



PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The unveiling of Pakistan's National Security Policy NSP on January 14, 2022, then Prime Minister Imran Khan opened an intriguing debate among experts, believing that NSP would pave the way for regional connectivity and prosperity of the region. First time in the annals of Pakistan, the country has shifted its strategic autonomy from geo-politics to geo-economics focusing more on citizen well-being, cementing the economy and coping with non-traditional threats. NSP documents unequivocally maintain that Pakistan desires regional peace, improving relationships with India. Imminent non-traditional threats to both Pakistan and India such as climate change, water scarcity, food scarcity overpopulation and Covid-19 in the foreseeable future are far bigger than imaginary traditional threats. South Asia is the least economically integrated region of the world, having only 5 per cent intraregional trade. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC, the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor and Pakistan's NSP are likely to make Pakistan a hub of regional connectivity and prosperity. New Delhi and Kabul should not miss the bus and ponder over NSP which by and large will prove a harbinger of prosperity and regional connectivity. This paper, thus, will analyze the role of NSP for regional connectivity and will also shed light on challenges to NSP.

Keywords: *Intraregional Trade, Kartarpur Corridor, Indus Civilization, CPEC, Climate Change, Unending Hostility.*

INTRODUCTION

The former prime minister of Pakistan Imran Khan on January 14, 2022, unveiled the National Security of Pakistan NSP 2022-2026. The NSP started an instructive debate among the experts for the unique and distinctive characteristics of the policy. Under NSP, Pakistan has conceded unprecedented changes in its strategic autonomy from geopolitics to geo-economics focusing on a citizen-centric approach, promoting regional connectivity and ensuring economic security, dignity, safety and prosperity of the people. The NSP recognizes the significance of non-traditional threats such as climate change, overpopulation and Covid-19, thus, has focused on both traditional and non-traditional security aspects giving leverage to the economic security at the core of national security. NSP ascertains without a robust economy, the country's conventional security cannot be strengthened, it is simply out of the question. (Inam Ul Haque, 2022)

The document appreciates the geostrategic location of Pakistan in the past as well as in the contemporary regional political landscape. But the geostrategic location of the country merely remained a cliché in the past that ought to be converted to reality by obtaining geo-economic dividends. NSP's Section IV entitled "Securing our Economic Future" encompasses economic security through promoting regional connectivity, trade, education, energy and human resources. Human Security entitled under Section VII observes areas such as an increasing population resulting in migration, securities in health climate change challenges and gender inequality. Some crucial areas are identified under policy objectives by promoting climate-resilient development affordability of food, sustaining agriculture, and promoting empowerment. Meanwhile, NSP will prove instrumental in regional connectivity culminating in accomplishing Pakistan's desired objectives. (Inam Ul Haque,



2022). The NSP focuses on pursuing enduring peace with India reiterated Islamabad was committed to promoting peace at home and abroad and had desired to mend better ties with New Delhi. Pakistan under NSP intends to have peace with New Delhi and expects reciprocity from the latter as far as the peaceful coexistence in the region is concerned. (Sameer Patil, 2022)

NSP: Regional Connectivity

NSP is likely to alter the complexion of regional politics. Over the last seven decades, the geo-strategic location of Pakistan was used by Pakistan and the US in the context of geo-political dividends. In the era of globalization, Pakistan cannot merely rely only on geopolitics, capitalizing on the potential of geo-economic is desperately needed to promote regional connectivity with the aim of cementing the country's economic growth. Pakistan with a total foreign export of \$ 31 billion dollars and import of \$ 80 billion dollars cannot survive in the contemporary world and soon will have to augment its economic growth and regional connectivity. (Miftah Ismail, 2022)

In his fascinating book entitled "Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum" Stephen Cohen by expressing pessimism maintains that the conflict between India and Pakistan is among the five conflicts of the world that are unlikely to be resolved. Cohen argues that Sub-Saharan Africa economically is more intertwined than South Asia. The latter has merely five percent of interregional trade. However, the NSP has a great deal of potential to convert the pessimism of Cohen into optimism. The region, by and large, will become a hub of regional connectivity once the NSP is implemented in letter and spirit. (Dost Muhammad Barrech, 2020)

