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THE COMPLICATED TUSSELE: COMPETING INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS & AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS

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Master of Defence Studies

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**THE COMPLICATED TUSSLE: COMPETING INTERESTS OF REGIONAL
POWERS & AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS**

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ABSTRACT

Entering into the second decade, the war for the control of Afghanistan is blurred by growing Pashtun sentiments of being marginalized, Pakistan's strategic sensitivities being threatened, madrasas continuously producing fresh brood and clashing interests of regional players like China, India and Russia. Considering 2010 being one of the bloodiest years for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the war seems to be far from over. This mutation of Global War on Terror to "The Complicated Tussle of Competing Interests between the Regional Players" is likely to affect the long-term solution to the issue. Today, though Taliban seems central to the problem, when viewed from a regional perspective, they merely represent a terminal beneficiary who is thriving on others' weaknesses.

Logical solution to this perpetual conundrum therefore is not in switching COIN strategies or blaming allies, but is in finding the common grounds within this complicated tussle in order to mitigate the complex clash of interests. Robert O. Keohane's 'Good Neighbourhood' approach may offer a solution, which at the moment may look a far cry from reality, but having taken a closer look at the developing regional environment, a fleeting opportunity can be found lurking in the shallow waters which could lead to a turning point in the history.

“The strategic approaches to Afghanistan by its neighbors are, however, always subject to readjustment. No regional state is prepared to allow another to gain a preponderance of influence in Afghanistan. Moreover, each retains links to client networks that are capable of fractionalizing and incapacitating an emerging Afghanistan. States in the neighborhood may well sponsor destabilizing forces in the event that Kabul governments fail over time to extend their authority and tangibly improve people's lives, or should Afghanistan's international benefactors lose their patience and interest”¹

INTRODUCTION

Landlocked and resource poor, Afghanistan is located in the most dangerous neighbourhood which is plagued by brutal tribal feuds, regional rivalries and global power politics.² The country was war torn and ravaged for decades before it suddenly emerged to the center stage of world arena on the morning of 9/11. This was perhaps the second time in a span of two decades when a Super Power, came to their turf for a bloodbath. The Taliban regime, mostly ethnic Pashtuns was defeated in one of the most spectacular military campaigns. The remarkable success soon started to fade away under the influence of strong undercurrents which have mired the region from hundreds of years.³ Being gateway to South Asia, Afghanistan has been home to power strife for centuries starting from Czarist expansionist designs ‘The Great Game’ in the 19th century

¹ United State Institute of Peace, “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood,” <http://www.usip.org/publications/afghanistan-and-its-neighbors-ever-dangerous-neighborhood>; Internet; accessed on 25 February 2012.

² The Sun, “Most Dangerous Place in the World,” http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/campaigns/our_boys/4095501/Afghanistan-news-Most-dangerous-place-in-the-world.html; Internet; accessed on 3 March 2012.

³ All foreign and domestic invaders to India form Aryans in 1500 BC to Alexander the Great in 328 BC and even Muslim conquerors of Indian used Afghanistan as a staging area for their campaigns in India.

to the beginning of the ‘New Great Game’ in 2001.⁴ The complicated tussle has been further aggravated by India- Pakistan (Indo-Pak) rivalry for past five decades as well as rise of Shiite branded Islamic Revolution in Iran. This mêlée has left Afghanistan at the “risk of unwelcomed external influences, its sovereignty and traditions vulnerable.”⁵

The competition between the external players at times allowed the Afghanistan to relish their beneficence, but more often than not, it suffered from this generosity. For more than a century, Afghanistan served as the classic buffer state between the British and Czarist empires. During the Cold War it was first neutral ground and then contested terrain between Soviet and surrogate American power.⁶ Under the reign of Soviet oppression, at least a third of its populace went into exile, leaving vast stretches of the contested countryside lay in devastation. The state itself suffered near disintegration in a following decade of civil war sponsored in part by regional powers. By the late 1990s, Afghanistan hosted the opening salvos in a war between radical Islamists and their designated, mostly Western enemies.⁷ The post-Taliban era, though still not fully free from conflict, the country however, accrues benefits for progressive recovery owing to

⁴ Lutz C. Kleveman, “The New Great Game,” <http://www.newgreatgame.com/>; Internet; accessed on 3 March 2012.

⁵ Reuters, “ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew,” <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 25 February 2012.

⁶ United State Institute of Peace, “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood,” <http://www.usip.org/publications/afghanistan-and-its-neighbors-ever-dangerous-neighborhood>; Internet; accessed on 25 February 2012.

⁷ *Ibid.*,

international patrons, with the hopes of weaning traditionally rapacious regional competition.⁸

With the United States (US) endgame in sight, Afghanistan's direct and near neighbours have stepped up their efforts to undercut each other, advance strategic interests and exert influence on a negotiated settlement of the decade long conflict, says Ahmed Rashid, journalist and author of the widely acclaimed bestseller "Taliban". There are "two parallel and dangerous rivalries unfolding in Afghanistan: a proxy war between India and Pakistan"⁹ that is now every bit as deadly as their 60-year duel over Kashmir, and "another between Iran and the United States tied"¹⁰ to their geopolitical tussle over a range of issues. Over the top are the Chinese and the Russians exerting a pull on Afghanistan. China's interest is principally commercial, eyeing the country's vast untapped mineral deposits. Russia on the other hand, while shedding few tears at America's predicament, is apprehensive in the long-term over instability spilling into its backyard.

According to Kamran Bokhari, Middle East and South Asia director at global intelligence consultancy, "of all the neighbours, Pakistan hold the highest cards in any possible deal with the Afghan Taliban to bring an end to the conflict. Its long-running ties

⁸*Ibid.*,

⁹Reuters "ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew," <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 21 March 2012.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

to the group and the cross-border linkages to its own Pashtuns make it a central player.”¹¹ Pakistan has been especially concerned about expanding Indian involvement in Afghanistan seeing it as an encircling gesture and will do everything possible to checkmate New Delhi. Its growing insecurity looks genuine especially in the backdrop of some serious developments in past few years. Indian contribution of billions of US dollars for Afghan development and nation building looks dubious when 500 million of its own people live below the poverty line.¹² Pakistan also sees many India centric US initiatives in the region especially offering a Strategic Partnership to India when bulk of warfighting is being carried out by Pakistan. Signing a Civil Nuclear deal when Pakistan also faces severe energy crisis and lastly Afghan Government’s decision to contract training and equipping their forces to India which confirms encirclement theory, as a threat to its national security.

Indeed, it’s unclear what kind of grip Pakistan has over the Afghan Taliban following the US invasion in 2001, forcing Pakistan to switch sides and scale back ties to the group. Besides Pakistan itself is now caught in the flames of extremist fire. Bokhari says it’s a misconception to think that Pakistan wants a Talibanized Afghanistan. "It's every bit a worry for Pakistani generals, they are fighting these forces on their side of the Durand Line."¹³

¹¹ Sanjeev Miglani, “ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew” KABUL | Tue Jun 1, 2010, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

¹² Indian Children in Poverty, <http://homeport.tcs.tulane.edu/~rouxbee/kids99/india2.html>; Internet; accessed on 6 March 2012.

¹³ Reuters “ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's ...”, on 21 March 2012.

According to Rashid, India was utterly shocked when during London Conference on Afghanistan, America and its allies agreed to begin re-integrating Taliban fighters. Karzai even went further and asked reconciliation with the Taliban led by Mullah Mohammed Omar.¹⁴ Since then, India is trying to regain ground, re-activating links with Russia, Iran and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) all of whom had earlier backed the Northern Alliance against the Taliban in the 1990s struggle. "India sees the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and Al-Qaeda working closely with anti-Indian groups based in Pakistani Punjab, such as Laskar-e-Taiba who has begun to influence Indian Kashmir to restart the liberation movement which has been dormant since 2004,"¹⁵ said Rashid.

If the competition between India and Pakistan is a stumbling block in Afghanistan, the tussle between Iran and the US is just as complicated. The Iranians, according to Bokhari, are locked in a high-risk struggle with the US on a range of issues and Afghanistan is tied to it. "They are looking at Afghanistan and saying this is part of the bigger package. They are conveying the Americans in back channel negotiations that if you want to leave Afghanistan you have to recognise we have a stake here just as in Iraq."¹⁶ At the same time, , Iran's intelligence services *Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, (National Intelligence and Security Organization) commonly known as SAVAK¹⁷ and members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have been backing elements of the Taliban, not for a love lost between Shiite Iran and the Sunni Taliban, but in view

¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷ Wikipedia, "SAVAK," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAVAK>; Internet; accessed on 22 February 2012.

of their shorter-term interests. The commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, also confided to media that the US had evidence linking the insurgents that they were being trained inside Iran and that weapons found in Afghanistan had come from Iran.¹⁸

Finally the Chinese have extended themselves into Afghanistan, eyeing its untapped mineral resources to feed its surging demand. China's involvement in Afghanistan is primarily economic and stability is vital to their interests. "Unlike the West pushing for democracy, the Chinese would rather have the Afghans choose a type of government based on local culture, customs and domestic conditions,"¹⁹ Beijing therefore, supports the policies of its all-weather ally Pakistan in Afghanistan, and has not been too critical of Taliban, in the past.²⁰

"The fate of Afghanistan and the success of US and coalition efforts to stabilize Afghanistan will in large measure be affected by the current and future policies pursued by its varied proximate and distal neighbors."²¹ Most analyses on Afghanistan's internal

¹⁸ Reuters, "U.S. general says Afghan insurgents trained in Iran," <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/05/30/idINIndia-48915720100530?feedType=RSS&feedName=everything&virtualBrandChannel=11709>; Internet; accessed on 21 February 2012.

¹⁹ Conveyed by "Shanthie Mariet D'Souza," a visiting scholar at Singapore's Institute for South Asian Studies, said in a piece for Eurasia Review. Reuters, "ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew," <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 25 February 2012.

²⁰ Reuters, "ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew," <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 25 February 2012.

²¹ ReliefWeb report, "Afghanistan and its neighbors - An ever dangerous neighborhood," http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/briefingkit-d9b4cb30435e282fcd3cbb1df2bb1bcf.pdf; Internet; accessed on 27 February 2012.

dynamics have focused on COIN policies pursued by US and the alliance. To date, very few analysts have situated Afghanistan's future in the context of regional politics and the conflicting interests of key players. This is indeed ironic that regional players, like Pakistan, Iran, India, China, Russia, and the CARs, have a significant capacity to sway the course of developments in Afghanistan, positively or negatively.²²

Afghan conundrum, therefore, is a complex clash of interests between its neighbours in which no party is ready to yield or compromise its vested interests for the overall good. With no solution in sight the problem looks to be a perpetual conflict of Robert O. Keohane's "Bad Neighbourhood"²³ wherein, failure of a state is attributed not only to its internal dynamics but to the predominant regional struggle.²⁴ This is truer in the case of Afghanistan than any other state, "which owes its existence to its neighbours' interests and the imperatives of the international system. Unlike the states of Europe, Afghanistan was not created through a state-building process. Nor is it the product of colonial state creation."²⁵ Instead, it was created as a "buffer state" to delineate the Russian, British, and Persian circles of influence. While in nation-states, political institutions "developed out of the internal exigencies or colonial rule, Afghan statehood is

²² *Ibid.*,

²³ Robert O. Keohane, "Political Authority after Intervention: Gradations in Sovereignty," edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane, "Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas," Cambridge University Press, 2003, 295.

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

²⁵ Boris Wilke, "Regional Security Strategies for Afghanistan and Its

Neighbours – A Role for the OSCE?," <http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/05/Wilke-en.pdf>; Internet; accessed on 5 April 2012.

a result of balancing the interests of external powers and the political calculations of local rulers, who secured annuities thanks to the status of their country as a buffer state.”²⁶

Repeated setbacks to successfully defeat Taliban insurgency in terms of short and midterm US strategies such as Comprehensive Approach, Surge, Regional Approach, Af-Pak and New Silk Road Strategy,²⁷ means that perhaps the overall approach to problem is incorrect. In order to achieve far reaching results, the effort has to focus towards mitigating the negative influence of bad neighbourhood in consort with other COIN efforts. The “Good Neighbourhood” approach may look a farfetched objective, however, in essence after a decade long war and diplomacy the situation is ripe for a good neighbourhood dash. The Good Neighbourhood Approach would contour around finding a ‘Common Ground’ within the conflicting interests of main players. Wherein, interdependence and mutual economic interests will in turn work as surety bonds for the external stakeholders.

The paper will discuss this complicated tussle in detail with an aim to find a possible long-term solution which could mitigate the effects of conflicting interests between the main regional actors like Iran, India and Pakistan as well as the other players that have economic and hegemonic stakes in the Afghan conundrum. Chapter one will discuss the Iranian interests in Afghanistan with historical linkages and its effects on Iran’s future designs. This chapter will also study Iran’s current sensitivities with regard

²⁶ *Ibid.*,

²⁷ US Department of State, “The United States' "New Silk Road" Strategy: What is it? Where is it Headed?” <http://www.state.gov/e/rls/rmk/2011/174800.htm>; Internet; accessed on 4 April 2012.

to its role as a Shiite leader rivaling Saudi and Pakistani interests as well as US presence. Chapter two will generally cover the Indian aspirations in the region and its effect on the ongoing struggle in Afghanistan within the purview of Indo-Pak rivalry, past and present. It will also focus on the aspect of Indo-US Strategic Partnership and its effect on the War on Terror. Chapter three will focus on Pakistan's sensitivities in Afghanistan and its historic lineage. The chapter will discuss the "Strategic Depth" concept in general and reasons for Pakistan's India centric approach to Afghan issue. Chapter four will generally summarise the interests of other players in the game including Saudi Arabia, China, Russia and Central Asian Republics, their aims and objectives in the ongoing conflict. Whereas, Chapter five will try to find the common grounds within the stalemate which could help to development a healthy environment in the region or create 'Good Neighbourhood' according to Keohane's thinking which may lead to long-term peace and stability in the region through a well-knit interdependence of economic interests.

