PAKISTAN'S TRADE WITH AFRICA: PECULIARITIES AND ROAD AHEAD

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Abstract

Pakistan's Look Africa Policy Initiative is required to take benefit from the African region in these times when African states want to establish good economic and diplomatic relations and create for themselves a comfortable niche in the African trade and development. Pakistan should not overlook the pre-eminence of action courses (functionalism and federalism) to adequately proceed with economic prospects and opportunities. The buck must stop here so that concrete and palpable genuine initiatives can be clutched. While expediting ahead on this economic nexus, it is necessary to shed light on the role of Morocco in CPEC and the possibility of investment in Pakistan. The paper explores the history of Pak-Africa relations positively in the search for a better future together. This is a research of the kind and nature of relations that can be potentially developed between Pakistan and Africa to reveal the natural potential of both.

Keywords: Africa, Pakistan, Look Africa Policy, Trade, CPEC.

Introduction

recently held conference on January 30-31, 2020, in Kenya (East Africa), commonly known as the Horn of Africa, allowed bringing more than 200 delegates from all over the African region under one roof for the first time to find ways of connectivity and cooperation with Pakistan.¹ In this high profile conference, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told the media that Somaliland asked Pakistan to extend its "Look Africa Policy Initiative" with the states of Horn of Africa generally and with Somaliland particularly.² The case understudy analyses prospects for Pakistan to be actively involved in the region. It did not happen all of a sudden that the African state asked for help. Pakistan has a long history of relations with several African states that are discussed in detail. The economic framework is yet quite evasive between Pakistan and Africa. To proceed smoothly, Pakistan must assume formlessness to avoid fall between two cracks. Constant adaptability to the market trends is significant in the way forward. This paper, therefore, assesses challenges and opportunities for Pakistan in the region. It also suggests some policy measures to Pakistani policymakers to get the most out of the opportunity.

Political stability and economic development are correlated phenomena. Pakistan and Africa have several things in common but unfortunately, one of them is

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frequent-change in governments. All the economic growth indicators, such as production, sales, employment, GDP, stable inflation, etc., can be achieved through persistent economic policies that can only be possible through stability in the political institutions. This paper examines the possibilities of a conducive sociopolitical environment in Africa for achieving promising results from joint economic ventures in the region. This paper also highlights the importance of looking towards Africa and shapes up brief responses to the quires regarding the strategic importance of the Look Africa Policy initiative. It focuses on the action discourse for Pakistan to take hold of African markets with its slender resources vis-à-vis the role of Morocco in CPEC.

The nation-state has been the unit of analysis in research on subjects of International Relations particularly when it comes to foreign policy analysis. This study takes Pakistan and African States as a unit of analysis to analyze systematically improving networking patterns among themselves. The underlying study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. News items, official documents and agreements, reports, and analytical work of different scholars are used to build the argument with some policy recommendations at the end.

Strategic Importance and Potential of African Region

The African region is strategically important for the East and the West for several reasons. Traditionally, the world is divided into seven continents irrespective of any specific criteria. Among these, Africa is the second-largest in terms of area and population. It covers almost 20% of the total land of earth and 16% of the world population. Scholars and experts usually divide the African continent into five regions to understand its diversity. First is North Africa which comprises Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Western Sahara, Libya, and Sudan. These countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. Despite prevailing political upheavals in this region, the authoritarian governments have been successfully controlling the democratic norms through economic as well as coercive measures. In some cases, these governments have been fulfilling the interests of the West, thus, becoming more dependent on the West for their vested interests. Comparatively, the northern part is more developed and prosperous than other parts of Africa. Despite political instability, which has been the constant feature of these countries, this area being a natural neighbor of Europe has a contrast in terms of economic development than other regions. This feature makes it naturally dependent on the EU countries.

