

Geographical importance of data

Countries



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GEOGRAPHICAL IMPORTANCE OF FATA 1. INTRODUCTION The spectacular land in which the Pathans live has had a major effect on their history and their way of life. — J. W. Spain Geography has a significant position in making of a nation's fortune; either in the shape of geo-politics or geo-economics. It can shower blessings or bring curse to the residents of the locality as one can't change the geography.

It is well said that a state's political system, economic structure, judicial organization, demographic size and relations with other states can change according to the needs and aspirations of the people but one thing remains constant, and that is " geography". If one cannot change the geography of a region but at least can mould its contours. It means that the method of handling is important to invite the blessings or curse of a region's geographical location. To testify the above, FATA presents an excellent example. FATA is situated on the North-Western side of Pakistan bordering with Afghanistan.

Since the ancient times, FATA has been a testing-ground of the empires' ambitions to fulfill. Alexander the Great, Chengiz Khan, Taimur the lame, the Mughals, the Turks and the British Empire have touched the Pakistan's Tribal Lands to pursue their adventures. All of these political campaigns have left long-lasting impacts on the fate of tribal people. The land has seen Great Game between the Russian and British Empires in the last two centuries and also a race between the two super powers (US & USSR) in the Cold War era.

Now FATA is experiencing another ill-fated adventure of " War on Terrorism". The status of FATA and its proximity to Pakistan Afghan border are a serious challenge for Pakistan on a number of levels. Historically, along Afghanistan

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it has been an arena for imperial competition, a battle ground and a definite invasion route. The area had been a launch pad for the exercise of influence in Kashmir, Sub-Continent and Afghanistan. Recently it has been emerged as source of terrorist and criminal activity that threatens Pakistan's national security.

The region due to its geographical location has a geo political and economic significance as it is a potential trade route for economic development of the Central Asian states and for peace and prosperity in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Geo-Political Setting The North West Frontier is not only the frontier of India. It is an international frontier of the first importance from military point of view for the whole empire. Simon Commission The region which includes, " Afghanistan and the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has perhaps seen more invasions in the course of history than any other country in the world. During all this period the plains had been dominated by great powers, the hill tract and tribes continued to value and protect their independence. For centuries, tribal society has persisted in the FATA, and remained open for numerous invaders out of those the most important are Alexander the Great (356 BC-310/309 BC), the Great Genghis Khan (1162 to1227), and Timur Lung (1336 to1405). The people of this region always defended their homeland against all sorts of external aggressions. Over the period of time, this response has made them passionately autonomous.

With the exception of Aurangzeb Alamgir, other rulers followed a policy of conciliation desisting from all direct and indirect interference in the internal affairs of the area. In this paper the focus on FATA history will be from the era of British supremacy in the Sub-Continent till todate. 2. THE FATA

REGION THROUGH AGES British Supremacy During early 19th century, the British had established their supremacy over the subcontinent except Balochistan, Sindh and the northwest tribal belt. It was the period when Russia was advancing southwards in Central Asia.

The British Government in England was perturbed and thought it an “imminent threat to the security and tranquility” of the Indian Empire and asked the Government of India to checkmate them. Thus began British involvement with NWFP, its tribal belt and Afghanistan. First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42) It was understood both in London and Calcutta, which was then the headquarters of the East India Company, that the Amir of Afghanistan was entering into secret negotiations with Russia. Accordingly, in 1838, the Government of India declared war against Afghanistan.

Since Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the Punjab would not give passage to the English army through his territory, Auckland, the British Governor-General of India, decided to dispatch his forces through Sindh. In 1839, the British-led Indian Army passed through Sindh and Balochistan and conquered Kandhar and Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. During the winter of 1841-42, there was a mass uprising against foreign forces and the Indian army comprising twelve thousand soldiers left the city of Kabul along with their followers and marched eastward in the direction of Jalalabad for safety.

The tribesmen gradually destroyed the entire Indian forces while on retreat. By January 1842, only one Dr. Brydon was able to reach Jalalabad to narrate the tragic story of the massacre of their comrades. “A large British-led army had not been wiped out so completely in living memory.” Owing to their terrible defeat in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-42) the British had

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realized that the task of ruling over the tribal territory in NWFP and Afghanistan was beyond their resources in India.

Thus they followed the policy of “close door policy” and their interest in the affairs of the tribal area in NWFP and Afghanistan remained minimal. Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-79) There was a change in British policy after 1876. The encouragement due to increase of British resources owing to the conquest of Sindh (1843) and the Punjab (1849) as well as the concern among British strategists in England due to the advance of the Russian armies in Turkestan close to the borders of Afghanistan made them to review their policy. The policy of Disraeli who became the Prime Minister in U.