CHAPTER 1

IRAN'S INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN: PAST AND PRESENT

*“Iran's destiny always lies to the east, not the west. Lowland Iraq may be a tempting morsel for Iranian strongmen, but Central Asia, Afghanistan and the lands beyond embody promises and perils - both yesterday and tomorrow - that exceed in importance anything to be found on Iran's western front.”*²⁸ Richard W. Bulliet, 2007.

US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 ushered in a new era in the complicated Iran - Afghanistan relationship. Iran willingly supported the formation of the post-Taliban government with the aim of establishing friendly ties with Kabul in the Bonn Conference in December 2001 and participated in the reconstruction efforts. Iranian leaders, on one hand welcomed the demise of the Taliban, also viewed this new development in their neighbouring Afghanistan as a serious national security concern. For US, nevertheless, Tehran's remained a riddle as they were suspected of assisting the insurgent groups in Afghanistan, including Taliban.²⁹

Iranian aspirations in the present day Afghanistan stretches back to the time of Achaemenid's Persian Empire.³⁰ The great Empire established by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C, an absolute superpower of the time. Wealthy, powerful, and in control of territories that extended to three continents stretching from Egypt to Central Asia. Like Alexander, this magnificence drove the Persian ambition towards ruling the world

²⁸ Journal of International Affairs, “Iran between east and west,” <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-163199289.html>; Internet; accessed on 3 March 2012.

²⁹ Institute for Study of War, “Iran and Afghanistan,” <http://www.understandingwar.org/iran-and-afghanistan>; Internet; accessed on 7 March 2012.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

through an effective system of centralized authority and administration.³¹ Present-day Iranians are cognisant of this grandeur and exceptionally proud of their history. “While ethnic Persians constitute only 51 percent of Iran’s population, the impressive legacy of the Persian Empire established an Iranian mind-set of far-reaching influence and engagement that remains an inspiration to this day.”³² With this in mind, it is easy to see how Iran sees its natural role as the ruling nation of the region, towards Afghanistan.

DEMOGRAPHIC LINKAGES WITH AFGHANISTAN

Iran and Afghanistan are tied in numerous religious, linguistic, and ethnic strands which create multitude of cultural overlaps between the two nations. According to latest census, Iran has a population of 66.4 million³³ and is the only Shiite-majority state in the world, with 89 % of the population or 58.6 million people being Shiite Muslims. Iran’s Sunni minority is merely 5.9 million, which accounts for over nine percent of the overall population.³⁴ The ethnic Hazara is a Mongolian descendant Persian-speaking group which is mainly concentrated around central Afghanistan, with considerable communities also present in the western Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and Pakistan constitutes the bulk of

³¹ Glenn E. Curtis and Eric Hooglund, eds., *Iran: A Country Study*, 5th ed. (Washington DC: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 2008), 3.

³² John Brennan, "The Conundrum of Iran: Strengthening Moderates without Acquiescing to Belligerence," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008), 170, <http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/618/1/168.pdf>; Internet; accessed November 12, 2012. Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook -- Iran," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>; Internet; accessed February 13, 2012.

³³ United States Central Intelligence Agency, “Iran,” *The World Fact Book*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>; Internet; accessed on 11 March 2012.

³⁴ *Ibid.*,

Afghanistan's Shiite population. The Hazaras are 2.9 million which makes up roughly nine percent of Afghanistan's population.³⁵

Commonality of language can be measured by the fact that 38.2 million or 58 percent of Iranians speak Persian, while nearly half of the Afghan population or 16.3 million Afghans speak one among many dialects of Dari (Persian).³⁶ "Eleven percent of Afghans or 3.6 million speak Turkic languages, such as Uzbek or Turkmen, as do 26 percent of Iranians or 17.1 million people."³⁷ Other ethnic group that lives between the borders of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan is Baloch which constitutes two percent of the Iranian population or roughly 1.3 million³⁸ people whereas, in the neighbouring Afghanistan and Pakistan they account for more or less the same with about 700,000 and 5 million people respectively.³⁹

HISTORIC LINKAGES WITH AFGHANISTAN

It is not possible to appreciate Iran's approach towards Afghanistan without being aware of the country's history. Iran's linkages with Afghanistan dates back to the times of the great Persian Empire. The majority of the population in the city of Herat (western Afghanistan) still speaks Persian. It is a popular belief in Iran that present day

³⁵ *Ibid.*,

³⁶ *Ibid.*,

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸ *Ibid.*,

³⁹ *Ibid.*,

Afghanistan would have formed part of contemporary Iran if it had not been for British intrusiveness in the region.⁴⁰

The Muslim conquest of seventh century left a lasting impression on the Persian Empire. “Its status as a Muslim state remains unequivocally a predominant characteristic of its identity today.”⁴¹ Iran stayed the part of the greater Islamic Caliphate until the demise of the Abbasid dynasty in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, after which it formed the part of the Turk Seljuk Empire in the twelfth century succeeded by the annexation to Mongol empire a hundred years later. Iran was left weak and vulnerable in the aftermath of the Tatar devastation and death saga. It therefore became an extended battle ground for Afghan and Turks power struggle.⁴²

By the end of fifteenth century, Iran pulled itself out of chaos once again and managed to restore itself to dominance, Safavids dynasty ascended to power, an indigenous Iranian tribe, in 1501.⁴³ The Safavid dynasty was instrumental in converting

⁴⁰ Jakobsen and others, “Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead” http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/2008/RAND_CF238.pdf; Internet; accessed on 21 January 2012.

⁴¹ Curtis and Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*, 4. United States Central Intelligence Agency, “Iran,” The World Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>; Internet; accessed on 11 March 2012.

⁴² Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America*, University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

to Shiite Islam as opposed to Sunni Islam, “adopting it as the state religion and forever distinguishing itself from the greater Muslim world.”⁴⁴

THE GREAT GAME

The Safavid rule continued till 1722, when a small conglomerate of Afghan tribesmen called Ghilzais’ sacked the Persian capital in an easy campaign.⁴⁵ In 1795, Qajars, an ethnic Turkic tribe ascended to power which again unified the nation and established a new Persian dynasty.⁴⁶ The world, however, changed rapidly and the start of 18th century brought Qajar rulers face to face with the British and Russian empires, the competing superpowers of the time. Trapped directly between the chief protagonists of “the Great Game,” Iran was trimmed out by the British and Russian empires. In essence, “Iran’s contemporary borders resulted from the treaties forced on it by Britain and Russia.”⁴⁷

COLD WAR RELATIONS WITH US

“Iran’s relationship with the US consumes Iranians to this day, and understanding its complexity remains a key to comprehending its motives.”⁴⁸ The founding of the new

⁴⁴ Curtis and Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*, 4. United States Central Intelligence Agency, “Iran,” The World Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>; Internet; accessed on 11 March 2012.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁶ Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America...*, 13.

⁴⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 36.

⁴⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: Iran’s Efforts to Destabilize Afghanistan,” Canadian Forces College Masters of Defence Paper, JCSP-36, 14.

Shah Reign “Reza Pahlavi’s” corresponded with the initiation of massive contacts between Americans and Iranian Government.⁴⁹ In view of a growing communist threat the two countries drew increasingly closer to each other.⁵⁰ In the meantime, a crisis with the British, over the control of Iran’s oil industry turned into power strife between the Prime Minister Mossadeq and his Shah.⁵¹ In the aftermath, in 1953 US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conspired a successful coup to topple the Mossadeq’s Government and returned the Shah to power.⁵² “The coup has had long-standing negative repercussions for American-Iranian relations to this day.”⁵³

ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

In January 1979, Shah was deposed in the wake of fourteen months long protests against his rule.⁵⁴ Iran’s orientation towards US led War on Terror can be well understood from the impact of Islamic revolution on US – Iran relations. Khomeini’s under the strong influence of fanatical hatred for the US came to power. As Khomeini gradually consolidated his power over the restive country, fears of foreign intervention grew consistently in the minds of Iranians which result in takeover of the American

⁴⁹ Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America*..., 40.

⁵⁰ Curtis and Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*..., 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵² Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America*, 67. Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: Iran’s Efforts to Destabilize Afghanistan,” Canadian Forces College Masters of Defence Paper, JCSP-36, 14.

⁵³ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: Iran’s Efforts to Destabilize Afghanistan,” Canadian Forces College Masters of Defence Paper, JCSP-36, 16.

⁵⁴ Curtis and Hooglund, *Iran: A Country Study*..., 50.

Embassy on November 4, 1979.⁵⁵ “Extreme anti-Americanism became the test of allegiance to the revolution and allowed radicals to cleanse the system of any moderates who argued for freeing the hostages.”⁵⁶

In September 1980, Saddam Hussein’s attack on Iran came in the middle of a significant internal strife.⁵⁷ The war also aided to strengthen Iran’s resentment towards US due to its assistance to Iraq, particularly when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the conflict with Iraq greatly facilitated the most radicalized and revolutionary factions in Iran to establish an uncontested control over the nation.⁵⁹

“While Iran’s historical greatness may stem from its Persian Empire roots, it is Islam that today serves as the anchor Iran’s national self-image.”⁶⁰ Approximately 10 to 15 percent of the world’s Muslim population, or 140 million people, are Shiites,⁶¹ “Iran holds the distinction of being the only country in the world in which Shiite-ism is the official state religion, with approximately ninety percent of its population subscribing to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁶ Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America*, 158. Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: Iran’s Efforts to Destabilize Afghanistan,” Canadian Forces College Masters of Defence Paper, JCSP-36, 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁵⁸ Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America...*, 208.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁶⁰ Thaler and others, *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics*, 6.

⁶¹ Shia Islam, " GlobalSecurity.org," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-shiia.htm>; accessed March 28, 2011.

that faith.”⁶² Therefore, Iran perceives itself as the “de facto leader of global Shiism,”⁶³ giving the Iranians’ a substantial influence and esteem among the quarter of Afghanistan’s population who belong to Shiite sect.

IRANIAN POLITICAL INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN

Like many aspirant regional players Iran sees Afghanistan especially the western part, as its legitimate sphere of influence. In the 1980s, however due to Tehran’s focus on the Iran-Iraq war, the regime could not focus on their eastern front.⁶⁴ Whereas, “Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, backed by the US, stepped up their efforts to support the Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation, Iran felt increasingly threatened by their loss of influence in Kabul.”⁶⁵

Iran’s subsequent efforts to muster the Afghan Shiite community fulfilled when in 1987, eight Iran-backed resistance groups formed a coalition.⁶⁶ Indeed, “Iran was a full player by proxy in the Afghan civil war, assisting a loose coalition of Persian, Shi’a, and Turkic factions against the Pakistan and Saudi-supported Pushtuns.”⁶⁷

Not since Saddam Husayn invaded Iran in September 1980 had any Iranian neighbour posed as great a security threat than the Taliban. Iran feared that Taliban rule would increase instability on

⁶² Pierre Pahlavi, "The Shia Crescent: Between Myth and Reality" Canadian Forces College, 2008.

⁶³ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border...”, 34.

⁶⁴ Milani, *Iran's Policy, "Towards Afghanistan...*, 237.

⁶⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: ...”, 44.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁶⁷ Jakobsen, “*Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics...*, 13.

its eastern borders and accelerate the flood of refugees into Iran. Tehran labelled the Taliban “narcoterrorists,” who provided sanctuary to terrorist organizations and who “cherry picked” elements of both Islam and Pushtun tribal traditions to justify an un-Islamic and repressive ideology.⁶⁸

Paranoid Iranian leadership saw the hand of foreign interference everywhere; to them the “Taliban represented efforts by the US, through their regional puppets, to weaken Iran’s power in the region.”⁶⁹ By the summer of 1998, the situation turned worst when Taliban captured the city of Mazar-i Sharif in northern Afghanistan. Taliban captured the Iranian consulate, killed a number of Iranian officials in revenge for an earlier carnage of Taliban in Shibergan and Iranian support for Northern Alliance. “Iranians were outraged, and Tehran threatened military action by deploying roughly 200,000 troops to its eastern border.”⁷⁰

However, in the post 9/11 invasion of Afghanistan, Iran supported US efforts since it brought its old ally, the Northern Alliance to power. Also, “the invasion was carried out using small numbers of American Special Forces troops combined with air power, all in support of the Northern Alliance, itself a group made up of mostly non-Pashtun factions and warlords whom Iran had supported prior to the Taliban’s fall.”⁷¹

“Having Iran-friendly Northern Alliance warlord firmly established as governor of the Herat, Iranians felt comfortable in establishing a convenient buffer zone from areas

⁶⁸ Milani, “*Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan...*”, 243.

⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: ...”, JCSP-36, 45.

⁷⁰ Hafeez Malik, “*US Relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Imperial Dimension*,” Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2008, 169.

