



RESEARCH PAPER

Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan and Concerns of Regional and Global Actors vis a vis Pakistan

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PAPER INFO

Received:

July 29, 2020

Accepted:

September 05, 2020

Online:

September 30, 2020

Keywords:

Afghanistan,
India, War against
Terrorism,
Pakistan,
South Asia,
Terrorism

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is a landlocked Country and it's topographically surrounded by East West and North South extensions of Hindukush range which traps the invaders. It forms a crucial bridge which connects the Southern and Eastern Asia to Central Asia and West Asia. Afghanistan has enormous importance for the global world during the 19th century, the area which is today called Afghanistan acted as a buffer zone between the Britisher and the imperialist Russia. In 20th century Afghanistan engaged into theatre of Cold War hostility between the USA and the USSR. After the departure of Soviet troops, the country dipped into a decade long civil war. While the West including the US, remained largely detached to the country during the 1990's, and regional actors supported their favourite allies. Russia, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Central Asian states chose their linked proxies in the conflict. Objective of this research is to be analysed geopolitical potential of Afghanistan as well as geo strategic competition of global and regional powers in Afghanistan. This research is the case study which evaluates geopolitical dynamics of Afghanistan and Pakistan's concerns in South Asian politics perspective.

Introduction

A landlocked country, Afghanistan has an Area of 647,497 sq km. Due to her locality; Afghanistan has a great importance in this region. Afghanistan is a crossway among the states of the sub-continent and central Asian states that connect East to the West. Afghanistan shares her borders with Pakistan, Iran, China and Central Asian States. The land of these three regions is called by scholars as "a region at the cross road of history". Due to the position of Afghanistan, great powers have taken great interest in this country. On the basis of its position, Dr.

MondraDutta said that “a measure of control over Afghanistan will automatically lead to a measure of control over south Asia”(Laruelle& Peyrouse, 2015). In historical prospective, this country has seen many invaders, wars and complete instability. Afghanistan is a country that always remained the subject of internal and external forces. It faced war and terror from the British colonialism including Anglo afghan wars. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic region with the biggest proportion of Pashtun (42%), Tajik (25%), Hazara (10 %) and Uzbeks (10 %) (Hameed et al., 2014b). There were remained a great ethnic tension in the 90s between majority Pashtun (Taliban and some non-Taliban) and other minorities (Northern Alliance) over the structure of national government. After the decline of Taliban regime, ethnic minorities are in power now in both military and economic aspects. Furthermore, ethnic groups were also supported by outsidess powers. Pashtun and Hazara were supported by Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively to counter each other while India and Russia supported Northern Alliance composed of other minorities. Inter and intra-ethnic groups rivalries and ties with foreign powers make Afghan conflict prone state. There were 1800 different armed groups after the completion of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), a peacekeeping strategy of United Nation during 2005 in Afghanistan. The leaders of these armed groups are involved in every prospect of the Afghan nation. They want to secure their economic interests. Moreover, regional states have their ulterior motive of achieving their strategic goal and taking benefit of Afghanistan geostrategic location to approach the energy-rich CAR's. For this purpose, regional states are solidifying their relations with Afghanistan and intervene in the internal affairs of Afghanistan to establish a puppet government which secure their interests and counter their regional enemy. In the post 9/11, New Delhi efforts to establish a strong relation with Afghanistan are evident. Kabul became more important for Pakistan and India after being a member of SAARC (Sangar, 2016).

Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan

Due to its prominent geographical features, Afghanistan remained the bone of contention between great power like Britain, USSR and America. Afghanistan remained the focal point of USSR and British India and played the role of buffer state between the great game of these two rival states (McLachlan, 1997). When USSR invaded Afghanistan, America succeeded in its goal to stop the USSR at Pak Afghan border with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, her permanent loyal allies. The battle for power between "holy warriors" continued for 6 years after the withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan. Breakthrough of Global War on Terrorism after the incidence of 9/11 made Afghanistan more vulnerable (Ottaway & Lieven, 2002).

