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The Western question in Pakistan Foreign Policy: Sources of Stress and Strain in Afghanistan

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct an analysis of foreign policy challenges for Pakistan from Afghanistan within context of “Stress and Strain Framework”. The historical period of time categorized into five distinctive geopolitical features: pre-USSR invasion in Afghanistan, war against USSR and alliance with the US, post US withdrawal and Taliban rule, US invasion in post 9/11 era and finally, post US withdrawal and indigenous Afghan regime. Employing “Stress and Strain framework”, the research endeavours to elaborate several key research questions: How major powers interventions in Afghanistan change the geopolitical environment of south Asia? What policy imperatives Pakistan consider minimizing stress in emerging geopolitics with reference to Afghanistan in the region? As to what extent does Afghanistan become a source of strain for Pakistan foreign policy during different epochs of history? How changing geopolitical alliances among regional and great powers shape geopolitics of South Asia and how these changes affect the global political environment? The findings of the study reveal that the geopolitical environment is shaped by geopolitical alliances of regional powers with global powers and Pakistan follow a distinct approach during each period based on great power alliances it follows. The study underscores the importance of considering alternate foreign policy choices in scoring national interest. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significance of cultivating an inclusive geopolitical environment that nurtures trust and respect for each sovereign state in the region.

Key Words: Western, Pakistan, Foreign Policy, Afghanistan, Interventions.

Introduction

Pakistan’s foreign policy challenges from Afghanistan side dates backs to its inception. Although, the Durand Line was drawn by the British during colonial rule in India, yet, it remained contested after the British withdrawal and partition of sub-continent (Khan, M. Z. 2017). During the partition of Sub-continent, the Durand Line was demarcated as the boundary of newly born state of Pakistan and what later became the Pakistan Afghanistan border. The Afghan ethnic group living on both sides of the Durand Line had ethno nationalistic tendencies and had aspired for a

separate homeland Paskhtoonistan or Pashtunistan, resultantly; the Afghanistan government did not recognize newly born Pakistan and cast a negative vote for its membership in the United Nations Organization on September 30, 1947(Ahmad S, 2010). Refuse to recognize and negative vote created doubts and mistrust among leaders of Pakistan about Afghanistan's intentions (Rehman H, 2012). About its north-western question, Pakistan pursued a diplomatic solution and considered the Durand Line as inherited legitimate demarcation from the British and a permanent international border as per partition plan. The diplomatic efforts brought both countries to a level of understanding where Afghanistan had acquiesced to fact that the initial border agreement of 1893 between the British and Afghan people was ratified by the Afghan successive rulers (ShayeqA Q 2008). However, the question of Durand Line could not be resolved permanently due to assassination of the than Afghan President Daud in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, the democratic government of Bhutto was toppled by General Zia and hence a new era of engagement started with Afghanistan. Situations changed in Afghanistan with increasing influence of Soviet Union over which Pakistan had already strong suspicions. General Zia approached Taraki to ensure border safety and to reach permanent settlement of Durand line question. It was concluded that both the states would ensure safety and stop cross border infiltration and eventually Afghanistan will recognize the Durand line and permanent international border (Shayed AQ 2009).