Second is East Africa or the Horn of Africa; it is one of the key regions facing the Red Sea which is an important region for maritime trade between East and West.³ It is also one of the most conflict-prone regions in the world, comprising Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Ethiopia, Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Sudan. This region has two-dimensional strategic importance; the first dimension is political in nature. Political upheavals are a common phenomenon since the post-colonial period in East Africa creating threat perception in the region.⁴ The second dimension of its strategic importance is trade. This trade-passage is used for large transportation of oil from East to West. Taking the first dimension into consideration, it

is important to mention prevailing political upheavals and external efforts to mitigate them. After the imposition of dictator rule in Somalia (1991), a power vacuum was created and ended up in chaos and anarchy. Moreover, US intervention made the situation worst but from 1995 to 2005, it remained unattended internationally. There was a surge of piracy of ships on the sea route of the horn of Africa due to unrest, chaos, anarchy, poverty, and lack of resources. The international military presence is not just for the provision of solutions to the regional issues but to provide security to their ships. Neighboring countries of Somalia have been in conflict with each other. Ethiopia enjoys cordial relations with Djibouti because, during its war with Eritrea (1998-2000), it had been trading via Djibouti seaport, being a landlocked country. Djibouti's relations which got strained with Eritrea in 1998 restored in 2000 at the end of the war. Both neighboring states located at the horn of Africa are now enjoying good relations with each other. Sudan has been involved in border disputes with South Sudan as well as Egypt.

The third is Central Africa, which consists of Angola, Cameron, Chad, Congo, Central African Republic, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. These states are part of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Six Central African states are also the members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and share a single currency. When countries of this region gained independence during the 20th century from European colonial powers, militant groups gained momentum and tried to control the region. This region is comparatively poor and the main professions of the people are farming, herding, and fishing. The Congo River is the deepest river system in the World. Lake Chad is located at the borders of four countries causing distress because of the access-to-water issue. Deepwater lakes, Tanganyika and Albert, are also the main sources of living of millions of people in the region. Cameroon and Gabon are comparatively politically stable countries of the region. The political history of most countries of Africa is full of short-lived democratic governments, corruption, and mismanagement which affected their economic stability. Ethnic conflicts and resulted in genocides in Rwanda and wars in Congo caused massive migration from one country to another.

The fourth region is West Africa comprising Ghana, Benin, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Togo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Gambia. The region borders with the Atlantic Ocean on the West and the Sahara Desert on the North. Due to the geographic proximity, Portuguese were the first who colonized these countries during the 15th century and started black slavery that was followed by British French, Spanish, and Dutch. West African kingdoms resisted colonial powers against their occupation particularly British and French but could not sustain. Until 1974, all West African states became independent but got involved in internal political strife. The majority of the states in this region are coastal states and few are landlocked. The Economic Community of West African States was founded in 1975 to improve the economic conditions with mutual cooperation.

The fifth region is Southern Africa comprises Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The Island of Madagascar is not

considered part of it due to its cultural diversity and language. Droughts are common in most parts of the region. The population of this region overwhelmingly consists of black people. People having European links settled here, particularly, in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Portuguese were the first who annexed the western part of Africa and reached till the southernmost tip of the continent. They tried to control the indigenous trade market but failed. Like Portuguese, Dutch also had their settlements in this part.

African continent from East to West and North to South has plenty in quantity and valuable natural resources, such as minerals, oil, gold, animals, plants, vegetation, and forests. The presence of natural resources in abundance cannot indicate development. Niger is one of such examples that is the most conflict-prone country despite having gold, iron, uranium, coal, and oil reserves. It is equally important to manage these valuable resources to achieve development and economic prosperity. In this regard, political stability matters a lot. African countries have been experiencing political instability, interstate conflicts, and frequent change of governments. The US, China, the UK, France, Germany, and other countries have trade relations with Africa but persistent underdevelopment and slow trade growth tendencies are visible. This continent having abundant resources remains insecure and dependent on the US, Europe, China, and others for trade and development.

In modern times, African governments and the business community took some measures to minimize the region's dependence on western countries. These measures included bilateral efforts with countries, like Pakistan and others, to enhance trade and development. Multilateral platforms were formed to serve the purpose. For this approach, the African region is divided into Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to better facilitate economic activities in African states. First, in 1980, the Lagos Plan was initiated for the development of Africa. It was an attempt to lessen their dependence on western countries while increasing self-sufficiency. They were convinced that western countries exploited them for development and economic integration. However, a need was felt to adopt a far-reaching strategy for cooperation to get out of the situation. Their commitments at national and regional levels improving economic growth will eventually be transformed into an African Economic Community and a Common Market, like the European Union. Secondly, in 1991, the Abuja Treaty proposed RECs to be established for better regional integration.⁸ These RECs are Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (SEN-SAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and South African Countries Union (SACU).9

