



Mitigating Challenges of CASA-1000 for Greater Regional Cooperation

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Abstract

To sustain economic growth of the South Asian region, an uninterrupted supply of abundant Central Asian energy needs to be ensured. The situation for energy trade between the two regions is mutually beneficial. The Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) is a well-thought initiative to fulfill the energy demands of the region by transmitting 1300 megawatts electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Central Asian partners are enthusiastic on the completion of CASA-1000 as the project is expected to bring an economic boost to the countries. Despite many opportunities, the project is facing some challenges in the form of financing of the project, security of the transmission lines, political instability of Afghanistan, and sustainability. This paper attempts to highlight challenges which may impede the successful implementation of the project.

Introduction

Cooperation between regions is not very much easy and common. There are grave challenges in bringing cooperation between regions. States are always interest seekers and their moves are driven by rationale-based interests. States in a region are struggling with some common issues and some unique matters also. The common issues help them come closer to each other, but unique problems and rivalries become a hurdle. Central Asian and South Asian states are facing a common issue of terrorism and the Kashmir issue is a unique problem between Pakistan and India. Both the issues are degrading and dismantling peace of the

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South and Central Asian regions. On the other hand, cooperation through integration is not impossible in Central and South Asia as couple of examples can be seen in the neighborhood. The European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can be exemplified. The good integrated scenario is in regions, the best outcomes are likely to be seen. In this paper the researcher tries to identify the prospects which are problematic for CASA-1000 project in bringing regional cooperation and development.

Security Issues to CASA-1000 Project

Security is a two-folded concept. Security means a state of being secure from certain or uncertain danger and security means surety of not to lose investments or objects. Security to the CASA-1000 primarily means that secure the proposed transmission line. All the partner states are responsible for providing security to the equipment, workers during the construction and the transmission line after its completion on their respective territories to ensure the uninterrupted electricity transmission.

Cooperation among states and development are obviously associated with the security of states or regions. Development and security are mutually related as security is a prerequisite for socio-economic development and for appropriate security, economic and social strengths are necessary. The states facing internal conflicts or bearing international interventions, try hard to develop themselves but fail to do that. Regional situation is also subject to the security circumstances of the states. Country like Afghanistan is affecting the regional conditions of South and Central Asia (Abbas & Asif, 2016).

This research is being conducted in 2017, during the time, South-Western part of Asian continent is the most turmoil and politically unstable area in the world. Almost all the states of Middle East (ME), Central Asia and South Asia are being affected by terrorism, extremism or internal insurgencies. Security is not the only but major challenge for CASA-1000 project to bring the regional cooperation through its successful and sustained implementation. There are many other challenges to the project but security issues are the concerns of all the states and it is proving to be the deadliest issue.

World Bank (WB) report states that security is the key impediment in realization of the project. WB reported,

Security issues relate primarily to landmines, sabotage and theft of equipment. All country governments have agreed to provide adequate security to contractor's personnel and goods. Each country has prepared a security management plan for both the construction and operation phases of the line in their respective areas of ownership. Provision has been kept for payment for any

work related to landmines or any additional specific security arrangement to be made by contractors. (The World Bank, 2016)

Afghanistan is the key state in the project as it is covering more length of CASA-1000 transmission line if compared with other partner states collectively. It is the central stage of the project and plays a key role as a connector between Central and South Asia. Though the transmission line is planned to pass the Eastern areas of Afghanistan which are comparatively secured than Western part but still approachable for the terrorists operating in the war-torn country. Many of the districts and provinces, through the line will pass, are not in control of Afghan government and some of them are still contested between Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and insurgents. The country is a safe haven for the terrorist organizations operating in South Asia and adjacent regions including Central Asian and Middle East. Afghanistan is called a nursery for terrorist organizations (Rath, 2017). Weak economy, limited and untrained army, lack of technology and tough terrain makes it a suitable place for base camps and training place for terrorist organizations. Government of Afghanistan is incapable to maintain law and order situation in the country even it has help of the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. The proposed transmission line will line up Tajikistan after passing Afghanistan. Security situation in the bordering provinces of Afghanistan with Tajikistan i.e. Badakshan, Takhar and Kunduz, is not much reliable. These provinces often come under attack by The Taliban as per recent past experiences. Therefore, terrorists were badly defeated by Afghan security forces in all the cases, but durable peace could not have maintained. Due to critical situation of Afghanistan, Tajikistan's southern provinces of Khatlon and Gorno-Badakshan face turmoil and instability. Entry points on the borders are always crucial. If there are border issues and issues in border areas that could be fatal for the construction of CASA-1000 transmission line (Partov, 2016).