In post-Cold War era, independence of mineral-rich Central Asian Republics (CAR's) is the element of interest both for regional neighbours and great powers. Afghanistan has the direct border with CAR's and is the gateway for oil and gas transit routes. Afghanistan has the potential to make itself an aid-free economic hub due to its mineral resources and geostrategic location. But the constant instability

due to the influence of other countries and US aggression made it impossible. It is estimated that the mineral resources of Afghanistan are worth of US 3 trillion dollars (Yousaf, 2016& Muzaffar et. al, 2019).

After 1979, Afghanistan is facing traditional and non-traditional issues of fragile security, foreign invasion and drug trafficking. War-ravaged Afghanistan is automatically causing instability in Central Asia and its huge market namely South Asia. Poor border management and lack of state control in sub-regions alongside Afghanistan turned these ungoverned areas into the heart of terrorism, narcotrafficking and other social evils (Idrees, 2016). These remote areas include Durand line, Pashtun tribal area of Afghanistan and Federally Administrated Area of Pakistan, Ferghana Valley, Afghan-Tajik border area of Badakhshan and most important the Sistan-Balochistan area which is the biggest hub of Opiates trade and located at the junction of Pak-Afghan-Iran border. A huge proportion of the population living in these areas have extremely low literacy rate and their source of income is smuggling. Persistent poverty across the border is nourishing emigration, drug smuggling and triggering illiterate youth to join militant groups. These geographical factors may affect the economic development and cooperation in the region. Moreover, covert operation by respective states to overcome military trends in these border areas made it so critical that a regional approach will not be able to deal it. It is important to promote cross-border cooperation between border management forces and develop a 'risk-based approach' to mitigate events of random migration and criminal activities. One of the functional examples of this approach is the cooperation at Afghan-Tajik border that facilitates the trade exchange between two countries by giving incentives to traders and utilize unusual resources to curb terrorist activities across the border (D'Souza, 2009). The main factors behind the long-lasting war in Afghanistan are multi-dimensional. Some of those factors include the ethno-political relations, warlords, poor governance, poverty and extremism; diffuse military patronage network, insurgent groups and their hideouts in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. These factors will also prove a great challenge for peaceful, economic, democratic and well-governed Afghanistan over the next decade. In future, after the withdrawal of US, small chance of government collapse and civil war can trigger terrorists as well as regional and global players to play in chaotic Afghanistan.

To establish peace in Afghanistan, it is necessary to maintain a balance of power between ethnic groups and devise a strategy to overcome violent struggle for power. A truly democratic, secure, pluralistic Afghanistan can only prevent regional rivalries, the risk of terrorism and guarantees a stable South Asia with successful opportunities of economic cooperation with resourceful CAR's (Anwar, 2013).

Peace talks in Afghanistan were a mere dream in the milieu of continuous warfare. In recent times some constant, inclusive and well-organized efforts have been conducted to restore sustainable harmony in Afghanistan. Negotiation with Taliban is another step to peaceful Afghanistan, after the death of Mullah Umar, efforts of negotiation with Afghan Taliban seem difficult because younger Taliban

generation is more radical and have no enthusiasm to end the brutal war with negotiations. The first step to this stabilization process was Urumqi talks organised by China and Pakistan between Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA) and the Afghan government. Later, peace talks were again initiated at the core Asia conference 2015 in Islamabad, but the death news of Mullah Umar disrupted the process. After that, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Russia tried to resume the peace dialogues in the first 3 months of 2016 (Basit & Shahid, 2016).

At present, Quadrilateral Coordination Group comprising of four major players, i.e., Afghanistan government, United State of America, Pakistan and China are effectively trying to bring a satisfying solution to this multifaceted issue by peace dialogues. Moreover, some other actors like Saudi Arabia, India, Russia and Iran are also interested in this process and no doubt, Taliban presence is crucial to negotiation and all above-mentioned players are persuading them to come to peace dialogue process. The strategic benefits of these players are associated with Afghanistan and in turn, these states shape their stances to bring peace in the region. According to their interests, these players will either cooperate or compete in Afghanistan (Saud & Ahmad, 2018).

