

**RESEARCH PAPER****Increasing Indian Influence in Afghanistan: Impacts on Pakistan****¹Tabassum Majeed * and ²Faiza Bashir**

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***Corresponding Author** tabassumajeed@icp.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study is to delve into the factors that are leading to increased Indian involvement in Afghanistan and how they are impacting Pakistan. Afghanistan's geographical location at the intersection of Central, Middle, and South Asia has led to heightened Indian strategic engagement, which has consequently affected its relationship with Pakistan. Various variables shape India's foreign policy, including its aspiration for access to Central Asian Republics. India's geographical proximity has resulted in substantial setbacks for Pakistan, leading to Pakistan surpassing the United States as the primary contributor to Afghanistan. The study, employing qualitative methods, argues that Pakistan's domestic security is jeopardized by India's influential soft power in Afghanistan. India's engagement extends not just to Central Asia but also within its own borders, as its Afghan strategy seeks to get access to energy resources. It is found that India views the Afghan War as a chance to offset Pakistan's dominance in the area and recommends that the US take into account the circumstances and stabilize Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Geo-Strategic Location, Security, Stability, War on Terror**Introduction**

As three strategically significant regions, Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia, converge in Afghanistan, the country attracts the consideration of both regional and foreign powers. India has no direct ingress to the oil and other natural resources of Central Asia. Consequently, Afghanistan's geostrategic position made it the focus of Indian regional policy. Since 1947, the two countries have had friendly relations. India had the best chance to further cement its ties with Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion of that country (Muzaffar, et. al. 2019). India was placed in a diplomatic limbo in Afghanistan as a result of the fall of the USSR in 1991 and the toppling of the pro-Soviet government in 1992. India got the chance to increase its sway in Afghanistan after a non-Pashtun administration was established in 1992. India's influence was once again downgraded by the Taliban's rise in 1996. Indian relations during this time underpinned with Northern Alliance that was amalgamation of non-Pashtun groups. India was able to reconstitute its influence in Afghanistan consequent upon the 9/11 tragedy. (Muzaffar, et. al. 2021).

Based on the country's type of government, India continued to have sway in Afghanistan. Indian influence in Afghanistan was diminished because of the installation of the Taliban regime while Pakistan got the opportunity to expand its influence and support. The incidence of 9/11 provided India the finest chance to take advantage of the prevailing conditions. India started to maneuver the global fraternity to label Pakistan as a "terrorist state" and to isolate her. Pakistan's worries grew based on India's expanding economic sway in Afghanistan after 9/11. (Yasee. & Muzaffar, 2018)

Analysis of Indian foreign policy towards Afghanistan within the framework of Kautilyan political theory of adjacent neighbors is the main goal of this paper. This theory holds that an enemy's proximate state is friend and vice versa. The disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the Durand line allowed India to forge friendly relations with

Afghanistan. After 9/11, Indian involvement in Afghanistan had several purposes, and this study aims to exhumate these aspects. This relationship's effects on Pakistan will also be examined in more detail. There are numerous works on the subject, including books, articles, and research studies. This study will be a supplement to the earlier studies in the backdrop that Pakistan has the power to challenge India in Afghanistan by making it stable.

Literature Review

The India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership, established on October 4, 2011, was Afghanistan's first formal agreement with any nation to facilitate the reconstruction and security of Afghanistan. This partnership is closely associated with the reduction of the US military presence in Afghanistan. (Raipeha, 2013). India's involvement is considered vital for the enduring stability of Afghanistan, and India acknowledges that a stable, economic, and democratic Afghanistan is also advantageous for its strategic objectives. (Pant, 2010). In the past ten years, India has mostly leveraged its friendly relations with President Hamid Karzai and the security protection offered by the U.S. and NATO to achieve its diverse goals in Afghanistan. However, as the International Security Assistance Force is set to withdraw in 2014, India now faces the task of formulating its future policy amidst multiple sources of uncertainty. (Fair, 2014). Conversely, Pakistan perceives Afghanistan largely as an environment in which to actively engage in its competition with India. While aiming to establish an Afghan state that would undermine regional security, India intends to bolster Afghanistan's stability, security, economic growth, and regional integration. Afghanistan would appreciate further engagement with India; however, it will have to consider the concerns of many other foreign powers as well. India possesses a variety of choices for engaging with Afghanistan, which include maintaining ongoing activities, enhancing economic and commercial connections, stationing troops to safeguard Indian facilities, continuing or expanding training programmes for Afghan forces, or deploying combat troops for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). India's influence in Afghanistan is a crucial element of its regional strategy, aimed at asserting its dominance over Pakistan in South Asia. Pakistan seeks influence in Afghanistan largely to counter, undermine, and thwart Indian objectives. (Mitton, 2014).

