

Afghanistan Imbrogio: The Unintended Consequences of Foreign Interventions

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ABSTRACT

The war-torn Afghanistan has long suffered from the dynastical contests and fraught economic strategies of foreigners, which instigated constant internal strife and regional instability. The foreign interventions have made this land a sphere of influence and initiated the great game politics sporadically. This paper attempts to examine the historical geostrategic tussles in Afghanistan between international players on the one hand and regional actors on the other hand over control and manipulation of Afghanistan and its surrounding regions through the lens of conceptual framework of unintended consequences approach, which deals with irrational aspect of foreign policy of the states. This study makes interesting contribution to the existing literature of the [old] Great Game of the late 19th century between Czarist Russia and Great Britain or New Great Game by re-conceptualizing this idea into a new concept of the Grand Great Game or the 3G in place of explaining the unintended consequences of the historical events i.e. the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan of 1979, the post-Cold War era when the regional players Pakistan and India got involved in Afghanistan; and the US invasion of Afghanistan of 9/11 incident. The findings of the paper suggest that the unintended consequences of these historical events are bitter than the reality. The foreign interventions have paralyzed the Afghan society and made it more insecure by promoting clandestine terrorist activities and proxies. The interview technique helps to verify the 3G concept and present its unintended consequences. The critical content analysis of the primary and secondary data is of assistance to understand that the current 3G to be not only multidimensional competition, embodying multiple stakeholders but also incorporating complex self-defined rational as well as irrational foreign policy objectives and national interests.

Key Words: **Afghanistan, Foreign intervention, Great Game, India, Pakistan, South Asia, Unintended Consequences, United States.**

Conceptual framework: Unintended Consequences in Context of Realism Paradigm

Different states adopt policies in international arena to address their basic strategic and economic needs. The policies vary as per the geostrategic make-up of that particular region where the state's self-interests are supposed to dwell. The actions by states to achieve their self-interests defines the rational foreign policy goals, which in other way sometimes couples with the irrational outcomes. Such

irrational and unidentified (and unforeseen) outcomes as a result of the rational and defined actions are termed as the unintended consequences. Now, the question arises what are unintended consequences? Phenomenologically, an American Sociologist, Robert K. Merton firstly used the term of unintended consequences in 1936 in his book *On Social Structure and Science*. According to his narrative, the unintended consequences are the unforeseen results due to actor's determined and rational actions. He further explains that the unintended consequence is a socially-constructed concept which is indeed a relationship between action and latent (of a quality or state) existing but not yet developed (or manifest; hidden; concealed) function (Merton, 1996: 173-175). This relationship (with respect to nature of outcome) determines the reaction as well as re-actions. Simply, they are unidentified results which are unavoidable (from the actor's viewpoint). Vernon defines that "Unintended consequences may arise as the cumulative outcome of similar actions performed simultaneously or consecutively by a number of actors" (1979: 59). He explains the phenomenon of "unintended consequences" in political theory. Moreover, Karapin (2016: 441) explains this concept in the following words;

"Unintended consequences abound in politics and policy making due to the complexity of political and social life, and the incalculability of the strategic interactions that may emerge when a political actor tries to achieve a result. No agent has complete control in the messy realm of human affairs. No campaign, edict decision, or legislation can seamlessly produce its desired outcome, because every enactment engages a field of subjects with their own intentions, desires, purposes and strategies. Policies may trigger resistance or compensatory behavior."

In the context of International Relations, the unintended consequences approach come up to the regional and international actors which are influenced by the realist paradigm that shapes the reactionary approach of a particular action. It is actually a relation between an action and its reaction which further defines the scope of that action against the unwanted outcome. Generally speaking, the unintended consequences are figured more consistently as the undesired outcomes. But this statement can be disqualified by the fact that scope (positivity or negativity) of the unintended consequences can only be defined after analyzing the rational and intended objectives of the foreign policy of an actor concerned. As it can be defined in terms of action and reaction with both positive and negative outcomes depending upon the intended desires of an actor. Therefore, it is argued that not all unintended consequences are undesirable, or in other words the unintended outcomes may add to the intended goals described in the rationally defined foreign policy objectives of a state.

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Studying unintended consequences is a futile effort unless the broad-based causes of such consequence are ascertained. As mentioned above that unintended consequences is a relationship between a rational action and a latent function that eventually shape the nature of possible unintended outcomes. For causes of such consequences, Merton has described two causing variables: 1) intentions exhibited by human beings, which drags in the classical-realism in the concept of unintended consequences, and; 2) System or circumstances, where the rational actions are employed in pursuit of the desired result as per the Waltz's system theory. The human behavior influences the nature of unintended consequences by resorting to rational actions that ultimately results in the outcomes that may be irrational or in contradiction to the wanted outcomes of the actor. Vernon (1979: 59) has extended the phenomenon of variables for the changing nature of unintended consequences and defined two variables: variety of terms (change in human behavior) and diversity in context. The changing human behavior triggers the diverse system or environment to change and produce unwanted outcomes. Such a case would qualify the approach of Vernon that human behavior is independent and causes the entire context to change. For example invasions in Afghanistan by the USSR and later by the US were a rational approach held by the foreign policies of both superpowers in pursuit of some limited desired outcomes. Here the states acted in a region with a diversity of other states that enabled the rational actions to result in the delivery of unintended consequences. The motive behind foreign intervention in Afghanistan was limited to certain economic and strategic objectives in Central and South Asia. But it also resulted in some grave and long-term unintended consequences for the region including the proxy war between Pakistan and India, which proved to be unintended and unwanted outcomes of the rational approach of the foreign intervention in Afghanistan.