According to Taliban claim, they are engaged in holy war and their objective is to restore Sharia-based government deep-rooted with the primitive version of Islam. They are against unconditional peace talks that are why they have lost their supreme commander Mullah Akhtar Mansoor. The drawdown of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan, disengagement of sanctions on Taliban commanders levied by United Nation and the release of their fellow prisoners from the Guantanamo Bay prison are some preconditions imposed by Taliban to start effective peace talks. Taliban are resilience to survive under the US invasion and they still have the potential to attack the NATO troops and Afghan forces with ease. Therefore, they consider it imbecility to lose a clearly won war on the table. These are some ground realities that prevent Taliban to engage in peace talks (Basit & Shahid, 2016).

The Afghan Government is also interested in peace talks with Taliban to avoid further aggravation of continuing war and cease long-term turbulence in the country. Moreover, after the withdrawal of US and western troop, fighting against terrorism on its own, put stress on Taliban to surrender themselves and to survive the hold of power are major challenges for the Afghan government. To bring peace, Afghanistan must change its Kabul centric policy and give the Taliban some leading position in the country. The Afghan government wants assurance by global community especially from US and China to continue their financial support (Aziz, 2016).

The NATO and US drawdown from Afghanistan have lifted grave concerns among the regional and international community. Geopolitical competition between the dangerous neighbourhood of Afghanistan and interest of global powers make the security of Afghanistan more complicated. For example, the geopolitics of transit route for gas between Turkmenistan Afghanistan and Pakistan is a great challenge

for Iran as well as Russia who wants to contain US domination in the region. Likewise, this situation is also a subject of apprehensions for Pakistan and India (Afridi & Afridi, 2015).

Geopolitical Concerns of Regional and Global Actors in Afghanistan

America wants to make a durable and tactical position in Afghanistan to counter its powerful adversaries such as Iran, China and Russia in the region. This competition causes the instability and security threats in Afghanistan which in turn upsetting the peace and stability of its neighbouring South Asian states, especially Pakistan. United State narrative over Afghan issue is multi-layered. The basic objective of US is to attain a sustainable, peaceful and internally secure Afghanistan with the lack of its potential to become shelter place for extremist groups again. The US has lately admitted that use of military power was not the solution for Afghan crisis. She has realized the effective dominance of Taliban in improving the law and order situation of Afghanistan and therefore, convincing Taliban to accept 'power-sharing mechanism' in Afghanistan. The US is cooperating with Pakistan to find a feasible solution of Afghan conundrum by facilitating the Taliban to negotiate (Hameed et. al, 2014b & Muzaffar, et. al, 2017).

Nevertheless, of being criticized for betraying the international community in the war on terror, Pakistan has severely been damaged during the battle. Pakistan is an important regional actor which is directly influenced by war and peace in Afghanistan. Afghan administration inclination to India is growing security and economic concern for Pakistan. Moreover, Intelligence agencies of Afghanistan are coordinating with Indian 'RAW' to press Pakistan which in turn escalating Afghan-Pakistan trust deficit. Indian influence in Afghanistan is considered by Pakistan as a direct risk to its national security due to its historical rivalry. Pakistan is afraid of 'Classical ChanakyaKautilya Encircle Movement' and wants a puppet and fragile government in Kabul which not only counter India but also unable to challenge her at Durand line (Ahlawat & Rahman, 2014). Islamabad has been continuing the Pro-Taliban policy for 20 years in Afghanistan to contain India and acquire strategic depth in the region. It may cause an adverse effect on Afghanistan by annoying its neighbour. Pashtun nationalism, extremism and water scarcity are and will be the perennial sources of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan may undermine the Afghan's effort to construct dams to improve its water storage capacity. Afghanistan water needs per capita are increasing and it will exasperate the relations between the two states in near future. Afghanistan needs considerable and continuous outside support to manage its own security and Pakistan should actively support her because peaceful Afghanistan is essential for regional peace. Afghan complaints about Pakistan would likely to become fewer if a peaceful political settlement will occur between Taliban and Afghanistan. Both countries are facing virulent insurgency while attacking the shelters of insurgent groups is their common ambition. Pakistan has legitimate concerns in Afghanistan and this trust deficit may hamper the peace talk process. Due to its clouts in Taliban, Pakistan always played a crucial role in encouraging Taliban to be the part of political settlement through

