

**RESEARCH PAPER****Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India Gas Pipeline and Foreign Policy of Pakistan****<sup>1</sup>Dr. Bibi Saira\*<sup>2</sup> Dr. Aisha Javed**

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**\*Corresponding Author** [sairanouman.polsc@mul.edu.pk](mailto:sairanouman.polsc@mul.edu.pk)**ABSTRACT**

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan India gas pipeline project is a component of an extensive plan to develop Asia's interconnected energy systems. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline has a significant impact on energy security and regional integration in South Asia. This gas pipeline project can address the growing energy demand of the region. However, due to the volatility in the political landscape of South Asia and the complexity of large-scale energy projects, the project is facing a number of critical challenges that need the focus of the regional partners and stakeholders. The limited literature on the TAP gas pipeline project has focused on security hurdles to the projects from the member countries' perspective. The research study found that the main hurdle to executing the TAP gas pipeline project in Pakistan is the country's internal issues, a lack of investments, lack of financial resources, international pressure, the country's regional issues and the dynamics of changing regional situations. The research study is proposed to be useful for policymakers to evaluate the implication of energy import dependency and to frame foreign policy.

**KEYWORDS** Energy Crisis, Energy Policy, Energy Resources, Energy Security, Foreign Policy, TAPI**Introduction**

Energy has become the backbone of a country's human activities. The mankind has achieved a lot through efficient and extensive forms of energy production. Energy is critical to achieve all the basic needs of mankind. The absence of affordable energy provision means humans' basic needs are not being met. Therefore affordable as well as adequate provision of energy is essential to provide basic human needs (Asif, 2012). In 1986, the importance of the feasible energy supply was first recognized in a Report of the "World Commission on Environment and Development" called the "Brundtland report", which stated that energy should be incorporated into the national policies of every country for sustainable development. (Brundtland Report, p. 240). The issue was again highlighted and discussed in 2000 in another report under the title "World Energy Assessment: Energy and the Challenge of Sustainability", by the "UNDP, World Energy Council and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs" (UN-DESA). This report emphasized the direct and strong relationship between poverty and energy (Sagar, 2005).

The energy industry is one of the greatest and most complex commercial markets and is also considered the backbone of other economic activities. Energy has been the backyard for the implementation of policy in many states due to its invincible significance for social well-being and economic stability. By definition, energy policy is the mechanism a country adopts to address the questions like assessing the needs for energy for a growing economy, making strategies to accommodate these needs, and analyzing the available options to do so. Energy is purely related to the government, therefore the energy policy reflects the ambition of the government about what to achieve, what to control, and what to change in the energy industry. The government's decisions about the types of energy to be

used in the country are reflected in the energy policies. The main goal of the government is to safeguard energy resources.

The geography of a country plays an important role in energy security and supply. Therefore Geographic features of the country bring opportunities along with risks. Pakistan is an ideal geographic location on the globe. However, Pakistan must realize how to utilize its geographic location to achieve its interests. Pakistan is the “gateway to Central Asia” and a route for other nations of the world into Afghanistan. Pakistan’s Eastern border is with India, China on its North, land-locked Afghanistan on the West and the “Gold Smith Line” with Iran. In the South, Pakistan has the Arabian Sea. With an area of 9, 96096 km square, Pakistan is Asia's most important geographical patch. Looking for the TAP (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan) gas pipeline along with the Western border of Afghanistan and Central Asia can be fruitful for the TAP Gas Pipeline.

Energy has gained importance in foreign policy and recently gained attention in world politics. Many countries both developed and developing have a foreign policy based on their energy policy. The US is a major example of an energy-based foreign policy. China has an energy-based foreign policy with all the energy-rich countries. Although Pakistan has energy-rich neighbouring countries and can attain energy security, however, no attention has been given to energy while making foreign policy. Due to the dictated foreign policy choices, no regional energy project has started to develop in Pakistan. The TAP gas pipeline project could not be developed due to the lack of funds and regional security issues in Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan is one of the major gas exporting countries having the world’s fourth-largest gas reservoir after “Russia, Iran and Qatar”. Turkmenistan has 17.5 TCM of natural gas and is producing natural gas since 1960, a major natural gas source for the former USSR. Turkmenistan claims to have the second-largest gas field “Galkynysh Gas Fields” after Iran’s “South Pars Field”. The TAPI project can be traced back to the 1990s when Central Asian countries got independence from the Russian federation after its disintegration. The international oil companies needed new pipelines in the region after the Russian refusal to allow Russian pipelines, therefore international involvement started in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Since Russia has halted the gas import from Turkmenistan therefore China is now the major importer of natural gas from Turkmenistan using 46% consumption of Turkmen gas. Turkmenistan produces 72.4bcm gas in 2015 and its production was boosted due to the development of the Galkynysh fields. Turkmenistan is now spearheading the long-delayed project TAPI for regional integration. TAP is a gas pipeline proposed to start from Turkmenistan would travel through Afghanistan and Pakistan and enter India through the Pakistan border.