The unintended consequences of the foreign interventions in Afghanistan

Geopolitically and historically, Afghanistan has been critically located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia and the Middle East. In the early twentieth century, the renowned Indian poet, Mohammad Iqbal, portrayed Afghanistan as "the Heart of Asia," while British India's Viceroy, Lord Curzon (1899-1905), called this land "the Cockpit of Asia" (Rashid, 2001: 7). Moreover, Vogelsang states that Afghanistan is considered the "Crossroads of Civilizations" through which warriors and traders from surrounding areas — Central Asia (CA), the Middle East (including Persia), the Indian subcontinent, Siberia and the Ottoman — took this passage to their destinations for gaining wealth and prestige mainly through bloody looting [military adventure] (2008: xii). Further, Tanner (2002) has marked Afghanistan "Crossroad of Empires", but during the Ahmad Shah Durrani's period, the neighboring people were fearsome from the Afghans because a vast Afghan empire emerged. Afghanistan has been blocked and remained in

isolation from the other empires' influences until the new empires of Britain and Russia emerged. Therefore, Afghanistan has hosted several overtly-and-covertly-held geostrategic competitions and remained a constant target of the unwelcomed drawbacks of the intentional policy actions of the old Great Game players adopted by Russia and Britain throughout this classical geopolitical rivalry. The irrational consequences of continued great game politics created a security dilemma in Afghanistan even in the 20th and 21st centuries. Afghan land had been a cockpit which has been witnessing permanent power jockeying and destruction due to [direct] wars or war-like conditions [indirect wars such as insurgency].

While, Afghanistan's history is critically analyzed after studying the historical archives, the three defined eras of foreign interventions are obvious which contributed a lot in the political and socio-economic destruction of Afghanistan as a country: (1) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan of 1979; (2) post-Cold War era when the regional players Pakistan and India got involved in Afghanistan; and (3) US invasion of Afghanistan of 9/11 incident. The critical content analysis of Afghanistan's history during the aforesaid time-periods comparatively helps to untie a lot of endless unintended consequences, which directly affected the regional security and geopolitical dynamics that directly or indirectly put serious and grave undesired impacts on South Asian region as well. The factual study of these highlighted historical events and developments show that states execute their rationally oriented foreign policies to attain some defined objectives, which as per the law of unintended consequences, turns out with some undesired outcomes. To counter such undesired results, state resorts to irrational means and so forth. For example, the natural engagement of Islamabad in favor of the US in 1980s was meant to contain the Soviet expansionism, but such an engagement triggered India to exploit anarchic disorder in Afghanistan for her own designs against Pakistan. Such a reactionary approach of India was balanced by a counter-reactionary approach by Pakistan and paved a way for a full scale proxy conflict between Pakistan and India.

1. Growth of opium poppy by taliban's regime

A direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan triggered the United States (US), in the 1980s, to fight a decade-long war in Afghanistan by arming and financing the *mujahedeen* forces. The US poured billions of dollars into the war and was successful in driving the Soviets out of the country. The monetary support provided by the Central Investigation Agency (CIA) was in billions and thus, the insurgent groups in Afghanistan had to get heavy funds for their fight against the Soviet Union. The "secret war" in Afghanistan was heavily funded by the United States, but the irony is that the official funds provided by the CIA through the Pakistan's intelligence agency named Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to the

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mujahedeen were only 10% of the total cost of the “Afghan War” (Brewda, 1999: 36). The former Afghan President Barbak Karmal highlighted the elements which funded and trained these forces in Afghanistan and made destructions by this war to the country at large, in his interview to an Egyptian journalist. Here, a following excerpt has been taken from primary sources.

The United States has provided the counter-revolutionary elements [*mujahedeen* forces] with more than \$1 billion in order to kill the Afghans and destroy the country. This year alone the U.S. Congress allocated \$480 million to fiancé the “undeclared” war against us. The amount of aid the United States has given to the counter-revolutionary elements is more than 6 times the amount it gave to Afghanistan as aid in 20 years before the revolution. The other countries such as West Germany, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia, Britain and France gave financial aid to the tune of \$800 million (*FBIS South Asia Report*, 1986, January 23).

The question is where that 90% of the cost of the Afghan War did come for fighting the Soviets. The answer is obviously hidden in the Afghan War that is presented through the lenses of the production of Opium Poppy on the arable land of Afghanistan. The *mujahedeen* forces used an extensive amount of money earned by the Opium economy of Afghanistan to afford that decade-long unprecedented effort against the Red Army [of the USSR]. Finally, the war ended with the withdrawal of the Red Army; but unfortunately, the tradition of using Opium Poppy and then heroin as a source of fueling insurgencies continued. The cultivation of Opium Poppy as a main crop in Afghanistan was resulted when the refugees returned to their homeland and saw their fields with crops which were destroyed by the Soviet forces previously in the 1980s and thus, preferred to grow Opium as their main source of income (Rashid, 2002: 20).