negotiation. Pakistan is in the favour of negotiation with all Taliban and opposes the only negotiation with reconcilable elements in Taliban and neutralization of irreconcilable elements through war. Pakistan also does not support Afghan-owned negotiation without her behest (Basit & Shahid, 2016).

Indo-Afghan relations did not remain pleasant during Taliban regime but after 9/11 their relations were changed from hostile to amicable nature. India provides logistic support to the US-led so-called war on terrorism and also gave services to rebuild the war-ravaged Afghanistan. India has become the 5th largest donor to Afghanistan and recently 15000 tons of wheat gave her in terms of financial and humanitarian aid. India has fully grabbed the opportunity to re-engage Kabul in post 9/11 era by improving funding in afghan areas of urgent development. India founded two new consulates in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif along with reopening of Kabul Embassy and consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad. Afghanistan and India consider Pakistan as their mutual enemy and they are tactically limiting Islamabad's leverage over Afghanistan and Central Asia by constructing alternative road via Iranian port Chahbahar. Increasing Indian assistance and strategic partnership with Kabul and Tehran provide shreds of evidence for extended competition for Pakistan to access the mineral resources of Afghanistan (Usman, 2018). India is supporting NDS agents to execute the proxy war in FATA and Pakistan. India is zealous to be part of Quadrilateral group to sabotage Pakistan oriented effort of peace in Afghanistan. India desires in peace talks is only to acquire strategic depth in Afghanistan (Basit & Shahid, 2016).

Goals of Iran in Afghanistan are like India. Both would like to see a stabilized Afghanistan and curtailed Taliban and Pakistan influence. Iran mostly supports Shiite Hazara minority in western Afghanistan and attempts to control the illegal stream of refugees and drugs. Iran will only want the resurgence of Taliban in the terms to thwart the US otherwise she will support Shiite Hazara and previous Northern Alliance groups. It is estimated that during 2030, Iran may face a crisis of water scarcity and decreased oil revenue. In this way, water scarcity can only spoil the friendly relation because Iran relies on Afghanistan's Hirmand river which she is using more than 70% than permitted by treaty. Iran has greater influence over Hazara Shiite and other non-Pashtun groups and 37-40% trade of Afghanistan is carrying through Iranian ports (Hameed et al., 2014a).

Afghanistan produces 90% of world heroin (Bewley-Taylor, 2013). Russia's main concern in Afghanistan is to curb poppy productions and its smuggling in Russia which severally afflicted its younger population in last two decades (Kramer, 2011). Russia is focusing on different strategic plans like ceasefire between government and Taliban, negotiation with local powerbrokers to reduce poppy cultivation and strengthening the licit economy of Afghanistan. Russia is the major donor to Afghanistan which knows the spill over effects of extension in the current chaos. Moscow supports the US-led war on terrorism but attempts to forestall the enduring presence of US in Afghanistan. Facilitation of peace talk process will prove

helpful in achieving its aim to access the warm waters of Arabian Sea. Unstable Afghanistan is also a hinder to the vision of CAR's to expand their energy linkages with South Asia via Afghanistan to minimize their dependence on Russia(Sangar, 2016).