⁷¹ Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Kamphuis, “The Forgotten Border: ...”, 49.

of the Afghanistan where American forces were fighting the Taliban.”⁷² However, by 2004 mounting US weight forced Karzai to get rid of Ismail Khan as governor due to his connections with Iran, as well as Karzai’s own ambition to further Pashtun representation in the Afghan government, amplified tensions between Afghan and Iran Government.⁷³ Iran backlashed by declaring Karzai as a “stooge of the US” and publically denouncing the election of 2006.⁷⁴

According to 2007, review of Iran’s policy by the Iranian Center for Strategic Research (CSR) towards Afghanistan, the Iranian interests in Afghanistan was broadly based on: “the flow of Afghan refugees to Iran who have adverse social and economic impact on the Iranian society; and containing of radicalism {Sunni-Wahhabi}; and drug trafficking.”⁷⁵ Following two events better illustrate Iran’s Afghanistan policy:

During the winter of 2008-2009, when the lack of electricity became one of the major news stories in Afghan media, and public outrage against the ministry of Water and Power was at its peak, the Iranian Embassy announced selling 25 million liters of oil at cheaper price to Afghanistan to help with Kabul’s electricity supply. (It is worth noting that the minister of Water and Electricity—Ismael Khan—has a history of close ties to Tehran.)⁷⁶

In January 2009—during the same winter Iran forcefully deported over 8000 Afghans in one week in the midst of a cold winter. The Kabul based daily Hasht-e-Sobeh (8 AM) observed that the forceful deportations were a part of Iranian policy to illustrate to the US that Iran can make life

⁷² Andreas Wilde, *Continuity and Hiatus: Structural Patterns of Iran's Policy in Afghanistan*, <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/Wilde.pdf>; Internet; accessed on 20 March 2012.32.

⁷³ Milani, “*Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan ...*”, 250.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 251

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁶ Quqnoos News Agency, “Iran Aids Poor Afghan People,” January 4, 2009.

hard in Afghanistan, especially, the paper noted, after President Obama did not respond to Mahmud Ahmadinezhad's letter.⁷⁷

The above mentioned events illustrate Iran's multi-layered approach towards Afghan issue. "Iran mixes alignment with the needs of the Afghan people with reminding the international community, precisely the US, of Iran's relevance to its goals in the region."⁷⁸

A leading hypothesis also argues that Iran and Saudi Arabia are playing out their competition in Afghanistan as a regional rivalry. Iran's broad position towards Afghan conundrum also discloses a very ethnic and faction backed perception. "Iranian policy rests on the notion that it is the guardian of Afghanistan's Farsi speakers Tajiks and Hazaras and its Shias against an often intrusive Pashtun power."⁷⁹ Some evidence in support of this argument is the Television Channel launched by Ayatollah-ul-Uzma Sheikh Asif Mohseni in Kabul. Mohseni is a former mujahedeen and a pro-Iranian militia leader. He runs the massive Hawza-Elmia-Khatim-Ul-Nabien, a modern university cum madrassa complex which is a 13 million dollar investment. Mohseni's TV channel Tamadun (Civilization) is an Iranian inspired media blitz which produces Persian programs.⁸⁰

Allegations regarding Iran backed Afghan-insurgent groups, including its former arch-enemy the Taliban started to surface since late 2002, which over the years have

⁷⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "Iran and Afghanistan," <http://www.understandingwar.org/iran-and-afghanistan>; Internet; accessed on 15 March 2012.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*,

intensified.⁸¹ The 205th Corps commander of Afghan National Army, General Rahmatullah Safi, accused in Jun 2007 that there was significant intelligence presenting weapons flow from Iran into Afghanistan. Safi also believed that some veteran mujahedeen were getting training in Iran.⁸² In 2008, former Governor of Farah Province, Abdul Samad Stanakzai, also alleged that Tehran was training a significant number of political opponents in the refugee camp called Shamsabad inside Iran.⁸³

While Tehran surely does not wish to see Taliban coming back in power, it is suspicious of the US troops' presence on its eastern borders as well as in recent years, Washington's growing aggressive posture. Thus, it is concluded that Tehran supports the continuation of a low intensity conflict against US in Afghanistan. Such a low level insurgency will supposedly tie down the US forces and relieve international and US pressure on Iran over its nuclear ambition.⁸⁴

IRAN'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Iran's clashing economic interests in Afghanistan are also a source of concern among its neighbours. Tehran desires a considerable portion of this immerging market. It therefore, vowed \$560 million US Dollar (USD) assistance at the 2002 Tokyo Conference on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, and an extra \$100 million USD at the

⁸¹ Alastair Leithead, "Iranian Influence in Afghanistan," BBC News Report, June 11, 2007; DPA, "Police official says armed men crossed into Afghanistan from Iran," South Asia News, June 19, 2007.

⁸² *Ibid.*,

⁸³ Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan: Kabuls Mulls Relations with Iran," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 17, 2007.

⁸⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iran and Afghanistan..."

London Conference in 2006. Bulk of the Iranian aid money was expended on infrastructure development projects, mainly road links with Iran-Afghanistan, and the CARs, something which is specially the Iranian national interest. A 123 km road link has been constructed from Herat in western Afghanistan to the Dogharoun in Iran, and fast trek work is going on to link Afghanistan to Chabahar, the Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman, which would diminish Afghan dependency on Karachi, the Pakistani port.

Commerce, less petroleum between the two countries amounts over a billion USD annually. There is also a multi-billion-dollar rail link project to connect Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, the first portion of this project is also following a fast trek construction from the Iranian border to Hera. Such transportation linkages between the land-locked and isolated Afghanistan and Iran will provide the CARs with an outlet to the warm waters which will increase trade and Iranian influence.⁸⁵

More so, Afghan market signifies an unexploited export market for Iranian merchandises which is suffering from an embargo in the west.⁸⁶ Iran's these efforts are in direct conflict with other neighbours such as by letting the land-locked people of Afghanistan to use the Iran's Chabahar port as a substitute to the Karachi, Pakistan's port in Arabian Sea. It will diminish Afghanistan's economic reliance on Pakistan and thus will further Iran's influence. Likewise, Iran has also encouraged Afghan trades to shift their offices from the UAE to Iran. In 2008, Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan also decided to establish the Economic Council of the Persian-Speaking Union.

⁸⁵ Quqnoos News Agency "Afghan-Iran Highway Boosts Business," March 19, 2009.

⁸⁶ CNN, "EU steps up banking sanctions against Iran," <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/15/world/meast/iran-banking-sanctions/>; Internet; accessed on 15 March 2012.

Lastly, simmering insurgency in Afghanistan is likely to deny Pakistan and India a trade access to CARs through land as well as access to the latter's natural resource like Tajikistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline project (TAPI).⁸⁷ This also means that India and Pakistan has to rely on Iranian Gas and natural resources, Pakistan-Iran and India Gas Pipeline project (IPI) is a case in point which is desperately being pursued by Pakistan.⁸⁸ This where gives Iran greater roam for maneuvers in the region will also fetch desperately needed capital in order to support its deteriorating economic conditions in the wake of US and EU led economic sanctions.⁸⁹

SUMMARY

Iranian interests in the ongoing struggle in Afghanistan remains a complex phenomenon especially when viewed in the context of its past grandeur and traditional rivalry with US. The Islamic Revolution, nevertheless, had a major role in shaping its present day outlook. Iran's demographic and historic linkages gave it significant leverage in Afghanistan which has been skillfully used for shaping a favourable situation towards east. Instability in Afghanistan is particularly in Iran's favour especially in the presence of strong US forces in its neighbourhood. US success in Afghanistan will not only encourage US to venture against Iran but may also be used as a launch pad.

⁸⁷ Latest Trends Updates, "TAPI Pipeline Gas Prices Stay Obstacles In The Of Way," <http://trendsupdate.com/2011/04/29/tapi-pipeline-gas-prices-stay-obstacles-in-the-of-way/>; internet; accessed on 15 March 2012.

⁸⁸ Reuters, "ICBC appears to back away from Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline," <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/14/pakistan-iran-pipeline-idUSL4E8EE2VW20120314>; Internet accessed on 15 March 2012.

⁸⁹ CNN, "EU steps up banking sanctions against Iran," <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/15/world/meast/iran-banking-sanctions/>; Internet; accessed on 15 March 2012.

Moreover, Iran's self-proclaimed Shiite leadership role is another reason for its manipulation in the Afghan affairs. Strong anti-Sunni and anti-Saudi sentiments have always been used to destabilize Afghanistan. However, it would also be prudent to say that Iran's economic interests in Afghanistan outweigh its regional aspirations. An unstable Pashtun belt with well-developed Persian corridor to the north is in favour of Iran. This will maintain a buffer with Pashtuns and also deny Pakistan and India an access to CARs.

CHAPTER 2

INDIAN ASPIRATIONS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

India's interests in Afghanistan are not only Pakistan-specific but equally, if not more importantly, tied to India's desire to be and to be seen as an extra-regional power moving toward great power status. India has long bristled at the tendency among international analysts to hitch India to Pakistan. India is keen to throw off any comparison to Pakistan -- a state it views as its diminutive and less consequential neighbor. Thus while India's presence in Afghanistan has Pakistan-specific utility it is also about India's emergent ability to influence its extended strategic neighborhood.⁹⁰ C. Raja Mohan, October 2007.

INTRODUCTION

The present day Afghanistan has historically been used as staging ground for virtually all over-land armed expedition into India, whether to rule or to plunder, from the legions of Alexander to the Muslim invaders of Central Asian Turks and the Mughals.⁹¹ Bactria, as the legionnaires of Alexander called this place, it was as inhospitable and insecure as is today. Afghanistan, also served as a social gateway for Indian-Arab exchanges of learning and knowledge, Persian and Greek aesthetics and arts, Sufi Islam, and the influx of Buddhism from India towards Central Asia and beyond. India's this sensitivity came to haunt it immediately after its liberation from British Raj, when in

⁹⁰ Foreign Policy "India in Afghanistan, part I: strategic interests, regional concerns," http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/26/india_in_afghanistan_part_1_strategic_interests_regional_concerns; Internet; accessed on 16 March 2012.

⁹¹ Is A Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/regional_approach.pdf; Internet; accessed on 17 March 2012.

1948 it fought its First Kashmir War against its Western neighbour.⁹² This forever changed India's relations with Afghanistan and its other neighbours.

India, today is not a direct neighbour of Afghanistan, but has over the years built close relation with the country. It is also among very few countries which despite having a sizable poor population, over 500 million living below poverty line, still contributes over 2 billion USD towards Afghan reconstruction.⁹³ "It sees Afghanistan as a legitimate sphere of influence, a potential ally against Pakistan and over the longer-term as a gateway to Central Asian energy resources."⁹⁴ Its immediate anxieties, nevertheless, have security dynamics: it fears that the Afghan Taliban's return will further bolster anti-India groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba' based in Pakistan. It therefore opposes any negotiations with the Taliban, especially any dialog that has been leveraged by the Pakistan.

Besides its immediate security concern, India's interests in Afghanistan have largely been driven by its hegemonic designs in the region. These designs have been a source of concern for its neighbour. Though, "India's larger interests in Afghanistan extend beyond Pakistan to its desire for increased trade and new economic, especially energy with Central / Western Asia through the traditional land route where it finds itself

⁹² India's Wars, http://www.historyguy.com/wars_of_india.html; Internet; accessed on 17 March 2012.

⁹³ Indian Children in Poverty, <http://homeport.tcs.tulane.edu/~rouxbee/kids99/india2.html>; Internet; accessed on 6 March 2012.

⁹⁴ <http://blogs.reuters.com/afghanistan/2010/05/30/saving-afghanistan-from-its-neighbours/>; Internet; accessed on 16 March 2012.

at a disadvantage vis-à-vis China.”⁹⁵ But Indian specific interests in Afghanistan are evident from the outcome of reconstruction projects which have remained focused at reducing Pakistan’s influence.⁹⁶

EARLY INDO-PAKISTAN COMPETITION IN AFGHANISTAN

Understanding India-Pakistan rivalry is key to their involvement in Afghanistan. This competition was also translated into India’s relation with Afghanistan which long precedes the dawn of the Hamid Karzai Government. Both these states, since their emergence in 1947, from the break-up of the colonial British Raj in the South Asia, have had ties with succeeding Afghan regimes. In spite of Pakistan’s close proximity to Afghanistan, the two have always had strained relations due to their differences over the legitimacy of Durand Line. Indeed, during King Zahir Shah’s rule (1933-1973), except for a brief rupture of relation during the 1965 Indo-Pak conflict, India essentially had better relationships with Afghanistan than Pakistan.⁹⁷

The basis of this rivalry lies in the unfinished partition agenda of British India over “Kashmir” between India and Pakistan. Kashmir being a Muslim dominated Princely State of British Indian Raj was legally to form part of Pakistan however; Hindu Raja of the State under pressure from Indian Government, against the wishes of people of

⁹⁵ Is A Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/regional_approach.pdf; Internet; accessed on 16 March 17, 2012.

⁹⁶ Institute of the Study of War, “Pakistan and Afghanistan,” <http://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>; Internet; accessed on 22 March 2012.

⁹⁷ Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, “Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate,” U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report 176 (October 2006), 7.

Kashmir illegally ceded it to India. Importance of Kashmir stems from its ‘Himalayan Water’⁹⁸ which is lifeblood for Pakistan, and a major vulnerability. Water of all five major rivers flow from Kashmir and irrigate the plains of Punjab and Sind provinces which are considered the breadbasket of Pakistan.

In 1947, the well-articulated partition deliberately put the canal headworks of Madhapur on River Ravi and Feruzepur on River Sutlej to Indian side with few kilometres margins, despite having sizeable Muslim population. India took the advantage and abruptly stopped the flow of water to Pakistan.⁹⁹ This act created a national crisis for the newly born state and threatened its very existence. The crisis lingered on till March 1948 when an interim agreement was signed by the Punjab Partition Committee.¹⁰⁰ Later on the issued was taken to World Bank for arbitration which resulted into “Indus Water Treaty”¹⁰¹ in 1962. This treaty gave control of three Western Rivers namely Indus, Jhelum and Chenab to Pakistan whereas; three Eastern Rivers Ravi, Sutlej and Bias were given to India.