Takeover of the Taliban [second generation of *mujahedeen*] of major parts of Afghanistan including Kabul boosted their influence all over in Afghanistan. They imposed strict *Islamic Laws* in the country, which enforced their main objective of making Afghanistan a purely Islamic Emirate. Initially, the Taliban were reluctant by their Islamic ideology perspectives to allow any kind of Opium growth and trade. However, after gaining power and coming to know the geopolitical and strategic realities concerning their conflicts with different groups and funding for these conflicts, they had to turn towards Opium and make the Opiate economy of Afghanistan as their perfect source of funding for their military equipment and other necessary things to make their movement survive (Peters, 2009: 10). There were two main things that turned the Taliban towards cultivation of Islamic banned Opium and their trade: (1) Since, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were the only countries that provided them with funds and other military support (*FBIS South Asia Report*, 1986, January 23), but that support was insufficient in confronting the Northern Alliance – heavily funded by Russia, Iran and India. Hence, the first motive behind supporting Opiate was to fulfill their monetary needs which would

allow the Taliban to arm their fighters with modern arms and ammunitions. (2) The Taliban were facing trouble from the local warlords and to earn their support, the Taliban had to allow the Opiate trade by the warlords who handed their arms to the Taliban in exchange for the cultivation of Opiate (the Opium Economy in Afghanistan, 2003: 54).

The Opiate economy, however, benefited both the Taliban and the opposing groups such as the Northern Alliance, since they both needed to fund their militancy. The Taliban, however, were the most benefited group in Afghanistan from the heroin and Opiate business with most of the production coming out of the Taliban controlled areas as reported by the US and the UNDCP in 1997 with almost 96 percent of heroin yielded by the Taliban held areas (Rashid, 2002: 199). The Taliban have avoided any public announcement of Opiate being allowed in Afghanistan during their rule from 1996 to 2001. Even though, they strongly criticized the Opium cultivation and growth by the farmers and warlords, and even hinted at strong punishment for the violator of what they call as the decree of Islam and the Holy Quran. The Taliban Foreign Ministry stated on September 10, 1997, that

“The Islamic State of Afghanistan informs all compatriots that, as the use of heroin and hashish are not permitted in Islam; they are reminded once again that they should strictly refrain from growing, using, and trading in hashish and heroin. Anyone who violates this order shall be meted out a punishment in line with the lofty Mohammad (PBUH) and Sharia law and thus shall not be entitled to launch a complaint” (Afghanistan, Drugs and Terrorism: Merging Wars, 2001/02: 11) .

Since, their takeover of Kabul, the Taliban were facing a serious problem of the international isolation which they tried to acquire at any cost. They tried relentlessly to make their ally Pakistan convinced the international community in granting recognition to the Taliban regime, especially from the US. In an attempt to get a recognition from the United States and the United Nations, the Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, in an appeasing move banned all kinds of Opium trade and production in 2001, which caused a decrease in Opium production from 82,000 hectares in 2000 to just 7,600 hectares in 2001 (Wahdatyar, 2018, October 28). In other words, the Opium production was declined by more than 90 percent. Most of the Opium production during the ban by the Taliban belonged to the areas held by the Northern Alliance which accounted 83% of the total Opium production.

However, the US military campaign against the Taliban regime in the late 2001 caused an extensive surge in Opium production and allowed the farmers to

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cultivate the once banned Opium Poppy in Afghanistan. The immense increase in cultivation of Opium Poppy and the heroin trade across the region once again touched the sky. It did not only affect the regional neighboring countries including Pakistan, but also caused an increment in the heroin usage in the West in general and the US in particular. The number of heroin users in the US itself increased from 189,000 to almost 4.5 million in 2016 which had dramatically changed the drug absorption throughout the US-led international invasion since 2001 (Edmunds, 2017, August 22). Thus, the Opium phenomenon added to one of the most important and unnoticed unintended consequences of the rational approach of global engagement in Afghanistan and reassertion of the global powers military interventionism. However, they didn't liberate the Afghans and pushed them socially in the darkness of ignorance.

2. Plantation of terrorism, Al-Qaeda and global Jihad: the usliberal interventionism

One of the highly regarded unintended consequences after the Soviets' withdrawal was the establishment of a new set of terrorism in the form of Al-Qaeda. Once the former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton confessed for the first time about the US responsibility for generation of *mujahedeen* against Communism and continuous support to the Taliban in NGG, when she admitted to ABC TV on November 12, 2010 that: "Part of what we are fighting against right now, the United States created. We created the Mujahidin force against the Soviet Union (in Afghanistan). We trained them, we equipped them, we funded them, including somebody named Osama bin Laden. ... And it didn't work out so well for us" (Subrahmanyam, 2012: 19).

The story begins when the *mujahedeen* fought a successful holy war (*Jihad*) against the Soviets with the US backing and rigidly repulsed their occupation. They included a considerable number of the Arab fighters who joined the Afghan counterparts in this war. One of such fighters was Osama bin Laden, who had travelled all the way to Afghanistan from his home town in Saudi Arabia to assist his Afghan colleagues. He was initially introduced by the head of the Saudi's Intelligence, Prince Turki Bin Faisal in 1980 (Tanner, 2002: 273), to assist the *mujahedeen* in their fight against the Soviet Union. He did a major part in defeating the Red Army, since he invested his expertise in managing the *mujahedeen* affairs and received funds from the Saudi government until the Soviets were back to their country in the late 1989. With funds from his family's billion dollar construction business, bin Laden dug caves and deep tunnel complexes in the mountains of Afghanistan, specifically in Khost and Jalalabad. With setting up highly advance depots and complexes for the Afghan War fighters, he also started setting up a separate training camp for the Arab-Afghan *mujahedeen* fighters which hinted at the formation of a new organization for the

Global *Jihad* (Al-Qaeda). The whole story, from Saudi Arabia to Global *Jihad*, has been described by Bin Laden himself, he said;

“To counter these atheist Russians, the Saudis chose me as their representative in Afghanistan. I settled in Pakistan in Afghan border region. There I received volunteers who came from the Saudi Kingdom and from all over the Arab and Muslim countries. I set up my first camp where these volunteers were trained by Pakistani and American officers. The weapons were supplied by the Americans, the money from the Saudis. I discovered that it was not enough to fight in Afghanistan [alone], but that we had to fight on all fronts, communist or Western oppression” (Massing & Otto, 1998, August 27).