### **Literature Review**

Mills (2012) explains in detail the importance of the geostrategic location of Pakistan can pursue its regional energy option can possibly increase competition among regional countries and can also contribute towards new collaboration to strengthen regional blocks. Khawaja, & Ur Rehman (2016) Say that Pakistan is located in an important location geographically and because of energy interdependence, Pakistan must not ignore the energy availability only then it can become a gateway to energy-rich central Asia. Cheema (2011) comments that energy security is crucial for the safe energy corridor and every state does not have sufficient energy, therefore energy transportation is inevitable for all countries Pakistan has the potential of an energy corridor and Gwadar can play a vital role, but due to constraints, the projects cannot be developed. Mahmood, et al., (2014) portray a very bright picture of the energy situation in Pakistan. Pakistan is dependent on imported fossil fuels, which is a threat to energy security. However, energy import options are unavoidable to minimize the energy crisis in the country. These options are regional energy projects with Iran and Central Asia.

## **Historical Development to Finalize TAPI**

TAP natural gas pipeline was connect Turkmenistan with energy-scarce South Asia. According to the agreement, it would transport 33bcm to three member countries, 5bcm to Afghanistan, 14bcm to Pakistan and 14bcm to India for 30 years starting from 2020. The gas pipeline will be 1824km long starting from Turkmenistan's gas fields of Galkynysh, covering 214km before entering the Afghan border. The gas pipeline will cross 774km through provinces of Afghanistan "Heart, Farah, Helmand, Nimroz and Kandahar" entering into Pakistan. In Pakistan, it will cover a long route of 826km past Balochistan Capital Quetta and Punjab city Multan finally reaching Fazilka India (as Initially, India was the member country of TAPI).

The TAP project was discussed for more than two decades, however concrete steps for this project were initiated in the last few years. This origin of the gas pipeline started back on 1995 March 15, When Pakistan and Turkmenistan signed an MOU for the construction of the "Trans-Afghan pipeline" in Islamabad, followed by the negotiations with Taliban in Afghanistan. Initially "Brida Argentinian Oil and Gas Company" and US-based company "UNOCAL" competed for the development of the pipeline but eventually "Delta" a Saudi-based company and "UNOCAL" made a consortium along with Russian "Gazprom" who had a 10% share withdrew afterward. In December 1998 UNOCAL withdrew after the bombing of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya by "Al-Qaida" (Taliban) and closed its offices in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

After the terrorist attacks on 2001 September 11, the pipeline project was restored when NATO forces ousted the Taliban from Kabul in Afghanistan with a new Afghan government that promised to provide security to the pipeline in Afghanistan. In May 2002 the leaders of three countries signed the MOU of pipeline construction (McMilliam, 2002). The member countries' energy ministers' steering committee was formed to follow the project. In July 2002 the committee requested ADB for technical assistance (TA) for a "feasibility study" of the gas pipeline. ADB completed the first "TA report" in December 2002 to set up a consortium for the construction of the TAP "Turkmenistan Afghanistan and Pakistan" gas pipeline, as Indian participation was not certain in 2002. In the feasibility report, the ADB proposed two routes of 1700km each with \$22.5billion. Initially, India was reluctant to join the gas pipeline as it was negotiating for the IP gas pipeline, which the US severely opposed due to the sanctions imposed on Iran. However, in February 2006, India for the first time participated in the meeting of the steering committee, and in May 2006 Indian government officially announced joining the project. The four participating countries signed the "Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement (GPFA)" on 2008, April 24 and the project was renamed TAPI. In April 2009, the TAPI project accelerated the pace when Russia halted the gas export of Turkmenistan after the explosion in the pipeline connecting Turkmenistan and Russia. This incident forced Turkmenistan to look for alternative roots. Turkmenistan's gas export to China started in December 2009. In December 2010, all participating countries signed a "gas pipeline framework agreement, gas sale purchase agreement (GPSA), and an inter-governmental agreement" completing phase 1 of the TAP project.