Material and Method

The methodology employed to construct this study is both descriptive and analytical. It has also consulted secondary sources like books, research articles, and opinion papers and web sources.

Theoretical Framework

The "Mandala Theory," which Indian philosopher Kautilya introduced in his work "Arthashastra" written in 300 B.C.E., is the theory that is used in this study. Kautilya gives the leader an advice on how to amass power by any means possible, whether they are moral or disgraceful. He discussed "smart power," a hybrid of hard and soft force. Kautilya's worldview revolves around the concept of the Raj Mandala (Rangarajan, 1992).

The idea of a mandala depicts circles of allies and foes, with the king, known as Vijigishu, and his realm serving as the focal point of these circles. When it comes to neighbors, the kingdom of the Vijigishu has an adversary next door and that adversary neighbor a friend. Kautilya holds the opinion that one's near neighbors should always be viewed as an enemy, whereas its neighbors should always be treated as friend. Here he means that the king must take care of twelve concentric circles. Enemy is represented by the first circle, friend by the second, and so forth. Kautilya is adamant that the king should constantly fight to expand his realm's territory and influence in his neighborhood since he believes that this circle is dynamic (Chandrasekaran, 2006). When friendly ties between the vijigishu's state and the neighboring state break down, this arrangement of circles in an order of adversaries and allies' acts as a shield. Furthermore, if the immediate neighbor is a

powerful state, the king must forge a solid alliance with the enemy's state other side. It will put pressure on the enemy state since it will be caught between the two enemies (Chandrasekaran, 2006). When put in geopolitical terms, this model is more auspicious. This study applies the Mandala model in geopolitical, not geospatial, terms.

According to Cohen's understanding of the Kautilya Mandala model, "my enemy's enemy is my friend" (Cohen, 2001), this statement is relevant to the relationship between India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Well-known Hindu scriptures and the writings of significant Hindu thinkers are bearing in mind when formulating India's foreign policy. In the framework of Kautilya's Mandala theory, India's Afghanistan strategy has been analyzed. India has orchestrated itself in the middle of the circles. Pakistan is situated next to India, making her a formidable foe. Since Afghanistan is bordering state of Pakistan, India views a foe's enemy as friend. Since the inception, Afghanistan and Pakistan have had a hostile relationship as a result of their disagreements on the Durand Line. Taking advantage of the circumstances India has established amicable ties with Afghanistan since 1947. The Taliban, a pro-Pakistan government led to the loss of Indian sway in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. Indian prospects to successfully return to Afghanistan was made possible by the 9/11 event. According to Kautilya's explanation in Arthashastra, India's goal of this entry was to increase its influence in Afghanistan by projecting a positive image. India here disregarded the "hard power" an element of smart power. India succeeded in achieving its goal because it concentrated on integrating with ordinary Afghans.

Because of India's humanistic approach, ties with Afghanistan post-9/11 era were friendly. The Karzai administration has shown an explicit tilt towards India. Because of Pakistan's engagement in the war on terror as a frontline state, made its ties with Afghanistan hostile, therefore, the mounting Indian influence in Afghanistan raised the concerns of Pakistan. Nevertheless, Durand Line issue continued to serve as contention between the two states. Pakistan's aid in Afghanistan's rehabilitation efforts was never warmly received. India provided aid of \$1.5 billion while Pakistan provided \$ 300 million in assistance. Using Afghanistan against Pakistan became now simple for India.

According to Mandala doctrine, Vijigishu's kingdom must amalgam the adversary's enemy in order to enclose its own enemy. Pakistan was currently crammed between Afghanistan and India. Furthermore, Pakistan would suffer greatly if the situation in Afghanistan worsened. India was practicing the Mandala concept in a geopolitical sense by taking benefit of Afghanistan's terrain, which imperils Pakistan's security on the one side while providing a possible passage to Central Asia on the other. It is understood that India could not utilize hard power in this nuclear age. Raja Mohan, a top South Asian security official, provides the following explanation of India's policy.