In August 1988, after assisting the Afghan *mujahedeen* against the Soviets, bin Laden huddled up various extremist groups including both Arab and Afghan *mujahedeen*, which resulted in the emergence of an idea of the Global *Jihad* and a platform to converge *Jihad* fighters in the name of “Al-Qaeda” (McCormick, 2014, March 17). This group then moved to Sudan in early 1990s and established contacts with some potentially capable terrorist organizations across the Middle East and North Africa assembling thousands of radicals and extremist figures. After takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in late 1996, bin Laden founded the same shelter again, which he left following the departure of the Soviets. The Al-Qaeda started operations under the manifesto of the Global *Jihad* and carried out some vicious attacks in the world including the deadly attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 (Wander, 2008, July 13). The terrorism of Al-Qaeda never stopped and enforced the capability of their fighters, which led to the attacks on Twin Towers, the deadliest in the US history by September 11, 2001.

a. US liberal interventionism or great power military interventionism

As stated by professor of International Islamic University Islamabad during his interview, “any superpower or major power tries to create reasons in order to have its own excuse for intervention for a specific matter. Today, it is named as liberal interventionism such as Operation Endurance was launched by the US administration in light of Global War on Terror (GWOT) for liberating Afghanistan from terrorists and Iraq from the WMDs. It is not the people of that concerned country liberating from the tyrant regime, but the matter of fact is that that particular rational action is actually maximization of power that is done to

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serve the interests of that power intervened” [without knowing the unseen consequences of that action] (M. Khan, personal communication, May 26, 2018).

The rational approach of Bush’s GWOT policy shifted unlawful great power’s military intervention adventurism to lawful long-term counter-terrorism policy (Maley, 2016: 5) under the US grand strategy agenda for Afghanistan and South Asia. The emergence of the terrorist organization of Al-Qaeda was nothing but a perverse outcome of the foreign intervention and misadventures of the superpowers that started in late 1970s with the invasion of Afghanistan by the communist USSR and anti-communist measures by the US and its allies. The destruction of Afghanistan and international community went on, even after the horrific attacks on the US, and the Global War on Terror as one of the unintended consequences of the foreign intervention still exist to absorb the rest of global peace and stability and is operating with the same label of Al-Qaeda in various parts of the Middle East and Africa. The emergence of Al-Qaeda did not only lead to the destabilization of Afghanistan but also changed the geopolitical dynamics and security patterns of the entire region. Afghanistan was again chosen as the main base for what their founders have asserted as the Global *Jihad* and thus, made Afghanistan a focal point for the War against the international terrorism. Pakistan was again a frontline ally to fight this war, initiated in the beginning of twenty-first century. Pakistan affected directly from superpower’s interventionism in the name of GWOT and “so-called” global Jihad [against terrorism]. Buzan & Wæver (2003: 3) perfectly portray the picture of this great power or superpower interventionism after 9/11 in these following words:

“Almost nobody disputes that the end of the Cold War had a profound impact on the whole pattern of international security but, more than a decade after the transition, the character of the post-Cold War security order still remains hotly contested...since decolonization, the regional level of security has become both more autonomous and more prominent in international politics, and that the ending of the Cold War accelerated this process. Cold War, both the remaining superpower and the other great powers (China, EU, Japan, and Russia) had less incentive, and displayed less will, to intervene in security affairs outside their own regions. The terrorist attack on the United States in 2001 may well trigger some reassertion of great power interventionism” (2003: 3).

According to Pakistani analysts, holistically, the US take excuses in the garb of liberal interventionist approach to reach any country where there is instability [to play a policeman role]. For example in Iraq, there was internal striving between Saddam and the rest forces. But after the US intervention for liberating the Iraqi people from Saddam, it could not have paved the grounds for peace. In fact, Iraq was in a peaceful situation during Saddam’s era and today it is practically

fragmented and unstable. Another example is Afghanistan. “In Afghanistan, the US doesn’t want to stay anymore, but it is not eliminating its full presence because it doesn’t want to give space to Russia and China. With the name of liberation, the US has only deceived Afghans and they are not dear to the US as well. Merely the country’s interests are dear to the US. The US intervention has undone the national character of Afghanistan” (M. Khan, personal communication, May 26, 2018).