In January 2011, Russia offered Afghanistan's section of the Pipeline. In April 2012 Afghanistan and India could not agree on the "transit fee" paid to Afghanistan, consequently Pakistan and India failed to agree on the "transit fee". The target date for transfer fee and pricing settlement was November 2011 by ADB, however, GPSA was not finalized until 2012. In May 2012 parliament of Afghanistan approved the agreement on the pipeline, followed by the Indian cabinet. Therefore in May 2012 "Turkmenistan's national oil company Turkmengaz" signed GPSA with Pakistan's "Pakistan's Inter State Gas System Ltd" and India's "GAIL" for transmission systems in respective countries. In July 2013, Afghanistan's "Afghan Gas Enterprise" signed an agreement with Turkmengaz thus completing Phase 2 of the TAP gas pipeline (Muzaffar & Imran, 2016).

The next step in the project was setting up a “Special Purpose Consortium Company (SPCC)”, by selecting the “consortium leader” and “GPSA-related operational agreements”. The companies of the member countries established “TAPI Pipeline Company Limited (TPCL)” in November 2014, which would construct, own, and operate the gas pipeline. “Turkmengaz” was approved as the “consortium leader” of SPCC in August 2015. On December 13, 2015, initially, all four countries signed the final agreement of TAPI at the groundbreaking Ceremony in “Turkmenistan’s Mary province. The “Turkmen president, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, the Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, and the Indian vice-president, Hamid Ansari” attended the groundbreaking ceremony. In December 2015, the construction of the TAP gas pipeline started in Turkmenistan and was completed in 2019. On February 23, 2018, Afghan’s side pipeline construction was launched in Heart and the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, the PM of Pakistan and India’s minister for state for external affairs attended the ceremony. The construction in Pakistan was planned to start in October 2019. The flow of natural gas TAPI is estimated to start in December 2023.”

### Chronology of TAPI Gas Pipeline

**Table 1**  
**Chronology of TAPI Gas Pipeline**

Date	Ruling Party	Event
1995 March	PPP	Turkmenistan and Pakistan Signed MOU for gas pipeline
1998 December	PML(N)	US refused to finance the project dew to the Taliban terrorist attacks on US embassies
2002 December	PML (Q) Musharraf regime	ADB conducted the feasibility study of the pipeline and proposed two routes.
2003 May		Steering Committee was formed by Turkmenistan Afghanistan and Pakistan.
2006 February		India attended the steering committee.
2006 May		India officially announced to join the project.
2008 April		GPFA signed between the participating countries and the project was renamed “TAPI”.
2010 December		The participating countries signed the Intergovernmental agreement and GPSA. First phase completed
2011 January	PPP	Russia offered Afghanistan to construct pipeline in Afghanistan.
2011 April		Afghanistan, India and Pakistan could not agree on Transit fee
2012 May		Afghanistan and India government approved the project. Turkmengaz” signed GPSA “Pakistan's Inter State Gas System Ltd and GAIL”
2013 July		Turkmengaz signed agreement with “Afghan Gas Enterprise” Second phase completed
2014 November	PML (N)	“TAPI Pipeline Company Limited (TPCL)” TPCL was established
2015 December		TAPI project was finally signed and construction started in Turkmenistan
2018 February		Construction on Afghanistan side started.
2019 October	PTI	Construction of Pakistan side was planned but not started yet.

