

**Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and the Geopolitics of  
Central Asia's Traditional Indus Basin Corridor**

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## **I. Background**

Political orders often shape the processes of socioeconomic and cultural developments often through conquests and migrations or after an economic or military disaster and civil wars or simply by the fall of an existing order caused by specific historical reasons with a major power vacuum. The construction of new political orders can take decades. The power vacuum caused by the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) has initiated the processes of an emerging political order, which, among other things, has to determine that the landlocked Central Asian countries including Afghanistan and Caucasus are reconnected with the world economy through region's traditional cost effective transportation routes in Southwest Asia. Commercial Dependence of the landlocked newly independent states solely upon the old Soviet routes and constant civil unrest in Afghanistan caused by the zero-sum game played by regional and international actors continue to hamper efforts toward the creation of a new commercial regime necessary to help revive Central Asia's long stalled traditional economic and political socialization with its southern neighbors. There are geopolinomic reasons to believe that the presence of alternative routes of transportation through Central Asia's historic land and sea outlets originating in Southwest Asia through the warm waters of the Arabian Sea can stimulate the regional and cross-continental trade with positive impact over the ongoing economic and political transitions as well as broader regional stability.

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Approximately seventeen years long efforts by the international community to invigorate the narrowly fluctuating GDP's of most Central Asian states (with an exception of Kazakhstan) have yet to materialize. Attempts toward the creation of some regional economic unions, such as the Economic Cooperation Organization and/or Central Asian Common Market and others have not succeeded enough to integrate Central Asian republics into the world economy. Dependency oriented former unidirectional Soviet transportation infrastructure and the lack of an unambiguous international understanding about the resource rich Central Asia's traditional communication routes through Southwest Asian ports in Pakistan and Iran have stalled CA's path of progress. The Greater Central Asia Partnership (GCAP) idea conceptualized by Professor S. Frederick Starr<sup>1</sup> is in fact, the first major attempt in United States toward the regional development strategy intended to reintegrate Central Asian trade cross-continently through its traditional historic routes of communication. It promises to replace this region's Old camel and horse oriented Caravan routes with modernized rail, road and maritime trade infrastructure. This North-South corridor strategy is bound to reintegrate Central Asia and Caucasus with broad based world economy with desired speediness, hence the processes of regional economic, social and political development.

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## II. Conceptual Justification:

GCAP is a gradually evolved geopolinomic concept with its own attributes related to the transit-route politics. It is derived from the earlier conceptual developments in geopolitics and economics. Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory about power supremacy in the world during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (revised in 1943) focused upon modern Central Asia and surrounding regions as the core of world power competition. His Heartland theory aroused a new interest in this field and was readily applied as a major strategic doctrine in the defense policies of all major powers of the time. By the

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<sup>1</sup> "Greater Central Asia Partnership: Afghanistan and its Neighbors", **Foreign Affairs**, Summer, 2005.

middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory appeared on the scene as an alternative development, which, recognizing the importance of Heartland theory, explained the processes how to restrict the Heartland expansionism. The Cold War era witnessed both Heartland and Rimland theory plays as applied mechanisms of conflict and cooperation in the defense and foreign policies of the competing superpowers through conflicting roles between Heartland and Rimland spheres themselves, and by cooperative alliances within each power's respective areas of influence.

GCAP as a geopolinomic concept is another major development in the evolution of geopolitics, which proposes a simultaneous cooperation between Heartlands and Rimlands by intersecting geopolitics with economics aiming at spurring a new geopolinomic regime in Central and South Asia and surrounding regions as a mechanism for regional economic integration and cross-continental trade. Re-linking Central Asia with the world economy through its traditional Southwest Asian commercial transit routes via Afghanistan and through Karakurams is the focus of this concept. Moreover, GCAP's new geopolinomic realism derives its strength from historical evidence related to the regional and cross-continental commerce between East, Central and South Asia, and Europe under various political orders across centuries, when the southern Indus river port Barbarikon<sup>2</sup> through a network of land and sea Silk-routes served Central Asia as an import and export outlet as well as an emporium of economic and political socialization.

The Indus River Basin (IRB) has served as a natural historical boundary between historic India or Indostan (modern Pakistan) and Bharat (now called modern India under the British tradition). IRB has played a significant role in intercultural and international relationships between Central and South Asia including modern Afghanistan and Iran. Focusing upon the transit routes as an essential geopolinomic requisite for trade, GCAP as a strategic doctrine signifies cooperation between the Heartland and Rimland space. By this configuration, the Indus Basin state, i.e. modern Pakistan plays a pivotal role through its closest ever rail, road and maritime communication infrastructure for trade as

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<sup>2</sup> Barbarikon may be the port that Alexander of Macedonia established in 332 B.C. on the Indus when shipping all of his war booty to Babylon by sea, while personally taking the harsh route through Gedrosia (modern Pakistani Baluchistan). All historians of Alexander describe this. Origins of Barbarikon/Bhambhor remain a mystery, linguistic pronunciation of the word Barbarikon to localized term Bhambhor suggest a resemblance. just as the Greek word Indus is locally pronounced as Sindh; Hind by Persians and Al-Hind by Arabs those days. Barbarikon port on the Indus is shown on the territorial map D of the Kushan Empire.

well as possible oil and gas pipeline outlets for Central, South, Southeast and East Asia and Europe as an alternative to the existing transit routes, hence associated forms of socioeconomic development and political socialization. Pakistani road, rail networks and port facilities provide an answer to the dilemmas of the hitherto handicapped economic and political development processes in Central Asia. Justification for GCAP can be traced to various ancient, medieval and modern historical epochs and rationalized by the present day geopolitics as a cooperation mechanism, a modicum that is likely to help bridge gaps between the conflicting interests of power politics with new forms of emerging interdependence through pipelines and trade routes, hence newer trends in the path of political order both regionally and internationally.

Critics of GCAP<sup>3</sup> are unable to offer alternative answers to Central Asia's chronic problem of landlockedness and represent forces opposed to the idea of alternative traditional Southern routes of transportation. Analytical data provided in this paper demonstrates that the alternative routes of transportation through Pakistan, once fully functional, are likely to multiply the existing commercial transactions that are necessary to balance the concurrent economic and political development linkages in Central and South Asia, the surrounding regions of China, Mongolia, Central Russia, Near and Middle East as well as the East Asian, European, American and African markets. GCAP is thus as a major geopolitic development with focus on transit-root corridors centered around the hitherto hampered processes of political reordering in Central and South Eurasia. Next section offers the importance of GCAP from an historical context.

### III. GCAP's Historical Significance<sup>4</sup>:

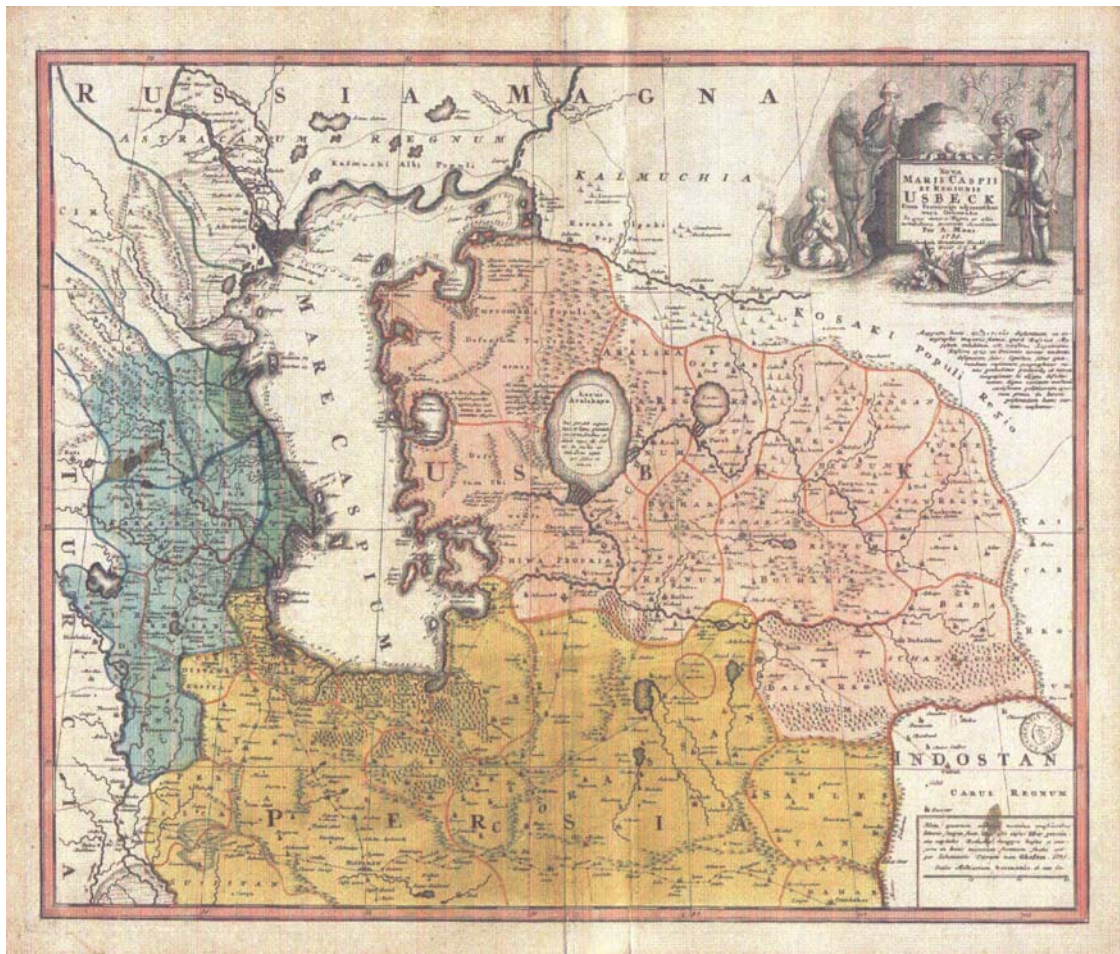
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<sup>3</sup> ADD REFERENCE TO THE BOOK IN RUSSIAN