China Afghan relations were restored in 2001 and after that China are investing in many projects to support Afghanistan and its own energy needs. China could be proved a game changer in Afghanistan. Chinese desires in Afghanistan are obvious. China wants a secure Afghanistan as the separatist elements in western Xinjiang province are accused of being trained by Taliban. She wants to help its partner Pakistan by checking the influence of her regional opponent India. Peace talks will ensure the Pakistan's stability and ultimately make the Chinese vision of trade and development easier. China is concerned of increasing extremism in chaotic Afghanistan and wishes a stable Afghanistan would not be a harbour for militancy. Most of the militants in Afghanistan join the global Jihad to support their family financial needs. If economic situation of Afghanistan will be reorganized than many militants will integrate into the society. China is deeply involved in facilitating the economy of Afghanistan by increasing bilateral trade. Beijing enhanced investment and significant presence in Afghanistan may lessen the fear of Pakistan to encirclement and enforce her to subside pro-Taliban policy (Saud & Ahmad, 2018).

Saudi Arabia is an important tactical player who is constantly funding Taliban to deteriorate the influence of her chief rival, Iran. Insurgency and Taliban dominance could be severely attenuated if Riaz crackdowns money flowing out to Taliban. Saudi Arabia may facilitate peace talks by means of its past influence on Taliban Commanders. Checking Iranian elements by Pakistan and promotion of Sunni groups are the ultimate goals of Saudi in Afghanistan (Hameed et al., 2014b).

NATO Withdrawal from Afghanistan: A Security Concern for Pakistan

America has been entangled in Afghanistan and failed in eradicating terrorism. After engaging in Afghanistan from more than 16 years, analysts said that America has trapped in a triple misfortune as it can't conquest the warfare, it can't stop the warfare and it can't leave the Afghanistan (Tisdall, 2018). American conventional warfare techniques failed in conquering terrorism, militancy and Afghanistan. Taliban refusal to peace talks until complete withdrawal of the US troops again put a shadow on American determinations to halt the war or leave Afghanistan. The US has spent one trillion dollars at this war and gained nothing except breeding more militancy in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. It is an undeniable fact that Taliban became more stronger than their previous position immediate after their expulsion from Kabul(Weigand, 2017).

Obama had proposed the withdrawal of the US security forces and many troops were removed from Afghanistan territory in post 2014 scenario. However, Obama reversed its withdrawal policy. In the same way, before becoming the president, Donald Trump echoed same rhetoric and further added that Afghanistan is waste, it is a time to come back and emphasized on rebuilding the US. However,

after taking the presidential chair in Oval Office, he diverted from its withdrawal claim (Ranade, 2017).

The retreat of the US and NATO troops from Afghanistan in post 2014 was claimed by many researchers as a biggest landmark achievement both for the Afghanistan and its adjacent region which was fed up with continuous instability in Afghanistan. The US withdrawal will be completely different from the Soviet one as Soviet empire was totally collapsed at that time. The complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan will be another example of great powers debacle in labyrinthine of Afghanistan. However, the US is not in position to accept this reality and therefore, she is trying to justify its position in Afghanistan. The removal from Afghanistan will be a symbol of disgrace and infamy (Coll, 2018). Moreover, the emerging China and resurgent Russia will be proved detrimental to its superpower brand. America will try to preserve its hegemonic title by deterring rising China-Russia-Pakistan triangle because it is far more important than losing battlefield in Afghanistan.

President Trump, contrary to anticipations, laid stress on retention of the US troops in Afghanistan. There are three principle options for the United State regarding Afghanistan. First option is complete withdrawal; second option is to limit its engagement to counterterrorism efforts while the third option was to stay in Afghanistan for an extended time-period with slightly more military capabilities and vivid political engagement. In this way Trump has chosen the third option. According to trump both Pakistan and Afghanistan contain highest concentration of terrorist groups than any area in the world. He further alarmed and persuaded international community that sudden and complete removal of their security forces from Afghanistan will cause the collapse of their puppet democratic regime thus ultimately causing the cascade down of terrorist into the security vacuum. Trump said that same kind of mistake was made by his predecessors that resulted in the emergence of ISIS and he made clear that he is not going to repeat this blunder. The removal of US troops occurred in Obama presidency and in 2017 number of the US troops declined from 100,000 to only 8,800 (Felbab-Brown, 2017).