2023 December	Expected date of the completion of project.
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### Features of the TAPI Gas Pipeline Project

TAPI was signed between four countries Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The origin of the gas is the “Galkynysh Gas fields” of Turkmenistan. The gas pipeline will be 1824km long starting from Turkmenistan’s gas fields of Galkynysh, covering 214km before entering the Afghan border. The gas pipeline will cross 774km through provinces of Afghanistan “Heart, Farah, Helmand, Nimroz and Kandahar” entering into Pakistan. In Pakistan, it will cover a long route of 826km pass Balochistan Capital Quetta and Punjab city Multan finally reaching Fazilka India. The estimated total cost of the TAPI project was \$25 billion. 85% of the total cost would be spent by Turkmenistan will spend 85 including the investment for the development of gas fields which is \$15 billion and \$10 billion for the development of a gas pipeline and each of the member countries would contribute 5%. The member countries have come to an agreement on a transit fee, which is “49.5 cents per Million British Thermal Units (MMBtu) and Afghanistan will get \$400 annually as a Transit fee.” The project will complete in two phases, the estimated cost of the first phase is US\$5-6 billion, which is free to flow”, and the cost of the second phase is around \$2 billion, which is “the installation of compressor stations.”

**Table 2**  
**Features of TAP**  
**Features of TAP**

<b>Gas Pipeline Project Name</b>	TAPI “Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India” Gas Pipeline Project
<b>Member countries</b>	“Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India”
<b>Origin</b>	Turkmenistan “Galkynysh Gas Fields”
<b>Estimated cost</b>	Total cost: \$25 billion Gas fields development: \$15 billion Pipeline Development: 10 billion
<b>Cost Share of each Country</b>	Turkmenistan: 85% Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan: 5% each.
<b>Transit Fee</b>	Afghanistan will get \$ 400million annually “49.5 cents/ MMBtu”
<b>Technical Features</b>	Length: 1814km Maximum Discharge: 33bcm annually Afghanistan: 5bcm (16%) Pakistan: 14bcm (42%) India: 14bcm (42%)
<b>Diameter of the pipeline</b>	56 inches
<b>Gas Pipeline Route</b>	“Galkynysh Gas Fields Turkmenistan”, “Heart, Kahdahar Afghanistan”, “Quetta, Multan Pakistan” and “Fazilka India”
<b>Facilitator/Coordinator</b>	ADB “Asian Development Bank”
<b>Financers/Partners/Sponsors</b>	“Turkmengaz” as major partner, “Pakistan interstate system limited” GAIL and Afghan Gas Enterprise.

### TAP Gas Pipeline Opportunities

The TAPI project would connect neighboring regions to get cheaper and better fuel access and infrastructure would develop in those areas where the pipeline would pass. The strong central power would minimize the security issues, as TAPI benefits would overshadow any possible downsides. Revenue in the form of transit fees is the visible benefit for the countries receiving it, which will be additional revenue for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. India would pay the transit fee to Pakistan and in turn, Pakistan will pay this

transit fee to Afghanistan, therefore Afghanistan will have a win-win situation. The transit fee is around 1% of Afghan's GDP. Furthermore, the pipeline will create jobs and will put down the unemployment rate. The major beneficiary will be Turkmenistan. Afghanistan will be able to generate power once the project will operate and consumers will get cheaper energy. It would not be the case with Afghanistan but energy-hungry Pakistan and India will receive the same benefits. The project will provide opportunities to increase revenues and boost bilateral relations between countries.

The pipeline connection means neutral relations must be held between the connecting countries, which are essential for the successful pipeline functioning without any interruptions. The project will offer more opportunities like establishing Peace and stability due to their common interest, which is essential for Afghan-Pakistan, Afghan-India and India-Pakistan as at the time they have strained relations with each other. There is no environmental issue related to this project so objection has been raised so far from the environmentalist group. The TAPI project will aid in building a peaceful, stable, secure South Asia.

After the execution of the TAP project, Pakistan will be the major consumer of the natural gas obtained from this project. Pakistan has suffered a lot due to the energy crisis in the country that has affected households, industry, the business community, and agriculture. The energy crisis cum economic crisis has become the manifesto of all the political parties. In Pakistan gas is used for commercial, domestic, and energy generation. Pakistan's per day gas demand is around 6 bcf/d whereas the supply is only 4 bcf/d. Since 2008 more than 40% of Pakistan's textile industry had shifted to Bangladesh due to the high prices and less availability of energy. TAP is one of the regional projects, which can fill the gap in energy in Pakistan.

### **TAP and Regional Gas Producing Countries and the US**

In 2007 "assistant secretary of state Richard Boucher" said, "One of our goals is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south". The US efforts of reconstruction in Afghanistan are advocating that TAP is a "Magic Glue", which will join the hostile factions into an "inter-dependent cooperative framework".