"India's grand strategy divides the world into three concentric circles. In the first, which encompasses the immediate neighborhood, India has sought primacy and a veto over the actions of outside powers. In the second, which encompasses the so-called extended neighborhood stretching across Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, India has sought to balance the influence of other powers and prevent them from undercutting its interests. In the third, which includes the entire global stage, India has tried to take its place as one of the great powers, a key player in international peace and security" (Mohan, 2006).

Indo-Afghan Relations in Pre-9/11 Era

The following phases highlights the Ind-Afghan relations in pre-9/11 period

Phase I (1947-1979)

Since 1947, ties between India and Afghanistan have been amicable. In 1950, a "friendship treaty" was signed, which was the initial step in advancing their relations

(Ashraf, 2007). It paved the path for India to establish cordial ties with Zahir Shah's pro-Soviet government. This lasted even into the late 1970s (D'Souza, 2011).

Phase II (1979-1989)

India has a limited amount of room to expand its influence in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1992. Since Indira Gandhi had established deep strategic ties with the Soviet Union, she did not object to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which was the first incident in this respect (Fair, 2010). When the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, India expressed her concerns in private platforms (Bhargava, 1983). India raised concern that Cold War has reached to their periphery. Nevertheless, post-Soviet invasion Indo-Afghan economic ties and cultural exchange remained unaffected. A contract was inked by the two at the beginning of 1984 to expand their trading connections. In August 1985, an agreement for a cultural exchange initiative for the years 1985 to 1987 was made in New Delhi. In accordance with this arrangement, India offered numerous fellowships and ten scholarships to Afghan nationals for PhD programs as well as other trainings in areas such as community outreach and child development (D'Souza, 2011).

An expert claim that due to the US-backed jihad waged in Afghanistan in the 1980s with the help of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states to drive the Soviet Union out of the country, India's involvement in that country was not as significant. In order to squash Pashtun irredentist ambitions to an independent state named Pakhtunistan that included Pakistan's Pashtun territories as well, Pakistan was funding the Pashtun Islamist armed groups via seven Sunni organizations (Rubin, 2002). This situation made the conditions difficult for India to pursue its interest. India actually continued its development strategies in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, focusing on irrigation, hydroelectric projects, and industry (Ashraf, 2007).

Both the states made the decision to improve their economic ties in 1987 by establishing direct banking arrangements and more frequent communication with one another in the commercial and industrial markets. Following two steps, this choice was made. In February 1987, Afghan Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil travelled to New Delhi for briefing Indian leaders on efforts to bring about national reconciliation. In May 1987, a joint commission between India and Afghanistan was established in Kabul (D'Souza, 2011). In his press conference at the UN on March 3, 1989, Afghanistan's ambassador to the UN, Shah Muhammad Dost, said:

“India is a leading country of the region and has a vital stake in what happens there. It has an important role in ensuring that the problems of the region are resolved” (Kumar, 1990). As evidenced by this claim, Afghanistan had begun to trust India.

Phase III (1989-1996)

As a result of Dr. Najibullah's pro-Soviet leadership, the Soviet Union's exit from Afghanistan had no adverse effects on its friendly relations with India (D'Souza, 2011). On May 4, 1989, he travelled to India to discuss the Geneva Accords with Rajiv Gandhi, the prime minister India. An agreement was inked in September 1989 to create a Joint Business Council, which would serve as an institutional framework for enhancing trade between India and Afghanistan. In the 1990s, high-ranking visits between the two nations persisted and a number of agreements centered on trade in agriculture, telecommunications, and culture were negotiated. India promised to begin numerous new initiatives for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan, including the building of a gynecological hospital and collaboration in the areas of agronomy, cartography, metrology, and tourism (Kumar, 1990).

Phase IV (1996-2001)

India wants to establish ties with the newly forming Central Asian Republics (CARs) following the collapse of the USSR. For India's route into Central Asia, Afghanistan was a feasible choice. In 1996, the Taliban took over, reducing the influence of India. India's embassy in Kabul was shut down in September 1996 because it refused to recognize the Taliban government. Only three countries—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—granted recognition to the Taliban's rule. During Taliban administration, the non-Pashtun factions established a new union known as the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance had power over the northern regions of Afghanistan. Pakistan was favored by the Taliban administration. India forged ties with the Northern Alliance in order to offset Pakistan's influence and maintain its own influence in Afghanistan. By donating \$10 million in high altitude war instruments through its Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India strengthened the Northern Alliance's defense. By ensuring that the Northern Alliance's acts were technically flawless, the Indian security advisors were also completely assisting the alliance (Ashraf, 2007).