3. Re-conceptualization of the great game notion into new idea of the grand great game

The Great Game concept is very well-known. But there is a long history in construction of any idea. The Grand Great Game or the 3G idea has been constructed and re-conceptualized in light of geopolitical dynamics and security patterns emerged in the post-9/11 era, since the term New Great Game was coined after the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. A Pakistani professor Azmat Hayat Khan quoted Major Hoggerty that the old great game (OGG) is defined as “the struggle between Great Britain and Russia, to gain influence in Afghanistan was known as the great game” (personal communication, May 22, 2018). The OGG geopolitics was different from the New Great Game (NGG) on the following points: The OGG was only between two powers, Great Britain and Czarist Russia, whereas the NGG has more than six players, Russia, US, India, Pakistan, China and Iran. There was no economy or religion involved in the old Great Game, whereas, now it is all dominated by economic interests and religion. In OGG, Afghanistan was used as a buffer to block hostile influence, where as of now, in the NGG it is being used as a jumping pad to achieve their objectives [in Central Asia]. In the OGG, Great Britain and Russia had an understanding that Russia would not interfere south of Hindu-Kush in Afghanistan, and Britain would not interfere north of Hindu-Kush. After 9/11, when the US invaded Afghanistan, it made the matter more complicated and grandeur, and has made it very hard for the regional countries, to come to some understanding. They neither the US nor do other regional countries trust each other and under these circumstances, there can be no peace in Afghanistan. Therefore, this 3G idea was approved by the most of research participants, since a sample size of 15 research respondents has been chosen for conducting interviews from senior and junior university doctorate professors, public-sector professionals, media persons, and doctorate scholars of International Relations from Pakistan, India, United States, Estonia, Australia, Singapore, Afghanistan and Iran [See Appendix I for interviewers information and response to new idea of the 3G]. Few examples with comments of these participants are as follows a senior Professor expressed his views during interview to the author that

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“Using the term Great Game [today] is a bit misleading because apart from the fact that today's inter-state competition is taking place in the same geographic neighborhood as the original GG, there is very little similarity. Having said that, you could of course use your 3G nomenclature but you would need to explain right from the beginning the differences and the similarities with the original term (C. Rakisits, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

The renowned Afghanistan-Pakistan expert, Marvin G. Weinbaum reflected that

“Let it suffice to say that what these games have most in common is that Afghanistan serves as the focal point of larger regional contestations, all carrying lasting consequences for Afghanistan itself. In contrast to the Great Game and Cold War, rather than its being a competition essentially between two major antagonists, the new game encompasses multiple actors including, importantly, non-state ones. The 9/11 brought these non-state actors clearly to the forefront. Moreover, the current game, with its strategic economic and ideological dimensions does not fit easily into traditional *realpolitik* thinking. That said, the “game” metaphor may have lost its utility. The devising of term grand great game would not be inappropriate if in well defining it you have justified its use” (personal communication, April 8, 2018).

Today's chess game is created neither for having the direct globe-spanning empire building nor keeping the contending chess players in balance (*The Spectator*, 1897, September 4). Rather, the master of this game [US] has tried to buy political influence indirectly by devising new strategies, new tactics and new game rules to content with new players, such as the sole superpower with allies has moved towards gaining the direct influence in Afghanistan in disguise of countering the global challenge of terrorism under the long-term grand strategy of the GWOT. This point is truly expressed by Rubin and Rashid (2008: 30).

“The Great Game is no fun anymore. The term “Great Game” was used by nineteenth-century British imperialists to describe the British Russian struggle for position on the chessboard of Afghanistan and Central Asia, a contest with a few

players, mostly limited to intelligence forays and short wars fought on horseback with rifles, and with those living on the chessboard largely bystanders or victims. More than a century later, the game continues. But now, the number of players has exploded, those living on the chessboard have become involved, and the intensity of the violence and the threats it produces affect the entire globe. The Great Game can no longer be treated as a sporting event for distant spectators. It is time to agree on some new rules.”

Another senior Pakistani expert also is in favor of the reconstruction of new idea in the following words;

As the geo-politics of the region has changed mostly after 9/11 and new players have entered the game, the word “Grand Great Game” would be appropriate. This is how political words develop with changing time and geopolitics. International politics before and after 9/11 will never be the same. Apart from politics and economics, religion has entered into international politics and in some areas, it is playing the dominant role and it is connected to each other all over the world e.g. Africa, Afghanistan and Syria etc. Times have changed, players have changed; but the methods, tactics and strategies are the same. Addition of this word grand great game would be a big boost to Political Science terminologies and once you write it would be quoted by others and this would pave the way for further research and studies” (A. H. Khan, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Another senior Pakistani analyst slightly differs with the aforementioned viewpoint that this great game geopolitics is continued with new character and new interests of new players. The nomenclature of the OGG and NGG can be changed, but definitely impact would be the same that is power politics” (M. Khan, personal communication, May 26, 2018). Another practitioner articulated in this way.

“During the Cold War, in the same battle ground, United States replaced British and the aim was twofold: (1) US wanted its revenge from USSR for its failing in Vietnam and at the same time, US was denying the USSR, an access to warm waters of Indian Ocean. (2) Now the battle ground is same. More players have joined i.e. China and India, in addition to existing players. U.S. and India also want to extend the battle ground to Pakistan. The term should be changed and have correctly been called it

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the “grand game”. I fully agree with you.” (A. R. Malik, personal communication, May 9, 2018).

Similarly, a senior Indian professor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) gives their support to this idea. For example, “the Grand Great Game is more appropriate as it is different as the Great Game involved UK and then USA in the Cold War and focused mostly on the USSR. The 3G not only involves Russia, Central Asian states plus, China, India, Iran and others” (A.K. Pasha, personal communication, June 19, 2018). Another senior Indian professor maintained that

“As regards content of conflict, then it was for imperial and ideological pursuits and now it is for geo-economic gains, controlling trade and energy corridors besides worth the \$trillion untapped mineral resources of Afghanistan. South Asian geography is, therefore, impacting the regional politics and international relations, since major competing players of the present “Great Game” are international, whereas India, Pakistan and Iran are the peripheral ones. [No issue in using the word “Great Game” as it points to the clash on interest. Nevertheless scholars must have used it for explanation in relation to the old great game” (M.A. Kaw, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