K. in 1874 was to build a strategic line of defense against Russian advance in Central Asia. It was felt that sooner or later the British and the Russian forces would confront each other in Central Asia. This thinking led the British to increase their sphere of influence in Afghanistan. In 1878, when Amir Sher Ali of Afghanistan refused to allow an English envoy at Kabul, Lord Lytton declared war on 20th November 1878 and British troops invaded Afghanistan and Sher Ali ran away and later died. His son Yakub concluded the Treaty of Gandamak on 26 May 1879 agreeing to British terms.

The war had encouraged the British to formally occupy most of the tribal belt. It included a permanent advance and control of the famous Khyber Pass but Kurram valley was occupied some years later. Withdrawal of British Forces from Durand Line In June 1897, the Waziristan tribes revolted against the British forces. This was followed by an attack by tribes of Malakand against the garrisons in the pass and in Chakdara. By August, Mohmands

attacked at Shabqadr, and later Afridi and Orakzai attacked at Tirah and the Khybar post was lost by the British.

The Samana forts were attacked and “ the garrison in one case wiped out to a man. ” Later Khyber was reoccupied and Khyber Rifles were re-established and new roads and more forts were built. To meet the situation Lord Curzon adopted a policy of “ withdrawal and concentration”-withdrawal from the advanced posts, employment of the tribal forces for the defense of the tribal country, concentrations of British forces in British territory as the second line of defense and the improvement of the means of transport and communication.

This policy continued up to 1919. Partition of Sub Continent In conjunction with the independence of Pakistan and India in 1947, the tribesmen as a whole expressed their popular will to join Pakistan. The tribes were assured a continuation of agreements between tribes and the British Government by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Since then no fundamental change in the administrative, judicial and political policies for the FATA has taken place. Soviet Invasion After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the FATA came into the limelight.

The influx of Afghan refugees, spread of militant culture, continuing civil war in Afghanistan and religious extremism leading to the rise of the Taliban did much to aggravate the situation. By and large it all contributed to an altered ethnic balance, weapons proliferation, inflow of narcotics, hindrance in developmental efforts, deteriorating law and order and de-sanctification of the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. United States' Invasion

Following the United States (US) led invasion in the Afghanistan in 2002, the tribal areas again came into focus when a large number of foreign militants were found taking refuge in these areas. Since then military operations carried out in the area have brought the lingering problem of the FATA and its integration issues with the national mainstream of Pakistan to the forefront.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE, POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL, EDUCATIONAL, JUDICIAL, AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE TRIBAL AREAS The Constitution of Pakistan introduced in 1973 is the main foundation on which the existing system of governance of the FATA, revolves.

This law states that the Federal Government of Pakistan will be the only one to extend authority in the FATA, while the Province will extend their authority to ' Provincially Administered Tribal Areas, making the FATA to be controlled by the central government. The President therefore is the only one who is in position to give directions to the Governor of a Province where that specific Tribal area is located, who shall under this article will follow the directions of the President. The FATA is divided into two administrative categories.

First, the ' protected areas' which come directly under control of central government through political appointees/agents. They are vested with judicial powers as well. Second, the ' non-protected' areas those are governed through the local tribes indirectly. The troika of Jirga, Political Agent (PA) and FCR of 1901, blends making the administrative and judicial systems in tribal areas. The Governor in a province is the representative of the President of Pakistan, who acts on behalf of the Federal Government and administers the Tribal Areas through the FATA Secretariat.

Agriculture forms a sizeable economic activity in the FATA, while the adoptions of age old agriculture systems have left the productivity of this important commodity for the local below subsistence level. Besides agriculture, the holding and growing of the livestock is also an importance economical activity in the FATA. However due to the adoption of non-scientific methods of animal husbandry, desired output is not achieved. A few areas in the FATA have timber and other forests.

Deforestation, use of valuable timber as fuel, its smuggling to the Afghanistan and degradation of grazing lands due to continuous droughts has resulted in the loss of these income-earning opportunities. The tribal areas, thanks to their terrain configuration, are sought to possess vast deposits of numerous minerals. Because of inadequate geological surveys, the security environments in the FATA and tribal disputes over these perceived 'minerals rich tracts of land,' they have yet been explored.

This situation has significantly affected the attention of private sector to draw their investment in these areas. The less number of schools, healthcare facilities, communication infrastructure and allied services do not support any major economic venture, keeping the area economically underdeveloped. 4. AVAILABILITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN FATA Due to its geography, FATA should not be allowed to be used as a spring-board and launching-pad for the satisfaction of international politics' stake-holders.