Pakistan has increased control of its troubled areas in which Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were top of the list. With the successful ongoing operation Zarb-e-Azb, Pakistan army has cleared the majority areas by eliminating terrorism and writ of the government has been restored. The terrorists, who were active there, have been either killed by Pakistan army or had to flee. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), major threat to Pakistan's peace as a terrorist organization, has been eliminated from the soil. The terrorist organization had to flee and established its base camp in Afghanistan. It is still a threat that it can target the transmission line in Afghanistan, and it is still conducting activities in Pakistan as well.

Tajikistan is the bordering state of Afghanistan and security situation is very critical on its southern border areas. Terrorism activities cannot be ruled out in the country especially in the border areas with Afghanistan. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is a terrorist organization operating in Central Asia and Afghanistan, has a strong hold in Tajik territory. There is a Tajikistan based

terrorist group “Jamaat Ansarulloh” which is affiliated with IMU and being financed by Al-Qaeda. “Jamaat Ansarulloh” was declared as “extremist and terrorist” organization and banned by the Supreme Court of Tajikistan back in 2012 (Avesta, 2012). It could create grey area for the CASA-1000 project.

Kyrgyzstan is seen in the past as a terrorist breeding state. There are not much terrorist incidents in the country, but many Kyrgyz people joined Islamic State and other organizations to serve the cause in Syria and Iraq (Jedinia & Zahid, 2017). In the view of above analysis, sympathizers and sleeper cells of IS, IMU or any other terrorist organization may cause a threat to the transmission line to serve their cause. East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is based in Xinjiang and has presence in Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan through splinter groups (Xu, Fletcher, & Bajoria, 2014). ETIM has desires of greater Muslim Caliphate including Central Asia, South Asia and Muslim majority territories in Western China. A project like CASA-1000 would be a great option for ETIM to get prominent attention in all the regions of its agenda through various splinter groups.

A terrorist organization which is active in Central Asia and Afghanistan, feels very convenient to operate beyond the borders due to inefficiency of security forces and border management authorities. Consequently, any of these terrorist organizations mentioned above, can become a threat to the transmission line.

Terrorist Organizations: A Threat to the Transmission Line

Terrorism is a collection of tactics used for political purposes including violent attacks on specific group or properties to create terror and influence another group of people mostly the respective government. Terrorist organizations are the tool to spread terror among targeted masses. These organizations are used to achieve one or more particular agendas. Multiple terrorist organizations operate in all the four partner states of CASA-1000 project. As per reports of Afghan security and defense departments in February 2017, there are 20 terrorist organizations fighting against the government (Arian, 2017). These all terrorist mercenaries posing a threat to the transmission line project. Many terrorist organizations are also active in remaining three countries. Some are the organizations which operate in all the partner states, less or more, and some are active in more than one state.

Terrorism is a dilemma being faced by Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Central Asian partner states of CASA-1000 project. South Asian region is one of the world’s most affected regions by terrorism and extremism. In South Asia, Afghanistan is a hub of terrorism used for base camps, recruitment of the fighters and training. Afghanistan is the second most terrorism affected country in the world according to the Global Terrorism Index-2016(Global Terrorism Index-2016, 2017). Before the American led ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan, the country was controlled by the group of mujahedeen later declared black-listed terrorist organization, the Taliban. About the Taliban, Zachary Laub wrote

The Taliban was formed in the early 1990s by an Afghan faction of mujahedeen, Islamic fighters who had resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan 1979–89 with the covert backing of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI) the Taliban is a predominantly Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalist group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, when a U.S.-led invasion toppled the regime for providing refuge to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The Taliban regrouped across the border in Pakistan, where its central leadership, headed by Mullah Mohammed Omar, leads an insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul (Laub, 2014).

Afghanistan has been a battleground since almost four decades where freedom-fighters, religious extremists, insurgents and terrorists fighting with the legitimate government which has help of external forces as well. External forces have limited but effective role in Afghanistan. While playing a vital role as connector between the two regions, Afghanistan is posing the biggest threat to the project due to high number of terrorist incidents. There is no clue when Afghan situation is going to be normal. A continuous fight is going on between the forces and terrorists. The Taliban are still surviving after 13 years long American war from 2001 to 2014 and continuous military support and financial aid to Afghanistan up till now. The current scenario, with the support of the past picture, is posing grave challenge to the transmission line project.