Former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Mr. M. H. Ansari exhume Indo-Afghan relations under the Taliban government,

“A relationship with the Taliban was not attempted as a result of the treatment meted out to the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. Much more serious in Indian eyes were the Taliban pronouncements on Kashmir, the training of Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and foreign militants in camps in Afghanistan. These touched the core of India's vital interests and compelled New Delhi to strengthen its support and assistance to the predominantly non-Pashtun Rabbani forces” (Ansari, 2004).

In response to the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight, IC 814, by the Taliban in Kathmandu on December 24, 1999, India contacted the Taliban authority who demanded the release of the three Taliban prisoners held in Indian prisons. The aircraft landed at a Taliban-run airport in Kandahar. Jaswant Singh, the country's then-foreign minister, engaged in a protracted conciliation. To ensure the safety of the passengers the Taliban men were released (Cherian, 2005). The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, altered the entire situation and gave India a golden opportunity to further increase its sway in Afghanistan while undermining Pakistan's power.

Indo-Afghan Relations in Post-9/11 Era

After the 9/11 attacks, India launched significant attempts to regain its influence in Afghanistan. For the pro-Indian forces in Kabul, the American ambitions for Afghanistan after 9/11 made paths plain. India provided the Northern Alliance with unwavering support as it rose to power (Baloch & Niazi, 2008). On October 2, 2001, while giving a televised interview in the US, the then-foreign minister of India, Jaswant Singh, said the following:

“India has never recognized the Taliban as a legitimate regime. We have continued to recognize the government of Afghanistan as represented by President Rabbani. They have formed the Northern Alliance; it should be the effort of the international community now to strengthen the legitimate government of Afghanistan” (Ashraf, 2007).

Indian aspirations included growing its power throughout South Asia. India tried to exploit Afghanistan as route to link South Asia with Central Asia. India also used the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) platform to amplify its economic integration with Afghanistan (D'Souza, 2011).

With four new consulates in Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat, India restored its diplomatic ties with Afghanistan. It also changed its ambassadorial relationships

with Afghanistan. In order to rebuild Afghanistan, Sashi Tharoor claimed that India used a soft power strategy. The circumstances indicated that India's soft power strategy was primarily aimed to diminish Pakistan's influence, since its operations were not restricted to the north but rather extended as far as the south and northeast, which are next to Pakistan's border (Fair, 2010). Following the Bonn Conference in December 2001, Afghanistan institute an interim administration with Hamid Karzai as president. When India was smug that the Afghan government was now under the control of the Northern Alliance, it started to get advantage from this and launched several development programs there for its strategic advantages. India pledged \$100 million in rebuilding aid to Afghanistan for these initiatives, and it also made investments in the country's infrastructure, health, different phases of training, the establishment and consolidation of institutions, and both the economic and institutional growth.

Following the attacks of September 11, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid visit Afghanistan twice while President Karzai travelled nine time to India. Manmohan Singh promised \$ 500 million additional in developmental aid for Afghanistan during his next visit in May 2011 (which he made shortly after Osama bin Laden assassination in Pakistan). Karzai visited India in October 2011, and the two states subsequently signed a strategic deal (Kugiel, 2011).

India's strategic Interests in Post-9/11 Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been ravaged by war for decades. A stable Afghanistan was desired by India as a regional power so that it could reach Central Asia and pawn Pakistan. India was of the opinion that Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence services were working to install a malleable Taliban administration. According to India, security is the primary reason for their involvement in Afghanistan (D'Souza, 2011).

Two dimensions of Indian strategic interests can be seen in Afghanistan: India's involvement in the economic development and rebuilding; and Afghanistan as a possible conduit to Central Asia.

Indian Role in the Process of Reconstruction and Economic Development

India's involvement in development initiatives in Afghanistan was noticeable. After the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, and Germany, India was the sixth-largest donor of aid to Afghanistan in the years following 9/11. India has contributed more than \$1.5 billion in aid to Afghanistan as of 2011. Around 4000 Indians have previously worked on various development projects in 34 regions of Afghanistan (Kugiel, 2011).