NSP plays a pivotal role in regional connectivity. China started its mega project named China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC in Pakistan. (Siraj Bashir, Muhammad Arshad, Sadia Barech, 2019). The NSP defines CPEC as the epitome of regional connectivity. Most considerably, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) and CPEC could prove a catalyst in this regard. CPEC and TAPI are the bona fide determiner of the NSP on regional relationships. Utilizing the country's significant location for regional connectivity and trade the policymakers of the country are committed to espousing equitable development initiatives aimed at making Pakistan a trustworthy and reliable trade partner. Islamabad under NSP extended regional connectivity contemplating regional integration and collective climate action including cross-broader energy network and transit routes. (Kashoon Leeza, 2022)

Pakistan's energy security has been underscored in the NSP, the former leaves no stone unturned to make connectivity with Central Asian states blessed with natural resources in a bid to get ample energy. Meanwhile, the World Bank report in 2018 stated that India and Pakistan had the potential of augmenting their bilateral trade from \$ 2 billion to \$ 37 billion. Arguably, NSP appears to be a turning point in ending the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan impelling them to go for regional connectivity. The opening of the Kartarpur Corridor in 2019 by former prime minister Imran Khan was applauded by the international community heralding a path to religious harmony.

Approximately, 45,000 Indian pilgrims have been visiting Kartarpur Corridor since its opening on November 9, 2019. Both parties should realize that Kartarpur Corridor under NSP should be made a corridor for economic and regional connectivity too. Opening yet another corridor by New Delhi and Islamabad in Sindh, Pakistan bordering India to exploit the Sufi shrines of Sindh for Indian Muslims will promote religious harmony and prosperity. The environment is ripe for such an initiative in the shape of NSP, promoting regional connectivity, religious harmony and economic diplomacy resulting in nipping the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan in the bud.

Mohenjo-Daro Larkana city in Sindh is the largest city of the Indus civilization and is one of the best densities to be visited by the Indians. India remained a part of this great civilization. In order to promote regional connectivity under NSP, Indians be allowed to visit this historic place promoting tourism and people-to-people exchanges. If CPEC is feasible why cannot New Delhi and Islamabad initiate a similar economic corridor under NSP to end the enduring hostility? (Barrech, 2022)

Presumably, Pakistan's first time in history will obtain political and economic dividends from NSP. From geopolitics to geo-economics, the country will benefit from its prized geo-economic location providing easy access to "north-south and east-west connectivity for South and Central Asia, Middle-East and Africa" and "Westward connectivity is also a significant driver for Pakistan's continued push



for regional peace and stability in Afghanistan. (Ajmal Khan, Dr. Siraj Bashir and Mujeeb-Ur-Rehman, 2022). While the foreign policy of Pakistan states Afghanistan in the future will remain a gateway for the economy connecting South Asia with Central Asia a region blessed with natural resources. (Sushant Sareen, 2022)

Extension of CPEC to Afghanistan

The foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan met in Islamabad in May 2023 and agreed on extending CPEC to Afghanistan. (The Indian Express, 2023) Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang in his meeting with the foreign minister of Pakistan reaffirmed their commitment to working together on extending CPEC to the Taliban-ruled nation. "The two sides agreed to continue their humanitarian and economic assistance for the Afghan people and enhance development cooperation in Afghanistan, including through extension of CPEC to Afghanistan," (Dr. Siraj Bashir, Dr. Waseem Sadiq, Dr. Huma Zafar, Anjuman Murtaza, Parveen Naseer, 2022). Deputy spokesman of the interim Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan Hafiz Zia Ahmad maintained CPEC would enable Afghanistan to become a part of BRI and would prove instrumental in bringing various projects like railway, energy and another project to the country (The Nation, 2023). Prior to that Afghan Zabihullah Mujahid Taliban spokesperson argued "China is our most important partner and represents a fundamental and extraordinary opportunity for us because it is ready to invest and rebuild our country." (Trevor Filseth, 2021)

Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2016 with China. Due to its proximity to Central Asia, Afghanistan is a gateway to Central Asia, Eurasia and the West Asian Corridor. The inclusion of Afghanistan in CPEC would enhance regional connectivity as the country remains a gateway to Central Asian states and Eurasia. Afghanistan has a massive potential to serve China's interests. Against this backdrop, China's expertise under CPEC will change the destiny of Afghanistan. The former mines minister of Afghanistan states the country has approximately 3 trillion dollars in natural resources including lithium, ore, sulphur, coal, chromium, uranium, zinc, lead, and bauxite. Instead of invading Afghanistan, China is trying to have cordial ties with Kabul to bring peace to the country which is significantly feasible under the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan. (Mir Sher Baz Khetrani, 2022)

CPEC, no doubt is a cornerstone of the NSP. Without the success of the CPEC, NSP cannot yield positive outcomes. The NSP has defined CPEC as the epitome of regional connectivity urging that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline under CPEC and regional connectivity could be accomplished accordingly. To say the least, amalgamation of CPEC & TAPI is a good omen for regional connectivity which is possible through the implementation of NSP. (Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, 2022).

The Saudi Iran détente and NSP

March 10, 2023, and March 27, 2021, arguably are the historic occasions in Middle Eastern politics where China demonstrated its long-term objectives by inking Saudi-Iran reconciliation and signing China Iran strategic deal respectively. China damaged US exceptionalism twice once amid Covid-19 when Beijing emerged as a torch bearer by supporting countries, provided medical equipment and vaccines. The US exceptionalism witnessed yet another blow when Beijing brokered the archrival Saudi Iran. The Saudi-Iran reconciliation seems to be the only game in the town having the potential to alter the complexion of regional politics and will pave the way for regional connectivity and consolidation of NSP (Dost Barrech, 2023). In this regard, leaders of Pakistan and Iran on May 18, 2023, jointly inaugurated a power transmission line in a marketplace and along their shared border. It is a significant move that will boost regional trade and energy cooperation between Iran and Pakistan. The latter in past due to Saudi Arabia's pressure could not make any deal with Iran now after the Saudi-Iran reconciliation will be able to get Iran gas and could easily promote regional trade. (Ayaz Gul, 2023)

There are numerous avenues for Pakistan to benefit from Saudi-Iran reconciliation. Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former representative to the UN argues "For Pakistan, it opens up new diplomatic and economic opportunities. For decades, Pakistan has followed a policy of balancing relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, trading very carefully between a strategic ally and a neighbour. Now the



rapprochement between the two former rivals means diplomatic space opens up for Islamabad to consider new initiatives and also strengthen ties with Iran” (Zebunnisa Burki, 2023)

China and Iran's 25-year strategic cooperation agreement signed in 2021 is going to promote a multipolar world and deepen multi-lateralization, making cooperation efforts for peace and stability in the region. China in its envisaged \$400 billion deal will invest nearly \$280 billion in the Iranian oil and gas and petrochemicals sectors which will certainly require a CPEC route for the energy supply enabling Islamabad to get Iranian oil at a discount of at least 12%. Both Pakistan and Iran historically have ethnic, religious and cultural bonds. By promoting regional connectivity, Islamabad in the evolving regional politics could get maximum dividends. The country is having the world's oldest civilizations like the Indus Valley Mohen-jo-Daro and Gandhara which ought to be capitalized for the projection of soft power. Public diplomacy and the soft power of the country will get cemented by allowing Iranian tourists to the oldest civilizations. Over a decade, China inked 15 strategic partnerships with the Arab states. To espouse China's proactive foreign policy, Pakistan could project its economic and soft power in the Middle East. (Dost Barrech, 2023)

Climate Diplomacy under NSP: Regional Connectivity

Ostensibly, Climate change in the contemporary era seems to be a bigger threat than terrorism, extremism affecting humanity and damaging the world's economy unprecedentedly. Pakistan, thus, in NSP gives special attention to climate change. It is a prerequisite for regional countries to promote climate diplomacy. Pakistan is the 8th most vulnerable country to climate change. It was badly affected by the floods of 2022, lost 33 billion dollars and nearly 33 million were affected by floods. António Guterres, U.N. Secretary-General António visited Pakistan and met with people affected by the flood maintained that “As we continue to see more and more extreme weather events around the world, it is outrageous that climate action is being put on the back burner as global emissions of greenhouse gases are still rising, putting all of us everywhere in growing danger.” (Shannon Osaka, 2022)