<sup>4</sup> Information provided in historical significance is scattered in several books including the Encyclopedia Britannica. Besides the several publications on historic India, Sindh and Hindustan and Muslim rule in on the subcontinent in the Persian language, suffices herewith to cite some literature in the English and Sindhi languages, which includes M.H. Panwar, **Chronological Dictionary of Sindh**, Jamshoro Pakistan: Institute of Sindhology, 1983; Abraham Eraly, **The Mughal Throne: The Saga of India's Great Emperors**, London Phoenix, Orion Books Ltd., 2004; A.T. Olmstead, **History of the Persian Empire**, Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1948; Mohammed Yunus and Ardhana Parmar, **South Asia: A Historical Narrative**, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003; Ahmad Hassan Dani, **New Light on Central Asia**, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1993; Dr. N.A. Baloch, **Sindh: Studies in History, Vol. I**, Karachi: Kalthora Seminar Committee, 1996, and Shamsudin Rukandin Quraishi, **Aina-e-Qadeem Sindh** (A Mirror of Ancient Sindh –in Sindhi Language), Hyderabad Sindh: R.H. & Ahmed

Although history does not repeat itself per se geopolitical orders often resemble various epochs when analyzed at various historical time-periods and cross-generational levels. With respect to land and sea communication, history of the Indus Basin can be traced back to 3000 B.C. for its trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia and the European continent. Internal migrations within the Indus basin in earlier times occurred largely through the northern Kunjrab Pass in the Karakurams than Khyber, Golan or Bolan passes in Central Pakistan, which were largely used by conquerors. From Darius of Persia and Alexander of Macedonia to Muhammad bin Qasim of Arabs and Mahmud of Ghazna, not a single conqueror ever attempted to cross the eastern banks of river Indus inside the Bharatan hinterlands until the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the only exception of Emperor Kanishka of Kushan dynasty around 238 A.D. From his capital in modern Peshawar, he also penetrated inside the Eastern Punjab up to Mathura region in Bharat. At least until the mid 11<sup>th</sup> century, Lodhis, Khiljis and their successors from Central Asia penetrated into Eastern Punjab. These dynasties established the foundations of the Muslim Empire in Delhi on the Bharatan land. Modern histories in the West often describe the entire South Asian subcontinent as India, however, until the rise of British power in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the name Indostan or Hindustan was applied to territories of the Indus Basin and its tributary regions in Punjab, Sindh and surrounding regions in Central Asian and European records. After the Mughul rule in Delhi (prior Muslim governments are named as Delhi Sultanats), Bharatan territory beyond the Indus Basin was also called Hindustan. Map A illustrates this fact.

**Map A.**

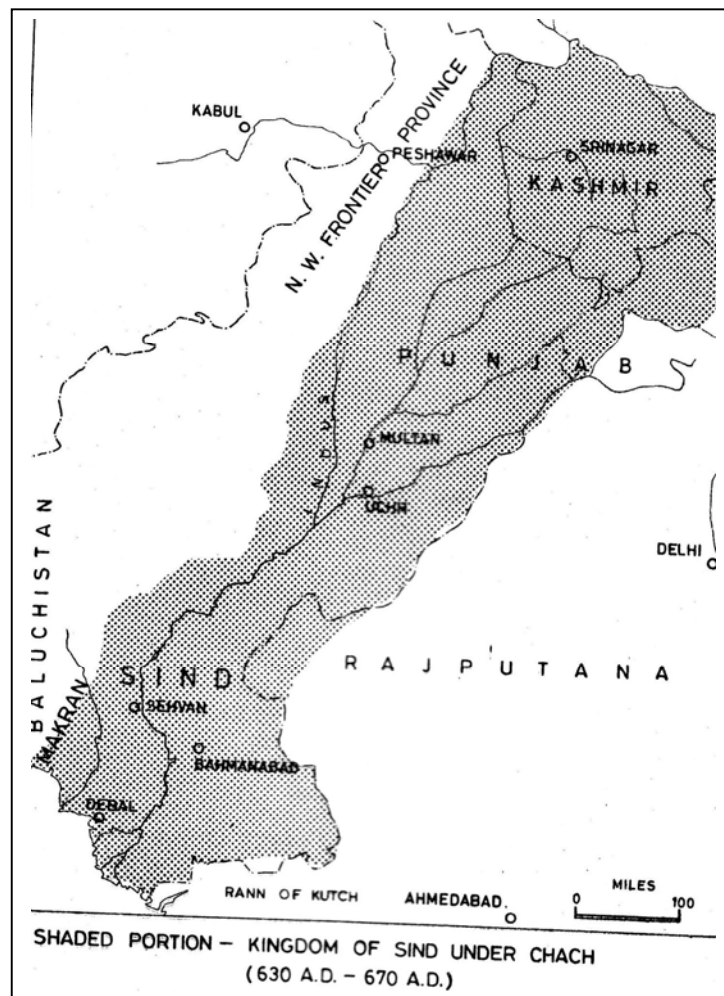


*A Greco-Latin map of Central Asia, University of Leiden 1731 A.D.*

Annexation of the Indus Basin into Bharat by Maurya dynasty (327 B.C) was not led by a conquest, but through negotiations between the Greek General Seleucus and Bharatan ruler Chandra Gupta Maurya. Having succeeded Alexander after his death to rule over the largest part of Alexander's vast Empire, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indus, Seleucus found himself under pressures of local rivalries. He thus negotiated with Chandra Gupta an exchange of the Eastern Indus regions for peace on the eastern borders of his domain, i.e. modern Pakistan. The fall of Maurya dynasty returned the Indus Basin territories to its previous forms of political socialization with Central Asia, Persia and later under the Arab Muslim political orders. The Gupta dynasty, which succeeded Mauryas, ruled Eastern Punjab and parts of Sindh now in modern India, not the entire Sindhu or the Indus Basin. Although during the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Lodhis of Central Asia

conquered the central parts of the Indus Basin, i.e. parts of the Pakistani Punjab enroute Delhi, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Mughul Emperor Akbar formally annexed the entire Indus Basin state (indigenously called Sindh or Al-Hind as called by Arabs) into his Empire. During the conquest by Arab General Muhammad bin Qasim in 610 A.D., the Indus Basin Sindh state stretched from modern Kashmir to Karachi on the Arabian Sea coast, which more or less comprises the present day Pakistan. The Map B illustrates the boundaries of the Kingdom of Sindh under the Brahman ruler Chach, who was the father of Raja Dahir, the ruler conquered by Arabs.