Role of Pakistan in Africa

Pakistan has been enjoying friendly relations with some of the African countries bilaterally, like relations with Somalia. Both countries are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). During the civil war in Somalia, Pakistan contributed to UN peacekeeping operations in the southern part of Somalia in 2010, which resultantly paved the way for the formation of a government in Somalia. Pakistan

has never been very active in the region regarding trade and investment; however, it remains active in Somalia. The Afro-Pak trade has been constant at the level of \$ 2 billion from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017. This trade volume has increased in 2018-2019 up to \$ 3 billion, which is still less as Africa's trade in total is \$1 trillion annually. 10

Algeria with 41.66 million population is an oil-based economy. Most of the trade and revenue generation is linked with the oil industry that never let other industries developed. Pakistan was the first in recognizing the independence of Algeria back in 1954 and immediately established relations with the newly independent state. Later, in 1958, a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) was established but no further cooperation in terms of trade or any other remained one of the main concerns for a long period. The very first session of this JMC was held in 2005 in Islamabad. Pakistan's relations with Egypt are cordial, however, imports and exports have decreased with time. Alkistan has also been supporting Sudan in its war. Pakistan enjoys friendly diplomatic relations with Ethiopia.

Pakistan's Look Africa Initiative

The Afro-Pak trade volume remains insufficient to enhance the years old diplomatic relationship. Recently, Pakistan has launched its "Look Africa Initiative" to increase the trade volume and better ties. Pakistan has indicated to enhance bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation in the region.¹⁴ The trade conference held in Kenya recently brought stakeholders on a platform to maximize benefits for both sides. Measures in this regard are planned to be taken in several phases. In the first phase, new commercial channels are opened to enhance engagement in Egypt, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Algeria. These commercial sections are relocated from Europe to Africa. The joint working group will be formed with the establishment of the Africa cell for the facilitation of Pakistani entrepreneurs. Research on the possibility of Pakistan's trade with other African countries is also part of the plan. Pakistan is also involved in negotiations with multilateral political and economic establishments within the region, such as South African Custom Union (SACU), East African Community (EAC), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for Preferential Trade Agreements.¹⁵ The overall plan of Pakistan so far focuses on countries from every region of Africa. Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Sudan are the eastern countries and Sudan also shares its border with Egypt that is a part of the North of Africa connecting it with the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). 16 Algeria is also in the plan from North Africa.

A peaceful political environment is important for economic gains for the country itself and the foreign partner as well. Pakistan not only supported Algeria in its struggle of independence from France in the 1950s but also maintained cordial political and economic relations throughout. Pakistan's primary energy consumption is mostly based on natural gas that is imported from Qatar, Iran, and Indonesia.¹⁷ Pakistan is planning to import LNG from Algeria, it will minimize its dependence on Middle Eastern countries.¹⁸ On the other hand, Algeria will have a new market for its LNG export. Another country Pakistan chose to work with is Tanzania. Pakistan has opened an economic channel in Tanzania which is one of the politically stable and economically

sound African countries.¹⁹ Tanzania also has a large number of people of Pakistani descent. There is a receptive environment in the country for strengthening cultural, economic, and diplomatic ties with Pakistan. To strengthen diplomatic relations with Africa, Pakistan naval ships, recently, visited the ports of Casablanca (Morocco), Nouakchott (Mauritania), Takoradi (Ghana), Lagos (Nigeria), Cape Town (South Africa) and Dar-e-Salam (Tanzania).²⁰ Pakistan navy set up medical camps in port cities for free medical services as a goodwill gesture. Security issues, such as piracy, armed robbery, maritime pollution, and drug trafficking also remained part of discussions during these visits.