According to the perspective of Iranian participant, “Today, there is also a great game in the form of a game for power. The issues of terrorism and extremism, Al-Qaeda, Taliban and ISIS, as well as the rise of India and China as two major powers, are among the issues that have affected the security scenario in the region. Afghanistan has been the arena for proxy wars between various countries, including Russia- the United States and India – Pakistan and etc., to reduce their rival's influence. And now the great game between Russia, China and Pakistan on the one side and the United States and India on the other hand are strengthening” (H. Rigi, personal communication, April 20, 2018). Unlikely, Afghan participant goes into detail that first of all, some of the actors have switched and some new actors have entered the scene. Afghanistan was a buffer state during the old great game. But during part of the Cold War and what some call now new great game, Afghanistan is one of the focal points. The main axis of the Cold War and the new great game are the same — Russia — but their allies have switched or seemed to be in a state of switching sides. Pakistan, for example, is entering or posing to be entering the Russian-led camp. In the existing situation, the geostrategic interests, more than anything else, are driving the agendas of different countries and so far as the Af-Pak region is concerned, the situation is getting complex with the active involvement of India-Pakistan rivalries more than

any time before, US-Iran trouble, Iran-Saudi rivalry, and the active quest for hegemony by the United States and Russia and somewhat silent, but overt struggle by China. It is not going to go away any time soon. “I would prefer call it new Great Game than Grand Great Game” (D. Khattak, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

(a) Unintended consequences of the 3G

A Professor of John Hopkins University explained that “I think that the term [Grand] Great Game has some merit, insofar as it suggests that there is a complex rivalry playing out among major powers in Eurasia, with Afghanistan as a central theatre of that competition. Afghanistan is not, however, currently the object of the competition in a serious way. No country wants to control Afghanistan or seeks a permanent presence there. The investment by the US and NATO has been driven by counterterrorism concerns, and the behavior by other countries has largely been a reaction to that US/NATO presence” (J.T. White, personal communication, May 1, 2018). Yet, the consequences of this 3G struggle are clearly seen. “The notion of a single chess player is equally false, especially in Central Asia, where dominant states (the U.S., Russia, and China) and local states are all alike weak” (Scott, 2010, 178), because “the emergent new structure of international security is 1 + 4 + regions” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 40), including the US (the international superpower, 4 rising powers (Russia, China, India and Brazil) and other different regional players. Therefore, Nye describe that “the world politics today [in the post-9/11] is like three-dimensional chess game. At the top level, military power among states is unipolar, but at the middle level, of interstate economic relations, the world is multipolar and has been so far more than that a decade. At the bottom level of transnational relations (involving such issues as climate change, illegal drugs, pandemics and terrorism). Power is chaotically distributed and diffused to non-state actors” (Nye, 2009: 162).

Moreover, the trend of confrontation and cooperation in the 3G under the umbrella of grand strategic partnerships (multifaceted dyadic alliance-making) are continued. On the one hand, states’ strategic interests have a collision with the others, but also they are collaborating for humanitarian assistance, countering terrorism and peacemaking, which provide the imperial states an opportunity to manipulate the weak ones. Or, they use the geography of the latter for their geopolitical interests against their rival. Moreover, the 3G is the intensification of the great game politics in changing geopolitical dynamics of the anarchic world order and the imposition of a grand strategic plan by major power(s) to achieve their strategic goals. Lastly, the substantial impacts of this game on Afghanistan and the South Asian region are the outcomes of a war-oriented geostrategy policy of the major powers and their disorganized collective aggression by proxy wars.

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The Grand Great Game is a backfire of the US planned strategy of Cold War after the Soviet invasion. As indicated by a senior Indian professor that “the US responded by promoting and pitting *Islamists/mujahedeen* against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Saudi funds and Pakistani muscle turned the US strategy into success by evicting the Soviets from Afghanistan. But it had dangerous [and perverse] unintended consequences for the subcontinent, as a Frankenstein’s monster was created not in the US but in the region [Afghanistan and its surroundings], which is still grappling with the rise of Islamic extremism and terrorism” (K. Warikoo, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Therefore, this study establishes that the 3G is not a traditional chessboard game of international politics in which the only two powers are involved for pursuance of their grand agenda and imperial powers generally acted for ‘rational’ security and hegemony. Rather, in this game, multiple states have to design reactions and re-actions according to the perverse results of unplanned actions. Moreover, the unexpected responses are planned by taking past and present geopolitical developments into consideration. In changing dynamics of global geopolitics and complex interdependency, states use war — direct or indirect — as a rational tool to gain political goals to cope with the challenges emerged as a result of security maximization and supremacy by socially-oriented means based on norms with realistic goals (Jahangir, Unpublished thesis, 2018). Briefly, it is a combination of geo-economic and geo-cultural competitions — other than geopolitical contest of all great games and wars in Afghanistan. As stated by an Indian analyst,

“Hence there is the need to look beyond geopolitics and see through the possibilities of geo-economic and geo-cultural cooperation in this 3G between India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Regional economic cooperation will bring both peace and prosperity to the region and its peoples” (K. Warikoo, personal communication, 9 April 2018).

Another expert described this topic in different words;

[In support of new conceptualization of Grand Great Game], prior to 9-11 conflict between states was assumed to occur because of power clashes over conflicting interests (primarily in regards to competition over scarce resources). Post 9-11 revealed the extent to which cultural values, cultural worldview (e.g. religion), and identity play a role in relations between states. Thus, there is a need for reconsideration of additional factors (L.M. Miller, personal communication, July 8, 2018).