⁹⁸ All five major rivers of Pakistan flow from Kashmir which irrigates the entire plains of Pakistan including Punjab and Sind. Without this water Pakistan would be totally barren.

⁹⁹ Oregon State University, Institute for Water and Watersheds, “Case Studies,” http://www.transboundarywaters.orst.edu/research/case_studies/Indus_New.htm; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Sagendorph Mason, Robert E. Asher, “*The World Bank since Bretton Woods*,” http://books.google.ca/books?id=Y4VmW98hZy8C&pg=PA611&lpg=PA611&dq=indian+canal+headworks+in+the+west+punjab&source=bl&ots=henSoJ8NyC&sig=sqUpwy9cCbefbS1_LL1EGH5bQcs&hl=en&sa=X&ei=oKV4T6nnJ-10AG74KDUDQ&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAjgK#v=onepage&q=indian%20canal%20headworks%20in%20the%20west%20punjab&f=false; internet; accessed on 1 April 201, 611.

¹⁰¹ Niranjana Das Gulhati, “*Indus Water Treaty*,” http://books.google.ca/books?ei=Yat4T_uNBIX0QGdma3cDQ&ct=book-thumbnail&id=RuwlAAAAMAAJ&dq=indus+water+treaty&q=indus+water+treaty; internet; accessed on 1 April 2012, 374.

Indian intervention of October 1947 in Kashmir¹⁰² was also seen as part of a wider conspiracy to deprive Pakistan from its legitimate resources i.e the water of three Eastern Rivers. Ever since 1962, India was secretly constructing “seven dam on Indus, eight on Jhelum and twenty four on River Chenab”¹⁰³ this include the large projects such as Wular Barrage, Kishan Ghanga Hydro Power Project and Bhaglihar dams on rivers Jhelum, Neelam and Chenab respectively which have official been objected by Pakistan.¹⁰⁴

Born out of above mentioned insecurity, “India sought to establish its presence in Afghanistan from the early days of its independence from Britain in 1947. In 1950, Afghanistan and India signed a Friendship Treaty.”¹⁰⁵ India therefore, had strong ties with the regime of Afghan King Zahir Shah. “Even after Shah’s overthrow in 1973, India managed to maintain close ties with the subsequent communist regimes. Contrary to popular belief, India was less than pleased with the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.”¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, India evaded any open criticism of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, after it failed to engage Pakistan for a possible regional solution to the

¹⁰² Alistair Lamb, “*The Indian Claim to Jammu and Kashmir - A Reappraisal*,” <http://hellinparadise.150m.com/dralistairlamb.htm>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

¹⁰³ Global Research, “Water Conflicts and Hydroelectricity in South Asia,” <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=29883>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Ashok Swain, “*Struggle against the state: social network and protest mobilization in India*,” Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Foreign Policy, “India in Afghanistan, part I: strategic interests, regional concerns,” http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/26/india_in_afghanistan_part_1_strategic_interests_regional_concerns; Internet; accessed on 16 March 2012.

¹⁰⁶ G.S. Bhargava, “*South Asian Security after Afghanistan*,” Lexington: Lexington Books, 1983.

Soviet invasion conundrum and confronted with significant US economic and military support to Pakistan, \$3.2 billion for six years. Instead, it preferred to work with successive Afghan Soviet puppet regimes because it did not share the ideology that the bulk mujahedeen groups, supported by Pakistan and US, followed.¹⁰⁷ The other reason for Indian support to puppet regimes was its desire to maintain a military supremacy over Pakistan for which it relied heavily on low priced advanced military hardware from the Soviets.¹⁰⁸ During the ensuing Afghan civil war in the 1990s, India decided to support Northern Alliance being led by Ahmed Shah Massoud in order to maintain the required influence in the new Afghan power structure.

India eyed on the lasting rivalry between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the status of international border between the two states since the end of British raj in the subcontinent of India. The overlapping ethnic Baloch and Pashtun belts along the Pak-Afghan border, demarcated by the British were considered illegitimate by many in the tribal areas. Indian's quickly tried to exploit this opportunity by airing Pashtun nationalists, who already had been demanding for a "Pashtunistan," took the pledge to a Loya Jirga (Grand Court of Elders) in 1949. "The Jirga believed that Pakistan, being a new state at the time, was not an historic extension of British India, and therefore all treaties signed prior to independence were nullified."¹⁰⁹ This decision impinged upon the

¹⁰⁷ For detailed study of mujahedin groups refer to Steve Coll's "*Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*," New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

¹⁰⁸ S. Nihal Singh, "Why India Goes to Moscow for Arms," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 7 (July 1984), 707-720.

¹⁰⁹ Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate," U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report 176 (October 2006), 7.

demarcation of the Durand Line and also the annexation of Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) with Pakistan. “Throughout the Cold War, India would be able to pay lip service to the idea of a Pashtunistan with the goal of keeping Pakistan’s army occupied on its restive western border.”¹¹⁰

“India’s ability to maintain good relations with Afghanistan drew to a close with Taliban victory in 1996.”¹¹¹ The Taliban victory finally forced India out of Kabul. It had to withdraw its diplomatic personnel and abandon its embassy from Afghanistan. However, India did not give up its aspiration its maintained links with the Northern Alliance. In 2001, as the Northern Alliance was involved in fierce fighting with Taliban forces, “India reportedly provided Massoud’s forces with high-altitude warfare equipment, defense advisors and helicopter technicians. Indian medical personnel also apparently treated wounded Northern Alliance members at a hospital in Farkhor in Tajikistan near the Afghan-Tajik border.”¹¹² It is also suspected that the Indian provided support to anti-Taliban groups for attacks from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.¹¹³

India did not break its ties with the Northern Alliance despite Massoud’s assassination in the pre-9/11. In the post 9/11 situation, it seized the opportunity to dismantle the Taliban regime by supporting the American effort in Afghanistan. India

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹¹¹Nicholas Howenstein, Sumit Ganguly ,” Pakistan & Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats : India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan,” <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/india-pakistan-rivalry-afghanistan>: Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009 Page 127-140. Internet; accessed on 24 March 2012.

¹¹² Rahul Bedi, “India joins anti-Taliban coalition,” Jane’s Intelligence Weekly, 15 March 2001.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*,

therefore, succeeded to manage space in the Bonn Conference held on Afghanistan in December 2004. “It found it quite advantageous that the US chose to throw in its lot with Hamid Karzai and his supporters at Bonn.”¹¹⁴ To India’s benefit Karzai had been living in India and acquired an undergraduate degree from Himachal Pradesh University, Taliban also assassinated his father in Pakistan, and therefore, India was greatly satisfied with Karzai’s emergence as a consensus and the US supported presidential candidate for Afghanistan.

THE DYNAMICS OF INDIAN ASSISTANCE

Indian foreign policy toward west especially CARs underwent a major shift by the end of 2001. US invasion of Afghanistan provided a rear opportunity to India to fulfill its long standing dream. India therefore, joined US bandwagon and cashed the prized trophy of Afghan allegiance. As a result, “India has developed an arsenal of economic, diplomatic and military instruments in its pursuit of a more coordinated strategy in the region. The monetary value of Indian assistance to Afghanistan by far exceeds that of Pakistan.”¹¹⁵ For its part, India “seeks a broader pan-Asian influence, not just as a major power on the subcontinent but also as a major player in the larger region and beyond to the whole world.”¹¹⁶

Moreover, India’s “efforts to form an extended security horizon, focused on but not limited to Pakistan, has also brought enhanced military and diplomatic

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹¹⁵ Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, “Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate,” ..., 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*,

engagement.”¹¹⁷ According to Stephen Blank of the Strategic Studies Institute, it was predominantly the security dynamics that first indignant India’s concern in the region, rather than mere economics. “The rise of China and of Islamist militancy in the region led it to aggressively pursue its economic and strategic interests in the area. The demise of the Soviet Union had earlier stoked Indian fears about a power vacuum developing in Central Asia.”¹¹⁸

In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, India ensured that it had a significant footprint, for this purpose, it re-established its embassy in Kabul, as well as reopened its consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad and opened two new consulates in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif.

India has pledged 750 million USD developmental funds to support the reconstruction activity in the war-ravaged country.¹¹⁹ By 2009, India promised to contribute as much as 2 billion USD, “making it the sixth largest bilateral donor to the country.”¹²⁰ The main object was to build goodwill with Afghan people through a series of targeted assistance projects including rebuilding the Ariana, Afghan national airline; it also donated three Airbus 300 aircraft to Ariana in 2002, even though having a deficiency in its own fleet, and also showed interest to train Afghan airline pilots.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Stephen Blank, “India’s Rising Profile in Central Asia,” Taylor and Francis, 2003, 139-141.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹¹⁹ Bhaskar Balakrishnan, “Afghanistan’s crucial elections,” Hindu Business Line, 26 August 2009.

¹²⁰ Royen D’Souza, “India’s ‘heart winning’ strategy in Afghan,” NewsX, 31 March 2009.

¹²¹ India offers planes to Afghan airline,” BBC News, 9 May 2002.

India's most important developmental activity, however, have been the "construction of a road that connects Delaram in western Afghanistan with Zaranj on Afghanistan's border with Iran and another that links Kandahar with Spin Boldak, a town near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border."¹²² The development of these transit facilities is not surprising as they will enable Iran, with little less fondness for Pakistan or the Taliban.¹²³ They reassure India's strategic access to Iranian port, which can significantly assist India to tap the vast hydrocarbon deposits of CARs, successfully cutting off Pakistan's interference.

ISLAMABAD: After restricting the flow of waters in the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab rivers by building hydropower projects on these rivers, India seems poised to intensify the water war against Pakistan with a plan to build 12 hydropower projects on the Kabul River in Afghanistan.¹²⁴

Indian involvement in all such reconstruction works which adversely affect Pakistan's interests logically initiates legitimate paranoia in the minds of Pakistanis. Indian assistance to Kabul in construction of dams on River Kabul has also been seen as a part of wider conspiracy to rob Pakistan of its waters, cripple its economy and then bring it to table for final submission to Indian hegemony. According to experts these dams will

¹²² Raja Karthikeya Gundu and Teresita C. Schaffer, "India and Pakistan in Afghanistan: Hostile Sports," *South Asia Monitor* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 3 April 2008).

¹²³ Jonathon Burch, "Afghanistan, India unveil strategic road," *Reuters*, 22 January 2009.

¹²⁴ International The News, "India to help Afghanistan build 12 dams on Kabul River," <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=5933&Cat=13>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

exacerbate the existing water shortage in Pakistan as well as hamper its capability to generate electricity.¹²⁵

Finally, India though precluded any formal military presence in Afghanistan but it is worth noting that Afghanistan's defense minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak, in April 2008, visited New Delhi to meet his Indian counterpart, A.K. Antony, and discussed the possibility of military cooperation which has concluded in the form of provisioning of military hardware to Afghan National Army (ANA) as well as their training by the Indian Army in 2011.¹²⁶ More importantly, "Wardak also visited the headquarters of the Indian Army's 15th Corps located in Srinagar, the capital of the Indian-controlled portion of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir"¹²⁷

This is primarily due to the fact that for the first time in recent history the interests of India and the United States in Afghanistan coincided. Both states seek a peaceful, secure and non-Talibanized Afghanistan. It was recently reported that in order to further these goals, the United States has agreed to directly mediate back channel talks between India and Pakistan regarding the regional war on terror and "the establishment of a 'fair bargain' between India and Pakistan over their respective interests in Afghanistan."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹²⁶ Asia-Pacific, "Karzai Picks Partnership with India over Pakistan," <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9aff11e-ef64-11e0-bc88-00144feab49a.html#axzz1pLwidbZi>; internet; accessed on 17 march 12.

¹²⁷ Stratfor, "Afghanistan: Why India's Cooperation is a Problem for Pakistan," 11 April 2008.

¹²⁸ Sayed Saleem Shahzad, "US orchestrates Pakistan-India talks," *Asia Today*, 30 September 2009.

It is important to underscore and interesting to note that unlike the Cold War era, India has no concern for either the American role or the ISAF presence in Afghanistan.¹²⁹

INDIAN INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

It would be highly unrealistic to believe that such a prominent Indian presence and philanthropic role in Afghanistan simply stems from her desire to promote the stability and security for the Afghan people.¹³⁰ Instead, India's foremost goals in Afghanistan may be interpreted as following:

- A main imperative of India's policy toward Afghanistan is to foil the rise of radicalized brand of Taliban and to foster good relations with the majority of Pashtun tribes, especially when the majority holds a nominal power in Kabul.
- India wants to use its reconstruction and developmental effort i.e construction of dams on river Kabul and construction of road link with Iran in order to shift Afghanistan's dependence on Iranian Chabahar port instead of Karachi (Pakistan) is generally viewed as a means to create rift between the interests of Afghanistan and Pakistan so that the two countries could not pursue friendly ties. This will automatically create India leaning policies in Afghan government.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹³⁰ Nicholas Howenstein, Sumit Ganguly, "Pakistan & Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats : India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009 Page 127-140.