USSR-fostered geopolitical environment

With the invasion of Soviet forces into Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan's foreign policy stress multiplied from its Western border. New geopolitical alliances and engagements took place in the region. The Soviet imperialist adventure in Afghanistan was not to stop at defeat of Afghan national government or the Afghan people, rather this invasion aimed to reach out at coasts of Indian occasion. The geopolitics of the South Asian region had already suffered throughout the Cold War period; the Soviet invasion was to be the last episode of Cold War contestations. The communist inclination of Northern Front in Afghanistan has already raised suspension in the West and hence the invasion was considered an anti-capitalist move on part of Communist Union. Pakistan was suspicious about the turbulent situation in Afghanistan and it had tried to defuse the tension with Afghanistan diplomatically but Soviet invasion had diametrically changed the whole strategic calculus of the region. The US intension of containing communism and Pakistan's apprehensions about geographical integrity materialized into a bilateral alliance that would fight against the Soviet invasion. At home, Pakistan recruited the Mujahideen to develop source of strain with support of the US that could mitigate the Soviet stress from Afghanistan (Sattar A, 2009). The decade of 1980s witnessed the Islamist resistance supported by the US and her allies eventually rolled back the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. It surprisingly ended the Cold War period and the US and her allies left the Afghanistan at mercy of various warlords who could not be able establish a unified government in Afghanistan. This power vacuum turned into violent civil war in Afghanistan and its spill-over badly affected the stability and peace in Pakistan. The foreign policy strain developed in shape of Mujahideen now changed to foreign policy stress from western border. To maintain peace and stability in Afghanistan was now the core objective of Pakistan given to its strategic importance and infiltration of violent elements into Pakistan from the Afghan border.

The turbulent situation in Afghanistan had repercussions for changing geopolitics of the South Asian region and it had posed many security concerns for Pakistan in the region. Now it was in the best interest of Pakistan that it should bring peace by mediating among the various factions of Islamic militants so as to establish a friendly government and diffuse the civil war. This strategy would serve two purposes: first it will reduce security stress from Afghanistan and second, a friendly government will be helpful for Pakistan in case of increase in security stress from Indian side (western security stress). These two aspects provided rationale for the notion of “strategic depth” in Pakistan’s foreign policy agenda (Ahmad, I, 2013). Pakistan assisted to combine the Mujahedeen groups who had fought against the Soviet Union and successfully mediated the differences of Mujahedeen leadership. Out of militant factions emerged the Taliban group as most powerful and controlled over important parts of the Afghanistan. Pakistan help Taliban consolidate their power to form a new Islamic state in Afghanistan. The Taliban succeeded in establishment of government by 1996 and Pakistan extended its diplomatic recognition to Taliban government (Durani, M. U., & Khan, A. 2002). Pakistan hoped for a sustainable peace within Afghanistan and cordial relations with newly installed Taliban government. But things turned otherwise. The Taliban leaders could not run the state properly judiciously in accordance with pledges made with Afghan people as well as those enshrined in the Islamic law. The nature of Taliban regime turned to be despotic and its image outside the world tarnished. Taliban failed to get support at international level due to their own version of interpretation of Islamic laws and execution of cases. There were reports of human rights violations and humiliations at large. Pakistan’s strategic calculations of developing foreign policy strain in Afghanistan failed and the very state turned as foreign policy stress from the western border.

US-shaped geopolitical environment

Although, there were fewer chances for Taliban regime to consolidate its power and to get support of Afghan people because of the reasons mentioned in previous paragraph, yet, provision of sanctuary to Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and refusal to hand him over to the US government in wake of 9/11 attacks opened a new page of war in history of Afghanistan. The US proclaimed war against terror in retaliation of Al Qaeda attacks of 9/11 and seek global support from the rest of the world. The NATO forces were to carry out operations in Afghanistan in search of Bin-e-Laden and other suspected terrorists. Pakistan’s position in this new trajectory was perplexing as the new alliances would change the traditional geopolitical and geostrategic considerations for Pakistan in the South Asian region. The United States which had almost abandoned its support and alliance with Pakistan after the nuclear test in 1998 was now to review its strategic calculations in the South Asian region. The US looked forward for Pakistan’s support in war against terror. For Pakistan, the scenario was quite bewildering for that the regional geostrategic policy adopted with regards to Afghan Taliban and Taliban government was to meet failure in case of US invasion in Afghanistan. The security stress from Western border was to renew in case the Taliban government was overrun by any external power. It was quite clear that the US has decided to invade Afghanistan either with help of Pakistan or without. It would search for other allies in the region and in case of Indo-US alliance, Pakistan would be besieged on Eastern as well as Western fronts