The US and NATO officially wound up their operations in December 2014 and vowed for complete withdraw in 2016 but it did not happen. The US could not withdraw completely and the issue is still lingering as it is not possible for the United States to leave an unfinished war. The current American administration has announced an increase in the US troops based in Afghanistan. It is predictable that Afghan situation will not be resolving in near future.

On April 13th 2017, the US dropped a huge bomb on eastern Afghanistan on caves where Islamic State was hiding. The “mother of all bombs” was dropped in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, the bordering province with Pakistan (Wright, 2017). The targeted area was very close to Pakistani border. The 11-ton bomb was targeted to IS sanctuaries which reportedly killed dozens of terrorists (Kugelman, 2017). This act by the US military indicated the intensity of terrorism in Afghanistan which led the US government to a very critical decision. This kind of counter terrorism activities held by Afghan and foreign forces in the future, can destroy CASA-1000 transmission line structure. It is not wrong to say that the transmission line has not threat from the terrorists only, but counter terrorism attempts by security forces can also bring the damages.

Resurgence in terrorist activities was fought in Afghanistan in post-NATO withdrawal of most of the forces in December 2014. Post-2014 is the bloodiest and deadliest era in the Afghan insurgency (Kugelman, 2017). New organizations i.e. Islamic State, are emerging and gaining momentum in the region. If only

Afghanistan is considered, terrorists are gaining in numbers and territory. There are not only the Taliban to be threatened by, many other regional and international terrorist organizations are also operating in the region. For example, IMU is operating in Central Asia including Afghanistan. It is an established terrorist organization which is not limited to one country. Other than Central Asian countries, Afghanistan is the place where it operates most. This could be a potential threat to the project.

Political Instability in the Regions

Political instability is a situation when government of a country is facing uncertainty to be removed from power anytime through any mean. It affects the socio-economic development of a country. Political instability is created majorly due to unequal rights distribution among citizens of a state. Stability in the political system in a country provides optimized environment to economic growth through long-term investments.

It is quite evident that the two regions are not much politically stabilized. There is always a power struggle among political elites. According to the past experiences, dictatorship has the possibility in the governmental system and in minds of the peoples. Visionary political leadership is very much necessary for the realization of long-term initiatives like CASA-1000 project. Lack of capable leadership is causing severe issue of corruption which is another root cause of political instability in the four countries. Though all the participating countries are democracies, the true sense of democracy is missing and cannot be achieved until or unless the states witness true, rationale and reasonable leadership. Despite the democracy prevails in the four countries, right wing parties and militaries differentiate with the civil governments on various points. Democratic values support the transnational projects which benefit the states' economies and help people raising their living standards through long-term investments. This political instability would be a hurdle in realization of the project. Afghan leadership is not much convinced to pursue the project. It is a long project which demands huge concentration and finances. Lack of interest of Afghan leaders is either they think that CASA-1000 is not a reality or they are uneager to see the development and prosperity in the country. Leadership, having true vision and no personal interests, plays a key role in the projection and execution of transnational projects like CASA-1000. A hopeful working scenario makes the dreamt plans a reality. Afghanistan is a different case but others countries are also in turmoil politically.

Likewise with the gas pipeline projects, which are joint ventures of the two regions, this power corridor comes up against the Afghan problem as a basic transit point for any extension towards the south. Political instability in Afghanistan has generally put the brakes on creating collaboration in power matters with Pakistan. In any case, the Afghan-Central Asian issue stays weighty for power matters. The

ventures made so far in the CASA-1000 power project give notable help to nearby populaces. The project is still in procurement process and ground work yet to be started. Other joint projects of Central and South Asia are still lingering.

Diplomatic Tensions between Partner States

Diplomacy plays an incomparable role in healthy transnational relations. Good relations among states are backbone of the economic output on international level. Neighbors, especially which are economically dependent on each other, remain in diplomatic contacts even in times of possible skirmishes. Diplomacy is a powerful tool to smooth the relations with other states in peaceful manners and to avoid the confrontations.