According to (Zakaria, 2017), the Trump policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan has firmly locked the US into a forever war in Afghanistan. (Felbab-Brown, 2017), stated that although the decision of retention in Afghanistan seems to be correct but Trump's Afghan strategy has not addressed the political and governance issues of Afghanistan which may be proved fatal. Moreover, the regional security environment has also profoundly aggravated due to Trump policy. Trump has frustrated its frontline ally, Pakistan; as well Washington is going to again indulge openly in the regional dynamic of South Asia by audaciously behaving towards China, Iran and Russia.

There are several concerns and negative consequences for Pakistan if the US either withdraws from Afghanistan or retains its forces in Afghanistan. In both cases Pakistan have to confront unending abiding frustrations with the USA. Pakistan frustration with the USA is obvious that at one time Pakistan was forced to saddle

with supposed militancy and now America is shifting the blame for its failure to handle the deteriorated situation of Afghanistan. President Trump humiliated Pakistan by saying that Pakistan gave us nothing but deceit in response to billions of aids. While Trump appreciated India and is going to promote India in Afghanistan rehabilitation process which is not acceptable by Pakistan (Kaura, 2017). Pakistan is much more concerned by being encircled by India and Afghanistan with the help of the USA.

The complete removal of the US troops has negative implications for the US as well Afghanistan and Pakistan. The US grievances are palpable as it is against the prestigious image of the USA globally. After the removal, Afghanistan will again become the chessboard of regional powers rivalry in which India and Pakistan again play the role of side actors. The US withdrawal will result in Taliban resurgence and it is possibility that Taliban may indict Pakistan for supporting US against them and would show retaliatory attitude towards Pakistan. There is also a fear of Afghanistan disintegration on the pattern of Somalia and Somaliland. Which again has negative consequences for the region and Pakistan as well (Bearak, 2017).

Indo-Afghan Strategic Relations and Challenges for Pakistan

The US interests in Asia are multidimensional but there are three major factors which are influencing the US policy towards Asia. First is the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, second is securing interests in Afghanistan and the third is CPEC because CPEC is the only feasible project through which China can secure its trade and economic goods from the influence of America and India (Bhatti, 2018). America has invested too much in Afghanistan to eradicate terrorism and turn Afghanistan into a ground where America can command the region. The US relied upon India to secure its interests after the involvement of multiple stakeholders in Afghanistan out of which Russia and China are important (Krumholz, 2017). India has also strategic interests in Afghanistan. Indian presence in Afghanistan is not only Pakistan specific but it is an attempt to expand its power beyond the region and prove itself an extra-regional power. This is a part of extended neighbourhood policy of India through which India do not want to be confine in the little space of South Asian region (Scott, 2009). Moreover, India wants to deal with major security challenges arising from Afghanistan land in the form of Taliban supported terrorist activities. India is opinionated that Afghanistan should not again turn into a terrorism sponsored state. India is the only state in the world which is confronting with most separatist, extremist and nationalist movements while these movements are supported and trained by Taliban and Al-Qaida insurgents in Afghanistan. India is collaborating with Afghanistan to eradicate these evils from its territory. Another strategic interest of India in Afghanistan is that Afghanistan is the only suitable land from where India can easily monitor Pakistan's activities. Disintegration of Pakistan is India's old foul motive which she can easily achieve with the help of Afghanistan, another rival of Pakistan since the time of partition (D'Souza, 2009).