(Yamin T, 2015). These were the geostrategic considerations that Pakistan over rightly shun the support for Taliban in Afghanistan and entered into alliance with the US and NATO forces. Another aspect of this alliance can be seen in form of security stress from the US that was directly perpetrated to Pakistan. Indicating towards Pakistan, the US President Bush mentioned in his address “you are either with us or against us”. Pakistan’s importance for US in war against terror was undeniable given the strategic position and strategic support Pakistan could provide to NATO forces. However, within Pakistan and in Afghanistan, Musharraf’s decision to join the US alliance was criticized by the civil society. Public opinion and sympathies would not work when it comes to choose between foreign policy stress and strain. Nevertheless, Pakistan extended its full support in war against terror by providing supply routes and bases for NATO forces alongwith sharing the intelligence information.

The US war on terror and Pakistan’s alliance in this war opened a new chapter of foreign policy stress in Eastern border of Pakistan. The traditional method of easing the security stress would not work due to involvement of great powers of the world in Afghanistan. The US managed to set up government in Afghanistan under Hamid Karzai that stayed in power till 2014. Throughout the period of Karzai regime, peace and stability in Afghanistan could not be achieved because various factions of Afghan warlords did not adhere to the Karzai government and they considered it a foreign backed government. Although, Pakistan had recognized the new government in Afghanistan but Karzai’s strategic partnership with India created security concerns for Pakistan. India set proxies in Afghanistan with the intention to limit Pakistan’s role particularly in Afghan peace settlement and generally in the whole region.

The US announcement of withdrawal from Afghanistan has raised many questions for states involved in Afghanistan and challenges for Pakistan’s foreign policy in the same period multiplies in terms of maintenance of security and helping in establishment of a democratic Afghan government in Kabul (Idrees, 2019). The security challenges for both Afghanistan and Pakistan had already increased and efforts for peace that both states have made appeared to be futile unless a joint strategy was designed and pursued. In case of failure in joint mechanism, power vacuum could take place as it had occurred after the Soviet withdrawal. Realizing the potential of threats particularly to Pakistan and generally in the region, Pakistan advanced the idea of taking into account the Taliban and work together in finding a political solution of the Afghan crisis. Without inclusion of all stakeholders, peace process would go futile (Hartzell, 2014). The US was initially reluctant to follow strategy of involving the local Taliban in peace process but the Obama administration realized the fact that the solution of problem was to be sought in multi-pronged strategy that would involve the local Afghan moderate elements to initiate peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. He announced the strategy for permanent settlement of Afghan dispute by involving moderate elements from Afghanistan (theguardian, 2009). This strategy was appreciated by the leadership in Pakistan and Afghanistan alike. In order to implement the suggested plan, the Afghan government announced Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme in 2010 on principles of engaging the willing segments to disintegrate the strong hold of Taliban militants. However, difference of opinion among the US policy makers about inclusion of Taliban in talks did not allow the process to reach at some fruitful

stage (Khan R M, & Abbasi A, 2016). Similar other efforts to establish peace since the early 2001 till Bonn Conference 2014 resulted either in failure or secured minimum success due to exclusion of main stakeholders, lack of understanding the dynamics of conflict and lack of consensus about the mechanism of conflict resolution (Schirch L& Rafiee A, 2011).

The US withdrawal plan from Afghanistan in 2014 raised many questions for stakeholders. There was no certainty as to what extent the incumbent government in Afghanistan would be able to maintain peace and redress the grievances of various factions including local Taliban and other militants. There was no comprehensive strategy to take on board all factions about the post US withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan. The Taliban and other militant's groups were uncertain about their future role and started terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These factions wanted to get political concessions by implying strategies of intimidation, attrition and provocation. These groups carried out terrorist attacks in major cities of Pakistan especially in provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. They targeted civilians and security forces without any discrimination to intimidate the government of Pakistan.