**Map B**

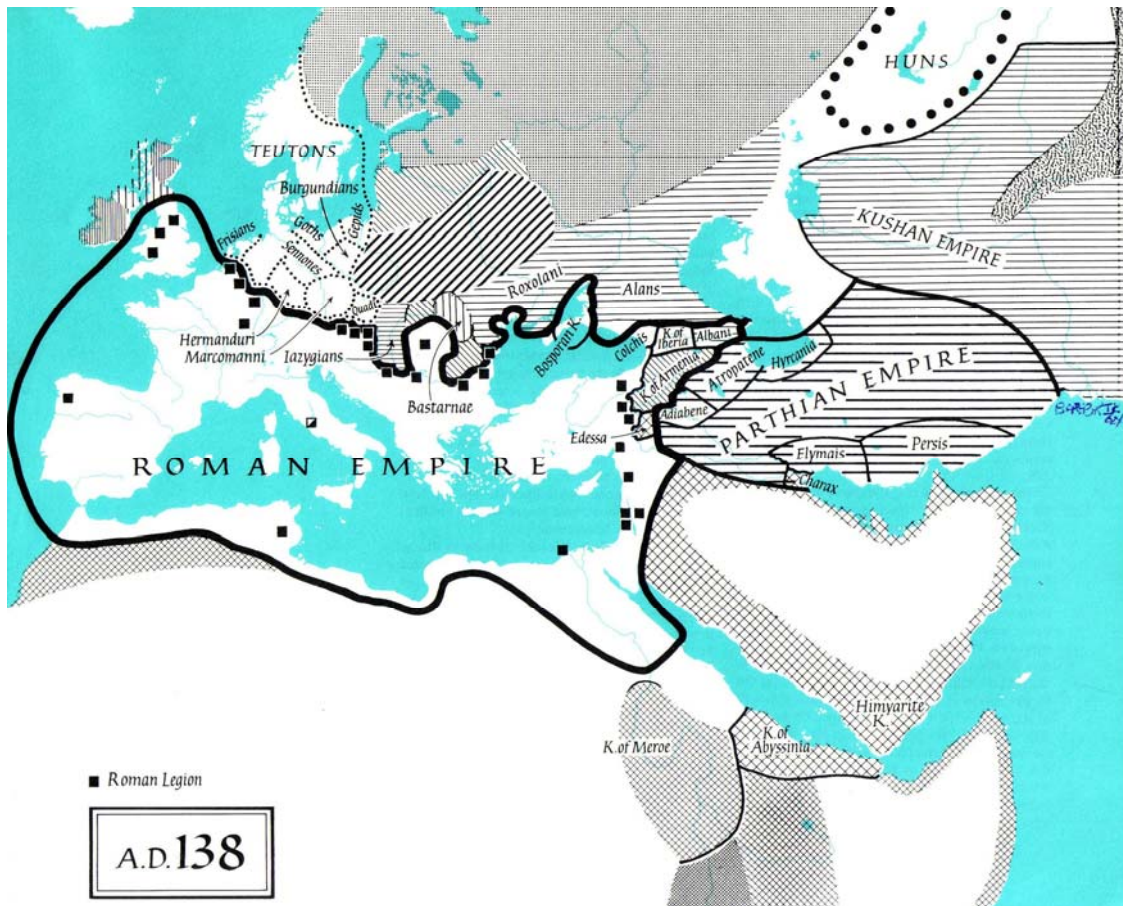


Not so long before the Arab conquest, around 500 A.D. the Great Kushans ruled over the Indus State. The interim period was influenced by the remnants of Kushans, while the Sassanid Empire of Persia maintained a close relationship with the southern Sindh



regions. Having dealt with the necessary historical details suffices it to trace the GCAP scheme patterns into various historic epochs explaining it by the model of the Kushan Empire.

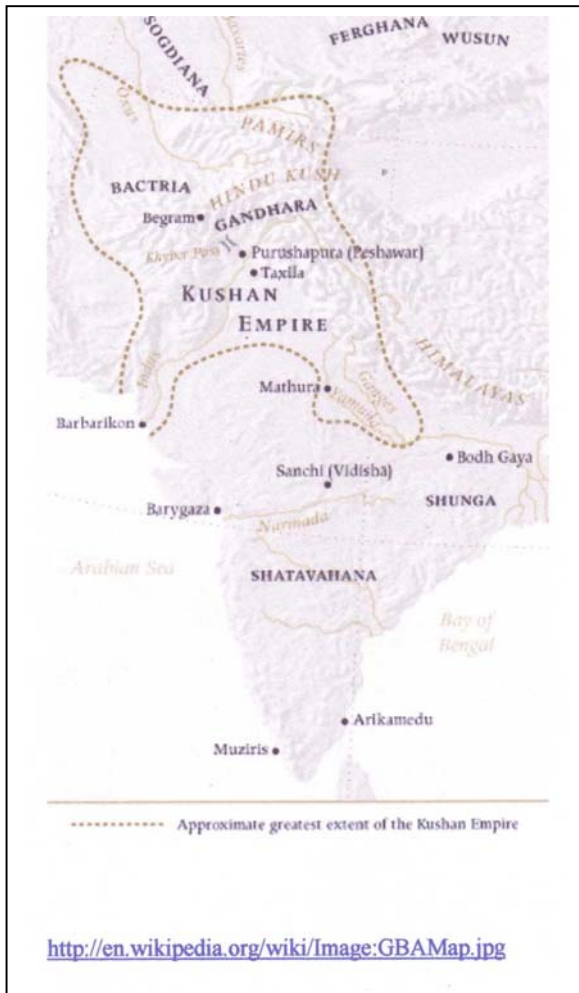
Map C



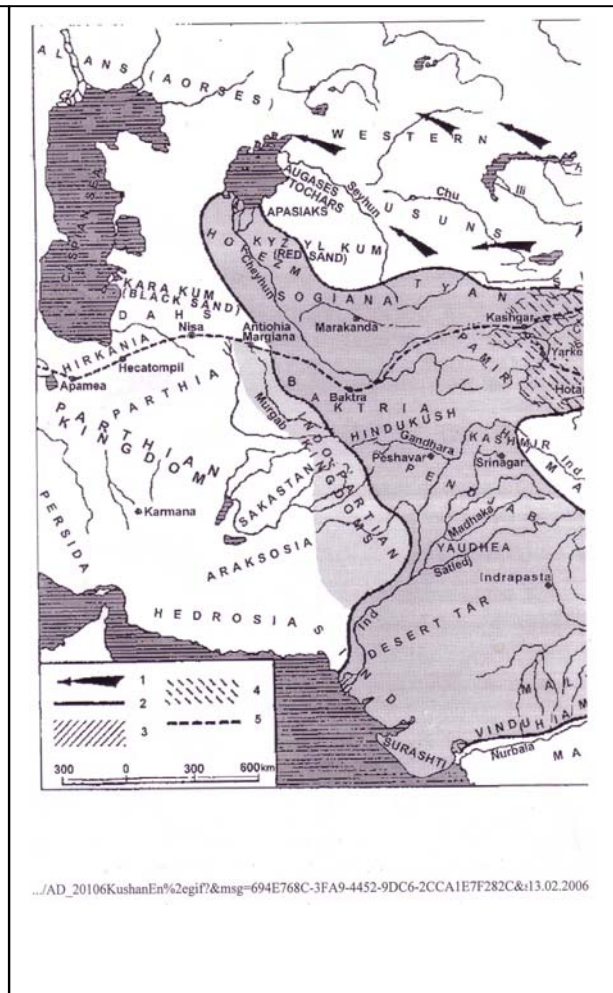
The Kushan Empire encompassed more or less the regions of modern day Central Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan that are considered essential as a regional trade hub in the GCAP scheme. Political orders since the establishment of Kushan Empire, although different in terms of ideologies such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, etc. (Patriotism prevailed instead of nationalism) indicate similar territorial rule patterns under empires following Kushans including the Sasanids of Persia, who cultivated considerable influence in the Indus Basin regions of Turan, Makran and Sindh until the beginnings of Arab-Muslim order throughout Central Asia and Southwest Asia by the early 7th century A.D. Kushan Empire stretched from regions that comprise modern day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, parts of Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and north Central Pakistan with

a satrap (governor in Persian) in the southern Indus Basin (modern provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan in Pakistan) allowing Kushans the commercial access through its ports on the Arabian Sea coast.