India considered Afghanistan as a potential way to access energy market of Central Asia and a site to monitor China's increasing stimulus in Central Asia. India built Chahbahar port to reduce the transit-trade dependency of Afghanistan over China and Pakistan to access Central Asia and Indian Ocean. India is contradicting any political, strategic, economic influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan. The governments in Afghanistan are pro-India. India contributed to Afghanistan for reconstruction after toppling down of Taliban government. Afghanistan's close relations with India are mostly due to tense and problematic behaviour of Pakistan towards Afghanistan. India strategically behaved as a soft power in Afghanistan vis-à-vis hard presence of Pakistan (Kiran, 2009).

Afghanistan is seriously apprehended about safe hideouts of terrorist in Pakistan while Pakistan repeat these concerns against Afghanistan. India took benefit of US invasion in Afghanistan and restored its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. India offered intelligence support and membership of SAARC to Afghanistan and now Afghanistan is the eighth member of SAARC due to India favour. In 2006, Hamid Karzai visited India and signed three memorandums of understanding for cooperation in the fields of education, standardization, rural development. India raised her aid from 150 million to 750 million dollars in 2006. India became the largest donor to Afghanistan in 2011 and the aid given by India in that year was 2 billion US dollars (Javaid & Javaid, 2016).

The year of 2011 was convivial for Indo-Afghan relations because India signed strategic agreement with India for the first time after Soviet invasion. This agreement ensured Afghanistan of socioeconomic support by India and training of Afghanistan security staff. Karzai declared that this strategic partnership is not against Pakistan and called Pakistan a twin brother and India as a good friend (Raipeha, 2013). However, the later consequences of this strategic partnership revealed the actual hidden goals which were aimed to reduce and restrict Pakistan from playing a cohesive role in Afghanistan. The other latent goal of India in Afghanistan was to disintegrate Pakistan by supporting separatism in Balochistan and Sindh provinces and promotion of extremism and terrorism. India provide training to the young militant and separatist elements who conduct terrorist activities in Pakistan. The primary security threat to Pakistan is India which is progressively aggravating the internal stability of Pakistan which seems likely to cause state's collapse (A. R. Iqbal, 2012).

Different kinds of projects were initiated in remote areas of Afghanistan and designs of different water dams were planned to overcome the water scarcity in Afghanistan. India succeeded in persuading the world to accept it as a soft power and the practical implementation of its soft image can be seen in Afghanistan. India invested in multisector of Afghanistan and helped the war-torn Afghanistan in improving its socioeconomic status. India abetted Afghanistan in exploring hidden natural resources of oil and gas in Afghanistan territory. Post 9/11 developments opened a new window of opportunities for India. India achieved success in attaining

long-awaited strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan. India established four consulates in Afghanistan despite having a functional embassy in Kabul. Two out of these four consulates are on Pak-Afghan border which Pakistan believes that these apparently redundant consulates are being used against Pakistan, fomenting anti-Pakistani sentiments and has clandestine motives to interfere in national security affairs of Pakistan (Kiran, 2009).

The sole motive of India behind destabilization of Pakistan is to curtail Pakistan from being a central state in trade and transit route often regarded as Belt Road Initiative established by China. Indian presence in Afghanistan resulted in major problems for Pakistan. Anti-Pakistan sentiments in Afghanistan were again provoked and Afghan raised the settled issue of Durand Line and its claim over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan has seen more border skirmishes with Afghan army. A new wave of Baluchi separatism and nationalism coupled with deadliest terrorist attack aroused in Pakistan. Moreover, India has also prospered in provoking Iran against Pakistan which is another neighbouring country to Pakistan. India, Iran and Afghanistan make up approximately 95% of soil boundary of Pakistan. It is huge effort of India to isolate Pakistan by provoking Iran and Afghanistan against Pakistan (Akram, 2016). Pakistan cannot reap the benefits from its blessed geostrategic location while it has to confront with hostile neighbourhood but, the security of its Northern Western Frontier and Balochistan is under gigantic threat. Pakistan will lose strategic depth in Afghanistan and the relegated Pakistan will not be able to use Afghanistan to connect Central Asia. Indian training to Afghan military personnel may contribute to rivalry between Kabul and Islamabad and increase in military threat to Pakistan across its western border.