Apart from the terrorist attacks within territories of Pakistan, US drone strikes had posed critical security challenges and breach of sovereignty. These strikes were initiated by the Bush administration and subsequently increased under Obama administration (Washington Post, Dec.27, 2011). Thousands of attacks took place in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province and Federally Administrated Tribal Areas. Starting from 2004, these attacks continued till 2018. According to an estimate, there were 414 drone attacks that claimed more than 600 civilian lives and more than 3000 militants were killed (newamerica.org). The US drone attacks continuously breach the sovereignty of Pakistan and there was no mechanism to stop such attacks. The security stress in northwest frontier region became a major irritant when Afghan security forces also began to attack the Pakistani security forces. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif demanded an end to the strikes and said "The use of drones is not only a continual violation of our territorial integrity but also detrimental to our resolve and efforts at eliminating terrorism from our country". The National Assembly passed a unanimous resolution against drone strikes and termed the strikes violation of the charter of the United Nations (www.bbc.com, June 5, 2013).

Moreover, another aspect of Pakistan's foreign policy stress from Eastern border after the US withdrawal is the cross border infiltration of militants and local people. The Pak-Afghan border is porous in its nature and there are many points of frequent movement of terrorists, criminals and smugglers. The Afghan people living across the border have frequent visits and they oppose to border surveillance of Pakistani and Afghanistan forces. Most of the terrorist attacks that were carried out in Pakistan e.g Army Public School Peshawar and Sehwan Sharif attack were planned and carried out by the terrorists based in Afghanistan (Alamgirian, M. Y., & Riaz, S). In order to reduce the unabated intrusions, Pakistan has approached the Afghan government and other stakeholder to seal the border but no cooperation on part of Afghan government has reached. Contrary to the Pakistan's resolve, the Afghan security forces attacked the Pakistani security official during the construction of Torkham Gate which was basically aimed to stop cross border infiltration of terrorists, smugglers and such other unwanted intrusion (Alamgirian, M. Y., & Riaz,

S). Keeping in view the security aspects of the border, Pakistan has taken some measure to stop the unchecked crossing e.g by fencing, establishing check posts, deploying security guards and checking the people who cross the border and getting their identification through necessary data checking. However, there is still infiltration of terrorists and smugglers that continue to pose threats to the state and worse the law and order situation in Pakistan.

Emerging Geopolitical alliances and environment

Pakistan's foreign policy stress from Afghanistan has aggravated with emergence of conflicting interests of great powers and consequent change in geopolitical alliances in the region. The US war on terror had already altered the configuration of geopolitics in Afghanistan and now the Chinese rise and its grand strategy of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) bears great impact particularly in Afghanistan and generally in the South Asian region. The Sino-US competition reconfigures the strategic alliances of great powers and puts negative impacts for stability in the region. This rivalry has also resulted into worsening the relations among regional powers particularly India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, the foreign policy stress for Pakistan from its Eastern border has intertwined with stress in Western border in face of shifting alliances of great powers with regional powers. Although, the US policy of withdrawal from Afghanistan was announced after killing of Osama Bin-e-Laden during Bush administration, yet, increase in number of American military continued in succeeding years. Later on, Obama administration (2009) made yet another announcement of withdrawal but it saw additional deployment of 3000 troops in addition to the existing forces for counter terrorism and counter insurgency (Woodward B, 2010). By 2014, US withdrawal from Afghanistan was supposed to be completed as per announcements made by Obama Administration stipulating a fix time period (theguardian.com, feb.25/2014), but new administration of Trump announced its "New South Asia Policy" in 2018 that promise the withdrawal on basis of "conditions on the ground" in Afghanistan. This new policy indicates that the US wants to make the conditions feasible for its influence to last longer in Afghanistan as it is evident in form of defence agreements it entered with Afghanistan. There is already a Bilateral Security Accord (BSA) signed in 2014 that allows the US to stay in Afghanistan till 2025 and it can be extended by mutual agreement (Imran S, 2019). The US presence in Afghanistan in Post-War against Terror period (2014) signifies the importance of South Asian region in great power competition. The Chinese BRI initiative and its flagship project China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) changed the traditional dynamic of geopolitics in the region especially with reference to the US South Asian strategy. Washington's objectives in Afghanistan slightly shift from war against terror to containment of China in South Asia. The US and China hold conflicting interests in terms of political, economic and strategic calculations. The US deliberate procrastination in withdrawal from Afghanistan raises strategic suspicions for China's BRI initiative. The US-India alliance and India's increasing influence in Afghanistan creates doubts for China and it undermines the political aspirations of China to expand her influence in the South Asian region. Given to this emerging conflicting interest, China-Pakistan growing strategic alliance is meant to compete the US-Indian alliance and their increasing influence particularly in Afghanistan and generally in the South Asian region.