Prospects for Pakistan

It is the right time for Pakistan to make a comprehensive policy for the African region when Pakistan's all-weather friend, China, has geared up its investment for development in almost all the underdeveloped countries of Africa. Algeria, the largest country of Africa and an oil-based economy, has significant potential for trade. Algerian economy is mainly government-controlled especially the energy sector. Economic reforms are being done to reduce the unemployment in the country and to attract foreign investment to explore the diversified opportunities of the economy and trade. Algeria and Egypt are much dependent on European and Middle Eastern countries for food items and agricultural products. Sudan has never been conservative in terms of export policies but new export policies are more conducive to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and expanding its scope from oil products to non-oil products. Unlike Sudan and Algeria, the Ethiopian economy is mainly based on agriculture but they are enthusiastic to grab any opportunity to diversify their export growth. Foreign investment is attracted to textile, leather, agriculture, and manufacturing industries. Ethiopia and Pakistan are having good trade relations for a long time, however, business communities from both sides are keen to open new channels of trade and investment.²¹ Somaliland is the huge exporter of livestock, largely dependent on Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, and Oman.²² Pakistan can fulfill its demand for livestock. Somaliland and Somalia have devastated, poor but open economies as compared to others. They are quite open to foreign investment. In the recent conference held in Kenya, Somaliland showed its interest and invited Pakistan to invest.

The Look Africa Policy initiative is the first step towards the right direction but the implementation of this idea or the action plan towards African markets is very elusive. Certain internal and external factors are playing an obvious role (quandary), making it a hard nut to break. Trade expansion since ancient times requires certain prerequisites, for instance, developing friendly ties and preparing business environment by cultural exchanges. Though Pakistan has already made certain procurement in this context, it has not decided whether to opt for a functional (bottom-up-approach) or federal approach (top-down-approach). For instance, the trade model of the EU is based on functionalism yet the driving force is portraying federalism as they were constantly threatened with the fragile balance of power phenomena.²³ The benefit of functionalism is evident by its success so Pakistan can replicate it with few modifications. This approach requires to get the ball moving steadily. Pakistan has to be very specific and

open to address the prevailing issues or barriers in trade with Africa instead of buck-passing. Contemporarily, both states are working to strengthen their bilateral trade but the Pakistan government is facing a cladding of economic downturn and is trying to bring in investment for the sustainability of the national markets so it is off the wall to invest a fortune in Africa. Consequently, Africa after the seven years of Congo wars, colonization, political turmoil, and social stratification requires time to come up with affluent business investment. There is already growing dissatisfaction in Africa over China's influx and hegemony in their markets. The two narratives are in full swing, one is African romance with China and the second one is depicting China as a new colonial master. So narrowing it down, Pakistan can safely conclude that instead of opting for Chinese influence in Africa, it is in a dire need to use neutralizing and narcissus effect (Look deep into the soul of the people, fathom their inmost desires, their values, their tastes, and their spirits and reflect it to them making yourself in a kind of mirror). So

To form a strong base for the future, Pakistan must address and appeal the mind of the individual as "our kingdom lies in each man's mind." Firstly, as there is an everlasting memory of Pakistan peacekeeping missions to bring tranquility in Africa so that must be the first front to strike. Amplify maritime and defense cooperation by engaging in mutual defense deals. Combine security is a perfect ground to deepen strategic and trade relations. Secondly, Pakistan can invest in cultural proximity by joint ventures between Pakistan and Africa. The African fashion industry is having a worth of \$15 billion, textile, thereof, can be next immediate raison d'etre. 27 Thirdly, Soccer and cricket are popular games in Africa. Pakistan can work on broadcasting and come up with joint cricket leagues. Cricket craze will further strengthen the ties between both sides as well as it will be another source to increase investment and trade opportunities.²⁸ Fourthly, tourism has par excellence to surpass the bilateral trade magnitudes to a new horizon. South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia could be the unparalleled and preeminent partners in this set-out. Fifthly, China established the CCTV Africa television network in 2016 and made it a part of the voice of the China media group in 2018.29 This channel is broadcasting China's dramas in English and directly investing in content for African dramas. This is the next field to work and invest to further enhance bilateral trade. Sixthly, about 90 percent of malaria cases are reported in Africa and annually 3000 children have died. Therefore, Pakistan can invest in pharmaceutical industries aiming at 1.2 billion people and it can assist in sanitation projects to harmonize collaboration on major fronts. Lastly, Pakistan must assume formlessness to take a hold of African markets with limited resources, thereof, it must adapt constantly and be fluid as nothing is certain and no law is fixed in the prevailing business trends in the world.