- India pursues to minimise Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan in order to ensure that no future Afghan government is fundamentally unfriendly toward India. As appreciated by India, in all eventualities a Taliban or any other radical groups that have links with Pakistan's tribal areas, would be hostile to India.
- Militant capabilities in Kashmir have direct linkages with the rise of radical groups on the either sides of the Durand Line. "The Islamist hardline groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, are well known to coordinate training, resource allocation and logistical support with groups operating out of northwest Pakistan [East Afghanistan]." ¹³¹ India therefore, does not want to see radical groups operating freely either in Pakistan or Afghanistan.
- Strong central and stable Government in Afghanistan is in India's interests, because "as long as central control and legitimacy continues to elude in Kabul, the conflagration in Kashmir will have a ready supply of tinder." ¹³²
- India also desires to cultivate adequate diplomatic and intelligence network within Afghanistan in order to maintain constant surveillance and undercut Pakistan's activities inside Afghanistan as well as in the North West Pakistan.

¹³¹ Nicholas Howenstein, "Pakistan & Afghanistan: ...", 127-140.

¹³² Stephen Blank, "India's Rising Profile in Central...", 142.

- Lastly, according to Stephen Blank's India's great game strategic desires is to control the land routes for CAR's resources leading to the warm water ports in order to deny Pakistan and China the ability to inflict Indian assets in the region.¹³³

SUMMARY

Indian desire to control Pakistan by controlling the flow of water which emanates from the Himalayas led to the historic Kashmir stalemate. Whereas, its new great game strategy, to undercut Pakistan and China by creating a clash of interests between Iran and Pakistan is fueling the current rivalry in Afghanistan which is causing US its image and war on terror. Indian, effort to build alternative routes to CARs through Iran and construction of dams on River Kabul will certainly give India more leverage in Iran and Northern Afghanistan but it certainly weakened its stance in the reconstruction effort. This bad blood was the key move to trigger Pakistan's sensitivity and finally led to Indian exclusion from the Istanbul conference.

Nevertheless, India is fortunate that it is American strategic ally against China and can accrue benefits of this relationship to support its economic development. But it has to realise that the US draw down in Afghanistan is approaching fast and probably the current opportunity to mend past mistakes may not be lost for ever. US probably rightly chose India as strategic partner against China but definitely ill-timed it with its war on terror and inadvertently pushed Pakistan to corner.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 141.

CHAPTER 3

PAKISTAN'S COMPULSIONS AND CONCERNS

“A Soviet military intervention provoked a deep sense of alarm in Pakistan. Suddenly the buffer disappeared and as the Soviet rulers consolidated their control in Afghanistan, they used it as a springboard to reach a warm water port on the Arabian Sea [through Pakistan]. Pakistan could not afford to acquiesce in the Soviet intervention, nor could it confront a superpower.”¹³⁴

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is direct neighbour to more or less six countries, but the approximate 1500 mile long Durand Line with Pakistan remains the most perilous.¹³⁵ Kabul besides having indissoluble blood ties with the people of Pakistan has however, never recognized Durand line as an international border. Instead it claimed the Pashtun territories of Pakistan that comprise the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), parts of North West Frontier Province now known as Khaiber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and parts of Baluchistan province along the border, creating bad blood between the two neighbour.¹³⁶ This bad blood on one hand had historical lineage, but supposedly also emanated from the King Zahir Shah's misperceived insecurity from a democratic Pakistan to his rule.

¹³⁴ Abdul Sattar, “Afghanistan: Past, Present and Future, From Jihad to Civil War,” The Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, 1997, pp. 462–63.

¹³⁵ The Sun, “Most Dangerous Place in the World,” http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/campaigns/our_boys/4095501/Afghanistan-news-Most-dangerous-place-in-the-world.html; Internet; accessed on 3 March 2012.

¹³⁶ Afghanistan website, “Afghanistan History,” <http://www.afghanistans.com/information/history/durandline.htm>; Internet; accessed on 18 March 2012.

The country today being claimed as the “Twin Brother” by the incumbent President, is heavily dependent on Pakistan for all its major imports including staple food. Conversely, Pakistan considered Afghanistan as its “Strategic Depth” against Russian Bear encroaching from the West as well as hostile Indian influence in the shape of Baluchistan and Pashtunistan insurgencies.

US-led war in Afghanistan nevertheless, has had an inverse effect on both countries as it has increased the violence on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan (Af-Pak) border. “In the last several years, US officials and intelligence reports have repeatedly attributed the growing strength of al-Qaeda and resurgence of the Taliban to safe havens in this border region.”¹³⁷ However, in 2009, the other school of thought started to emerge in Washington that envisaged addressing the turmoil in Pakistan's tribal areas in order to win the war in Afghanistan. In March 2009, a top ISAF Commander in Afghanistan, General David McKiernan, conveyed to the media that the only way to break the stalemate is to take "an Afghanistan-Pakistan approach to this insurgency."¹³⁸

DEMOGRAPHIC LINKAGES

Pakistan and Afghanistan share deep ethnic and linguistic linkages, Pashtun and Baloch are among the major ethnic groups who live on both sides of the Durand Line. According to the Afghan national census of 1970s, Pashtuns constitute the largest ethnic

¹³⁷ Council on Foreign Affairs, “The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border,” <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905>; Internet; accessed on 18 March 2012.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*,

group in Afghanistan, having 13.8 million people or 42 percent of the population.¹³⁹ In Pakistan, roughly 26.6 million Pashtuns population constitutes 15.4 percent of the total populace.¹⁴⁰

On the Afghanistan side, the Pashtun population mainly lives in geographical belts extending east to west, across the south of the country from Pakistan towards Iran; besides this they are also present in other areas in small numbers. Main Afghan cities like Kabul, Jalalabad, and Kandahar have substantial Pashtun populace. While on Pakistan side, the Pashtun tribes generally live towards the western half of country in the KP, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Northern Baluchistan. Whereas, large Pashtun communities are also present in the metropolitan city of Karachi. “Pashtun’s on both sides of the border share the same origin and other commonalities, including the language.”¹⁴¹

“Baloch is another ethnic group that lives in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and even some parts of Iran. The group constitutes 3.6 percent of the Pakistani population or roughly 6.2 million people.”¹⁴² In neighbouring Afghanistan, Baloch account for 2 % of the population, or about 700,000 people¹⁴³ and mainly live in the southwest, along its borders with Pakistan and Iran.

¹³⁹ United States Central Intelligence Agency, “Afghanistan,” The World Factbook, April 9, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴² *Ibid.*,

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*,

The majority of population in Pakistan, about 75 percent and roughly 80 percent in Afghanistan are Sunni Muslims generally from Hanfi School of thought. Nevertheless, both nations have significant Shiite minorities. In in Pakistan, it is 20 percent of the population or 34.6 million people, while in Afghanistan, it accounts for 19 percent of the population or 6.2 million people.¹⁴⁴

In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, large segments of Afghans population migrated to Pakistan and sought refuge. At the height of conflict in Afghanistan, it was estimated that more than five million Afghans lived across Pakistan in regular Refugee Camps. Many Afghans have returned since 2001, but still a considerable number of Afghan refugees are present in cities like Quetta and Peshawar.

THE HISTORIC LINKAGES

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, only Shah's regime in Afghanistan objected its admission to the United Nations.¹⁴⁵ The Shah's regime did not recognize Pakistan as the legitimate successor of British India and consequently, withdrawn the territorial agreements and put forth its claims on Pakistani territory. It made several ambiguous demands concerning its aspirations about the Baloch and Pashtun communities in Pakistan. For recurrent periods between 1947 and 1973, Kabul patronised covert and overt support to Pashtun and Baloch separatists inside Pakistan and even voiced for the establishment of a new state called "Pashtunistan." In 1973, Pakistan, struggling to maintain territorial integrity, reciprocated by extending support to Islamist

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴⁵ Country Studies US, "Independent Pakistan," <http://countrystudies.us/pakistan/14.htm>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

dissidents that resisted Sardar Daud's Government. "Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government created the Afghan Cell within Pakistan's foreign office and assigned it a policy that included strengthening ties with and empowering Islamists in exile in Pakistan, and improving Pakistan's influence over governments in Kabul."¹⁴⁶

In the late 1970s, Sardar Daud tried to make friendly gestures to Pakistan, but his advances were undercut by the Communist coup in 1978. "The new regime in Kabul returned to the support for Pashtun and Baloch nationalists in Pakistan. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was seen by Pakistan as a grave threat to its national security."¹⁴⁷ It therefore, forced Pakistan to formulate its 1973 policy of supporting the revolutionary Islamists against the Soviet puppet Government in Kabul. Pakistan's insecurity was not only confined to internal security threats but was also as a result of its Cold War partnership with US since the 1950s, and the provocations which infuriated Soviet over the years.

During the same period Pakistan also faced another political crisis which resulted in the 1977 coup. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the new leader of Pakistan, was a ardent anti-communist and devote Muslim. General Zia sought for US help while organising a guerrilla resistance based on religious ideology against the Soviet incursion of Afghanistan.

By 1981, The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began supporting the Afghan resistance. "Accepted doctrine was that America would not overtly reveal its

¹⁴⁶ Institute for the Study of War, "Pakistan and Afghanistan," <http://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*,

hand in a proxy war with the Soviets, and therefore the CIA worked through its ally Pakistan.”¹⁴⁸ Pakistan maintained a tight control on Afghan war or Afghan Jihad and decided who in Afghanistan should receive American aid. This policy empowered the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and the Pakistani Religious party Jamaat-e-Islami - Pakistan, which supported Zia’s regime. “As the war progressed and as US and the Saudi Arabia led Arab funding for the mujahedeen skyrocketed, the Pakistani government and the ISI gained the desired influence in Afghan affairs.”¹⁴⁹

The Afghan resistance was an amalgamation of religious parties and nationalists which had roots in Pakistan. In the initial stages the resistance was fractured in more than hundred small groups which were organised by ISI into seven bigger Peshawar based groups, by the beginning of 1980. Tight financial control by ISI meaning that “anyone wishing to receive aid from Pakistan, the US, the Arabs, and others, had to join one of these groups”¹⁵⁰ facilitated to steer the war. Pakistan supported these mujahedeen groups with training, weapons, and supplies as well as provided bases to operate. Pakistani units also participated directly in the fighting disguised as mujahedeen.

President Zia-ul-Haq was killed in 1988 as a result of a plane crash, and was succeeded by democratically elected Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (BB), the daughter of the man, Zia ousted and hanged, years ago. At the same time, Soviets withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 resulted in waning international interest as well. However, the ISI continuously supported Hekmatyar’s party and the other

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,

mujahedeen groups against the communist government of Doctor Najibullah, despite the fact that Hezb-e Islami was closely associated with BB's political rival, Jamaat-e-Islami. After the fall of Kabul in 1992, efforts were made to formulate a national unity government in Afghanistan, ISI backed efforts were made to bring Hekmatyar with Rabbani and Massoud to some power formula, but the Hezb-e Islami did not support the alliance. Afghanistan therefore, spiraled into a brutal civil war between rival mujahedeen warlords, "none of whom were capable of unifying or stabilizing the entire country. Kabul remained in Massoud's control."¹⁵¹

BB lost the office in 1990 due to an internal power struggle, but returned to power a few years later. Islamabad's support to Hekmatyar's declined due to his inability to move against Jamiat and other forces around Kabul. "Bhutto's interior minister, General [retired] Nasirullah Babur discovered and empowered a group of former Mujahideen from the Kandahar area as Pakistan's new strategic card in the Afghan conflict out of ISI loop."¹⁵² Baber tried to work through Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami's rival party and began supporting the Talibs (students) who studied in the madrassas across FATA as well as in Afghan refugee camps. These students later came to be known as the "Taliban".

With deep seeded vengeance BB wanted to give a severe blow to Jamaat-e-Islami, which she consider a supporter of her father's executioner and partly which conspired her out of power, earlier. She also desired to see ISI weakened. But by 1996, she was again

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵² *Ibid.*,

thrown out of power by then President Muhammad Farooq Lagari, who was from her own party on the charges of corruption. Taliban by then had grown into a formidable force and the ISI started to develop links with them and gain control of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

Pakistan, successive governments since BB's second government tried to establish a stable government in Afghanistan that should allow access to CARs rich hydrocarbon resources and market, as well as, does not indulge into ethno-nationalists issues in Pakistan, and question the boundary, "Duran Line" issue between the two countries. With Saudi and Pakistani backing, the Taliban captured Kandahar in 1994, Kabul in 1996, and bulk of the remaining Afghanistan by 1998. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirate's recognised the Taliban regime and also extended diplomatic support. "Some claim that support also came from the US, which would have preferred a Pakistan-installed government over the Russian-backed Northern Alliance."¹⁵³

Other factional leaders including Rabbani and Massoud withdrew to the northern Afghanistan and later joined the group known as the Northern Alliance or the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. Hekmatyar also ran away to Iran in 1997.

Pakistan constantly supported the Taliban regime in its fight against Russia, India, Iran and CARs less Turkmenistan, backed the Northern Alliance. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, then President General Pervez Musharraf who rose to power as result

¹⁵³ Sheppard Software, "The Taliban," <http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/Asiaweb/factfile/Unique-facts-Asia15.htm>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2012.

of 1999 military coup in Pakistan joined the US-led ‘War on Terror’ taking a U-turn in Pakistan’s policy towards Afghanistan. Pakistan provided bases, and facilitated the transportation of supplies in support of the US war effort. “Less than two months into the military operations in Afghanistan the US-led coalition, working with the Northern Alliance, toppled the Taliban regime, which successfully melted away alongwith some of al-Qaeda allies.”¹⁵⁴

Pushed out Afghanistan, these groups including Taliban and al-Qaeda started to resurge in the border belt of Pakistan’s North-West Province called the KP and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by the end of 2001. In 2002, the Pakistan Army (Pak-Army) moved into the FATA¹⁵⁵ in the pursuit of Al Qaeda and Taliban. In the meantime, newly formed groups known as the “Pakistani Taliban” gradually started to emerge inside Pakistan. In 2007, different “Pakistani Taliban” groups united under Baitullah Mehsud into the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Taliban Movement of Pakistan or TTP and started to fight against Pak-Army. By the end of 2007, the TTP was involved in numerous terrorist attacks throughout Pakistan, spreading the fighting to the settled areas of Pakistan.