Unfortunately, the four partner states in CASA-1000 project are not having good diplomatic record with the immediate neighbors participating in the project. Pakistan and Afghanistan are confronting each other on the border management issue. Durand line, a border separating Pakistan and Afghanistan, is being fenced by Pakistan amid tough opposition of Afghan authorities and even US forces. Fencing will be completed in different phases and first phase is almost completed in the most problematic areas i.e. Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand Agencies. Rest of the 2,611 kilometers long border will be completed in upcoming phases (Border management: Pakistan starts fencing Afghan border to curb infiltration, 2017). Pakistan is committed to fence its border with Afghanistan completely along with increasing number of security check posts. After the completion of proposed fencing, crossing between the two states will be bounded to the 'border crossings' only. This is the indication of threatening diplomatic situation. The two countries could not resolve the long persisting issue through negotiation and diplomacy. On 16th June, 2017 two Pakistani diplomats went missing from Jalalabad, Afghanistan a city near to Pakistani border (Pakistani diplomats go missing in Afghanistan, 2017). They were travelling towards Torkham border crossing to enter into Pakistan. They have been taken allegedly by Afghan secret forces. This is a failure of diplomatic relations. The projects like CASA-1000 demand high level of trust and good relationship among partner states. During the construction and after the completion, many incidents could happen which will require strong diplomacy to resolve them.

On the other end, Afghanistan and Tajikistan are also not in good diplomatic terms. Both states have border disputes and hostilities. The two neighboring states are land-locked and dependent on Pakistan and Iran for their imports and exports. Tajikistan is more vulnerable as Afghanistan is the pathway for its overseas trade. Many militants belonging to the terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan come from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This cross-border militancy is diminishing the good relationship opportunities for Afghanistan and Central Asian states.

Due to common issue of terrorism and militants' conduct of 'beyond the border' activities, lead Pakistan and Afghanistan towards a blame-game. It is very usual that the two neighbors blame one another when there is a terrorist incident. On the Northern side, Tajikistan is always blaming Afghanistan for drug trafficking. It is an alarming situation that 90% world's opium produces in Afghanistan and then reaches to Europe, the US and Russia through Pakistan or Central Asia (Chossudovsky, 2017). On this particular matter, remaining three participating countries are not in good standings with Afghanistan. Joint ventures are very necessary to combat the persisting issues which are undermining the diplomatic relations between the four states and would be creating hurdles for the realization of CASA-1000 project.

Presence of the Taliban in Afghanistan

The Taliban have significant presence in Afghanistan although they were removed from power by the US and allied forces in 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on World Trade Center (WTC) and Pentagon. Since then they are surviving and carrying noteworthy contest with Afghan and foreign forces. Some of the 407 recognized districts of Afghanistan are in full control of the Taliban and many contested between the Taliban and Afghan forces who have support of the US forces as well. According to U.S. watchdog, Afghan government controls less than 60% territory (Smith, 2017). Afghan forces' gains are less than losses in NATO's post-withdrawal era. The government lost about 5% territory in 2017 only (Woody, 2017). Although their gains are in rural and mountainous areas which have less significance due to lack of population but much important in terms of territorial control as these areas provide them hideouts and survival. The Taliban are present mostly in rural areas where *madrassahs* (religious schools) are operational in quite numbers. These insurgents are production of these religious schools which have orphan students with no families to look after and lack of work opportunities. Security surveillance is difficult in rural areas due to scattered population and tough terrain. Terrorists have hideouts in mountainous areas where they hibernate in winter season and come out again in spring. In cities and metropolis, security is comparatively better and the Taliban can have sleeper cells but no other opportunities. The Afghan Taliban is not the only terrorist organization operating in Afghanistan but this is the contender of foreign forces and the US backed civil government. The Taliban have ruled this conflicted country for half a decade. The Taliban have backed the initiative of CASA-1000 project once but it is not necessary that they oblige. The Taliban have attacked a major power line in Baghlan province in January 2016. The power line coming from Uzbekistan was sabotaged and deprived Kabul from electricity (Jolly, 2016). It used to happen in the past as well that insurgents blew power plants and grid stations (Shalizi, 2008). Their obliging need to be affirmed by actions. If the Taliban somehow agree

to not destroy CASA-1000 transmission line, even then it cannot be trusted overwhelmingly.

TTP is also operating in Afghanistan currently. It established its base camp in Afghanistan after successful ongoing Zarb-e-Azb operation which made them flee from Pakistan. TTP's presence in Afghanistan is confirmed by Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah (Presence of Pak Taliban in Afghanistan a reality, admits Abdullah, 2017). TTP is a faction of the Afghan Taliban and has full support of it. TTP, major contender of Pakistani military, is a serious concern for CASA-1000's security.