Our leadership has to consider a parallel approach of geo-economics with geo-politics. This is a viable solution to improve the living standard in the Tribal belt. Although geo-economics approach is an evolutionary process and takes time, but it has capability to change the fate of the tribal people in the long

run. Basic thing for this strategy to be useful in future is the restoration of peace in the region. Then an atmosphere can be created to develop infrastructure and finally to exploit the natural resources of FATA in a right direction.

Oil and Gas Reserves Huge reservoirs of oil and gas have been explored in Khyber, North and South Waziristan Agencies. The Oil and Gas Development Corporation (OGDC) should start drilling in FATA, while numbers of multinational companies have shown keen interest in this region for oil, gas and other minerals exploration. The foreign oil company, Tullow, has obtained a license for the exploration of the reservoirs of oil and gas in the North Waziristan Agency while the oil company of Ireland, MOL, has shown interest in the Khyber agency.

Now a suitable environment, consistent effort, due attention and keen interest is needed to speed-up the process of development. In 1996, a British Petroleum Company indicated after a seismic survey that the oil and gas reserves of NWA have the success possibility of 1: 3 while these possibilities in Middle East are 1: 10. Lime Stone and Coal The geological surveys of 85 per cent of the tribal belt have revealed immense prospects of mineral exploration. Some of them have been already utilized but much yet to be extracted.

This not only can engage the local youth with constructive and profit-making activities but can also attract the foreign investors which can ultimately be exported. Bajaur Agency has 130 million tons of lime stone reserves while Khyber Agency has 454 million tons of it. Orakzai Agency, Kurram Agency and North Waziristan Agency have 178 million tons reserves of high-level

coal. Some work is underway there but is deeply hindered by the elements of militancy and military operations on one hand and lack of scientific know-how and use of modern technology on the other hand. Marble and Granite

The mines of Marble and Granite are likely to have good potential for growth. And with huge reserves of eminently valued marble including white marble, are in abundance in Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber and NWA alone with a total of 570519 ton reserves. If this industry is given proper government attention and the project designed are properly implemented, they can provide job opportunities to several thousands of individual living here. Gem Stones Like Baluchistan which is hub for natural resources, FATA has also been kept aloof regarding development for various known unknown reasons.

Geologists have indicated that this region is also enriched in availability of venerated and semi venerated gem stones. Emerald and tourmaline are found in the north while garnet and quartz are found in South Waziristan and Bajaur. But due to lack of exploration their reserves have not been properly identified. Gold, Copper and Chromate FATA Development Authority (FDA) is of the view that huge deposits of various minerals like gold, copper, chromate and lot of others are available on 4707 square kilometer area of NWA.

After digging 7000 meter deep the surface, the FDA experts reach to conclusion that 36, 000 million tons of copper is available in just 16 kilometer area of NWA Boya Shinkai spot. FDA has tested 37, 000 samples of natural resources in laboratories. Current price of one ton copper is seven thousand dollars in international market and mountains of NWA have deposits of billions dollars hidden in just 16 kilometer area which if explored can change

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the fate of most deprived inhabitants of this war ravaged area as well as bring economic stability in country.

Natural Forests The natural forests and fruits is a wealth in this regard. Forest area is decreasing day by day by ruthless cutting where there is not an effective law to prevent the practice. Fruit production is also affected because of insurgency, military operations and lack of a permanent water supply. The local people are digging out these minerals by using dangerous means like blasting, on one hand destroy large part of these reserves while on the other this activity inflict irreparable damage to eco-system of the area.

No proper, planned and modern system is being used to explore these mineral resources as the Government is still showing no interest in exploration because no industries were set up in the area for raw material as the situation is not favorable for it. The availability of such huge reserves can contribute a lot in economic maturation of the country. Proper government assistance will not only help the locals regain jobs but would also help in restoring peace and stability.

But, extremism and militancy have brought already poor economic and trade activities of the Agency to a standstill, while many traders and businessmen have migrated to other parts of the country because of the fear of being kidnapped for ransom or killed by unknown armed groups.

5. GEOGRAPHICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE TRIBAL AREAS AND GREAT GAME Besides being the one of the most important areas of Pakistan because of its strategic location in proximity with Afghanistan, tribal areas are also one of the most sensitive areas of the World.

The War on Terror has further enhanced the importance of the tribal areas significantly. The Tribal Areas have the strategic importance, as these areas can play a significant role of a buffer zone between the turbulent Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of late this importance has been further highlighted in global geopolitics because tribal areas lie between the warm waters of Arabian Sea and the Central Asian countries i. e. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan etc, which have a very large oil and gas potential.