**Map D**



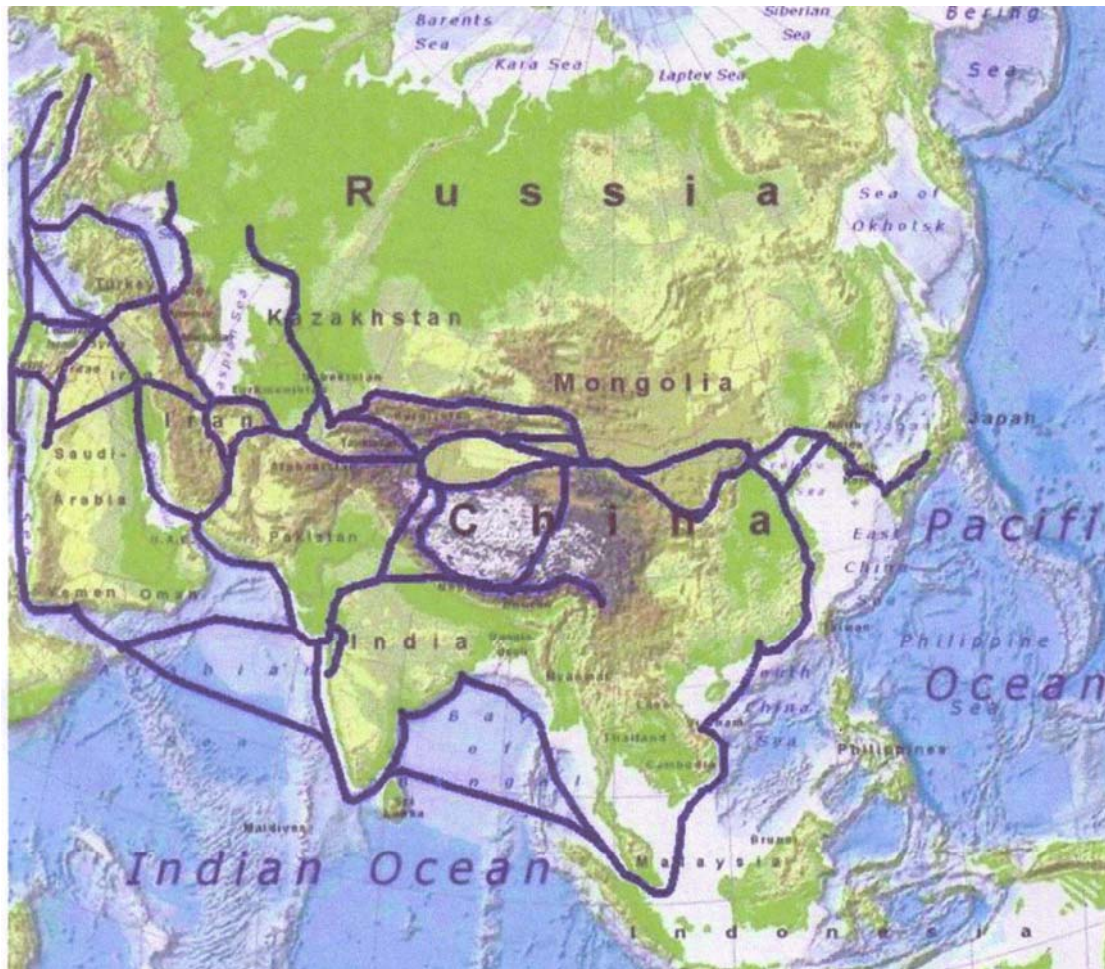
**Map E.**



The ruins of the then Indus coastal harbor Barbarikon still exist some 60 kilometers near Karachi and are called Bhambhor by the natives. This communication through Barbarikon on the Arabian Sea and via lands of modern day Pakistan was one of the then Silk routes. The cross-continental trade of the Kushan and the Chinese Empire in gold, silver, silk and spices with the Roman Empire was carried out through this route by the time Sassanid ruled over Persia. Ships sailed from the Arabian Sea to Red Sea and entered Mediterranean via the Red Sea Niles canal in Egypt, from where the goods were exported to Greece and Rome.

The Kushan incursions in Bharatan hinterland were limited to Eastern Punjab - close to Mathura in Yamuna River Basin- for peripheral reasons, as is suggested by the fall of Kushan Empire in 500 A.D. Eastern Punjab was ruled by the Gupta Dynasty, while areas surrounding the Indus Basin regions remained with the remnants of Kushan rulers without much change in the territorial political order. Rulers changed, but the territorial order remained more or less the same. Attached maps A, B and C demonstrate more or less the resemblance between the territories of Kushan Empire and GCAP trade regions with transportation corridors largely running through modern Pakistan and Iran coastal regions. Although much has been attributed to Bharat by its present day name India, actual India in the days of Kushans was the Indus Basin, the present day Pakistan.

**Map F.**

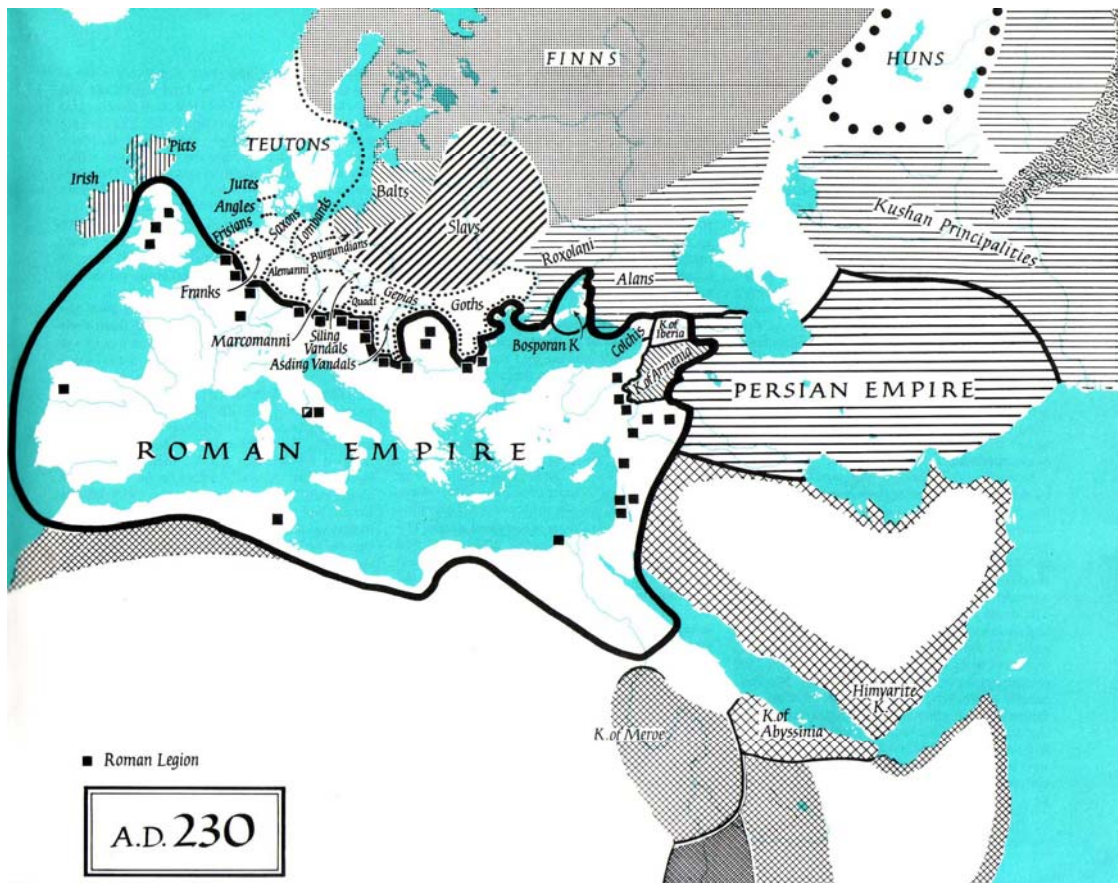


<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Silkroutes.jpg>

Contrary to the conclusions of the 1968 Dushanbe Conference on the ‘Kushan Period’ that reflected upon India-Central Asia commercial and cultural interactions<sup>5</sup>, the applied India, in fact, referred to the regions of modern Pakistan, from where the Kushan commercial and cultural influences in the form of Hellenistic Gandharan arts were extended to Bharat. Nevertheless, suffices to say that both the Indus Basin and Bharat have mutually influenced each other in cultural development under specific historical time-periods but not always.

Present day sociopolitical influences on the modern day Indian subcontinent can be traced back with the beginnings of Muslim Empire and the succeeding British Empire. Fall of these empires reestablished the Indus Basin state as Pakistan, which has often served more or less as natural boundary between historic Indostan and Bharat.

