

India-Afghanistan Knot in South Asia: Implications for Pakistan 2000-2014

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South Asia. Pakistan is located in its South and East. Afghanistan has always been central in the global power politics due to its strategic and economic importance as it is considered as a land bridge for oil, natural gas and trade route. After 9/11 incident, US invasion in Afghanistan led to instability in the region of South Asia. Two big powers of South Asia i.e. India and Pakistan have conflict over Afghanistan due to their conflict of interests. India has always been interested in Afghanistan due to its strategic importance and its role has been increasing. On the other hand, Pakistan is facing security threats due to some disputes with Afghanistan such as Durand line dispute, increased Indian role and intervention in internal affairs. Further, instability in Afghanistan has impact on Pakistan's stability. It can be analyzed that throughout history, India and Afghanistan had good bilateral relation as India has worked for rebuilding of Afghanistan and involved in various developmental projects. India-Afghanistan nexus will benefit India as India would be able to establish its influence in Afghanistan through its intelligence agencies. This paper endeavors to search the dynamics of Afghanistan's tilt towards India after US led war on terrorism in Afghanistan. It also examines the factors of Pakistan concern over India-Afghanistan bond. This paper aims at to explain the role of India in Afghanistan to undermine Pakistan influence. The main question of the paper is to see what are the factors/variables involved in the Afghanistan- India nexus. Also, through qualitative and descriptive analysis, it has been inferred that the new great game in Afghanistan by India is continuously upsetting the balance of power in South Asia. It may cause further instability in the region. This research paper helps to comprehend Indian strategic interests in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan. Moreover, it is suggested that if Pakistan develops a moderate policy while becoming facilitator for Afghan peace process and development then Indian influence can be countered.

Introduction

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South Asia. Afghanistan has always been central in the global power politics due to its strategic and economic importance as it is considered as a land bridge for oil, natural gas and trade route. India and Afghanistan has been adoring a durable historical bonds for over 1000s of years. India was the only country in South Asia that recognized Afghanistan being backed by Soviet in 1980s. During 1990s, both the states experienced with worsening their relations but their relations got stronger after the end of Taliban's

demise. India has been very active involving its strategic interests in Afghanistan. Moreover, Afghanistan and India always had good bilateral relations. As India has worked for rebuilding Afghanistan and is involved in construction projects in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has declared India as the brother country. Whereas on the other hand Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have never been smooth. Though, both states enjoy religion and cultural affinity but their relations have been subject to various complexities due to certain issues between them and India's strong bond with Afghanistan. Pakistan is the only country much concerned for the stability and peace in Afghanistan since being an immediate neighbor it suffers the most.

Literature Review

Ahmed and Bhatnagar (2007) explain the dynamics of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan since 9/11. Pakistan remained a great ally of Taliban during Soviet war in Afghanistan but 9/11 has changed the sincerities of Pakistan towards U.S against Taliban particularly to destroy their nexus. India has always enjoyed good relations with Afghanistan. Along with its economic and political interest India has very important strategic interest in Afghanistan as its location and its closeness to Central Asia have increased its importance to India. In post Taliban regime, India's engagement in Afghanistan has increased. India gave an assistance of 550 million dollars for Afghanistan's reconstruction along with training programs and various development projects. Khalid (2011) highlights the new great game in Afghanistan by India. India's involvement in Afghanistan endangers Pakistan's stability. He determines that the new great game in Afghanistan is continually distressing the balance of power in South Asia which is against the stability of the South Asian region. Balachandar (2012) describes the future prospects of Afghanistan relations with India and Pakistan. India will help Afghanistan against terrorism, extremism, violence and armed struggle. Khan (2013) spotlights the relations of Afghanistan with India and Pakistan that since independence both the states have been trying to develop relations with Afghanistan. Pakistan never had smooth relations with Afghanistan due to several differences such as Duran line. Gulshan (2014) explains the geostrategic importance of Afghanistan as it is at the tri junction of three important regions including Central, West and South Asia. It is a landlocked state. Due to its geostrategic significance many regional and extra regional powers enhance their influence in the region.