India has been the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change. By 2050 the level rise in India is predicted to mount nearly 15-38 centimetres affecting its major cities. Land erosion is yet another dilemma the country will have to confront, the latter's approximately 26 per cent of coastline areas are vulnerable to land erosion and losing nearly 450 hectares of land annually. McKinsey report shows a very bleak future for the Indian economy states that “heatwaves translate into a projected 2.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent, or \$150 billion to \$250bn, the risk to the country's gross domestic product”. (Rebecca Bundhun, 2022)

In such delicate circumstances, climate diplomacy in South Asia is exceedingly important to be promoted. NSP takes serious note of the negative effects of climate change like floods, heatwaves, and drought. It focuses on water availability which has alarmingly reached 908 cubic meters of water per capita in Pakistan. The country worrisomely will face water shortages in the near future and its agrarian economy is entirely dependent on irrigation and will witness water scarcity 23. (Ghulam Murtaza, Siraj Bashir and Abdul Khaliq, 2023). NSP underlines to preserve Pakistan's transboundary water rights. The country's nearly 80 percent of water is in Indus Basina which is believed to have been carried by rivers originating outside its borders.

Pakistan, consequently, under NSP cannot overlook promoting climate diplomacy. Climate policy goals of Pakistan are encompassing promoting “a climate resilient Pakistan that prioritizes climate adaptation, sustainable water management, and disaster preparedness”. (Shafqat Kakakhel, 2022) The Climate Change Policy of Pakistan, established in 2012, so far remained unimplemented nor did it reflect in any following annual development plan that could now be implemented in NSP 24. (Sarfraz Ahmed, Dr. Siraj Bashir & Mumtaz Al, 2019). Ironically, Pakistan lacks the technical apparatus for monitoring and calculating emissions of greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide. By promoting climate diplomacy, Islamabad could benefit from the expertise of the regional countries. (Shafqat Kakakhel, 2022)

Regional countries particularly India and Pakistan need an overhaul in their foreign policies. Shunning preoccupation with the theory of realism is a prerequisite for both parties. Both countries need to ponder over the critics of realism in a bid to promote climate diplomacy embarking on a path to



regional connectivity. Firstly, the theory of realism negates the non-traditional threats such as climate change, Covid-19 and overpopulation (Dr. Siraj Bashir, Dr. Ghulam Murtaza, Sana Ullah, Mobeen Ahmed and Shakir Adam.,2021). At the current juncture, climate change undoubtedly is a bigger threat than traditional threats to the whole South Asia. Secondly, the theory overlooks economic interdependence which caused irreparable damage to regional connectivity and prosperity of South Asia. (Rashid Ali, Dr. Siraj Bashir & Kinza Farooq,2022).

Thirdly, it overshadows intra-state warfare. Currently, India and Pakistan are experiencing intra-state warfare damaging their national integrity. As the saying goes that “He who comes late is no loss”. Pakistan after 74 years realized that its strategic autonomy needs a comprehensive overhaul focusing on human security and climate change. Climate diplomacy under NSP with the regional countries will play a catalyst role in regional connectivity and prosperity. (Dost Barrech, 2022)

Foreseen Challenges to NSP

The perpetuating instability in Pakistan puts the future of NSP in jeopardy and makes foreign investors sceptical of investing in the country. It is very disappointing to note that over 75 years of history, none of the prime minister of Pakistan completed his or her five-year tenure. Their tenures have been toppled in different forms of allegations showcasing that the country is unstable for regional connectivity and Foreign Direct Investment FDI. Political instability, by and large, is causing a damage to the NSP. (Mohammad Mazhari, 2022) Though NSP is a brainchild of PTI, currently, the party is in the tug of war with Pakistan’s Military Establishment. Imran Khan has been undergoing hard times of his life, the party leaders have been incarcerated in jails. They are forced to quit PTI. Defence Minister of Pakistan Minister Khawaja Asif stated that the government was considering banning the PTI party after the vandalizing of the military installations on May 09 by the PTI workers. Regional connectivity and implementation of NSP in political instability will remain just wishful thinking (Dawn, 2023)