**Map G.**

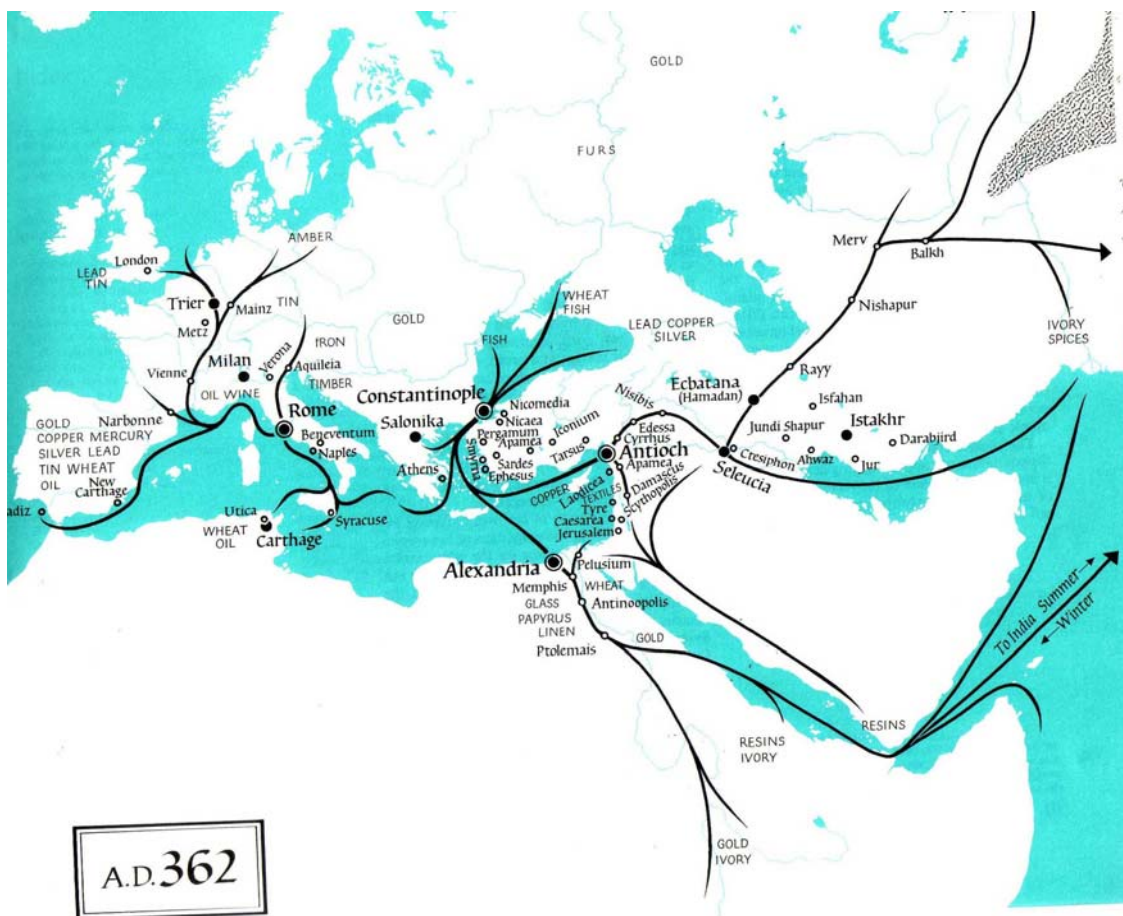


<sup>5</sup>Cited by Moonis Ahmar, “India and its Role in the New Central Asia”, **Pakistan Horizon**, Vol. 45, No.3, July 1992, p. 59 from Niranjana M. Khilnani, **Realities of Indian Foreign Policy**, New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1984, pp. 167-168

McEvedy Colin, *The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History*, Penguin Books, 1988

Within this historical background, the GCAP proposals of region-wide partnerships resemble the extension of trade patterns under Kushans with their own gold and silver currencies. The phenomena that are now called Silk routes are very old. Kushan Rule in fact, revitalized them and their empire served as the hub of larger regional trade between China and Central and South Asia, all the way to Rome through the Arabian Sea and Red Sea canal to Egypt between 100-500 A.D. (Maps F and G portray the traditional Silk routes between the Kushan and Roman Empires. Map F maintains modern day identities of states in Central and South Asia).

### Map H.



*The maps of A.D. 230 and A.D. 362 have been cited from McEvedy Colin, The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History, Penguin Books, 1988*

Although this map does not show internal trade route connections, the transport facilities of Kushans resemble more or less to the present day trade routes being planned by the Pakistan government. Applied modern technology has facilitated connections between

Pakistan national highways, railways and the port facilities of Karachi, Port Qasim and Gawadar. Newly planned roads also include connecting points with Afghanistan at various junctions including Jalalabad, Wakhan border, and Western China through the northern Karakoram Highway, hence with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan via Chinese roads as the north-south alternative transit route (SEE MAP I). Under a contract of US\$200 million, China will be revamping the Karakoram Highway with 5 to 6 bridges on route turning it into a year round weather-fair road.<sup>6</sup> Pakistani transit routes connecting India already exist, however, their effectiveness largely depends upon a long-term transit related negotiations with Pakistan.

#### IV. The Geopolitics of Transit Routes:

Should the alternative routes of transportation for Central Asia and surrounding regions be considered as essentials in GCAP concept for regional and international trade, the geostrategic location of Pakistan provides the most convenient modern rail and road facilities with relatively short distances. A comparative overview of distances between Islamabad and Karachi and the capital cities of Central Asia as well as existing Soviet era Russian port facilities illustrates this point:

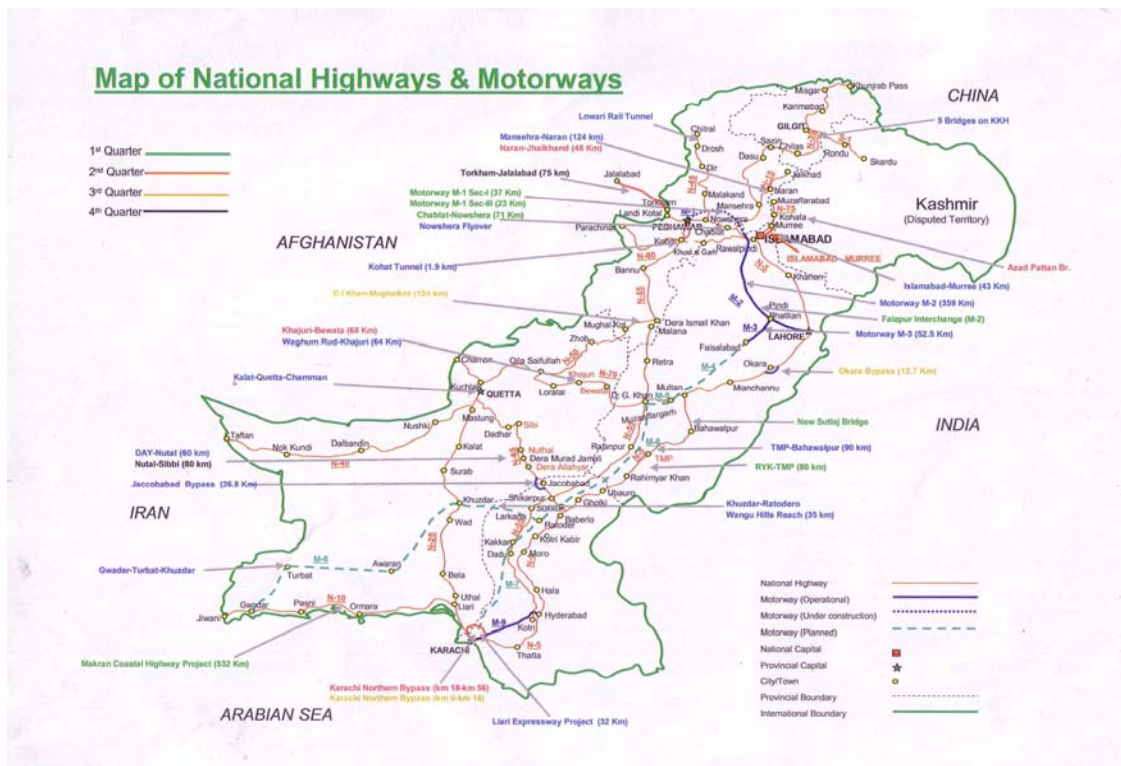
**TABLE I:**  
**Distances Between Pakistan, Russian and Central Asian Destinations**

From	To	Distance	From	To	Distance
Islamabad	Tashkent	800 km	Karachi	Dushanbe	2720 km
Islamabad	Dushanbe	640 km	Abadan	Dushanbe	3200 km
Islamabad	Alma Ata	1040 km	BandarAbbas	Dushanbe	3440 km
Islamabad	Bishkek	960 km	Odessa in Black Sea	Dushanbe	3400 km
Tashkent	Chaman	1292 km	Vladivostok in Pacific	Dushanbe	9500 km
Karachi	Lahore	1292 km	Gawadar	Karachi	489 km

*(Table prepared from the article by Shameem Akhtar, "Strategic Significance of Central Asia", Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 45, No. 3, July 1992, pp. 49-56. Routes remain the same since this publication).*

<sup>6</sup> Conversations at the Ministry of Communications, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 27, 2006.