The 3G is a boomerang of the US military interventionism in which Afghanistan has transformed into an international conflict with regional flavor (C.

Rakisits, personal communication, May 4, 2018). Changing of Afghan conflict into a full-fledged international conflict is one of the unseen consequences of the 3G. The Global War on Terror and proxy wars in Afghanistan are basically harbinger of this international nature of Afghan quagmire during the 3G, in which heterogeneous non-regional and regional players are fighting for their political goals under the cover of collective 'war' against terrorism. The players especially the US-led Western world, India, Japan, Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia and so forth are on one side engaged in cooperation to resolve the conflicting situation of terrorism in this land from decades, simultaneously they are busy in confrontation for their own strategic interests.

The 3G is a dynamic conflict of interests and constant struggle for global primacy to be played by the United States even following 9/11, and this struggle shares geopolitical competition factor with all previous great game-like competitions. The international conflict of Afghanistan has transformed the nature of global rivalry of great game politics into a regional one in which regional players — Pakistan and India in South Asian region — are confronting each other for conflict of interests in the emerging current geopolitical developments of anarchic and complex interdependent world structure. As Buzan & Wæver (2003: 15) proclaim that external major powers have played the regional great games in Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. However, the nature and scope of game being played in South Asia is different because the epicenter of this game is Afghanistan.

Proxy conflict started becoming prominent feature of international politics partly after the end of Cold War and wholly after 9/11, as Hughes argue that "proxy warfare is in itself also partly a legacy of the Cold War" (Hughes, 2012: 14). In the current situation due to the US role in Afghanistan and de-hyphenation policy in South Asian, the two countries [Pakistan and India] are entirely different for the US. "In post 9/11 scenario, US devised Af-Pak policy which was aimed at treating both the countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) as one. So, in this case one can make out clearly that the Pakistan is state which is treated with sticks and India with carrots" (F. Konain, personal communication, April 6, 2018). An Afghan expert states that "Afghanistan is part of India and Pakistan's proxy war having replaced Kashmir as a battlefield between both the two rivals" (Ahmadzai, 2010: 4). Pakistani political analyst explained, "There is a proxy war going on in Afghanistan between India and Pakistan. The fear and mistrust among these two countries [India and Pakistan] is more than the actual conflict. Indian phobia among the Afghans is much more than what it actually is. The amount of money and energy the Indians are spending in Afghanistan, their achievements are nothing comparing the efforts and money Pakistan invested (A.H. Khan, personal communication, May 22, 2018). An Indian political observer expressed, "I would stick to the official position of India, and which states clearly that it is in

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Afghanistan for Afghanistan. In the span of last four decades, India has not cultivated (or maybe managed to cultivate) a proxy for itself in Afghanistan the same way as Pakistan has. This has come with its own advantages and disadvantages. But overall, it makes sense to conclude that India does not lead a proxy war in Afghanistan both because it does not want to and it cannot (C. Saxena, personal communication, April 28, 2018).

But on the other hand, another senior Indian analyst at JNU maintained that “India decided to court Afghan governments [including Hamid Karzai] to limit Pak influence in Kabul” (A. K. Pasha, personal communication, June 19, 2018). The US war on terror and a wave of terrorism inside Pakistan has diminished the latter’s policy of publicly supporting the Taliban fighters but have maintained a considerable influence over these groups in Afghanistan. India also enjoys the services of multiple groups inside the Afghan territory capable of mounting terrorist attacks on Pakistan’s economic and military installations. The proxy conflict between Pakistan and India in Afghanistan being a theatre for such a war has increasingly changed the geo-political and strategic dynamics of the region and has transformed the region around Afghanistan and Central Asia into a flashpoint for a possible military engagement among regional powers. A Pakistani expert maintained that “the power struggle between Indian and Pakistan in Afghanistan is complex because of the role of great major powers. Chinese aim does not fully coincide with Russians. At best we can broadly categorize these countries into two. The US and India want controlled and continued chaos in Afghanistan to contain and check rise of China and resurgence of Russia. China, Russia, and Pakistan want peace in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of United States and NATO foreign forces from Afghanistan” (A. R. Malik, personal communication, May 9, 2018).

Pakistani circles maintain that India is operating terrorist activities against Pakistan via Afghanistan and Islamabad possesses serious security apprehensions and concerns against the India’s strategic foothold in its backyard [Afghanistan]. A senior Pakistan professor expressed that India is encircling Pakistan through Afghanistan and Iran. India used this as opportunity and Kulbhushan Jadhav did all his activities in Baluchistan and Karachi through Iran. After 9/11, India has entered in Afghanistan extensively and Afghan soil is constantly being used against Pakistan. This is a stated policy of India [in form of Gujral Doctrine] that let’s bleed Pakistan and let’s use all anti-Pakistan elements within Pakistan and within Afghanistan against Pakistan for cause of terrorism (M. Khan, personal communications, May 26, 2018).

On the other hand, the US just invaded Afghanistan without any organized and constructive planning, therefore, after fighting 17 years long war, the international conflict of Afghanistan is still unresolved. According to M. Kamal, “the term ‘Grand Great Game’ can be reconstructed under the evolving political scenario and US continuous and unjustifiable presence in

Afghanistan against the uncertain threat of terrorism (since 2001), moreover, rising Chinese status and reformation of the Russian role in Central Asia. The US-India nexus is another emerging bloc in Afghanistan that reaffirms the changing geopolitical dynamics and security patterns in post-9/11” (personal communication, July 3, 2018). Maley’s argument seems wrong when he explains that “for escalating international conflict situations and crises, assuming that the intervening power works with a clear political objective and plans well, the faster an intervention is deployed, the greater its chances of success. Paradoxically, crises often have to attain a certain level of severity before enough political support in the intervening state can be mustered for active involvement. Appropriate contingency planning is essential if an intervention is to occur expeditiously” (2016: 9).