India-Afghanistan Knot

India and Afghanistan have been enjoying a strong historical connection since long. According to India, both states share historical and civilizational ties. The relations between the two states got deteriorated during 1990s Afghan civil war and during the time of Taliban government but then India helped in ousting Taliban and their connection got stronger after the demise of Taliban government.

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Though Indian embassy was targeted in Afghanistan several times and many Indian civilians lost their lives in these attacks, India was quoted as a 'brother country' in 2008 by Afghan foreign ministry. And it was declared that both states share a strong bond which no other state can destroy (Balachandar, 2012).

India's Interests in Afghanistan

India's basic interest is to develop the strong relationship between the people of both states and India has realized that this is only possible if it will support the policies in Afghanistan to make certain the economic wellbeing of its people and to ensure the stability and modernization in the country. Indian government has no desire to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs and it has made its stance clear by stating get involved in any conflict in Afghanistan and will only participate in bilateral cooperation in the spheres which will provide mutual benefits to both states. Further, India's primary concern is of security because of which India doesn't want Afghanistan to be backed by Pakistan, Taliban or any other fundamentalist groups. Security problems of Afghanistan is of great concern for both Pakistan and India as these will have a long lasting affects on the social fabric of both countries. Security interests of India in Afghanistan include:

Prevent Anti-India Terrorism

India has a fear that Pakistan can use Afghanistan as a base to launch terrorist attacks in India through extremists. So to prevent anti-India terrorism, India's concern is to stop Afghanistan from being used by Pakistan against India. As, in 2008, it has been stated by India that its first priority has to be the internal security of Afghanistan and there must be collective efforts to stop the terrorist operations within and beyond Afghanistan (Hanauer, Chalk, 2012).

Undermine Pakistan's Influence in Afghanistan

In case of India-Pakistan rivalry over Afghanistan, it is a zero sum game for both the states so India wants to counter Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan as it will be a threat to India's security and economy, both. India has a fear that after US troops withdrawing from Afghanistan, Pakistan will fill the gap while using Afghanistan as training base for radicals against India. Moreover, Pakistan will have a greater access to Central Asian Republics (CARs) denying India's access to these states. So it is necessary for India to refute Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan and its capacity to prohibit India from trade and other links to Central Asia. Another vital goal of India is to have friendly ties with Afghanistan in order to keep an eye on Pakistan and its activities (Iqbal, 2015).

Drug Trafficking

Another security interest for India is of preventing drug trafficking in Afghanistan as it has a direct effect on India's security. Due to lack of proper political setup and law and order situation, Afghanistan has become the hub of drugs especially poppy which is then smuggled into India through Pakistan. This supply was estimated to be 64% in 1996-1997 which has now reduced to 5% in 2002. The money generated from drug trafficking was a source of income for Taliban so India wants to shun drug trafficking in Afghanistan. It has been estimated that Taliban soldiers used to get US 300 dollars from drug trafficking where as Afghanistan force's soldiers receive the salary of only US 40 dollars (Javaid & Aslam, 2016).

Increase Access to Central Asia

India is a growing energy hungry country since it has a world's second fastest growing energy market for which it needs new energy sources to fuel its multiplying economy. It has been calculated that India will have to import 80% of its fuel by 2030. So to fulfill its need it has to form its connection with Central Asia which is only possible through Afghanistan. For this purpose, India wants to establish its link with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan through a pipeline TAPI. This pipeline being proposed will travel 1000 miles and will provide India with its required fuel. India is estimated to receive 14bcm/y which represents 1.5% of India's total annual energy consumption. The pipeline passes through the territory of Afghanistan so in order to get access of the Central Asian energy resources India has to ensure the stability of Afghanistan.

Power Projection

India's one concern is to project its power in whole South Asian region and beyond as it wants to increase its role in regional and global affairs. And to achieve this goal, India has to play a vital role in Afghanistan's security and economic prosperity. Afghanistan can connect India with CARs through which it will gain economic benefits providing India with a hope of projecting power in South Asia and beyond which will help India in gaining the great power status.