China's strategic stretch and engagement

The turbulent history of Afghanistan has always remained a matter of security stress for China. However, Chinese involvement in Afghan conundrum is quite intangible especially in terms of participating in war against terror led by the US and its allies. Although, in a broader security perspective, China and United States share common beliefs on anti-terrorism campaign and development of Afghan government institutions yet, both great powers differ in terms of security threat perception. China fears and tries to prevent infiltration of terrorists into its Xinjiang province from Afghanistan while the US conception of security in Afghanistan is conditioned with internal stability and establishment of Afghan government that eventually will enable the US to pull its forces out of Afghanistan (Rank. D 2018). China's security approach towards Afghanistan stems out of countering and preventing extremism and separatism within Xinjiang province and it has not entangled into internal matters of Afghanistan unlike the US. China only intends to develop Afghan government that would be able prevent rising extremist and terrorist elements within Afghanistan and its spread out of the country.

The rise of China marked by its economic development and global strategic engagement envisioned in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) holds a significant importance for its neighbours. Security and stability within China and its neighbouring states will determine the success of Chinese strategy of development in future. Afghanistan shares a short border of 76 kilometres at northeast Wakhan corridor that connects Chinese Kashghar city in Xinjiang province. The turbulent history of Afghanistan does not allow China to set off its eyes due to security challenges which coincide with the Islamist militant tendencies in Chinese Xinjiang province. However, China has followed a non-interventionist policy in fight against terrorism in Afghanistan to avoid any militant reaction in Xinjiang province. Moreover, China fears the US involvement in East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which can instigate the Uyghur Muslim uprising in the Xinjiang province.

In order to help Afghanistan in countering terrorism, China has extended its help to develop an Afghan brigade (Chan, 2018). It provides military training to develop capacity and provide material equipment to them. China has also developed a Mountain brigade in order to conduct joint operations against terrorists in north east Afghanistan. In addition, the Afghanistan government had requested to China for provision of combat helicopters for Afghan security force (Martina M, 2018). The Chinese engagement in Afghanistan speaks louder for development of anti-terrorist mechanism in her neighbours because Chinese consider that the regional security challenges would be detrimental to their grand strategy of global investment. Presence of terrorist and extremist elements in neighbouring Afghanistan threatens security in Pakistan which ultimately bears great concerns for the Chinese flag ship project CPEC.

Chinese approach in Afghanistan is diametrically different from the US approach in sense that the former believes in development of regional trade and connectivity of Afghanistan with the rest of the region. China provides a huge tariff exemption on imports and exports of goods with Afghanistan. It has already started import of raw materials from Afghanistan and has provided financial grants to Afghanistan. It has shown great interest for investment in infrastructure, agriculture and hydropower

plants in Afghanistan in addition to strengthening road and rail connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Reuters, 2015). Chinese plan for engaging Afghanistan in BRI projects came on limelight in 2016 when the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Initially, Afghanistan was not included in the BRI project when the announcement made by Chinese in 2013. However, the 2016 MOU between the two countries showed the commitment to jointly promote cooperation and Afghanistan's proper integration in the greater project of inter-connectivity (Zia, H. 2019). There is a proposed railway transportation project between China and Afghanistan that will connect Afghanistan's north eastern province of Badakshan with China's Xinjiang province via Wakhan corridor. The Southern part of Afghanistan will be connected with China via CPEC passing through Pakistan.