Russia opposed the project originally but in 2010 Russia took a complete U-turn by offering support for the project by offering Afghanistan to construct the pipeline on its side. Only Turkmenistan has rejected the idea due to its bitter experience, apart from Turkmenistan all three countries were in favour of Russia. TAP has ignited threat for Iran as a fear of being left out in energy export and the devaluation of the IP gas pipeline

### **Challenges for TAPI Gas Pipeline**

#### **Afghanistan and TAPI**

For the realization of TAPI Afghanistan will play a major role as it is a war-prone area for decades with lots of internal problems. Due to internal disturbances Afghanistan has never evolved as a powerful, strong, and centralized state. The internal power struggle among the Afghan linguistic and ethnic groups had created their institutions through militarization and violence unable to unite against external forces and could not achieve a structured political system. The internal dynamics have shifted the focus between Taliban and Non-Taliban. Now, the internal dynamics have shifted and are more focused between Taliban and non-Taliban. The complex political geography has turned Afghanistan into an asset as a transit hub for "south and east Asian energy and trade." TAPI is one of the examples of Afghanistan as an energy transit hub. The US, Iran, and India have concerns about the Taliban threat. The route of the pipeline is from Afghanistan's southeastern border with Turkmenistan to the southwestern border with Pakistan's province of Balochistan. Ethnic

groups and Taliban dominate the route of the pipeline, which are Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, (Muzaffar, et. al. 2017) & (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018)

The challenge that arises is security as the proposed pipeline route will pass through those areas in Afghanistan where the Taliban has a strong influence. After the withdrawal of NATO forces from some of the areas of Afghanistan Taliban has recaptured their hold in Helmand and Kandahar which had been the major security concern for security. This Afghanistan instability has been a threat to the neighbouring countries as some of the terrorist attacks were reported on the Turkmenistan-Afghan porous border, which has created doubts about the security of the gas pipeline. On its Southern border with Pakistan, Al-Qaida, the Haqqani network, Taliban threat has been a security issue for both countries. Pakistan has experienced several terrorist attacks facing innocent casualties since 2001, although the number has declined due to Pakistan’s military operations in Waziristan the threat persists. Afghan pipeline will also cross the area of land mines, which the UN has declared as an “extreme risk zone”.

Although the Afghanistan government has pledged to provide security to the gas pipeline through the deployment of 7000 armed personnel in the problematic route of the gas pipeline. However, the absence of a “strong national security institution” in Afghanistan will turn the pipeline into a “lucrative protection racket” for insurgents. Pakistan has also used its influence on the Taliban to ensure TAPI security and the Taliban have also assured that they will not harm the gas pipeline. Still, there is uncertainty due to the incapability of the Afghan government to deliver. TAPI’s success mainly depends on the Afghan government’s commitment and ability and also on the international community to ensure economic benefits for the people, or else it will lead towards an unresolved “cycle of conflict”.

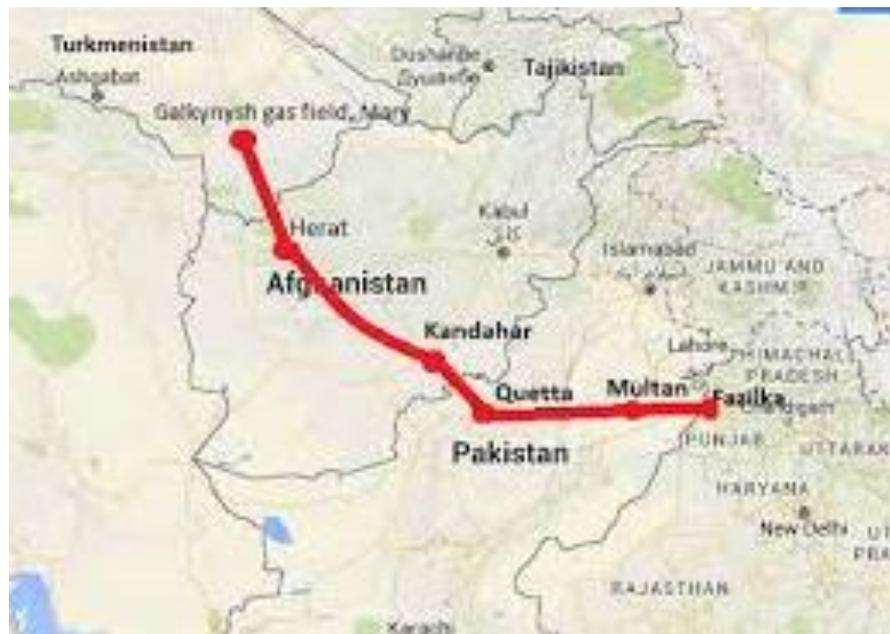


Figure 1 TAPI Gas Pipeline Route Source: <https://sheir.org/edu/tapi-gas-pipeline/>

