opposition . Sanctions on Russian enterprises involved in the NS2 project were issued by the Trump administration in January 2021.

Those sanctions were lifted by President Joe Biden in May 2021, and in July of that year, he struck an agreement with Germany wherein that country committed to respond if Moscow used energy as a "weapon" against European states. After a month, however, the Biden administration brought back sanctions against Russian companies while exempting the business responsible for

building NS2. Regardless of the fact that Russia's cheap energy supply has been essential in meeting European demand and encouraging economic growth.

Since the conflict in Ukraine and the subsequent European sanctions, there has been a heightened sense of risk that Russia poses to Europe. As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, Russia's GDP will contract by 3% in 2020.

The ruble's collapse is exacerbated by falling global energy demand and increasing oil costs.Russia's economy is highly dependent on revenues from the sale of natural gas and petroleum, thus Moscow is actively pursuing new markets. Here, gas-starved Pakistan takes centre stage as a potentially robust energy user.

According to a white paper produced by the Asian Development Bank in 2019, Pakistan is an energy-insecure country. Pakistan has a gas shortage of 1.5 bcfd right now, and that number is expected to quadruple by 2025. Since domestic gas supplies will fall from 3.51 billion cubic feet per day in 2020 to 1.67 billion cubic feet per day in 2028, authorities predict that LNG imports will rise to meet demand. The country started bringing in Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in 2015 in an effort to slow the growth of demand and reduce its reliance on foreign oil. Islamabad has quickly risen in the ranks, becoming the world's ninth largest LNG importer in just the past eight years. However, Pakistan is actively looking for new energy partners in its neighborhood. With plans to triple LNG production capacity by 2035 and increase LNG exports, Russia is eager to include Pakistan as a new energy user. In addition to the PSGP, Russian firms have also submitted bids to increase LNG exports to Pakistan. Russia is keen to participate in TAPI and IP initiatives in which Pakistan plays a key role. This common ground may mark the beginning of a new era of cooperation between Pakistan and Russia.

CONCLUSION

With a definitive agreement expected to be concluded by late March, Pakistan will soon be able to purchase crude oil and oil products from Russia. The first shipment will soon arrive in Pakistan and state will be able to overcome its energy security.

In January 2023, Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov visited in Pakistan to negotiate the agreement. According to Shulginov, "We have already decided to create an agreement to resolve all of our transportation, insurance, payment, and volume-related issues. These matters are in the last stages of the agreement."

The pact, if finalised, would be vital for the Pakistani economy and its energy requirments. This is Pakistan and Russia's first significant step towards establishing bilateral cooperation in the trading of oil and gas. Because in the past, discussions in this respect stayed at simple expressions of interest.

Pakistan desires not only to begin crude oil imports within a few months, but also to fulfil 35% of its entire crude oil demand from Russia. If all goes according to plan, trade might further transform the bilateral relationship, enabling the two nations to better arrange their interactions. The possibility of oil and gas imports from Russia also implies that Pakistan, which currently purchases oil from Saudi Arabia, Kwait and Qatar with deferred payment options, will have access to oil at discounted costs from an additional source.

This is crucial since Pakistan faces a deficit-like position, with foreign currency reserves just sufficient to pay three weeks' worth of oil imports. The bulk of Pakistan's imports consist of energy, and cheaper oil from Russia would assist Pakistan in containing its expanding trade imbalance and balance of payments issue after a consensus is established on the technical specification, oil and gas trading transactions will be organized in a way that benefits both nations.

This will help Pakistan to overcome its energy deficit condition and regulate its supply and demand chain, creating employment opportunities and ultimately adding to the economic growth that would mitigate the threat to national security in Pakistan.

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