The major development initiatives of India in Afghanistan are listed below.

Zaranj-Delaram Highway: It is a 218-kilometer route that connects Zaranj town on the Iran-Afghanistan border with the town of Delaram on the Kandahar-Heart highway in Heart province. This road gives Afghanistan access to the Iranian port of Chabahar (Choudhry, 2001). The Indian Army's Border Road Organization (BRO) built this road (Ashraf, 2007).

Power Transmission Line: a 202-kilometer power communication line starts from Pul-e-Khumri connecting Kabul. The Salang series, which is 4000-meters high, is traversed by substations.

Salma Dam: On the Huri-Rud River, 164 kilometers east of Afghanistan's Heart province, this project was launched in November 2004. In order to irrigate 75,000 hectares of land, this dam will generate 42 MW of power.

Indian Medical Missions (IMM): they were built in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kandahar and can serve up to 360,000 patients (Choudhry, 2001).

Other Assistance: Other developments comprised creating a new Parliament structure, donating 400 buses, 200 minibuses, 105 service cars, instructing police officers and diplomats, providing Afghanistan's national airline, Ariana Airlines, three aircraft and giving the Afghan army 300 vehicles. There were also given with telecommunication arrangement and TV up and down facilities. Two million children received daily protein biscuits weighing 100 g. (Ashraf, 2007). India made deep-seated investments in Afghanistan, creating an environment that earned praise from the indigenous population.

Agreements Signed between India and Afghanistan

Chabahar Free Trade Zone Authority: India is still actively engaged in efforts to create a southern trade route that would connect it to Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, and Central Asia. Success in its efforts resulted in the establishment of the Chabahar Free Trade Zone Authority (CFZA) in 2002 as a result of the bilateral Trade and Transit Agreement between Iran and Afghanistan. For Afghanistan and India, this region offered commercial prospects (Durani & Khan, 2009).

Preferential Trade Agreement: During the March 2003 visit of President Hamid Karzai to India, this agreement was signed. In accordance with this agreement, thirty-eight commodities that Afghanistan exported to India received 100% tariff discounts (*n.a.*, 2003).

Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs): A cooperation agreement and two memorandums of understanding were signed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his visit to Afghanistan in August 2005. The healthcare and medical sciences were covered by the Cooperation Agreement. One MoU covered the small developmental programs while the other encompassed agriculture, research, and education. In April 2006, during the visit of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to India, three further Memoranda of Understanding were signed. These Memorandums of Understanding were (Ashraf, 2007):

- I. Collaboration in the area of Standardization,
- II. Collaboration in the area of Rural Development and
- III. Collaboration in the area of Education.

Strategic Partnership: Following the death of Osama bin Laden in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his second trip to Afghanistan in May 2011 announced that Indo-Afghan relations had taken a new direction in the form of Indo-Afghan "Strategic Partnership." Bringing Afghanistan into regional political, economic, and security mechanism was the objective of this collaboration. With the visit of Afghan President Hamid Karzai in October 2011 following Burhanuddin Rabbani's murder, this partnership entered into new phase (Katzman, 2011). The "Strategic partnership" deal was signed by President Hamid Karzai on October 4, 2011, marking the first time that Afghanistan's government had ever done so with a foreign state. In order to improve the cooperation between the two signatories, this comprehensive agreement included a wide range of areas. Four key themes were: "politics and security, trade and economy, capacity development and education, as well as social, cultural, civil society and people-to-people relations" (Roy, 2001). Along with improving women's rights, the deal also called for joint efforts to strengthen the Afghan army, civil service, and economy.

Afghanistan as Potential Route to Central Asia

India places a high value on Central Asia from a geostrategic perspective. On the other hand, it lacks a direct land access to Central Asia. To achieve this, it plans to use Afghan territory. In one of her papers, the Indian analyst Meena Singh Roy claims that

“India as an extended neighbor of CARs has major geostrategic and economic interests in this region. The prospects for co-operation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be very important. Peace and stability in CARs and Afghanistan seem to be the most crucial factor for India’s security” (Roy, 2001).