Map I.



Ministry of Communications, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 2006

Pakistan expressed great enthusiasm as one of the major transit-route corridors for Central Asian states at the time of independence. Estimating new port facilities in terms of distance, Pakistan government considered the construction of additional ports in 1995, besides Karachi and Port Qasim. The construction of the new Gawadar deep sea maritime port on Baluchistan coast and related connecting routes with Afghanistan reduce these distances by approximately 500 km for Pakistan-Central Asia traffic. During one of his U.S. visits in (summer 2005) in his presentation at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, President Hamid Karzai emphasized upon the importance of 32 hours long travel distance by road from Karachi to Tashkent via Afghanistan. The distance between Karachi to Chaman is relatively longer than from Chaman to Dushanbe –via Afghanistan- and the port facility at Gawadar lessens it by approximately 500 km reducing travel time from five to ten hours, depending upon where the journey may have started.

Should the increasing volume of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan be juxtaposed vis-à-vis the Pakistani transit-routes, Afghanistan-Pakistan trade in 2004

enhanced up to US\$1 billion.<sup>7</sup> According to officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, “ By early 2006, the Afghan-Pak trade has already reached US\$1.2 billion against the US\$3 million trade between India and Pakistan and that approximately 60,000 Pakistani workers are engaged in the Afghanistan reconstruction projects”.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan shares approximately 2500 km of border with Afghanistan and offers that country the most important trade facilities. Despite some disagreements on tariffs, largely over some electrical supplies from Dubai, which often are smuggled back to Pakistan, the trade volume between Afghanistan and Pakistan is continuously rising. Some Afghan government officials have complained about lengthy time-period in cargo clearance at Karachi and Port Qasim, however, recent modernization of ports and reformed customs rules and technological facilities have reduced the time from twelve to 4 days.

Similarly, recent reports indicate significant increases in trade volume between India and Pakistan rising in the direction of US\$1 billion<sup>9</sup>, Pakistan-Central Asia trade figures still fluctuate in between the trade volume figures of mid 90s. The India-Afghanistan trade, particularly reconstruction assistance is transported through Pakistan on Afghanistani/Pakistani vehicles from Karachi to Kabul. Direct transit for India through Pakistan is a component of the compound package of Confidence Building Measures depending upon the progress of detente between these two countries, which so far has been encouragingly rocky and slow.

Minimal trade between Pakistan and Central Asian States is likely to improve in the wake of improving transit security in Afghanistan, as well as through the bilateral agreements over commercial mechanisms between Pakistan and Central Asian states. Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to construct a 20 km long road together with electricity supply line to help facilitate trilateral trade and Pakistani import of electricity from Tajikistan with possibilities of exports to India as well.<sup>10</sup> However, Pakistan has also welcomed a new suggestion of President Karzai that the electricity transit to Pakistan may be facilitated via Kabul than the Wakhan border route.

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<sup>7</sup> “Trade with Kabul to rise to \$1 bn”, Daily **DAWN** (Karachi) January 19, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Personal meetings with top officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 28, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> “India Pakistan trade on the rise”, Daily **DAWN** (Karachi), March 20, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Meetings in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, February 28, 2006



Secular and commercial initiatives by Pakistan over the last seven years are rapidly helping its image in Central Asian Republics (CARs). While Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed an extradition treaty in January 2002, the Pakistani government has waived a USD\$10 million loan to Kyrgyzstan. The Almaty-Karachi road via Karakurams (Almaty-Bishkek-Kashgar-Karakuram-Islamabad-Karachi network) is functioning, albeit with a low trade volume at this time. The trade volume is likely to grow once the construction of Gawadar is complete. The development of Gawadar is likely to open new opportunities of foreign direct investment in both regions. Although the government of Pakistan has reservations about Tajikistan leasing a military airbase to India for unexplained reasons, the Tajik government seems attentive to Pakistani concerns on the subject.<sup>11</sup> Revived plans of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline with Turkmenistan certification about reserves in Daulatabad gas fields, and a successful visit by President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan to Pakistan last May indicate promising developments.<sup>12</sup> Besides the historic ethnocultural relationship (majority of Pakistani population and material culture art have routes in Ferghana and Zarafshan valleys), most Central Asian governments realize the geopolinomic importance of Pakistan as a southern transit route, hence an alternate to their landlocked isolation.

Pakistan thus has an edge over the other transit routes for the simple fact that it offers at least three major maritime seaports on its Arabian Sea coast. The construction of Gawadar vis-à-vis the planned Iranian port of Chabahar with India's assistance in the mouth of Persian Gulf (200 km away from Gawadar) should not be interpreted merely in terms of competition. Despite the limited scope of Chabahar nearby the Strait of Hormuz and relatively shallow waters of the Persian Gulf, commercial needs of Central Asia and surrounding regions can be so enormous that the existing port facilities may not be sufficient enough in time. Once the GCAP trade proposals through southern routes are materialized, proposals for the construction of additional ports might be necessary. Next section describes the plans of the Pakistan government about the construction of rail and road networks aimed to connect Central Asian traffic through Pakistan National Highways, internal routes connecting Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan and

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<sup>11</sup> Meetings, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, February 27, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Eastern Kazakhstan via Karakurams through the Western China road network and also the proposed gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan.

**IVa. Rail and Road Network:** While the North-South corridor facilities already exist in the form of Karakurams and Pakistan’s national highway system, many new internal bypasses, motorways and expressways are under construction (some are already completed) to help facilitate the Central Asian trade. Map I illustrates about these routes. Pakistani officials believe that an effective way to address the issues of underdevelopment, poverty, stability and trade growth within Pakistan and nearby regions cannot be accomplished without a formal network of commercial communication. Official Pakistani investments in the communication sector reflect this concern. Table II demonstrates the extent of interest in the planning of rail and road infrastructure to help facilitate Central Asian trade.

**TABLE II**  
**ROAD COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN PAKISTAN**

Roads	Purpose	From	To	Size	Bridges/Tunnels	Status
N-35 Karakuram Highway	Weather- fair year- long	Gilgit	Khunjab Pass/Chinese Karakurams	Not Available	5 to 6 bridges	Existing. Weather- fair Cosigned with China
Motorway	Internal connection	Mansehra	Naran	124 km	No	Operational
N-15	National Highway	Naran	Jhakhand	48 km	No	Operational
N-75	National Highway	Islamabad	Murrree	43 km	Yes. At Azad Pattan	Operational
M-1 Sec. I	Motorway	Mansehra	Nowshera	37 km	No	Planned
M-1 Sec. III	Motorway	Mansehra	Rawalpindi	23 km	No	Planned

	Nowshera Flyover	Chalbat	Nowshera	71 km	No	Operational
N-80	National Highway	Kohat	Bannu	1.9 km	Tunnel	Operational
M-2	Motorway	Rawalpindi	Lahore	359 km	No. Faizpur interchange	Operational
M-3	Motorway	Lahore	Faisalabad	52.5 km	No	Operational
M-5 & M-6	Motorways	Faisalabad	Karachi via D.I.G. Khan	Unknown	May be	Planned
M-8	Motorway	Gawadar-Turbat	Khuzdar	Unknown	May be	Planned
M-8	Motorway	Khuzdar	Ratodero-Wangu hills Reach	35 km	No	Planned
N-10	National Highway	Karachi	Gawadar-Giwani	500+ km	May be	Operational

*(Prepared from the Ministry of Communication, Islamabad Map, 2006. Possible mistakes in map reading are solicited for forgiveness. The map is attached for personal reading)*

Roads in Pakistan carry 89% of passenger traffic and 96% of all inward and outward freight traffic and have been a major development priority. The main national Highway (N-5) connects Karachi in the South and Torkham in north at the Afghan border and an additional Torkham-Jalalabad link with Afghanistan is nearing completion.