China's aspiration in the South Asian region exemplifies its resolve to play an important role and its potential to mitigate the long standing challenges to regional integration. China's role in Afghan peace process is crucial given to its strategic leverage over Pakistan. Success of peace and integration depends on Chinese propensity of maintaining equilibrium with Pakistan and mitigating the differences pertaining to security from Afghanistan. In 2014, China engaged in Afghan peace process and gave a new chance for political settlement through its reconciliatory role. China initiated Quadrilateral Dialogue, a peace initiative for Afghanistan comprising the US, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The US appreciated the reconciliatory role of China and actively supported the peace initiative (Khalil, A. B. 2019). Moreover, initiation of Trilateral Dialogues including China, Pakistan and Afghanistan is another attempt of China to maintain peace in Afghanistan and to ensure regional integration in the South Asian region. The first dialogue was held in Beijing in 2012 where three parties agreed to exchange opinions on regional situation and trilateral cooperation for maintenance of regional peace and stability (www.china-embassy.org). It was recognized that the establishment of trilateral platform opened a new model of solidarity and cooperation. Moreover, a series of trilateral dialogues have been held in 2014 and 2015 and most recently on 7th September, 2019 at Islamabad (www.dawn.com, 7 Sep. 2019). It was decided that the MoU on cooperation for counterterrorism signed in Kabul previous year would be implemented and it was reaffirmed that no terrorist organization would be allowed to use soils against any country.

Keeping in view the above mentioned facts, it can be argued that the Chinese approach towards Afghanistan is driven by multifaceted interest. Firstly, it contends to tackle with terrorism and create a peaceful environment which is necessary for success of CPEC. Secondly, China wants to outsmart the US in Afghanistan without any confrontation and the US withdrawal will give it an opportunity to establish China's hegemony in the region. However, Indian growing interest in Afghanistan may lead to divergence of interest with China and an indirect competition with US would give shape to a new geopolitical environment for China in the region. Thirdly, peace efforts on part of China will put Pakistan in right row to do away with extremism and terrorism which will eventually lead to cooperation with Afghanistan for permanent settlement of longstanding disputes in the region. Finally, the great power competition necessarily demands China for ensuring regional integrated efforts e.g trilateral negotiations among China, Pakistan and Afghanistan, in order to reach peace settlement in Afghanistan and success of CEPC and the BRI vision.

India and Security Stress pairing

Indian growing influence in Afghanistan has always been a matter of grave concern for Pakistan. The historic rivalry between India and Pakistan shape the patterns of relations among three countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The regional geopolitical environment is thus influenced by the sceptical vision and mistrust prevailing for long in the region. For Pakistan, growing Indo-Afghan relations means multiplication of Eastern security stress with the Western security stress. Thus, fear of encirclement from Eastern and Western border guides the foreign policy objectives of Pakistan with reference to Indo-Afghan relations.

India-Pakistan estrangement with reference to Afghanistan appeared when Socialist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) toppled the rule of Mohammad Daoud Khan in a military coup on 30th April 1978, popularly known as Sour Revolution. The PDPA's socialist leanings and consequent help from the Soviet Union to the new Afghan government made it obvious that Afghanistan was fully controlled by the Communists and their intensions to reach warm waters at Arabian Sea would raise deep apprehensions in Capitalist bloc particularly Pakistan. On the contrary, the Indian government of that time extended its support to the socialist government in Afghanistan by recognizing Najeebullah's government and extending humanitarian aids to Afghanistan (Crossette, 1989). The Cold War environment engulfed the Indian Sub-Continent and consequently Pakistan began to prepare fight against USSR and India in Afghanistan. The Islamist proxies were to serve for this cause. Since then Pakistan has been very cautious about Indian intensions in Afghanistan and it consider Indian involvement as strategic encirclement by enemies. After the end of war against USSR, civil war broke out between Socialists and Mujahideen and eventually Taliban Mujahideen rose to power. The Taliban government in Afghanistan found to be very inimical towards India. It destroyed the historical monument of Bamiyan Buddha during their war against the socialists. These Taliban Mujahideen infiltrated into Kashmir and caused security stress for India. Later on in 1999, Taliban hijaked an Indian aeroplane flight and made hostages to demand the release of terrorist leader Masood Azhar and two others who were imprisoned in India for Mumbai terrorist attacks (Balanchandar, 2012). The Indian government released the terrorists and get the aeroplane freed from Taliban. These incidents show that the relations between India and Afghanistan were deteriorated in wake of militant Taliban rising to power in Afghanistan.