Strategies used by India to play its role in Afghanistan

It is very important for India to form friendly relations with both Pakistan and Afghanistan as these are the areas that can facilitate India's economic relations and cooperation with the CARs. But since this very ideal situation is not easy to be obtained in near future, India should work for the stability of Afghanistan to normalize its relations with the country. India was the only country of South Asia that recognized Soviet backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Soviet Union provided economic and military aid to India which helped India forming significant diplomatic ties with the country as India provided

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humanitarian and technical aid to Afghanistan at the time of President Najibullah. But these diplomatic ties came to an end after Taliban took power. India then helped in the ousting of Taliban in 2001 along with the Northern Alliance (NA). And since then India has been actively participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Balachandar, 2012). India's policy towards Afghanistan is of projecting 'soft power' and helping in the rebuilding and stability of the country in order to win the hearts and minds of Afghans. India uses various strategies to achieve its goals in Afghanistan and these strategies include:

Strategies to gain Political Influence

To reduce the control of terrorists, Pakistan and Pashtuns, India supported the Karzai government to build democratic bodies/institutions with the representation of all groups of Afghanistan society and security forces. India has established the diplomatic posts in Afghanistan such as Delhi's embassy in Kabul, consulates in Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif in order to build relations with local leaders, bolster trade and investment and increase awareness of regional developments. India has kept the northern card in its back pocket. It supported NA in ousting the Taliban regime and provided this movement with weapons and equipment during that time. Some Indians are in favor of the continual military support to NA since it opposes Pakistani supported Mujahideen but this support can increase tensions between Tajik- dominated northern Afghanistan and Pashtun-controlled central administration in Kabul which will lead to a proxy war in Afghan territory. And this is not in favor of India's interest to have instability in Afghanistan. But this can remain an option for India to re provide NA with military support in order to counterattack Pakistan if it supports anti-Indian insurgents (Price, 2013). Indian leaders felt it necessary to support the political reconciliation in Afghanistan since after 2010 multinational peace talks, they realized some form of reconciliation will take place with or without Indian support so India has to negotiate and have links with power brokers in Afghanistan. To counter Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, India has to be a part of reconciliation process instead of opposing it from outside.

Strategies to gain Economic Influence

Further, it was realized in 2011 through a poll released by Asia Foundation in November 2011 that the biggest problem being faced by Afghanistan is of economic crisis such as unemployment, poor economy and poverty. So, Indian government formulated economic policies to solve these economic issues in the country. India is the largest South Asian donor of Afghanistan when it comes to aid receipts from India. India helped Afghanistan by suggesting its membership to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the year 2005 and Afghanistan became its member officially in 2007. This was a regionalize solution to solve Afghanistan's security and stability problems. Delhi and Kabul

signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2003 in order to flourish bilateral trade since one quarter of Afghan exports are meant for Indian market. This agreement reduced duties on Afghan exports and the bilateral trade between these two expanded. India is also developing its relations with Iran since Iran will help India to send Indian commodities to Afghanistan through its route as Pakistan doesn't allow India to use its territory for trade purposes. The trade between India and Afghanistan has expanded from \$80 million in 2001 to \$280 million in 2010 (Hanauer, Chalk, 2012). In 2012, Kabul 'Heart of Asia' conference, India proposed to lead two confidence building measures (CBM) that it will support Afghanistan and merge it into the regional economy. Then in 2012, India also hosted an investment summit on Afghanistan in Delhi in which it invited other 'Heart of Asia' countries who were willing to invest in Afghanistan. India has invested US \$2 billion for the development of Afghanistan and has assisted the country in sectors including education, transport, power generation, health, infrastructure, defense and diplomacy. These projects are as follows:

Project Details	Year	Amount Spent (In Rs Crore)
Reconstruction and completion of Salma Dam Power Project (42 MW) in Herat Province. (2011-12 to 2014-15)	2011-12 to 2014-15	601.6
Construction of the Afghan Parliament Building at Kabul	2011-12 to 2014-15	260.2
Doshi and Charikar Power Project	2011-12 to 2014-15	74.9
Wheat to Govt. of Afghanistan	2011-12 to 2014-15	476.5
Setting up of an Afghan National Agriculture Science and Technology University in Kandahar, Afghanistan	2013-14 to 2014-15	4
Small Development Projects (SDP I&II) in Afghanistan	2011-12 to 2014-15	104.8
Restoration of Stor Palace in Kabul	2012-13 to 2014-15	17