### **Balochistan Instability and TAPI**

Balochistan security concern is also a hurdle for the realization of the TAP gas pipeline. The Baloch nationalists felt like a victimized and marginalized community in Pakistan and they raised their voices on different forums in the state. Hundreds of people are missing in the province. The Provincial government claimed the lack of allocation of funds for Balochistan therefore very less development has been made in the province. After the “18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the constitution of Pakistan” devolution of power has been awarded to the provinces. However, the central government has to play a more active role in the

developmental project and award Balochistan its due share to remove the sense of Marginalization and victimization. The Baloch nationalist movement has attacked and targeted many people in Punjab province and also targeted Chinese people working for CPEC another regional project.

Another challenge for TAPI is the deep-rooted rivalry between India and Pakistan. Since independence, both countries had been combatively leading to deadly clashes many times. The history of Indo-Pak relations hardly witnessed any steps taken by the leaders of both countries. Furthermore, the competition for “global power” in South Asia as China has started economic cooperation with Pakistan under the CPEC and US has cooperation with India in the struggle for regional power. Pak-India tension has escalated the situation, which has become a challenge for the smooth execution of the TAP project (Yaseen, et.al, 2016).

### **Financial Concerns for TAPI**

Financing is one of the project's major challenges for all the participating countries. “TAPI Pipeline Company Limited (TPCL)” the four-member country consortium consisted of “the state-owned companies”. However, Turkmengaz, the head of the consortium guaranteed to provide 85% of funds for the TAPI pipeline was a big question mark for the project and 15% for the other three countries 5% each. ADB is financing part of the project, however as the pipeline progresses foreign funding will become more crucial. Saudi Arabia offered to fund the project through the “Saudi Development Fund”. Japan is also expected to finance the project. China is a potential financier for Turkmenistan. However, an official statement from china has been released to support TAP. The TAP pipeline needs financial assistance for its completion, but the financiers have taken no major steps.

### **Conclusion**

The energy projects were initiated with the consideration to complete them, however, these projects were delayed for so long that it seems difficult to complete them. The TAP gas pipeline project was discussed for more than two decades and the agreement was signed in 2015 between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and India withdrew the project. No development in the construction of this pipeline has started in the territory of Pakistan. CPEC project was signed in 2015 between China and Pakistan and 51 Projects of \$46 billion were signed under CPEC, among them \$35 billion worth of projects were energy projects. The projects of CPEC have been started in Pakistan and some of the projects have been completed and started to generate energy for the country, however, the major energy projects are under construction phase. The pipeline project has not started to develop in Pakistan. The TAP gas pipeline project cannot be realized due to the instability in Afghanistan, as it has to cross Afghanistan territory to reach Pakistan and the route passes through the problematic areas of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Another cause of delay was the internal situation in Pakistan as instability in Balochistan can cause problems for the realization of the goal. The common obstacles to the project were the lack of investment and financial resources. Pakistan is not in a position to develop these projects on its own as Pakistan is facing an economic crisis and it is not economically stable to develop these mega projects. Due to the delay of the TAP gas pipeline Pakistan cannot overcome its energy crisis as the country import oil for the generation of energy and the energy generated through petroleum is costly and the burden is directly on the consumer and the government. Therefore Pakistan needs to look for investors and financiers for gas pipeline projects and play the diplomatic card very cautiously. Moreover, Pakistan needs to look deeply into its internal issues and the stakeholder should be taken into confidence and their justified concerns should be addressed. Pakistan is already very late in its regional energy projects and if proper measures would not be taken then Pakistan not only face energy crisis but also an economic crisis would also accompany energy crisis, Which right now Pakistan is not in a position to face.

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