The second north-south corridor in Pakistan, Indus Highway has been updated to international standards and entire highway is likely to be revitalized and revamped by 2008. These highways together with various new bypasses, motorways and expressways along with Karachi-Gawadar road, and other widely connecting routes in north-central

Pakistan have reduced the distance by 500 kilometers for Afghanistan and Central Asian trade.<sup>13</sup>

**IVb. Additional Roads:** While direct rail and roads from Gawadar to Chaman are being planned with the assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Gawadar has already been linked with Chaman through a combination of coastal highway (N-10) and ECO Highway (N-25). Additional roads with an investment of Rs. 35 billion (US\$59 million) are being planned together with the upgradation of the existing road from Gawadar-Hoshab-Panjgur-Nag to Basima and Sorab. Construction of a new road to Pangur and beyond is being treated as a priority to facilitate the Afghanistan and Central Asian trade.<sup>14</sup>

The Liari-Gawadar road has been completed, while Gawadar-Jiwani-Gabad road is expected completion by 2009 for trade with Iran. Reportedly 57% work on Gawadar-Hoshab project has been completed; rest of the road will be complete by 2007. Also, Basima-Khuzdar road will be completed by 2009, while 60% work on Khori-Wangu hill project has been completed. Remaining portion from Qubo Saeed Khan to Wangu hills is expected to complete within the next three years. The Qalat-Quetta-Chamman road has been awarded to contractors under ADB financial package and is expected to be complete within 3 years.<sup>15</sup>

Existing Pakistan Northwestern Railway network that serves country from Karachi to Peshawar and other inland routes is being modernized through an agreement with China. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already offered to assist in the construction of Gawadar-Chaman railway line that will be extended to Kandhar, Heart and Kabul with additional north and west extensions to Daulatabad/Ashkgabat (Via Heart) in Turkmenistan, Termez in Uzbekistan and Tajik Badakhshan with in country railway connections. While the Pakistan road network is scheduled to complete in the next three years, additionally planned rail and road infrastructure is expected to complete within the next ten years or so. Domestically, Pakistan is busy reconstructing and

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<sup>13</sup> "Trade and Transport Facilitation in Pakistan –Prospects for increasing trade volume". A brief by the Ministry of Shipping and Ports, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 27, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> "Gawadar link roads to cost Rs. 35bn: PM", Daily NEWS (Islamabad, March 21, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

revitalizing its national high ways with two-way double traffic lines and approximately 87 per cent road revitalization appears complete. The Traffic volume on Pakistani national highways has almost doubled since the independence of the Central Asian States and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, subjecting the Pakistani domestic rail and road network to constant pressure, hence constant improvements and repairs all time. Moreover, an understanding between China and Pakistan for a railway line and an oil pipeline from Gawadar to Karakurams is being explored.

**IVc. The Gawadar Deep Sea Maritime Port:** The continued instability in the Persian Gulf regions led ADB's master plan studies to consider the strategically located Gawadar as an alternate to Gulf ports.<sup>16</sup> Existing Pakistani ports of Karachi and Port Qasim, despite modernization and revamping to accommodate large cargos, were found relatively unattractive for their distance from main roads and shipping routes and limitations in dealing with large mother ships and oil tankers. The construction of Gawadar deep-sea maritime port has been an important geoeconomic imperative by the government of Pakistan to help facilitate trade opportunities with landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Afghanistan.

Gawadar is located approximately 489 kilometers from Karachi near the entrance of the Persian Gulf. Plans for the development of Gawadar port were initiated in the early 1990s, while construction of the first phase started in 2002 with Chinese assistance. In early 1980s amid the Afghanistan Jihad, the United States also expressed an interest in developing the Gawadar port facilities, but the interest waned soon after the signing of Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan in 1985. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the growing importance of the CAR's and rising energy needs from the Gulf, China agreed to assist Pakistan with this initiative. Cost for the development of the first phase was facilitated by Chinese investments of US\$198 million and US\$50 million by Pakistan.

The first phase was completed ahead of time by November 2005. Inauguration of the first phase development, first in March 2005 and afterwards scheduled for July was postponed in the wake of terrorist attacks in Baluchistan, allegedly assisted by forces

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<sup>16</sup> "Gawadar", Board of Investment (BIO), Government of Pakistan.  
[http://www.pakboi.gov.pkNews\\_event/Gawadar.html](http://www.pakboi.gov.pkNews_event/Gawadar.html). 11/15/2004

opposed to alternative routes of transportation for CAR's and durable stability in Afghanistan. While the China-Pakistan construction of the second phase is underway, opening ceremony of the first phase is likely to take place by the end of 2006.

Coastal highways connecting Port Qasim and Karachi to Gawadar have been completed. ADB is providing assistance to construct road and rail networks from Gawadar to Chaman with links to Afghanistan cities of Kandhar, Herat and Kabul, which will be connected with the border posts located within Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and eventually to Europe via Turkey and Turkmenistan. While the existing Karachi and Port Qasim cater approximately 97% imports and exports of Pakistan, additional Gawadar deep-sea port will serve the needs of CAR's, besides being a transit and transshipment hub in the region.<sup>17</sup>

The Phase I of Gawadar port with "three multipurpose berths of 200 meters, each with 350 meters backup area and related ancillary facilities, 5 km Approach Channel dredged to accommodate vessels up to 30,000 dwt drawing 11.5 meter draft, cargo handling equipment and operational craft" has been completed at the total cost of US\$248 million.<sup>18</sup> Phase II of Gawadar Port, with 7 additional berths of 300 meters and two oil Piers will accommodate oil tankers up to 200,000 tones dwt, bulk carriers up to 1000,000 tons, general cargo vessels up to 100,000 tones dwt, and fourth generation container ships drawing 15.6 to 20 meters draft is estimated to cost approximately US\$524 million. Phase one scheme was revised on February 25, 2005 with additional allocation of Rs.1500 million (approximately US\$39.8 million) to dredge port channel to 14.5 meters to attract mother ships for use of transshipment, which will be completed between June-December 2006.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, the port has been leased to Dubai World Ports Authority for operations. While Pakistan customs administration has undergone through a massive reformation process to ensure facilitation, transparency and user-friendly automated clearance system to expedite the dwell time for clearance of goods, with tariffs as low as 5% on raw materials and machinery not manufactured locally. Reforms have been initiated under the

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<sup>17</sup> "Trade & Transport Facilitation in Pakistan ..."

<sup>18</sup> "A Brief on Gawadar Port Project", Ministry of Shipping and Ports, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 27, 2006

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

bilateral agreements with Iran, Turkey and China. Supporting road network is being developed according to Asian Highway Network Agreement, ECO Decade Program of Action on Transport and Communication and Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) among ECO countries about the development of New Silk Route (NSR) to link up with China and Europe.<sup>20</sup> Under the new rules, most cargo will be cleared in 4, instead of 12 plus days. Also, the Code of International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has been implemented by ports and shipping wing of the Ministry, and the UN initiative called Customs Trade Partnership against Terrorism (C-TPAT) is operational on Voluntary basis, and the National Logistic Cell will install container scanners at all border crossings under the Container Security Initiative (CSI) of U.S. Homeland Security Department.

Civilian structures planned to develop Gawadar as a modern port city is attracting many international countries. While Oman is already planning to invest approximately US\$100 million in city's new infrastructure, some Polish companies have also expressed interest in engineering work involved in this development.<sup>21</sup>

**IVd. Regional Trade Forecast:** Pakistan's sea-borne trade forecast for year 2000 was estimated at 42 million tons. The trade forecast was estimated at 51 million tons per annum by 2005 and 78 million tons by the year 2015. Future trade envisages substantial cargo from China, CARs and Afghanistan. Gawadar will be the shortest in distance and viable port for Western China, Kyrgyzstan, Eastern Kazakhstan and possibly Central Russia and Mongolia through Karakurams Highway, Indus Highway and proposed linkages through Ratodero and Khuzdar, and Khairpur to Dadu, as well as links to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Eastern Turkmenistan via Afghanistan. The estimated cargo figures for Gawadar Port envisage:

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<sup>20</sup> "Trade and Transport Facilitation in Pakistan..."

<sup>21</sup> "Polish Companies Interested in Gawadar Development", **Pak Tribune**, <http://www.paktribune.co./news/print.php?id=61615&PHPSESSID=56818006188776b>, 11/15/2004.

**TABLE III. Estimated Cargo Trade Volume**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Years</b>		
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>
Dry Cargo (million tones)	3.96	4.74	5.77
Liquid Cargo (million tones)	16.62	17.74	18.77
Container (1000 TEUs)	200	241	295
Trans-shipment (TEUs)	200,000	250,000	300,000

*Ministry of Ports and Shipping, Government of Pakistan, 2006*

Moreover, Pakistan's monetary expansion has improved considerably. Exports have increased from US\$8 billion to over US\$14 billion during the last five years. Export trade has been among the major factors. Pakistan-Afghanistan trade has risen to 500% and similar trends in trade between India and Pakistan persist.<sup>22</sup> Most Pakistani exports emphasize the cotton and textile industries.<sup>23</sup> Pakistan's trade with Central Asia remains minimal, limited to leather products, banking, training, hotels and some minerals, etc. However, the projected energy/gas transit and land to sea trade through Pakistani infrastructure is likely to increase in transit fees and tariffs during the upcoming years. Estimates run around US\$1000,000 plus million per year with gradual trade development. Afghanistan could similarly benefit from transit fees. Pakistani officials hope that besides the existing levels of cooperation, new projects of trade expansion between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, if materialized could make a significant difference.