The Central Asian states being land locked, the energy wealth has to be exported by pipelines passing through these areas to Arabian Sea Ports for onward distribution to the world. As the energy control is a key to the global supremacy, the 21st century power game is destined to be played by the major powers around the potential producers and pipeline routes. Thus the tribal areas located on the rim of Afghanistan border with Pakistan, cannot remain immune to the spill over effects of any socioeconomic or political storms occurring in this strategic triangle. -----

----- The New Great Game -----
----- Whereas the Old Great Game emerged out of strengthening of the Russian empire; the New Great Game arose with its demise. The severe reduction of the stern control Russia had maintained in the region, through the Soviet Union, lead to a power vacuum in the region. Since the independence of the Central Asian states, all the players of the New Great Game are competing to garner individual control and fill this emptiness.

The countries that together comprise of Central Asia today include Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The region as a whole has historically suffered foreign domination, initially under the Ottoman Empire, and most recently being part of the Soviet Regime with Russia pulling the strings. ----- Furthermore, to confirm this conception of a New Great Game, one only needs to look at the reasons that have contributed to the world turning its attention to this region of the globe.

The Central Asian Republics derive their importance through two major factors. The region on the whole has continued to have geostrategic value, not only due to its location at the center of the Eurasian landmass, but also due to the political significance of the countries that border Central Asia. Secondly, and possibly a lot more significantly, the region now also has massive economic implications for the whole world.

Economic Worth of Central Asian Countries

Central Asia, comprising of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and the energy-rich lake called the Caspian Sea, owes its significance to its vast economic potential and its geo-strategic location and is fast becoming an economic center of the world. The region has a strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, and the Far East; surrounded by some of the fastest growing economies in the world including China, Russia and India who are not only investing in the region but are competing for the leading role.

From 2000 to 2009, foreign direct investment flows into Central Asia increased nine folds; while the region's gross domestic product grew on average by 8. 2% annually. ----- The most well endowed state in the Caspian region is Kazakhstan; ranked 6th in the world in terms of natural resource reserves. Out of 110 elements of the periodic table, 99 were discovered in the bowels of Kazakhstan including oil, gas, uranium, zinc, tungsten, bohrium, silver, lead, chromites, copper, fluorides, molybdenum and gold.

Moreover, it has proven oil reserves of 30 billion barrels, highest in the region followed by Azerbaijan which has 7 billion barrels. Turkmenistan has the world's 4th largest gas reserves at 7. 5 trillion cubic meters while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan follow close with 2. 41 trillion and 1. 84 trillion cubic meters respectively. Thus, collectively the Caspian region contains about 46 per cent of the world gas resources.

Pakistan as Player in the New Great Game

Central Asian region is so important for world politics, the various players involved in this New Great Game are trying to gain a stronger foothold in the area. The six players broadly involved in the game, include the United States, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, and of course Pakistan. The immense interest of Pakistan in the Central Asia Republics stemmed from the economic, geo-strategic, and political benefits these countries could provide to this struggling nation. Trade relations with these landlocked

countries had the potential to be the sole solution for Pakistan's economic problems.

With the CARS having an annual potential market of \$80 billion, Pakistan could exploit this untapped market to its advantage and improve its balance of payments. Along with cheaper imports, Pakistan could also benefit from transit income, by providing access through the Karakoram Highway, to its neighboring industrial giants: India and China. Similarly, keeping in mind the historical importance of this resource rich region, Pakistan could foresee the centre stage it could acquire in the energy war of the New Great Game by providing the shortest route for the Central Asian counties via Gwadar to the Arabian Sea.

This would help Pakistan fulfill its long term energy needs, through projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) oil and gas pipeline. The 1735 km pipeline faces security challenges because it must cross Afghanistan and FATA. It is estimated to carry one trillion cubic m of gas over a 30 years period, or 33 billion cubic m a year. Furthermore, Pakistan's electricity needs that are huge burden on its economic life could easily be lifted by access to abundant Kyrgyz hydroelectric power.

Thus, favorable trade relations with the region could result in a significant uplift of Pakistan's strained economy. -----

----- 6. CONCLUSION

----- The 21st Century is yet to see the unfolding of The New Great Game. With every country in this surge for power taking its own route, it shall be interesting to see the unfolding of the events.

Russia continues to exert its importance in the region in political and economic domains while planning to maintain its stronghold in its backyard. Iran is making waves through its trade routes and with Iran; Central Asia can see many lucrative trading and pipeline options available through them. On the other hand, it may difficult for Central Asia to tilt towards Iran without displeasing the world hegemony, US that maintains its military presence in the region. Furthermore, both Turkey and India are also vying for influence in the region. ----- Though Pakistan may face a number of constraints and obstacles in fulfilling itsdreamsof being a prominent player in the New Great Game, it can devise a policy that may ensure better results for Pakistan, if not the best. And peace and prosperity of FATA due to its geographical location will be the dominant tier of that policy. Kashmir is life line of Pakistan on eastern borders and on western border geostrategic and geopolitical importance of FATA dictates the economic future of Pakistan.