As previously said, India faced difficulty in forging relationships with CARs because its influence was reduced under the Taliban administration. However, she managed to keep some of her ties to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan owing to her relationships with the Northern Alliance. With the assistance of the Northern Alliance India built a hospital in Farkhor on the border with Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Electricity from Uzbekistan was imported through the Salma dam. India made substantial investments in Afghanistan because they understood it could serve as a bridge to Central Asia. At the time of his visit to India in April 2006, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said:

“We will be very happy for Indian companies in Afghanistan to produce their goods and to have Afghanistan as a hub or launching pad for those products in Central Asia” (Randolph, 2008).

In May 2006, the Indian Cabinet approved the construction of the 1,300-kilometer Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided funds for this initiative. A military base in Tajikistan’s Ayni costing a \$10 million was renovated by India in 2002 (Ashraf, 2007). After Germany, the United States, and Russia, India is the fourth state having military base in Central Asia. For India, this basis is crucial from geostrategic perspective. Sudha Ramachandran, an Indian analyst, stated:

“A base at Ayni allows India rapid response to any emerging threat from the volatile Afghanistan–Pakistan arc. It also gives New Delhi a limited but significant capability to inject Special Forces into hostile theatres as and when the situation demands ... in the event of military confrontation with Pakistan, India would be able to strike Pakistan’s rear from Tajik soil. Ayni has to do with India’s growing interests in Central Asia as well (Ashraf, 2007).”

To become a regional power and pursue hegemony by means of soft power image, India is supporting Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal, a former US commander, provided a summary of confidential report in Afghanistan,

“Indian political and economic influence is increasing in Afghanistan, including significant development efforts and financial investment. Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, the report pointed out “increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India (McChrystal, 2009).”

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan's security has historically been challenged by its close neighbors, Afghanistan and India. Unfortunately, Pakistan has the longest border with these two hostile neighbors. Pakistan has more than 2,912 km long border with India while longer than the 2,430 kilometers with Afghanistan. Both the states have traditionally an antagonistic relationship with Pakistan (Muzaffar, et. al. 2021). The Indian presence in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to Pakistan's sovereignty. Because of geopolitical and geostrategic considerations, Pakistan is extremely concerned about India's growing influence in Afghanistan. Analyst Frank Cook held,

“India’s increasing role in Afghanistan through reconstruction projects and diplomatic efforts is also of concern to Pakistan. India’s influence could lead to a strategic encirclement of Pakistan (Frank, 2009).”

Pakistan grew more powerful in Afghanistan under the Taliban government, while India lost all diplomatic relations with the country. Following 9/11, India had an incredible opportunity to isolate Pakistan and designate her as a "terrorist state" in the eyes of the world community. As soon as the United States military operation "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan began, India entered the arena and unlocked her doors in order to fully cooperate while opposing Pakistan in the process. L. K. Advani, the Indian Minister of the Interior, asserted on September 16, 2001

"The world cannot disregard the fact that over a decade, Pakistan and now Taliban have been promoting terrorism. They have been giving refuge and asylum to all those indulging in terrorist violence (Nawab, et. al, 2021 & Ashraf, 2007)."

In response to a question, Mr. Jaswant Singh stated in an interview conducted in the United States in October 2001 that the world community must recognize that,

"Perpetuation of Taliban regime is to perpetuate terrorism. The Taliban is a product of the machinery of Pakistan. Pakistan has continued to aid it, finance it, equip it, and continues to do so (Ashraf, 2007)."

The presence and influence of India in Afghanistan raises Pakistan's concern. For Pakistan it would be harmful for her sovereignty if Delhi gained a firm foothold in Afghanistan. This fear's underlying ground is that Pakistan would be enclosed by India if it gained control of Afghanistan. For this reason, the Pakistani government has publicly aired its dreadful worries regarding Indian influence in Afghanistan and its undertakings along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Charges of producing fake Pakistani currency and terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil are just two of Pakistan's worries. Pakistan's government alleged that forty terrorist camps are allegedly operating in Baluchistan under the direction of Indian secret services (Khetran, 2017).

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Pakistan has observed Afghanistan as an Indian sandbox where India is experimenting with Pakistan's security by initiating covert operations against Pakistan through its five diplomatic missions (Narayanan, 2010). According to Pakistani politician and analyst Mushahid Hussain Syed, Indian consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar are allegedly engaged in fostering insurrection in Pakistan. He clarifies this situation in the given lines:

"The Afghan Police, the Border Security Force and customs officials facilitate the visit of Indian diplomatic staff and intelligence agents to border areas, and help them to hold meetings with dissatisfied pro-Afghan dissidents, anti-state elements, and elders of the area. In this context, meetings of tribal elders are arranged by the Afghan intelligence agency (Riyast-i-Amniyat-i-Milli or RAM) at the behest of those RAW officials who serve in different diplomatic offices of India in Afghanistan. Indian agents are carrying out clandestine activities in the border areas of Khost and in Pakistan's tribal areas of Miranshah with the active support of Afghan Border Security Force officials (Fair, 2010)."

