**CASA -1000: From Surplus to Deficit**

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Leadership is all about leading the way through mainstreaming and implementation of policies for the masses. In this context, Overton’s window is often used to analyse the narrative-building and mainstreaming of ideas. This window is a gauging scale of a narrative from unimaginable things to policy. Pakistan’s development policy also needs out-of-box thinking to translate unimaginable good things into useful policies.

Like Pakistan in general, its energy sector is going through a defining moment where discourse setting, narrative-building, and resulting decision-making will have far-reaching effects. The recent official visit of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar to Afghanistan is resonating all over the globe, not only in the context of efforts to revive and re-initiate work on the Afghan side of CASA-1000, but also bringing the discourse window from unimaginable to acceptable policy-oriented mainstreaming.

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The CASA -1000 initiative revolves around the transmission of green hydel power all the way from Central Asia to South Asia. The power corridor carrying 1000+ MWs of electricity will start from the warm Mediterranean Continental climate with plentiful hydroelectric potential, and a surplus of hydroelectric power enters Tajikistan, Afghanistan. Its final destination is Pakistan’s Northwestern city of Noshehra, where the High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) will be converted into High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC). The CASA -1000 is a 1126.50 million Dollar intergovernmental project, which is being funded by World Bank through European Investment Bank, Islamic Development Bank, Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, the US government, and other financial institutions. The initiative is one of the largest intergovernmental high voltage lines projects and potentially it can help to solve the worsening power deficient in South Asia, particularly Pakistan, in summer. The climate of central Asia and hydrology potentially provide an abundance of hydroelectric potential in summer to generate surplus electricity. The total length of transmission lines is 1387 kilometres and 4,264 towers will be built. The project organisation and governance are headed by an intergovernmental council (IGC). Project implementation authorities are Pakistan National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC), Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), Tajikistan Barqi Tojik (BT), and National Electricity Grid of Krygzistan (NEGK).

CASA-1000 holds importance for all four countries in terms of improving electricity access, integration, and expansion of markets. The initiative will eventually enhance the trade and management of resources. There is no denying the imperativeness of well-functioning electricity mechanisms for developing a strong economy. The importance of CASA -1000 has increased for Pakistan as domestic gas reserves are depleting at faster than expected rates and the Ukraine-Russia war has caused imported LNG an unfordable alternative. CASA-1000 is an important step in strengthening the electricity systems across Central Asia and South Asia and consequently achieving sustainable economic development across the regions. The initiative is not only a one-of-a-kind project but also opens an opportunity for Pakistan to explore alternative clean energy solutions. There are many bottlenecks to the initiatives as the largest portion of the transmission lines will pass through Afghanistan. The recent visit to State Minister for Foreign Affairs has kickstarted the process to transform the CASA -1000 towards policy implementation and to bring Overton’s discourse windows to policy from unimaginable good things.

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