However, after the event of 9/11 Indian relations with Afghanistan have been improved and it desires to play her role in stabilizing the Afghan issue. Indian approach towards Afghanistan is now based on long term objectives and it wants to contribute in development of Afghanistan through soft power. Moreover, India has no territorial issue with Afghanistan and it enjoys good relations with Socialists elements to be known as affiliates of Northern Alliance. The US backed Hamid Karzai government and now Ashraf Ghani's government has many officials belonging to the Northern Alliance with whom India is acquaint and tries to build strong relations. The Taliban government had fought with the Northern Alliance and hence there is clear difference between Indian and Pakistani prospective regarding Afghanistan's future government (Johnson C, Maley W, Thier A, & Wardak A. 2003). It is presumed that as long as the affiliates of Northern Alliance dominate the

government in Afghanistan, India will extend its support and on contrary, Pakistan will not be comfortable with these developments. Pakistan's approach towards Afghanistan and Taliban is in conflict with India and her aspiration in Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan considers Indian presence and her support for Afghanistan as an act of combining security stress from Eastern and Western border.

In order to secure its longterm interests in Afghanistan, India has pursued diplomatic relations with new government in Afghanistan by opening its embassy in Kabul in 2002. Both the states entered into Strategic Partnership Agreement and consequently Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Sing paid visit to Afghanistan in 2011(thehindu.com.5 Oct.2011). In succeeding years, India extended its help to improve the electoral processes in Afghanistan by providing training to Afghan official and equipping them with voting machines to further the democratic process. India wants to develop and strengthen democratic system in Afghanistan as it believes that a strong democratic government will be helpful in ending Taliban militancy that has been a source of security stress for India in Kashmir. Apart from helping in democratic system, India has made considerable efforts to develop economy of Afghanistan. It has provided assistance for Afghan government to develop projects of power generations and infrastructure development in addition to immense humanitarian aids. In social sectors, India has invested to build educational institutions and develop hospitals in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Heart and Mazar-e-Sharif. Apart from the above mentioned facts, India wants to develop economic and trade ties with Afghanistan through investment in mineral and natural resources. Steel Authority of India Limited and National Mineral Development cooperation of India have invested in extraction of natural resources in Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan have signed strategic partnership Agreement in October 2011 which is aimed at development of economic engagement, trade and construction of mega projects in Afghanistan (Haidari, M. A. 2015). Indian governmental companies have invested in extraction of petroleum and copper mines while private companies and entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in Afghanistan.

The political transition marked by democratic transfer of presidency to Dr. Ashraf Ghani from Hamid Karzai on 29 September, 2014 and the US plan for withdrawal of security assistance forces in the same year highlights the potential challenges for Afghanistan itself and for the regional powers. Within Afghanistan, political divisions on the basis of ethnic and sectarian lines did not allow a single national political party to operate and single political identity to unite the Afghan nationals for democratic governance. This division contributes for political uncertainty which adds vulnerabilities to internal security within Afghanistan (Livingston I. S. & O'Hanlon, M. 2012). Moreover, the US led security forces could not bring longlasting peace and now planning for exit amid chaos. The Indian authorities fear resurgence of Islamist militants within Afghanistan and possible Pakistani influence to launch proxies in Kashmir augmenting security stress for India. The militant resurgence was evident in 2015 when Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan was occupied by Taliban (www.dawn.com, 28 Sep. 2015). India not only fear terrorist threats in Kashmir but it fears that the Islamic extremism would penetrate and boost within India. In order to ensure security in post 2014 Afghanistan, India try to improve security cooperation with regional and international states. It has established military and intelligence ties with Central Asian States where Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Al-Qaeda have already established their