The massive amount of assistance India is providing to Afghanistan demonstrates that India's major goal is to reduce Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. Consequently, the western border of Pakistan is becoming more exposed. Strategically significant, the Indian military facility at Ayni in Tajikistan allows India to counter any threat from Pakistan. Pakistan's security has been hampered by this military installation. The ratification of "strategic partnership" elevated Pakistan's concerns. India has successfully incited anti-Pakistani emotions in Afghanistan. These circumstances have put Pakistan and Pak-Afghan relations into peril. Pakistan cannot bear to have a second India on its western frontier and spillover of war on terror over her terrain.

The only way to get out of this jam is to end the continued war by building positive ties with Afghanistan based on shared values and beliefs. The geographical integrity of each party must be respected. If normalization of relations is achieved, both countries may usher in a new era of peace (Baloch & Niazi, 2008).

Conclusion

India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are the three states that dominate South Asian affairs. Nuclearization was the primary topic in South Asian politics prior to the 9/11 attack. Incidence of 9/11 provided India an opportunity to regain influence in Afghanistan. South Asia is mostly an Indo-centric area. All of its neighbors share a physical frontier with it. Afghanistan is the only state that has no direct access to India. The Indian strategy revolves around the fact that it wants to have access to Central Asia via Afghanistan. Pakistan is the only South Asian state that threatens India's design of regional hegemony.

The fight against terrorism gives India the opportunity to consolidate its control in the region. It started providing substantial aid to Afghanistan and inked a number of agreements including "Strategic Partnership" in October 2011. In opposition to India, Pakistan provided much less aid to Afghanistan following 9/11. While Pakistan gave aid worth only US\$300 million, India provided more than US\$1.5 billion. Pakistan's position in Afghanistan is declining as a result of India's expanding presence. Considering the Kautilyan school of thought, one can comprehend that India entered Afghanistan using soft power diplomacy not for the rebuilding of Afghanistan but rather to create insecurity for Pakistan on its western frontier and to gain access to Central Asian resources.

India didn't want pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan is excluded from the energy market and faces security challenges on two fronts, India benefits from the Karzai government's continued hostility towards Pakistan. Pakistan had invested a lot of effort in establishing friendly ties with Afghanistan in order to protect its border and add depth to its strategic position. Pakistan's efforts have been hampered by its adversarial relations with India and the presence of India in Afghanistan. India's economic interests in Afghanistan come before its strategic ambitions in encircling Pakistan.

Indian efforts to rebuild Afghanistan are essentially intended to give the Karzai administration legitimacy and eliminate the Taliban from political power. Through a composite discourse, Pakistan and India attempt to normalize their relationship, but India continues to disregard Pakistan and continually works to undermine Pakistan. To combat Pakistan in Kashmir, India backs anti-Pakistan groups in Afghanistan. Pakistan's security is at jeopardy due to India's presence on two fronts, namely its eastern and western borders. Pakistan would undoubtedly respond to India's explicit and implicit efforts. India must stop acting in a way that could start a conflict. India and Pakistan must collaborate to eradicate terrorism. Any insensitive act by Pakistan or India will seriously jeopardize the security of the region (Yaseen et al, 2016). Both parties need to realize the fact that a proxy conflict in Afghanistan will increase their concerns rather than helping them. Pakistan would undoubtedly retaliate violently if India took any negative steps ahead. The United States must take into account the circumstances and stabilize Afghanistan.

Since 1947, the goal of Indian strategy in Afghanistan has been to completely eliminate Pakistan from the region. To lessen Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan, India is helping to build the Zaranj-Delaram highway. Afghanistan may easily access the Iranian port of Chabahar through this roadway. Conclusively, India will never reverse its hostile attitude towards Pakistan and would employ every legal means at its disposal to sabotage Pakistan. India cannot be expected to provide Pakistan with any benefits. Normalizing Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan is the only way out.

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