Another major concern for Pakistan from Indo-Afghan nexus is water war. Kabul River is the major river which flows through Pakistan from Afghanistan territory. Afghanistan is also a water stress country and desirous to overcome this by constructing hydropower projects and diverting the flow to its major rivers to equally irrigate its dry land. The total annual flow of Kabul River is 16.5 million-acre feet out of which 8.5 million-acre feet go through Pakistan in the form of Chitral River. However, with the Indian crookedness, Afghanistan is going to divert the flow of Kabul River by constructing 12 dams. This is an attempt to aggravate relations of Islamabad with Kabul. Pakistan is first upper riparian to Kabul River. Pakistan can build dam over Chitral River which again deprives Afghanistan from more than half of its Kabul river water (Pervaz & Khan, 2014).

Conclusion

Winning political power and maintain influence in Afghanistan is a main agenda which pursued all foreign and regional players. But this is certainly not in the interest of any of the Afghan parties to the conflict. Since it will turn the country into a theatre of proxy war. It is true, that some of Afghan groups which are facilitated to get economic and logistical benefits from their external sponsors but in the long run they are ready to compromise their legitimacy in the country as well as

abroad. As for as, geographical, and security concerns of all the external parties have trumped their economic benefits. But all external players, especially local players have common interest in discovering the trade and investment prospects in Afghanistan mainly Pakistan, India and China. But prior to materializing considerable capacity of Afghanistan which is associated to mining and minerals extractions, it is needed to obtain harmony and stability in the region as well as Afghanistan. For this purpose, all internal and external actors need to work out to ensure bright future for Afghanistan in general and the world in particular. However, the eradication of terrorism is the greatest colossal for of all the international players. Only a stable and peaceful Afghanistan could ensure a better trajectory route for sustainable economic activities. Remarkably the USA remained failed to attain a pulsating global collaboration to tackle militancy, terrorism and extremism in Afghanistan. It is the annals of history that Pakistan and India always tried to counter each other presence in Afghanistan. But it is the duty of international players to convince both states that they work for the betterment of Afghanistan. The logical conclusion from above mentioned Indian quest in Afghanistan is only to confine Pakistan and limit the economic investments of China in the region. India has launched proxy wars versus Pakistan by using Afghan soil. India is following the primitive Kautilian's philosophy of neighbourhood and encirclement. India is extensively striving to encircle Pakistan from both eastern and western border by cooperating with neighbours of Pakistan which are so called hostile to Pakistan. Pakistan is concerned with Indo-Afghan strategic relations because it challenged the Pakistan's Afghan policy. The challenges facing Pakistan after the withdrawal of US forces are creation of power vacuum, re-emergence of Taliban, stability of Afghanistan, reconciliation between Taliban and Afghan government. Pakistan has keen interest in addressing these challenges because Pakistan shares direct borders with Afghanistan. These challenges get worsen with the Indian influence in Afghanistan. Successful removal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan is most important strategic concern of Pakistan. The United States has got trapped in Afghanistan due to its mistrust on Pakistan. However, the Pakistan stability is linked with regional stability. So, the US-Pakistan mistrust has direct implications for region and there is a fear of terrorist resurgence in the region if the mutual mistrust continues. It is a positive development that reconciliation measures under the label of peace process with the Taliban have been initiated by the USA and other major states of the region. Pakistan is also a key player of this game. Apparently, The USA and India do not deny the role of Pakistan for the settlement of the issue. Internally, these countries want to minimize influence of Pakistan on the ground that Pakistan will try to revive rule of the Taliban. The game on the chess board of regional politics carries quite significant interest. China wants considerable role of Pakistan while the USA and India do not want it. They flout the dynamic and unprecedented role of Pakistan in the deracination of terrorism and unstinted efforts to build peace in war-torn Afghanistan.

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