sanctuaries. The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation program is aimed to provide military trainings to armies of Afghanistan and Central Asian Countries (WANG, J. (2017) enabling them to fight against the militant Islamists. It has enhanced its security cooperation with Afghanistan and has provided four Mi-25 combat helicopters enabling Afghanistan to fight against extremist elements within Afghanistan. India considers that a strong Afghanistan will contribute to security of the region and it will reduce and stop extremist and terrorist's elements from growing and proliferating out to other regional countries.

Overall, foreign policy objectives of India in Afghanistan can be categorized into three broad areas: security, anti-Pakistan and regional and international interest. Security concerns for India in Afghanistan stem from the fact that regional and international terrorist organizations find safe heavens in Afghanistan and they operate from there and continue threats to India and other regional states. India fears that the land of Afghanistan is used by Pakistani supported terrorists who undermine the Indian interest in the region and pose security challenges within India. The 2008 Mumbai attacks and terrorist attacks on Indian embassy in Afghanistan are the prime examples in this regard. India's anti-Pakistani campaign in Afghanistan is evident in the Indian fear of Pakistan's dominance in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. Pakistan's proximity and relations with Afghanistan raise suspicions in the Indian strategic thinking about the possible influence Pakistan could exert to use the Afghan land as its strategic depth. Therefore, India seeks to get Pakistan out from Afghanistan and establish a government that is not friendly to Pakistan (Javaid, U. & Javaid, R. 2016). Lastly, India's regional and international interest is developing in the economic growth and global trade which requires India to boost relations with regional and global powers. For India, Afghanistan can provide access to Central Asian countries which offer a great potential of trade and business in the region. India's growing populations and industry requires energy and its growing economic productivity needs markets. The Central Asian countries offer both needs for India. Therefore, Indian interest in Afghanistan is related to its regional and global aspirations.

Conclusion

Afghanistan plays a significant role in geopolitics of the South Asian region. It can be ascribed as the pivot of emerging geopolitical environment in the region. Physical presence of military of the great powers, pursuit of interest of by regional powers and active role on part of non-state actors make the geopolitics in Afghanistan quite perplexing. The government of Afghanistan lacks support from all segments of Afghan nationals and external elements influence the decisions of state and role of the Afghan people. Afghanistan and Pakistan share long border, cultural, religious and ethnic similarities. Both nations share common interest ranging from maintenance of peace and development of bilateral cooperation and friendly relations among regional countries. However, there are certain irritants that hamper mutual cooperation and raise misconceptions about each other. The emerging geopolitical environment of the region necessitates mutual cooperation to ensure peace, stability and development particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan and generally across the region. In order to bring peace, Afghanistan government needs to develop consensus with Taliban and other local militant groups and give them chance to reintegrate in society and polity. It seems quite challenging task but it can

be achieved by mutual efforts on part of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Leaving Taliban and other militant groups out of main stream politics would give space to other terrorist group like Daesh and ISIS in the region. Therefore, efforts to pacify the Taliban would make sure that in future such elements would not get chance to proliferate in the region. Both countries need to understand each other's vulnerabilities and Afghanistan should not trade off Pakistan's relations for India and it should abide by the obligations of international law with reference to Durand Line and cross border attacks, smuggling of drugs, arms and illegal human trafficking. Furthermore, the regional states and great powers involved in Afghanistan also needs to respect the sovereignty of Afghanistan and they need to extend sincere efforts to get Afghanistan out of current mess and to put an end of proxy wars against each other. All regional and great powers involved in Afghanistan needs to develop trade and business relations and help Afghanistan develop its infrastructure and institutions to facilitate a democratic government in near future. The regional organizations for mutual cooperation and development needs to be rejuvenated so that integrated model of regionalism would work to eliminate differences and pair the interest of all regional countries for better future of the region.

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