Figure 3.4: Projects funded by Indian Government in Afghanistan, 2011-2015

Source: <https://www.quora.com/What-is-Indias-relationship-with-Afghanistan-What-sorts-of-influence-has-India-had-in-Afghanistan-in-the-past-and-vice-versa>, Retrieved on February 20, 2017

Moreover, Indian NGO's are also actively playing their role in Afghanistan. One such NGO is the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) which after gaining huge success in Indian state of Gujarat began operating in Afghanistan in 2008. SEWA has established a vocational training centre in Kabul and has trained

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almost 3000 Afghan women till now. USAID provides SEWA with up to \$1 million for this purpose. And SEWA is still operating in Afghanistan (Price, 2013).

Effectiveness of India's Strategies in Afghanistan

India has been very much successful in its mission to accomplish its goals in Afghanistan. It has played an important role in the establishment and stability of Afghanistan and has deployed very effective strategies in order to achieve its Strategic interests in Afghanistan. The Karzai government gave a very positive response to Indian initiatives by developing the diplomatic, political and economic ties with India in defiance of Pakistan's resentment. India's contributions brought the two states closer and they signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2011 making India the first strategic partner of Afghanistan. India's favor towards Afghanistan by suggesting its membership in SAARC helped gain Afghans' confidence and provided India with access of important trade routes and energy markets in Central Asia. popularity of India among Afghans was exhibited when Afghans carried a 100 meter long Indian flag in order to show the gesture of being thankful to India for assisting in the reconstruction of Salma Dam which was then renamed to 'Afghan Indian Friendship Dam'. India's decision of being a part of reconciliation process instead of opposing it is another effective strategy since it has realized that some sort of political reconciliation is inevitable.

Implications for Pakistan

India/Pakistan conflict over Afghanistan is due to conflicting interests of both the states in Afghanistan but this actually traces back to the India Pakistan old rivalry as between India and Pakistan there is always a 'zero-sum game' i.e. in what one gains other automatically loses. India basically wants to create friction between Pakistan and Afghanistan as it would help India in any future war with Pakistan since Pakistan would have two front dilemma. India's strategic, economic, social and security motives include preventing anti-India terrorism, undermine Pakistan and Taliban influence in Afghanistan and to have increased access to Central Asian States through Afghanistan to counter China and to gain these goals India uses soft power and provides Afghanistan with developmental aid and regionalize solutions to Afghanistan's stability problems. Pakistan's objectives include the core objective of friendly and stable Afghanistan to secure its own borders from western influence. It wants to block Indian influence since India's growing involvement in Afghanistan is creating disturbances in politics and security of Pakistan. Pakistan also wants to maintain strategic depth and to build economic links with CARs. And to achieve these objectives Pakistan is training extremists to counter India in Afghanistan and making Pakistan essential to Afghan reconciliation talks and is also offering developmental aid to Afghanistan.

Conclusion

This can be seen throughout history that Afghanistan and India always had good bilateral relations. Pakistan is the only country much concerned for the stability and peace in Afghanistan since being an immediate neighbor it suffers the most. Pakistan wants stable Afghanistan as unstable Afghanistan is a security threat for Pakistan.

India has always been interested in Afghanistan and now its role has been much increased. India's active involvement is quite realistic. Due to areas of friction with Afghanistan such as mistrust, Durand line dispute, interference in internal affairs and growing Indian influence, Pakistan is facing security threats as well as Afghanistan instability has impact on Pakistan's stability and politics such as smuggling in Afghanistan affects Pakistan as well. India-Afghanistan nexus will give more advantage to India and Pakistan will have to suffer consequences. India will also get a chance to establish its intelligence agencies to make operations against Pakistan. To counter India in Afghanistan, Pakistan should make cultural ties with Afghanistan, make alliances with China and Iran, make ties with Russia and should project soft power and act as a key facilitator for Afghan Peace process and development. Pakistan still enjoys position of great significance so must take measures to improve its ties with Afghanistan. The research concludes that the new great game in Afghanistan by India is persistently distressing the balance of power in South Asia which is not in favor of the stability of the region and needs to be ended.

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