In 2008, thousands of combatants from Maulana Fazlullah’s Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) an affiliated group of TTP, emerged as a strong political force in the Swat Valley of KP, less than a hundred miles from Islamabad. Fazlullah and

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵⁵ FATA is the North Western region adjacent to Afghan border it is largely less developed part of Pakistan that is governed by colonial era law. Political parties are barred from operating there and most parts of Pakistan’s constitutional order and liberties do not extend to the region.

TNSM were briefly beaten back by the Pak-Army; however, they grew stronger in the wake of the Provincial Governments reconciliation policy. “In February 2009, Islamabad agreed to a cease fire brokered by the Provincial Government which allowed TNSM, under the direction of Sufi Mohammed, to implement Sharia law.”¹⁵⁶

Militant encouraged by the peace deal started to expand further, reaching Buner about sixty kilometers from Islamabad. Meanwhile, Pakistani media aired gruesome videos showing the humiliating treatment of the locals by TNSM in the areas under its control, which kicked in public outrage in the entire country. Pak Army desperate for public support cashed this opportunity and launched a massive campaign against the TNSM and rooted them out of Swat within three months. Militant strongholds in other parts of FATA including South Waziristan, Kuram, Bajur and Mehmend agencies were also destroyed by the end of 2009.

PAKISTAN’S CONCERNS

“I think that the perception of what Pakistan is able to do is blown out of proportion most of the time.” Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister¹⁵⁷

Pakistan’s concerns in Afghanistan are primarily twofold: one that deals with growing Indian influence and the other that emanates from persistent instability and rise of extremism branding Talibanization. Both threaten the basic social fabric and very existence of Pakistan. “What makes the issue of India - Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan so

¹⁵⁶ Bill Roggio, “Pakistan to end military operation and implement sharia in Malakand Division,” The Long War Journal, February 15, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Geo News, “Geo Pakistan,” Interview with Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, <http://www.geo.tv/GeoDetail.aspx?ID=41672>; Internet; accessed on 26 March 2012.

thorny is that all three parties have overriding national interests in the situation”¹⁵⁸ India pursues its interest with an ambition of an emerging power, regional and global, including access to prized resources. New Delhi views its efforts meeting the desires of Kabul.

Barnett Rubin, a leading expert on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations at New York University “sees Pakistan’s concerns over India’s involvement in Afghanistan as one of its legitimate interests. Regardless of whether Pakistan’s desires for its own strategic involvement in Afghanistan are valid or not, it nonetheless sees itself as surrounded by hostile powers,”¹⁵⁹ except its all-weather ally China. Pakistan is therefore, accused of applying the same gravity and apprehensions to India’s involvement in Afghanistan as India feels to the Kashmir.

India’s increasing influence and presence in Afghanistan undercuts the Pakistan’s interests which have generally been related by hostile forces with “strategic depth” issue against India. It is not understandable why Pakistan should be insensitive to developments in Afghanistan which is its next door neighbour as compared to India which is third country and US which feels a pinch 7500 miles away. Pakistan’s security forces cannot easily abandon this claim.

Pakistan views India’s advances in Afghanistan through rapid push of material support as a strategic loss to its interests which had kept India at bay from Pakistan’s western frontiers for years but now with the opening of Indian consulates close to the

¹⁵⁸ Economist, “The Great Game revisited: India and Pakistan are playing out their rivalries in India,” 24 March 2007.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*,

Pakistan border India has started to interfere in Pakistan by aiding Baloch insurgency and Pakistani Taliban faction, TTP which is fighting Pakistani Army in the FATA. Pakistan perceives that any Indian engagement in Afghanistan is malicious.¹⁶⁰ According to Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, “the Afghan government extended aid to some 30,000 Balochi tribesmen in the 1970s. Pakistan is now worried about similar aid from an Afghan-allied India; to Pakistan the claims are legitimate.”¹⁶¹

India has a long-term interest in Baluchistan as a possible instability played by India would be crucial to checkmate Pakistan in the event of re-initiation of insurgency in Kashmir. Another argument is that Baluchistan’s succession from Islamabad would deprive Pakistan its support during any future India-Pakistan strains by placing it directly in Delhi’s court. A general impression was also given to some participants of the 2007 roundtable Council on Foreign Relations that perhaps Indian intelligence services were attempting to bleed Pakistan in Baluchistan as a vengeance for the decades of clandestine struggle in Kashmir, supported by Pakistan.¹⁶² Pakistani Prime Minister, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani pressured Indian Premier Manmohan Singh, during their meeting at Sharm-el-Sheikh in July 2009 by presenting a dossier of Indian involvements in Baluchistan to hamper the construction of Gwadar Port.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁶¹ Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, U.S. Officials Say,” *New York Times*, 1 August 2008.

¹⁶² To understand the extent of covert operations, refer to Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947-2004*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁶³ Hamid Mir, “Balochistan and India,” *Jang: News*, 29 July 2009.

Gwadar is an under construction deep sea port located on the coast of Baluchistan, Pakistan. It is being funded by China and has direct strategic implications for both Pakistan and India. As a deep-water port, it gives CARs an access to main shipping lanes of Indian Ocean. Indian Premier Manmohan Singh encountered staunch domestic disapproval for his allowance to Pakistan for Baluchistan to make way into the joint Indo-Pak statement at Sharm-el-Sheikh in 2009. This acceptance by the Indian Premier also proved that one, Baloch militants were targeting Chinese engineers at India's behest and "second, by intending that news of the attacks would garner further anti-India sympathies among Islamist militants and their supporters."

Lastly and more significantly Pakistan's major concern is that when it takes action against Taliban forces, they have a tendency to run across to Afghanistan and start launching attacks on Pakistani soil from there. TNSM members, who managed to escape to Afghanistan in the aftermath of massive operation in Swat valley in 2009, now launch continuous attacks from the Afghan Province Kunar into Dir district of Pakistan.¹⁶⁴ Similar thing also happened as a result of operation in the South Waziristan when bulk of TTP elements escaped to Afghanistan. Now Pakistan's western borders insecurity has increased many folds which has resulted into deployment of heavy regular forces on the western border. The same insecurity haunts Pakistan in the wake of any operation in the restive North Waziristan Agency.

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM: EFFECTS ON PAKISTAN

¹⁶⁴ The Guardian, "US troop withdrawal leaves Pakistan vulnerable to attack by insurgents," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/17/us-troop-withdrawal-pakistan-vulnerable>; Internet; accessed on 21 April 2012.

Pakistan's relationship with its neighbours has followed a troubled course, ever since ISAF has initiated Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. This has further convoluted Pakistan's own external and internal security, interpolating further dysfunction into its political landscape and adding stress to its economy which has been brought to the brink of collapse. According to Kamal Matinuddin, author of "The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994–1997" Pakistan's strategic goals in Afghanistan before the NATO intervention had been: "one, the creation of a durable peace with an Afghan government that is pro-Pakistan; two, the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistani soil; three, access into Central Asian markets; and lastly, a safe route for the oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to the Arabian Sea."¹⁶⁵

Since 2001, as a direct consequence of ISAF's operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan's internal security has suffered adversely due to unification of Islamic extremists under anti-US and anti-Semitic sentiments. The US drone (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) campaign that attacks on sovereign Pakistani territory failed to achieve any strategic effects has put ever-increasing political pressures on Pakistan and has further impinged its nation's instability.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, as an unanticipated outcome of US policies and NATO operations in Afghanistan a steady rise of religious extremist organizations' in Pakistan and Afghanistan has been experienced as more and more Muslim males joined these groups to fight those they see as return of Crusaders especially in the backdrop of President George Bush's speech on September 16, 2001:

¹⁶⁵ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 141.

¹⁶⁶ Christopher L. Budihas, "What drives Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan?" http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/LWP_82_web.pdf; Internet; accessed on 25 March 2012.

No one could have conceivably imagined suicide bombers burrowing into our society and then emerging all in the same day to fly their aircraft - fly US aircraft into buildings full of innocent people - and show no remorse. This is a new kind of -- a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.¹⁶⁷

This speech further substantiated by the fact that a western coalition forces are fighting a war in a Muslim country has provoked radical groups in Pakistan to send out a jihadist call across the world to unite in their fight against NATO forces in Afghanistan. More so, bulk of Pakistanis perceive that the US installed Karzai government is a foreign puppet, supported by a significant number of minority Tajik and Uzbek officials and military officers, who are traditionally pro-Indian or pro-Iranian.

Taliban pushed out of Afghanistan started to nest in the neighbouring FATA and KP areas of Pakistan. These highly radicalized individuals started to affectively galvanize the local population through coercion and exploitation, resulted in massive radicalization / Talibanization of society. Most young males fanaticised Taliban as patriots fighting against “White Occupiers” and LEAs as facilitators of the Western puppet regime. The agenda being pro-Islamic mixed with terrorist flavour spread like contagious disease in most economically deprived parts of Pakistan. Today, Pakistan is most threatened by Talibanization for being economically deprived and backward.

“India’s political and economic partnerships with the Afghan government and NATO partners, even if regarded as harmless civil–economic projects helping the Afghan

¹⁶⁷ The White House, “President George W. Bush,” <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>; Internet; accessed on 27 March 2012.

people, are seen as a Hindu–Western attempt to take over the country.”¹⁶⁸ These factors reinforce their jihadist appeal in Afghanistan, undermining Pakistan’s strategic external and internal security. Ongoing unrest by left wing religious parties in the shape of “Defence of Pakistan Movement”¹⁶⁹ further explains this sentiment.

As a direct consequence of this inability, Government of Pakistan faces two types of pressures. One is international pressure to stop the influx of extremists from Pakistan to Afghanistan and removal of terrorist sanctuaries in the FATA and KP. The Islamabad’s failure to control the FATA has a ripple effect on the remaining country: the nation loses confidence in the Government’s capability to aptly rule the state and therefore, population turns to terrorist leaders notably those associated with extremist organisations. These pressures could spin the nation towards a worst-case, failed-state status.

The other aspect of NATO operations in Afghanistan that raises contention is the persistent drone strikes in the FATA. This strategy has many inadvertent and distressing consequences in Pakistan. The predominant concern is the popular public perception that the US without any recourse to international law is doing whatever it pleases and has the consent of broader international community. Though these strikes often kill a significant number of high profile terrorists, but they also kill and injure a numerous innocent civilians, instigation nationwide protests.

¹⁶⁸ Christopher L. Budihas , “What drives Pakistan’s...”, March 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Dawn, “Defence of Pakistan Movement,” <http://www.dawn.com/2011/06/12/defence-of-pakistan-movement.html>; Internet; accessed on 2 April 2012.

In addition, America's denial to halt these forays the perception that the incumbent establishment including military are US stooges. The attacks may be productive in killing extremist leadership; they complement tension in the internal and external security paradigm in the country. Ironically, Pakistani nation see its leadership as foreign puppets, whereas, the external security dynamics strain the foreign relationship with other international partners including US.

EFFECTS OF US-LED WAR ON PAKISTAN

US-led war where greatly impacted the internal security dynamics and economy of Pakistan. It also has forced some major reverses on the Eastern front with archrival India. Indian gains in the ongoing US-led war are more far reaching as compared to US frontline ally, Pakistan. According to Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "after nearly four decades of mutual distrust and neglect, the United States and India have [developed] significantly overlapping interests in South Asia in general and in Afghanistan in particular for the past decade or so."¹⁷⁰ This alliance where undercuts Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan also left Pakistan deprived from US leverage against India in its long standing Kashmir issue.

US India specific initiatives in the backdrop of US-India Strategic Partnership such as Indian access to high-technology, US-India Civil Nuclear deal and award of Afghan National Army training and defence deal gave Pakistan a feeler of being left out of the loop. This US treatment further strengthened Pakistani belief that US is an

¹⁷⁰ Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "The Start of a Beautiful Friendship? The US and India," World Policy Journal 20, no. 1 (Spring 2003).

unreliable ally and felt compelled to look for long term partnership with Russia and China.

SUMMARY

9/11 definitely caught Pakistan most unprepared for a war on the western front. Indeed, Pakistan did not have much choice to select sides due to poor economy, a limping democracy and international isolation. The fateful decision did bring Pakistan to the 'frontline ally' but the war on in Afghanistan soon turned into brewing old rivalry with India when US finally gave India a free hand to plan and conduct reconstruction. Pakistan's sensitivity to the issue has historical lineage and ongoing struggle in Baluchistan is a testament that Afghanistan's current setup is involved in the resurgence of insurgency.

Moreover, for Pakistan the quickly pressed war did not give her the time to deliberately dismantle the Cold War established Jihadist network which turned on the state when it tried to go against their interests. As evident from the history of Afghan conflict, Pakistan never had the control over the entire situation which was perceived or expected. Pakistan could have been a more productive member of the coalition had it been treated fairly for the sacrifices it rendered for the War on terror.