The Afghan Taliban and other terrorist organizations, present and operating in Afghanistan, are a grave threat to the transmission line project. The situation requires increased security measures and enhanced materialized efforts. It may also require a prominent increase in security budget allocated for it.

Misgovernance in Afghanistan

For the transnational projects, Governance at the state level use to be critical. Bad governance could be a constraint in execution of CASA-1000 project. Lack of professionalism in Afghan leaders undermines the state's business. The execution of state's decisions is not possible without the legitimacy and Afghanistan is missing that. Afghanistan is federation which makes decentralized governance necessary. All the governing leaders at province level are appointed by the president and most of them are lacking in true leadership. So, point is evident that lack of leadership on lower level undermining the government's legitimacy which is encouraging insurgency in the country and insurgency is the biggest impediment to the CASA-1000 project. The state is losing its grip on many key areas which are much important for other businesses. The projects like CASA-1000 require full legitimacy of the concerned governments to realize them. Bad governance in Afghanistan may directly impact the transmission line project. There is a coalition government in Afghanistan at center which is also a negative point on the account of the project. A multi-party government could have different agendas on particular affairs. There are issues between the two main leaders in center government. Deviation between the Afghan President and Chief Executive Officer could delay the process. Lack of legitimacy of Afghan government could create great constraints to CASA-1000 project (Group, 2017).

Central Asia-South Asia electricity transmission and trade project (CASA-1000) is not only fulfilling the power needs of Afghanistan but giving it a status of a transit country between two regions (Pannier, 2016). Besides CASA-1000, other projects of energy transmission are also in progress. These projects demand a strong determination and sole leadership for decision making on important matters. Clashes among the top slot in Afghan government raise questions on the realization of energy trade projects passing by Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, like many other third world countries, is a victim of corruption. There are vast chances of dishonesty as foreign donors are pouring in huge money in terms of aid. Addressing corruption and governance in a futile state like Afghanistan is enormously difficult. A report published in *New York Times* in 2010 which claimed that President Karzai received millions of dollars through Iranian ambassador to bribe the Afghan tribal leaders, official and Taliban commanders for fealty (Filkins, 2010). Afghanistan is a country which is pretending to be a democracy. The powerful elite leaves no chance to stick to the rule by any means.

Pak-Afghan Porous Borders

Issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan on border management are showing that the two countries have trust deficit. Pakistan has started to secure itself from the pouring in militant organizations which are using a strategy to cross the border regularly to commit attacks on Pakistani territory. These terrorist organizations have base camps and hide outs in Afghanistan and conduct their activities beyond the border (Khan, 2015). For this purpose, Pakistan has started fencing on the Durand line along with increased number of new security check posts. The illegal crossing on the border causes smuggling, human and drug trafficking and terrorists' movement. In the past, border fencing was initiated many times by Pakistan but could not be implemented due to strong opposition by other side. Recent initiative was taken in June 2016 which seems to see its end. Pakistani establishment is taking it necessary to curb the terrorism and retain the achievements of Zarb-e-Azb operation by lawful act of fencing its border (Soofi, 2015). In researcher's opinion, fencing on the western border is as much important for Pakistan as the atom bomb was for the balance of power with eastern neighbor. Both sides claim the terrorists' infiltration by other side and a blame game is seen very commonly. Some beyond the border attacks in the recent past made the situation worst. Pakistan closed the busiest border crossings with Afghanistan for couple of times. This indicate the severity of relations adjoined to border management (Nazir, 2016).

It can be correlated as a challenge for CASA-1000 as the transmission line may cross the border of two countries and the crossing point exist on turbulence area. Crossing of a transmission line is not like crossing of a military or civilian convoy. It is a permanent infrastructure and duration of the construction will not be consisted on days but would be months. If there are border clashes between border forces of the neighboring states, implementation work on the transmission line could be delayed or even derailed. It is posing a great threat to the sustainability of the project. Sustainability will be questioned if the relations do not get better.

Weak inter-state relations usually slow down the resolution process of mutual issues between the states. It proves lethal when two neighboring states are

interdependent on each other. While laying down the transmission line, the occurrence of border skirmishes between Pakistan and Afghanistan could take long time to resolve the issues. It is very much possible that the long-term project face hurdles due to absence of peace on the borders. Pakistan's positive steps towards better border management might not be helpful in CASA-1000 project.