#### **ADD TRADE FORECAST CROSS-CONTINENTAL:**

**IVe. Possible Pakistan-Central Asia Cotton and Textile Cartel:** Considering the large cotton production in Pakistan and Central Asia, officials suggested that both regions would benefit by initiating joint projects, particularly in cotton and textile industries.

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<sup>22</sup> Conversations at the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 27, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> "Monetary Policy Implications for Trade", Document, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 2006. Also, conversations with high officials at the ministry.



Increasing transportation facilities inside Pakistan and Afghanistan may eventually encourage Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, bilaterally or under ECO or other framework to join hands to establish a World Cotton Cartel<sup>24</sup> based in the port city of Karachi with offices in all regional capitals. The cartel, if materialized, is likely to increase trade volume regionally and cross-continently, India could also join this cartel at a later stage, once the India-Pakistan détente leads to agreements on transit facilities. A cotton/textile cartel could multiply regional trade by billions, leading toward economic cooperation in several other mutually beneficial areas of areas of interest, including natural gas and oil; minerals, Jewelry, hydroelectric power, communications institutional cooperation (educational and operational), software technology, complimenting regional agrarian market and joint tourism. Such geopolinomic cotton cartel and relevant developments is the cornerstone of the GCAP scheme.

## **V. Impediments**

Mistrust in security relations between India-Pakistan and Afghanistan-Pakistan appears to be among the major impediments. Emergence of CARs led to speculations that the new geopolitics in the region will compel both India and Pakistan to resolve their differences. The gradually developing India-Pakistan détente is likely to need enough time to mature before the fundamental differences over Kashmir, Sir Creek and other issues are settled. Despite the beginnings of trade and tourism, mistrust in security relations persists as a fundamental issue in both India-Pakistan and Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. In light of previous insurgencies in Baluchistan, according to Pakistani officials, some factions in Afghanistan appear to support the present day insurgency in Baluchistan and that India continues to play a zero-sum game against Pakistan in the region. Several military training camps in Baluchistan allegedly supported by the Indian consulates in Kandhar, Jalalabad and Zahidan are found and are being destroyed by Pakistani Frontier Corps. Moreover, Indian financial support of Sindhi and other anti-Pakistan groups based overseas has been a major concern for Pakistan. In the garb of human rights and/or social organizations, these groups are engaged in anti-Pakistan propaganda in United States, Canada and United Kingdom spreading stereotypes against the actually operating

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<sup>24</sup> Conversations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996 and in February 2006.

sociopolitical and cultural realities in contemporary Pakistan. Thus, the mistrust between India-Pakistan and Afghanistan-Pakistan appears on the increase despite the official rhetoric in joint public statements by these countries. The following points are necessary to be considered in terms of infrastructural development processes:

1. Road and rail communication infrastructure in Afghanistan, if not addressed in a timely fashion could delay the effective communication processes in the region, compelling the donor agencies and countries to emphasize upon, at least temporarily, for some other immediately available alternative transit routes, most likely through the Karakurams than via Afghanistan.

2. Officials in United States expressed an interest in Pakistan extending the direct transit for Indian products enroute Afghanistan and Central Asia.<sup>25</sup> However, the lack of security trust and Pakistan's own developing state of trade and communication, according to Pakistani officials, does not allow direct transit at this moment. Perhaps, in time with emerging relationship confidence, India may be granted this access. Central Asian states at this moment have no such problems with trade through Karakurams via the under construction rail and road communication infrastructure through Western China. In the meantime, India must rely upon the indirect transit facilities provided by Pakistan. Afghanistan as a major trade partner of India has to understand the Pakistani concern.<sup>26</sup>

3. Rhetoric about the "Strategic depth" doctrine. Many in India and the West often attribute Pakistani interest in Afghanistan merely in terms strategic depth search. This may be true in geostrategic terms, but the fact remains that strategic depth is not a one-way street and applies to all neighbors of Pakistan. However, the strategic depth of landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics is equally dependent on Pakistan for an access to warm waters, hence for world trade. The transit routes points actually necessitate a mutual reciprocity of

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<sup>25</sup> Conversation with officials at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC, January 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Conversations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, February 28, 2006.

bilateral interests –geopolitical, economic, security and strategic- between Pakistan, Afghanistan and CARs, just as this can be implied to China and India.

4. Most states in South Asia fear India, because of its national-self worldview that is based upon the Lord Curzon's imperial worldview.<sup>27</sup> It was advocated by K.M. Pannikar in 1950s and holds the entire Indian Ocean and surrounding regions as India's zone of influence. Besides the regional powers, United States itself may eventually find a conflict of Interests with India over its presence in the Indian Ocean. This worldview represents the ideology of RSS, hence the Bhartya Janta Party, which also includes Southeast Asia as its traditional sphere of influence; it was not Central Asia. Southeast Asia may had been a zone of influence for India in the ancient and medieval times, but in the present times, when the geopolinomics of Southeast Asia has changed considerably with the rise of new regional tigers, India may have problems to find suitable markets. India's long-term competition with China or Russia in Central Asia and Caucasus might become somewhat problematic, as both of these countries are located within the Eurasian Continental Realm, while India does not share borders with this Heartland region and must rely upon China and Pakistan for transit facilities.

## CONCLUSION

What United States can do to help in removing these impediments? The U.S. government is already engaged in advising India and Pakistan to normalize relations without taking sides.<sup>28</sup> However, a lot depends upon the leadership in India and Pakistan to resolve their disputes under the changing geopolitical situation in the region. Pakistan has already made a start. However, the U.S. government can propose specific confidence building measure on a reciprocal basis to both governments. Afghanistan-Pakistan lack of mistrust in security matters specifically needs similar attention.

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<sup>27</sup> This worldview has been thoroughly highlighted in Raja Mohan, **Crossing the Rubicon: The shaping of India's New Foreign Policy**, New Delhi, Penguin Books India, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Conversation at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC, January 2006.

In this writer's view, the complex ethnopolitics in the region is complicating the matters. The nation and state-building processes in the region must include mechanisms of interethnic socialization besides an emphasis on law and order and civil society constitutionalism. This is also true in case of Pakistan to some extent. New transit routes via Pakistan and consequent economic developments are likely to stabilize the political ordering processes throughout the Central and South Asian regions. At present, the required tactical balance between economic and political development processes is missing. Processes of political socialization as a value mechanism can be based on federal democracy, with theory and practice of democracy as a tyranny of neither majority nor minority. Structural processes of democracy are already in place and democratization as a cross-general phenomenon is bound to take time. Messianic zeal at democratization processes may cause more problems than prospects. Contrary to general speculations about instability, Central Asia is a relatively stable region. Credit goes to CA countries for having resolved almost 95 percent of their boundary problems by themselves.

The new Bureau of South and Central Asia at the Department of State can play a major role in materializing the GCAP concept of regional and cross-continental trade. Its geopolinomic foundation is based on geopolitical realism and historic evidence. Increased transportation infrastructures and transit access to Central Asia's traditional southern routes of communication are likely to encourage foreign direct investment contributing toward peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan and broader region.

Alternative routes of communication are likely to create a new regional form of interdependence, allowing major powers to balance their own interests in these regions. New interdependence is likely to help stabilize U.S.-China relations in the long-term. Trade can play an important role, just as it did in the past under various historic political orders in the region and is likely to speed up the economic and political transitions in relatively stable form throughout the region.

Perhaps, the United States could offer new incentives to encourage confidence building both at the bilateral and multilateral levels among various regional countries. Existing region wide corruption may cause some problems in the short-term but a balanced economic and political development strategy is likely to gradually overcome or

manage it at considerable levels, just as it can be useful in curbing terrorism. It is time that the long overdue solutions to the problems of relative deprivation in Central and South Asia are addressed. Alternative routes for trade and transportation through Pakistan may hopefully pave the way toward a broader region wide stratification.

Furthermore, the newer U.S.-India relationship and new geopolitics in Central and Southwest Asia demands a change in India's foreign policy worldview. The idea of emerging markets in Central and Southwest Asia is appealing, however, the nature of trade competition among regional powers can be somewhat unpredictable.

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