CHAPTER 4

OTHER PLAYERS IN THE GAME

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan being at the crossroads of three main regions of Eurasian peninsula has stakeholders who may want to influence the outcome of ongoing struggle in order to secure their long term security, trade or influenced based interests.¹⁷¹ If, this role may be categorised on the basis of stakes over interests, then perhaps Pakistan, Iran and India hold the maximum stakes whereas others have shared interests based on outcome. Role of other players who have relatively lower stakes in Afghanistan may not directly influence the outcome of the endgame but virtually affect the long-term solution. These stakeholders include Central Asian Republics (CARs), China and Russia whereas; Saudi Arabia wants to maintain long-term influence due to its status as regional player.

Interestingly, these stakeholders may have varying politico-economic interests in the Afghan conundrum but they share a common goal of keeping Taliban out of power loop. These goals and interest also coincide with coalition goals in the overall outcome of the conflict. Nevertheless, the distrust among the players as well as with major coalition partners is also a source of friction. China and Russia fear a growing US presence in Afghanistan as a major source of concern to their interests whereas, CARs see this as a favourable outcome for being a major economic incentive in addition to security issues, and Riyadh wants to limit growing influence of Shiite branded Islam from the West.

¹⁷¹ Jessica T. Mathews, "Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan," <http://www.CarnegieEndowment.org>; Internet; accessed on 5 April 2012.

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS (CARs)

Among seven CARs only, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are the direct neighbours of Afghanistan.¹⁷² These states besides sharing strong religious ties, also share a significant portion of ethnic Uzbek and Tajik population with Afghanistan. This bondage not only made these states Afghanistan's direct neighbours but also partners in regional security, sharing "a common interest in Afghanistan: preventing the rise of militancy and extremism [Taliban], and the cross-border infiltration of such groups into their territories. Stability in Afghanistan would quell the serious threat these radical groups pose."¹⁷³ As an underlying objective, CARs also aim the seizure of transnational narco-terrorist groups which operate in this region. These interests generally coincide with coalition goals and the larger international community.

At an individual level, CARs have unresolved water sharing issue with Afghanistan which is a potential source of tension in the region. Especially, "as [the] climate change and frequent droughts are making water scarcer in the region."¹⁷⁴ The other main source of concern for CARs is the Russian aspirations of regional dominance with overarching economic and strategic implications of control which inhibits their true

¹⁷² The American Institute of Afghan Studies, "Afghanistan's other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China," http://www.bu.edu/aias/reports/aon_conference.pdf; Internet accessed on 8 April 2012.

¹⁷³ Jessica T. Mathews, "Is a Regional Strategy ...", 5 April 2012.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*,

economic potential. “Therefore, the fulfillment of Central Asian states’ objectives in Afghanistan is contingent upon Russia’s desire for regional influence.”¹⁷⁵

In the post 9/11 scenario the establishment of US military bases in CARs, has provided them with a unique economic opportunity. Especially, in backdrop of US recent inclination to use Russian and the CARs route as a supplementary supply route for movement of military support material to Afghanistan provides an additional short-term economic incentive.

Under present arrangement landlocked CARs are heavily depend on Russia for access to world markets, a stable Afghanistan may offer a substitute, efficient access route to warm waters through Pakistan. This new arrangement will not only bolster the economic activity but also open the prospects of their supplying rich hydrocarbon resources to energy hungry South Asia.¹⁷⁶

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia was one of the main US ally against Soviets in Afghanistan, however, since the fall of communism, Saudi policy in Afghanistan underwent a major shift from defeating communist ideology to containing Shiite branded Iranian influence into pro-Sunni countries in South and Central Asia.¹⁷⁷ Saudi role in Afghanistan came to limelight on the morning of 9/11 when Bin Laden, a Saudi national and Al-Qaeda

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁶ Islamabad Policy Research Institute, “Gas Pipeline Projects in South Asia,” <http://ipripak.org/factfiles/ff64.pdf>; Internet; accessed on 9 April 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Jessica T. Mathews, “Is a Regional Strategy ...”, 5 April 2012.

mastermind, orchestrated attacks on US soil.¹⁷⁸ The post-Soviet era, strategy further envisaged on investing heavily in Wahhabi branded madrasas in Pakistan and Afghanistan where considerable number of Pakistani and Afghan youth are being rendered free education, boarding and lodging; “believing [that] radical Sunni Islam to be a natural obstacle to the propagation of a revolutionary Shiite doctrine in the region.”¹⁷⁹ Under same pretence, Saudi Government has also funded numerous mujahedeen groups, who were inclined to promote Wahhabi brand of Islam as well as play a leading role in countering Iranian influence in Afghanistan. Riyadh was among the three only nations, besides Pakistan and UAE that officially recognized the Taliban regime in 1996.

As regards contemporary Riyadh policy towards Afghanistan and its long-term interests; they desire to see an end to bloodshed in Afghanistan and the eradication of al-Qaeda and other anti-Wahhabi organisations. This largely does not conflict with US and coalition objectives; however, in the final outcome they would like to involve key elements of the former Taliban movement in an endgame.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in the post-US intervention era, role of Saudi and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Afghan reconstruction is considerably less compared to that of other countries.¹⁸¹

CHINA

¹⁷⁸ Council on Foreign Affairs, “Saudi Arabia and the Future of Afghanistan,” <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/saudi-arabia-future-afghanistan/p17964>; Internet; accessed on 9 April 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Jessica T. Mathews, “Is a Regional Strategy ...”, 5 April 2012.

¹⁸⁰ Jessica T. Mathews, “Is a Regional Strategy ...”, 5 April 2012.

¹⁸¹ Council on Foreign Affairs, “Saudi Arabia and ...”, 9 April 2012.

China has always maintained a passive role in Afghanistan, and exclusively supported Pakistan's policy owing to its close alliance / convergence of interests' i.e limiting Indian role in Kabul. In the post 9/11 era, China has not played an active role in reconstruction based on this view. However, in the recent past Chinese policies underwent a comprehensive review which involved change mainly for two reasons. "First, the Chinese have growing economic interests in Afghanistan's mineral resources. Second, they see Afghanistan as important for maintaining their own internal security."¹⁸² This insecurity stems from Chinese view of growing influence of extremist and separatist groups like Uighur movement, that have been active in the South Eastern China, in the past few years. These groups draw inspirational and other support from extremist groups, including al-Qaeda and Taliban. Allegedly, these groups have received terrorist related training from the radicalized training camps in FATA, and also pose a growing threat to the stability of Xinjiang province in China.¹⁸³

In strategic terms, the infusion of American presence in to Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan has seriously upset China's security calculus on which its West-bound strategy is predicated. The importance of this became apparent when Beijing warned Washington that China's stakes in Pakistan were as high as America's stakes in Israel. Its political, military and economic investment in Pakistan over the last two decades has been many times the magnitude of its efforts to bring Taiwan into the fold.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Jessica T. Mathews, "Is a Regional Strategy ...", 5 April 2012.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁴ Vijai K. Nair, "America's War on Terrorism and Chinese Strategy," China Brief Volume: 2 Issue: 5, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=3795&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=192&no_cache=1; Internet; accessed on 9 April 2012.

Chines, long-term interests in the region and Afghanistan will remain the exploitation of economic and mineral resources, securing of Ainak copper mines deal in Afghanistan is one such example. However, limiting US influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan in conjunction with denying Indians a foothold in the Kabul is China's second preference. China sees US presence in Afghanistan an attempt to encircling. Chines close cooperation with Russia in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and recent military exercises also suggest convergence of Russian and Chines interests in the region and globally.¹⁸⁵

RUSSIA

Russia though remained divorced form the global politics for nearly two decades; however, it never surrendered its strategic interest in the CARs, on the belief that it is the sole protector of CARs against foreign as well as radical Islamist threats such as al-Qaeda and Taliban. Therefore, US and NATO presence in Afghanistan is viewed as a serious concern, as it neutralises its influence in the region. This concern was expressed by Ambassador Zamir Kabulov, Russian ambassador to Kabul, that “expansion and modernization of Afghan military bases such as the Bagram air base is worrisome for Russia, as it might signal a long-term US presence in Afghanistan.”¹⁸⁶

At present, Russia's aims in Afghanistan include:
 (1) prevention of an outright victory for the Taliban, essentially by supporting the U.S.-led coalition; (2) stemming the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan into Russia; and (3) restoring a pacified, neutral, and stable

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁶ Jessica T. Mathews, “Is a Regional Strategy ...”, 5 April 2012.

Afghanistan as a buffer state between Central Asia and the Greater Middle East.¹⁸⁷

While the short term Russian objective in Afghanistan is to avert the return of the Taliban and stop the narco-trafficking, nevertheless, its predominant interest in the ongoing Afghan conflict is to maintain a reasonable influence on CARs through Afghan relations. Since northern Afghanistan has had historic and ethnic linkages with CARs, therefore, Russia's interests generally concentrated around cultivating close ties with the Northern Alliance.

This ambition, however, looks farfetched and unattainable for the reasons that CARs do not want to be viewed as Russian clients; their refusal to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia conveys this point loud and clear. Opening up of southern route to CARs may in long-term reduce Russian hold on CARs as Dmitri Trenin suggests that "in order to protect its markets, Gazprom is seeking to block a projected gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and an oil pipeline from Pakistan's port city of Gwadar to China"¹⁸⁸ therefore; Russia may be overplaying its internal security dynamics.

Russians belief that US presence in Afghanistan will minimize their influence in CARs has been further strengthened due to the defeat of Russian companies in the Ainak copper mines bidding. They now see Chinese influence as a major challenge to their economic interests in Afghanistan. In nutshell, "Russia is more interested in preventing

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*,

others from availing themselves of Afghanistan's resources than it is of obtaining those resources itself."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*,

CHAPTER 5

GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD APPROACH

There is hardly a state which owes its existence to the interests of its neighbours and the obligations of an international system. Unlike many western democracies, Afghanistan emerged as a part of state-formulation process involving competition between various regional and hegemonic powers.¹⁹⁰ Its role largely represented as a “buffer state” to delineate between the British, Czarist Russia, and Iranian spheres of influence. As a result of its direct role unlike India, Pakistan, or even Sri Lanka, where the state institutions evolved as part of exigencies of colonial rule, in case of Afghan statehood these institutions emerged as a result of balancing the interests of external powers. This veracity created a two way post-colonial progress in the country in which interest groups developed as a result of a strategic rivalry between powerful regional states like India and Pakistan as well as the two superpowers which created a “[political] black hole”¹⁹¹ in Afghanistan. This ‘black hole’ further sucked in the Shiite and Sunni rivalry with the rise of only Shiite State on the edge of Middle East and Saudi Arabia, who sees itself as a leader of Wahhabi branded Islam.

“As a buffer state, Afghanistan is not only a *product* of hegemonic ambitions and political calculations – its current (post-) conflict situation is also determined by the

¹⁹⁰ Boris Wilke, “Regional Security Strategies for Afghanistan and Its

Neighbours – A Role for the OSCE?” <http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/05/Wilke-en.pdf>; Internet; accessed on 6 April 2012.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*,

cross-border character of the problem complex.”¹⁹² The fact that explains the reliance of the Afghan internal actors on external support makes it possible for its neighbours and regional powers to transfer their disputes / interests into Afghanistan which is the main reason that all attempts, so far, to resolve this issue met so blunt failure.¹⁹³ This cycle also reversed in last two decades when much of the conflict started to proliferate back into the neighbouring states. The flow of violence “typical of long-lasting armed conflicts was accompanied by a proliferation of conflict parties, whose activities range across national borders: from religious solidarity networks, to international militias.”¹⁹⁴ Not only, weapons and drug trafficking is structured on a cross-border basis, but also the reinforcement that include international fighters, who have converged here from a larger circle which expands from Kashmir through Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, and as far as the Balkans in last decades or so.¹⁹⁵ “This is the underlying reason why Afghanistan experienced not peace but rather an unprecedented escalation of violence following the end of the Cold War.”¹⁹⁶ Some even argue that Afghanistan is the “heart of Asia” and therefore, Asia will remain restive till it comes out of the current flux.

In this backdrop it is understandable that why the regional aspect of the peace process has so far played a minor role towards conflict resolution? Especially, the six

¹⁹² *Ibid.*,

¹⁹³ Cf. Barnett R. Rubin, “*The Search for Peace in Afghanistan. From Buffer State to Failed State*,” New Haven/London 1995.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Steve Coll, “*Ghost Wars. The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*,” New York 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, “*Islamist Networks. The Afghan-Pakistan Connection*,” London 2004.

¹⁹⁶ Boris Wilke, “Regional Security Strategies, ... 6 April 2012.

plus two arrangement under the auspices of US and the Russian guarantees, which included China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran. The Afghan neighbours, in the “Bonn process” and the upcoming “Kabul process” that foresees US and Russia remaining outside observers. The “Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations”¹⁹⁷, signed by Afghanistan and its six neighbours, “merely updates the principles of non-interference and good-neighbourly relations in the context of the war on terrorism.”¹⁹⁸ This declaration where provides a framework for consultations and conferences (one that has already been made use of) however, it fails to render a mechanism of consultation between Afghan neighbours and the states who interfere in the country.¹⁹⁹

RELEVANCE OF GOOD AND BAD NEIGHBOURHOOD

“Theory and experience suggests that institutions grow best in institutionalized soil- where they are supported by other institution.”²⁰⁰ These institutions are vital for statehood functions as recognised by international community in terms of “Westphalian Sovereignty”²⁰¹. These functions which may be understood as democratic traditions or

¹⁹⁷ United Nations, Press Release SC/7621, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/sc7621.doc.htm>; Internet; accessed on 7 April 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Boris Wilke, “Regional Security Strategies, ... 6 April 2012.