Sustainability of CASA-1000 Project

Sustainability in such a project is as much important as its materialization. Critical security situation in Central and South Asia, difficult terrain, scarcity of funds and other related challenges put serious questions on the sustainability of CASA-1000 project. The transmission line will be elapsing from regions' some most troubled areas. Although security concerns are being kept in mind while planning and execution of CASA-1000 and appropriate budget is allocated for physical security of the project but this may be a permanent challenge. Security challenge may be faced even during the months of winter season when the transmission line may not be in use. Huge funds will be required for its maintenance and security provision throughout the year. Terrorism, political instability or insurgency are the issues of all the partner states. Afghanistan is victimized enormously by all these evils which is a key state in the project. Afghanistan's current situation is making it the most difficult partner in the project (Amb. A. Ayub, Personal Communication, 2017). Ambassador (r) Arif Ayub is an expert on security with expertise on Afghanistan. He spent a long time in Afghanistan during his professional career. Afghanistan has abandoned its share of 300 MW imported electricity after the inauguration of the project. Pakistan showed its willingness to import Afghanistan's share as well. Such kind of situation in the future, when the other importer refuses to import extra energy, may raise questions on the sustainability of the project. If any state among the four project countries is unable to comply the defined criteria due to certain reasons on any stage, the whole process can be sabotaged.

Border disputes among the partner nations especially between Pakistan and Afghanistan may be the great concern for the execution and successful operation of the transmission line. These disputes are discussed above thoroughly under the heading of border management issues. An argument regarding the duration of the electricity transmission is well logical. This transmission line will be used five months a year i.e. May to September (Yousafzai, 2017). There will be opportunities to find the ways to utilize the transmission line during non-CASA 1000 months i.e. from October to April but that is uncertain (Sustainability report: CASA electricity import project flawed, says report, 2012). The project is being carried out with the help of international donors. The donor institutions are playing an important role in the realization of the project as it was facing issue of funds. The international financial institutions (IFIs) will be able to recover the invested money if the project sustains. The project would lose its attraction if there are

doubts on its sustainability. The four partner states and IFIs would be in state of uncertainty and the project would be delayed.

Slow Pace of Project Implementation

CASA-1000 project was approved in 2014 but being delayed since then due to multiple challenges. At the time of approval, its completion date was set the end of 2018 which has been extended to the end of 2020 due to certain delays in the process. Its groundbreaking ceremony held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on May 12th 2016 and physical work has not been started yet. Currently, it is passing through procurement process for AC/DC converters and construction of the transmission line.

The first and foremost hurdle is security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Security issues in the two regions were discussed above thoroughly. Another problem which resulting in delaying the project is the scarcity of funds. The project will be completed through loans of IFIs and every project country will be paying back the money expensed in their land.

Afghanistan is the most important and the most problematic country in the project at the same time. It is the country which has the most need of the electricity CASA-1000 will be bringing. Its economy will get boom and people will be finding jobs. The electricity will be contributing in the improvement of life standards of Afghan people. Sufficient availability of energy will improve businesses which will enhance the reach of economy. At the end, it will all be bringing peace in the country. But the current Afghan government does not seem much interested in the project or at least in fast-tracking the CASA-1000 project.

As political instability exists in the four countries, sudden change of government cannot be denied. New government may have different agendas to concentrate on and that might be looking for other cheap and sustainable clean energy options. It has been noted in the past that work on the project was delayed mainly by the changes in the governments. The civil government of Afghanistan is the US-backed and any contradiction of the interests of the US government with the project, might derail it and the million US dollars go into waste. In the long awaiting, new Afghan policy in August 2017 by the US President Trump, in which he criticized Pakistan on the issues of its double standards and terrorist sanctuaries. This happened very first time that a President of the US publicly warned Pakistan for severe consequences if it does not comply with its policies. This prospect of the US might be a clash with objectives of the project CASA-1000. Trump administration is going to surge American troops and giving deep engagement to India. This new strategy will severely destabilize the situation which is not in the favor of CASA-1000 project (Hussain, 2017).

Conclusion

Cross-border projects pose numerous challenges especially when there are no precedents. Transmission of electricity beyond the border is not new in South and Central Asia but it is not on that scale CASA-1000 is expected to transmit. The project is very much feasible and sustainable after the resolution of certain issues. There are some issues like security, terrorism and political instability which cannot be eliminated completely but can be mitigated with joint efforts. If these challenges are minimized to such a level that the project is not affected, it may be sufficient. After addressing the above stated challenges, to an affordable extent, realization of CASA-1000 project is pertinent and it may be delivering with full capacity.

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