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan embarked on the path to the resurgence of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan TTP. Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies a think tank based in Islamabad in its report says that fatalities caused by TTP attacks have been augmented by 25 percent in 2022 from the previous year. The report further maintains during this period more than 262 terrorist attacks were carried out by the militants including 14 suicide bombings that claimed 419 lives. (Roohan Ahmed Uzair Younus, 2023). Islamabad urged the Taliban regime to carry out operations against the TTP in Afghanistan. Taliban are unlikely to crush the TTP as both are ideologically akin and lived together in Waziristan for ages. Taliban believe crushing TTP will impel the militant group to join the Daesh which will further exacerbate the national security of Afghanistan. The resurgence of TTP and the volatile situation in Afghanistan would have spillover effects for Pakistan disturbing the national security of the country, discouraging the investors to invest, and putting the regional connectivity and NSP in uncertainty. (Maleeha Lodhi, 2023)

Pakistan’s economy is in a deteriorating situation, the country has merely \$4.3bn foreign-exchange reserves and is on the verge of default. (Abid Hussain, 2023) Two well-known Pakistani American scholars Atif Mian and Shuja Nawaz both are also political scientists and economists have cautioned the current government and urged them to take pragmatic measures as the economy of the country was near collapse. Atif Mian maintained “To thump your chest and say, ‘See we have not defaulted’ means nothing if you continue to ignore the underlying crisis,” Meanwhile, Shuja Nawaz reiterated that “The only thing worse than indecisiveness in the face of a crisis is incompetence.” (Anwar Iqbal, 2023)

According to the Asian Development Bank ADB, Pakistan’s economy is forecasted to get slowed to 3.5% (ending 30 June 2023) in fiscal year (FY) 2023 amid policy tightening, devastating floods and external imbalances. The economic meltdown discourages foreign investors to invest in Pakistan which requires policymakers to ponder over the economic stability in a bid to make regional connectivity and NSP successful. (Asian Development Bank, 2023)

There appears to be a great contradiction in the NSP. The government has preferred the regional economy over the domestic economy. The policy has termed CPEC as a cornerstone of regional connectivity cementing the country's economy through rising domestic growth. On the contrary, the



economic growth of the country was much better in the pre-CEPC period. Over the last few years, CPEC has not improved the economic growth nor did the government build Special Economic Zones SEZ. Pakistan remained utterly failed to diversify its economy. The situation could have been ripe for regional connectivity had the state under CPEC built SEZs, skill development, ensuring technology transfer, research, and development. (Kashoon Leeza, 2022)

Theoretically, NSP seems to be interesting but practically it remains elusive. There is no mention of concrete measures to achieve policy objectives. Though NSP has identified policy goals and broad areas of interest it lacks measurements of how to accomplish the goals. Without strategies and practical steps, NSP will remain daydreaming. NSP does not shed light on the humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan that emanated after the Taliban takeover. The humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan should have been the primary concern of Pakistan.

The growing immigration of Afghan refugees to Pakistan would cause further damage to the country's fragile economy. The political instability in its poverty-stricken neighbour will intensify Pakistan's worries. Above all, Pakistan army is deeply involved in the politics of the country and frequently remains embroiled in political engineering. Consequently, the country leaned towards a security state. Morphing the country from a security state into a welfare state will remain a hurricane task for civilian governments. In military-dominated politics, mending ties with India under NSP will test the nerves of the civilian governments (Neha Ansari, 2022)