On February 20, 2020, the Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan, Muhammad Karmoune, announced a potential agreement between Tangier and Gwadar ports to enhance bilateral cooperation at different levels. The port of Tangier is located on the strategically important crossroad (Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea) of the world.³⁰ This port can handle 9 million containers simultaneously and 750 companies operate in its platform. This can be adjudged as Morocco's direct inclusion in CPEC.³¹ Morocco is interested in promoting trade and business ties between both countries; recently, the

Morocco-Pakistan Joint Business Council has been established to exchange trade delegations that can imperatively identify bilateral trade potential ³² The joint coordination of Pakistan Stock Exchange and Casablanca Stock Exchange of Morocco is also under discussion and high-level meetings were conducted in August 2019 to finalize the framework for future discourse.³³ Pakistan is a significant investor in Morocco's fertilizer production field in Al-Jadida while Morocco is conspicuously interested in Pakistan's Tourism.

Recommendations

There are following policy recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to make the measures most advantageous for Pakistan:

- China and Europe are the competitors in the region for Pakistan. Pakistan may help Algeria through investment to established small industries that may help in revenue generation which decreased in the last few years due to the overall lower prices of oil. Algeria needs support to enhance its potential of exports, hence, Pakistan should avail this opportunity.
- Rice and textile products can be exported to Algeria for which it is
 highly dependent on European countries. Pakistan should not leave it
 alone and should use good friendly relations, which it already has with
 Algeria, to use the potential of its market for Pakistani rice and textile.
- Pakistan may work to lessen Algeria's Libya and Egypt's dependence on Europe that is due to its proximity. They are dependent on Europe for the import of agriculture products and food items. Pakistan can be the major exporter of rice cotton, and textile in the region.
- In all the countries where Pakistan has opened new trade channels, i.e., two from North (Algeria and Egypt) three from East (Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia), China is the largest trading partner and this partnership is turning to be the bigger investment.³⁴ Taking advantage of the opportunity, Pakistan may also offer its services and joint businesses to promote traditional industries as well as establish new sectors. Training programs can be conducted and Pakistan can also send its trained people to provide them training, like China.
- Pakistan should work on peace and stability with the help of the local authorities and stakeholders.
- Pakistan has successfully created a positive image with its diplomatic and economic engagement respectively. Now, there is a need to strengthen it and take it to the next height through the successful implementation of Look Africa Policy. Student exchange programs have already been done.
- Pakistan must take serious steps to cultivate its stature in African markets by predisposing the merger of its media and fashion industry with Africa. Several initiatives can be taken in offing to successfully foster a new image of Pakistan worldwide.

- Military and maritime cooperation can be amplified which in turn can reflect in persuading strategic fronts bilaterally. This can lead to the share of expertise as well as defense deals and investment.
- Tourism offers unexcelled possibilities for future discourse. It could be
 a nonpareil track to explore and enhance unequaled opportunities for
 trade and investment between Pakistan and Africa.
- Pakistan's pharmaceutical companies can set sight of Africa aiming a population of 1.2 billion people. Especially, Pakistan can share its experiences of combating with malaria and dengue.
- Pakistan and Africa can work on making collaboration more harmonious by taking initiatives for promoting cricket by engrossing joint cricket leagues and clubs. It all together will further enhance the cultural exchange and investment aperture.
- The Morocco inclusion in CPEC and the investment possibilities in Tourism can open a new window of opportunities for Pakistan in the African continent. Authorities must lend an ear to business communities in both countries to maximize bilateral investment and future cooperation.

Conclusion

Pakistan has cordial relations with African countries from the time of their independence. Since then, Pakistan has its resident mission almost in 13 countries of the region and accreditation for other countries is given to them. Pakistan and Africa have several commonalities and points of common interest. Both have been ex-colonies but there is another similarity particularly with the countries that are under discussion, they share the same religion – Islam. Hence, background, history, and common religion make them sympathetic to each other naturally. Pakistan though does not have a big share in African trade but has always been enjoying cordial relations. Pakistan and Africa have the potential to create a trade-friendly environment in the region together and can fulfill their respective needs. It will take their partnership to the new heights. The new surge of enhancing economic cooperation may bring them more closer and Pakistan can get benefit from Africa's growing importance and changing environment due to political stability. Since 2008, Pakistan is experiencing a smooth transferring of democratic governments that is important for the successful implementation of the Look Africa Policy.

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