Conclusion

Afghanistan problem has been contextualized and comprehended in the great game politics to understand the story of unintended consequences of historical events related to foreign interventions in Afghanistan from the Soviet invasion to the 9/11 incident. As in inference, it is concluded an idea that the foreign intervention in Afghanistan has shrunk the scope of the international politics into a regional power struggle which remains a case of serious consequences. While analyzing the foreign interventions in Afghanistan, started back in 1979 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the later situation that the policy makers of 1980s were expecting after the Soviet withdrawal were also not much worrisome; for, they thought the Soviet withdrawal would stabilize Afghanistan and the region. However, the situation created in the aftermath of post-Soviet boots was terrible, since it observed multiple unintended consequences of the Soviet adventure in Afghanistan. It did not only empower groups like the Taliban to emerge but also catalyzed the use of Opium and Heroin in the world. Transformation of *mujahedeen* into the Taliban and Al-Qaeda (terrorism) were the perverse unintended consequences of the US rational foreign policy actions.

Moreover, the 9/11 incident is considered a yardstick in changing geopolitical scenario and security patterns not only in international arena but also in the canvas of Afghanistan. However, in this scenario, changes in geopolitical dynamics and security patterns altered the nature and scope of the great game into the 3G. As unseen consequences of the 3G, foreign intervention of the sole superpower in Afghanistan has shrunk the scope of the international politics into a regional power struggle which is deemed a case of serious consequences to the international and regional security and stability along with terrorism. The US de-hyphenated the South Asian key player, i.e. Pakistan and India. This policy of the sole superpower in the post 9/11 era adversely affected the relationship between the two neighbors

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and heralded the penetration of regional-based great game geopolitics in the South Asia. As Buzan proclaims this point as “a variety of regional ‘great games’ is being played out by rival external powers in Central Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa...But South Asian politics is different in sense that this game is being played put in Afghanistan, located at its periphery (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 15). The political commentators agreed on this point that the proxy warfare between India and Pakistan in Afghanistan is a zero-sum game, since D’Souza (2011: 2) expressed that India’s growing aid diplomacy in the strategic backyard of Pakistan proven to be fatal between zero-sum rival. She further explained that the westerners dubbed this rivalry as the ‘new great game’, the source of insecurity and anarchy in the region that assures the renewal of ‘Great Game’ geopolitics that once played out there and in some ways or other still continue (D’Souza, 2011: 6). But this study has drawn out three basic findings: (1) the 9/11 incident was a perverse consequence of the US Cold War policies which paved the way for the 3G, wherein the regional and non-regional players are involved in complex strategic engagement under a new international structure unimultipolarity with sub-regional great games and competitions along with cooperation for universal threat of terrorism; (2) India-Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan is a traditional chess game in Afghanistan international conflict with regional taste; and (3) Pakistan-India proxy war in Afghanistan is a backfire of the Grand Great Game which is accepted by most of the research participants.

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Appendix I: Response of Research Respondents for Testification of the 3G Idea and Their Brief Introduction

Name of Countries	Name of Research Respondents *	Testification of the idea Grand Great Game (3G)	Brief Introduction of the Research Respondents
Pakistan	Prof. Dr. Azam Hayat Khan	Strongly agreed	Director/ Vice Chancellor, Area Study Centre (Russia, China and Central Asia), University of Peshawar, Peshawar.
	Prof. Dr. Muhammad	Agreed	Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, International

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	Khan		Islamic University, Islamabad.
	Atta Rasool Malik	Strongly agreed	Col (Retired) from Pakistan Army. A freelance writer. Hails from semi tribal areas of Pakistan. Served on Pakistan-Afghan border from 2009-2012
	Dr. Marium Kamal	Strongly agreed	Assistant Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.
	Dr. Farhat Konain	Disagreed	Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, National Defense University, Islamabad.
India	Prof. Dr. K. Warikoo	Agreed	Professor and Secretary General (Hony.), Centre for Inner Asian Studies at School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
	Prof. Dr. Aftab Kamal Pasha	Strongly Agreed	Professor and Director, Gulf Studies Program at Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
	Prof. Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Kaw	Agreed	Professor, Department of History, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad-Gachibowli-500032, Telangana.
Singapore	Chayanika Saxen	Disagreed	PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore,
United States	Prof. Dr. Marvin G. Weinbaum	Agreed	Professor and Director, Afghanistan and Pakistan Studies Centre, The Middle East Institute, Washington D.C.
	Prof. Dr. Joshua T. White	Agreed	Associate Professor, South Asian Studies at School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, United States.
Australia	Prof. Dr. Claude Rakisits	Strongly agreed	Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Melbourne.
Estonia	Prof. Dr. Leon M. Miller	Strongly Agreed	[Retired] Associate Professor, International Consultant & Researcher of South Asian Studies, Freelancer. Served in Department of Law, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia.
Iran	Hanifeh Rigi	Disagreed	PhD Scholar, Dept. of International Relations at Faculty of Law and political science, University of Tehran, Tehran.

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Afghanis tan	Dr. Daud Khattak	Strongly disagreed	Senior Editor, Prague, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty.
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Source: The table is made by the author after interviewing the research respondents.

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