Recommendations

- Islamabad will have to end political instability. So far among the 18 prime ministers of the country, none of them has completed his and her five years tenure which tarnishes the soft image of the country.
- The current crackdown against PTI by the military establishment is demonstrating that democracy gets weakened. The more democracy is feeble, the less there is the likelihood of implementation of NSP and regional connectivity.
- Pakistan will have to cement its economy and political stability under NSP to make the country hub of regional connectivity.
- China's strategic deal with Iran in which the former will invest 400 billion dollars in the latter should be made a part of regional connectivity under NSP.
- Islamabad needs to get maximum dividends from the Saudi-Iran détente. Improving trade with Iran will prove instrumental for NSP.
- After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Pakistan has been experiencing a new wave of terrorism and extremism generating uncertainties about NSP in the context of Foreign Direct Investment FDI, and regional connectivity. To make NSP successful, Pakistan will have to eliminate terrorism and extremism.
- In the lexicon of social constructivism theory friendship, rivalry and sovereignty are socially constructed. NSP in the prism of constructivism theory can construct a new chapter of friendship, regional connectivity and prosperity.
- The regional countries should shun obsession with the theory of realism and ponder over its critics that negate economic interdependence, interstate warfare last but not least the non-traditional threats. Critics of realism theory be incorporated into NSP.
- India should also incorporate critics of realism theory in its foreign policy.
- Modi regime in India ought to eschew Hindutva ideology based on the suppression of minorities and espouse the inclusive approach to get political and economic leverage from NSP.
- Over decades South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remained utterly failed to address the regional issues. However, NSP can provide a robust platform to SAARC members for collaboration to promote regional connectivity.
- Cooperation always delivers results. Pakistan under NSP will have to persuade regional countries to show good research and analysis that can lead to a win-win situation benefiting each party.
- David King opines that Climate change is a bigger threat than terrorism. Pakistan must promote climate diplomacy under NSP.

- Under NSP, Pakistan should promote clean energy, there could be regional cooperation in this regard consolidating trading agreements and transmission infrastructure.
- New Delhi after Lahore is the 2nd most polluted city in the world. Air pollution under NPS is offering promising ground for Islamabad and New Delhi to cooperate.
- India can benefit massively from NSP as it is the second largest consumer of energy. It requires land access to the Middle East and Central Asia regions which is only feasible through Pakistan.
- Pakistan will have to extend CPEC to Afghanistan for regional prosperity. Afghanistan should not miss the bus to benefit from the extension of CPEC.
- Afghanistan nearly has 3 trillion dollars in natural resources which could be capitalized under CPEC once it is extended.

CONCLUSION

Arguably, in international politics neighbours cannot be changed. Even if a country has strained relations sooner rather than later it will have to improve relations with them for the prosperity of the region. While the foreign policy of the country cannot remain static. Against this backdrop, regional countries in South Asia will have to mend their ties to cope with innumerable challenges such as climate change, water shortages, food scarcity, Covid-19 and other foreseen challenges. The 21st century is a century of globalization, regional connectivity and economic diplomacy. China's led Belt and Road Initiative BRI has 150 signatories. Chinese regional connectivity modal is replicable as far as NSP is concerned.

NSP documents contain Pakistan for a hundred years does not want hostility with India. The environment is ripe for friendship and regional connectivity under NSP. As mentioned earlier the Sub-Saharan Africa region economically is more connected than the South Asia region. Bringing a massive transformation in its strategic autonomy from geopolitics to geo-economics, Pakistan has been moving in the right direction. NSP accentuates a citizen-centric approach that presumably will promote regional connectivity heralding a path to economic diplomacy, climate diplomacy, religious harmony, people to people exchanges. Ostensibly, in international politics security cannot remain stagnant it changes from time to time. At the current juncture, non-traditional security, by all means, is a bigger threat than the so-called imaginary traditional security. Robert Kaplan maintains "to see the 21st century truly, one's eyes must learn a different set of aesthetics". Kaplan underscores climate change, food shortage, water scarcity and overpopulation would be a far bigger threat than conventional threats.

Regional countries should not miss the bus and be ready to get economic dividends from Pakistan's NSP. India and Pakistan in recent history interestingly are unique states both have been embroiled in enduring rivalry for the last 75 years. Both parties cannot perpetuate rivalry as the concept of threats has changed. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are the 7th 5th and 10th most vulnerable countries to climate change respectively, bearing the brunt of political, economic, cultural and psychological losses. However, challenges to the implementation of NSP cannot be ruled out. The political instability and weak economy of Pakistan put the future of NSP in jeopardy. The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan has emboldened the TTP. The resurgence of TTP's attacks in Pakistan will discourage foreign investors to invest in the country. Under CPEC, Pakistan should have diversified the economy and should have built SEZs, and railways installation. Unfortunately, the non-implementation of CPEC projects would affect the NSP badly. The success of NSP largely depends on CPEC but currently, the mega project has been witnessing stagnation and incompetency. NPS is the final nail in the coffin to end the enduring hostility between India and Pakistan. In short, it can be argued that NSP will usher an era of trade, regional connectivity and prosperity.

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