¹⁹⁹ The Berlin Declaration on Counter-Narcotics was adopted on 1 April 2004. Since then, conferences were held in Doha (May 2004) and in Riyadh (February 2005) on police cooperation and counter-terrorism policy, respectively.

²⁰⁰ Robert O. Keohane, “Political Authority...., 2003, 292.

²⁰¹ The classic unitary conception of sovereignty is the doctrine that sovereign states exercise both internal supremacy over all other authorities with a given territory, and external independence of outside authorities. As the World Court said in the Wimbledon case, sovereignty means that the state “is subject to no other state and has full and exclusive powers within its jurisdiction without prejudice to the limits set by

institutions are either inherited or evolve through the course of many centuries. In most western democracies these institutions have evolved over many centuries whereas, in others these defused across the borders. Nevertheless, these traditions have nurtured the political landscape for many decades making a fertile institutionalized neighbourhood or “Good Neighbourhood”²⁰² such as European Union and North America. These governments support the democratic functions in their neighbouring states and thus create mutual trust and dependence.

Mutual trust and interdependency of interests is vital for the success of international institutions. The reason for their success largely depends on the degree of consensual or voluntary acceptance of this dependence. Therefore, modern day institutions owe their success to the good neighbourhood and thrive in this environment whereas; they tend to wither away in bad neighbourhood. “In good international neighbourhoods, Westphalian sovereignty is not a precondition for domestic sovereignty, since external authority structures can have limited powers and be responsive to the states involved.”²⁰³ This implies that in good international neighbourhoods, these institutions also constrain the unbundling sovereignty which in return provides domestic sovereignty.²⁰⁴

applicable law.” Permanent Court of International Justice, Series A, No. 1 (1923). See Stanley Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva: Essay in the Theory and Practice of International Politics*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1987, 172-73.

²⁰² Robert O. Keohane, “Political Authority...”, 2003, 292.

²⁰³ Robert O. Keohane, “Political Authority...”, 2003, 293.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*,

According to Myron Weiner, unfortunately region in which Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are located is among the bad neighbourhoods.²⁰⁵ Here, according to Michael Ignatieff, the vicious circle of state decline is inherited by the succeeding governments due to weak infrastructures, multitude of ethnic groups and largely due to weak coverage of government institutions.²⁰⁶ The Competing interests of the regional players generate a “war economics”²⁰⁷ which is further supplemented by drug trafficking and international criminal and terror syndicates. Thus creating spirals with seemingly bottomless supply of resources to sustain combat and make these conflicts perpetual.²⁰⁸ “These states are in crisis not because they are poor but they are cursed with a highly profitable commodity – heroin, cocaine, oil and diamonds”²⁰⁹ No dearth of foreign aid will help resolve this issue unless some long-term mechanism is not put in place which could create conditions for creating state institutions.

States which do not comply with international norms may well warrant military interventions in order to restore order / human rights or to deny safe havens to terrorists. These interventions may succeed and avert the catastrophe or could also further plunge the state into disaster. “The *context* within which humanitarian intervention takes place is critical to the long-term political efficacy of any strategy to restore normal life and civil

²⁰⁵ Myron Weiner, “Bad Neighborhoods: An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows,” 21 *International Security*, 1996, 5-42.

²⁰⁶ Michael Ignatieff, “State Failure and Nations Building,” Cambridge University Press, 2003, 302.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ... 303.

²⁰⁸ Jon Lee Anderson, “Oil and Blood,” *The New York Times*, 14 August 2000, 46.

²⁰⁹ Michael Ignatieff, “State Failure ...”, 304.

relations between ethnic groups that have been adversaries.”²¹⁰ If viewed in the context of Keohane’s “bad and good neighbourhood”²¹¹ metaphors it can be inferred that in a bad neighbourhood, it is easy to act bad and may be suicidal to act better and if not improved there is very less likelihood that the situation may ever improve. Here people either loath each other or worst distrust each other for centuries bad blood, which according to James S. Coleman and Robert Putnam is referred as lack of “social capital.”²¹² Resultantly, external influence is either hostile or exploitive.²¹³

Keohane’s Good Neighbourhood approach in essence revolves around the new concept of pooling or sharing sovereignty function between neighbouring states in order to ensure greater stability, enhance the governance capability and internal as well as external security. The new defined of sovereignty allows international or regional bodies to monitor the national legislation, minority rights and human rights. This thinking closely resembles to the current EU construct in which the states navigate the new international arena with new definition of sovereignty which does not mean dismantling the Westphalian Sovereignty but having a more robust one.

In order to understand the effects of good and bad neighbourhood on the conflict, two latest and relevant scenarios can be briefly viewed in comparison with Afghanistan. Bosnia and Iraq are two such states and societies whose problems are in fact very ethno-

²¹⁰ Robert O. Keohane, “Political Authority...., 2003, 292.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*,

²¹² James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*,” Belknap Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1960; and Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,” Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

²¹³ Robert O. Keohane, “Political Authority...., 2003, 292.

religious and regionally embedded. In both cases internal intervention was called for but they met with different outcomes. Bosnia gained independence in the 1990s, but soon plunged into a devastating civil war due to ethno-religious, historic and regional disputes which crushed its sovereignty. A foreign military intervention restored its sovereignty; but not fully, its current form of sovereignty is as much a function of external forces, as it is of internal, even today. But Bosnia is in a 'good neighbourhood' and its outcome was much better, than Iraq's. Where, too the competing ethno-religious interests, external interventions, geostrategic competitions created a civil war, in a post-intervention period. Unfortunately, Iraq is located in the bad neighbourhood where Shiite dominated Iran and Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia, are fighting their rivalries therefore, outcome is much similar to Afghanistan.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD APPROACH

The issue, however remains that good neighbourhood cannot simply be created especially, overnight. They generally evolve on the basis of "common interest" as can be seen in Europe where a union grew from the need of common security, in the wake of two consecutive World Wars and overarching economic interests. The construction of good neighbourhood is a long-term issue.²¹⁴ In the special case of Afghanistan, it must be understood that the conundrum has existed for over three decades, though a small period in the history of nations however, the effects and geopolitical conditions which are prevalent in the region may have created a situation which could be turning point in the history.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 293.

According to Robert O. Keohane, a short term strategy towards conflict resolution could be redefining the boundaries of the neighbourhood by which a new social construction / obligation can be affected.²¹⁵ This could be in a manner similar to Balkan issue where Balkan was a bad neighbourhood but its effect such as refugee flow was affecting the entire Europe Union, therefore, in the larger construct the issue was a European, which was a good neighbourhood.²¹⁶ The Afghan conundrum may be an issue concerning its immediate neighbours but has effects that reach beyond the region to China, India, Russia, Middle East and even to North America and Europe. All these affectees have already responded to the issue.

The common goal of the new neighbourhood would be securing long-term regional and global security by ensuring security and economic development in Afghan neighbourhood. The conflicting interest may be divergent but there are some 'Common Grounds' which are; One, Taliban should not return to the power; Two, social and economic development of the entire region and not Afghanistan alone for long-term stability; three, access to energy resources of the Middle East and CARs using the Afghan land bridge.

As per refinement strategy the countries in the Bad Neighbourhood should be given incentives for reformed behaviour by the consortium of the 'New Redefined Neighbourhood'. Understanding, that the countries within the conundrum cannot provide resources for each other due to economic decline or mutual distrust. "The resources and

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

credibility has to come from outside the bad neighbourhood.”²¹⁷ Moreover, for the resources to continuously flow as well as the implementation of the covenants the providers of the resource has to consider the region within their own neighbourhood. With reference to Afghan conundrum rich nations like, China, Russia, CARs and India can not only create this effect but can help jump start the dying economies of the bad neighbourhood.

The harder part of the ‘good neighbourhood approach’ is to persuade the conflict zone countries to compromise their notion of Westphalian Sovereignty in order to achieve economic benefits. International stakeholders may have to attract these countries with lucrative incentives for joining the resource providing countries, in a similar fashion as in North American or EU construct that may assist to changing their long-established behaviours pattern.²¹⁸ The new beliefs, that long-term security and rule of law can foster economic development by attracting direct foreign investment in addition to promised foreign aid which may create political and social developmental conditions which could then assist the nations to concentrate on social development and finally come out of vicious cycle of poverty and law and order.

While applying this theory to Afghan neighbourhood we should understand that indeed this is a long-term strategy but keeping in view the experience of past three decades especially by India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, CARs and now China & US the situation is ripe to take this process to next higher level. A brief over view of the situation is:

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 294.

Pakistan:

➤ Understanding that where, in any Afghan political and military solution, Pakistan holds the maximum cards, at the same time; it also has the maximum stakes.²¹⁹ Pakistan has suffered the most in the thirty year Afghan conflict. Its economy which was the fastest growing in Asia in the 60s is now at the verge of collapse.²²⁰ Pakistan was a stable economy growing at the rate of over 7 % till as late as 2007 is now down to 2-3 percent.²²¹ Law and order from best in South Asia till 2001 is now ranked only after Afghanistan. If the situation persists Pakistan is likely to plunge further. Following facts will certainly affect Pakistan's decision to support Good Neighbourhood Approach:

- Under the current geopolitical scenario Pakistan cannot allow its territory to be used for exporting terrorism. This may lead to political isolation for Pakistan internationally, if not regionally.
- Taliban government in Afghanistan is unacceptable to any stakeholder including Pakistan.
- Internal security situation in Pakistan is linked with the resolution of Afghan issue, so is economy.

²¹⁹ Sanjeev Miglani, "ANALYSIS - Afghanistan's neighbours stir a witches brew" KABUL, 1 Jun 2010, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/idINIndia-48956420100601>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

²²⁰ Ishrat Husain, "Pakistan & Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats : The Role of Politics in Pakistan's Economy," Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009 Page 1-18 , <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/role-politics-pakistans-economy-0>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

²²¹ Economic Watch, "Pakistan Economic Review," <http://www.economywatch.com/economic-review/pakistan.html>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

- Stable Afghanistan can open trade and the doors of abundant natural resources for Pakistan.
 - Closer trade and economic ties with India mean increase in economic activity and access to cheaper goods / commodities for people of Pakistan.
 - Pakistan could not settle long standing issues including Kashmir with India through war or proxy wars.
- Having realized this, probably Pakistan has started to engage India and Afghanistan in the context of good neighbour where for the first time in the history Pakistan, it has considered granting India the status of “Most Favoured Nation (MFN).”²²²
- However, since KASHMIR IS THE LIFE BLOOD FOR PAKISTAN, any solution which leaves this issue simmering behind will not have a long-term effect. Resolution of Kashmir Issue, therefore, is vital for a peace in the region long-term solution of Afghan conundrum,²²³ says Nawaz Sharif.²²⁴

India:

²²² India Times, “Most Favoured Nation Status,” <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/topic/Most-Favoured-Nation-status/news/2>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

²²³ Pakistan Today, “Kashmir dispute must be resolved for regional peace, says Nawaz Sharif,” <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/03/28/news/national/kashmir-dispute-must-be-resolved-for-regional-peace-says-nawaz-sharif/>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

²²⁴ Nawaz Sharif is leader of second largest political party Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Group [PML(N)]. He has been twice elected as the Prime Minister and now is leader of opposition party in Pakistan.

- India knows fair and square that lack of a central Government in Afghanistan will surge the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir as well as law and order situation in the India due to transnational linkages of religious / radical organisations. Experience of worst insurgency in the history of Jammu and Kashmir from 1989 to 2001 and 2008 Mumbai attacks, are at hand.
- Return to this scenario means dwindling economic growth and parting with the aspiration of attaining a regional power and global player status. Under the present circumstances, US strategy of peace and stability in Afghanistan does not seem to be working and Karzai Government may not last any further then US pack up date.
- Nuclearization of South Asia means that India can no longer defeat Pak-Army without facing a total destruction scenario, which precludes military domination of the region.
- Without engaging Pakistan, India cannot tap into the natural resource of CARs and markets which are vital to sustain growth against Chines monopoly, besides gaining access to Pakistani markets.

Iran:

- Iran is going through the worst international isolation in its history with the gravest consequences to its economy due to latest US restrictions on its Central Bank and export of Crude.²²⁵

²²⁵ Shearman and Sterling, "US Ratchets up Economic Sanctions Targeting Iran's Central Bank and Its Crude Oil Exports," <http://www.shearman.com/files/Publication/8d7bde8a-75b8-41c4-ad4e->

- In the backdrop of post 1998 experience, Iran would not want a Taliban led government in the Afghanistan however; Tehran also understands that it is not possible unless other neighbours especially Pakistan and Saudi Arabia cooperate.
- US presence in Afghanistan, especially under the current scenario poses an even graver security challenge for Tehran.
- Crude under export restriction by US means Tehran can only survive by exporting natural gas to its Eastern neighbours, Pakistan and India as well as import staple food for its population to evade starvation and political isolation internationally.

OTHER PLAYERS IN THE GAME

- CARs and Russia understand especially in the backdrop of post 1998 experience, that defeating Taliban would be a major challenge without garnering the support of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.
- Resurgence of Taliban will have serious security implication for all other players especially for Russia, China and CARs.
- Russia's desire to keep US and NATO out of its backyard as well as for China to avoid encirclement, they have to facilitate Afghanistan's stability.

COMMON GROUNDS

[d3ccc4602734/Presentation/PublicationAttachment/f9bbb7b1-dc74-40e8-b033-d2f6d4e12a56/US-Ratchets-up-Economic-Sanctions-Targeting-Irans-Central-Bank-and-Its-Crude-Oil-Exp.pdf](https://www.d3ccc4602734/Presentation/PublicationAttachment/f9bbb7b1-dc74-40e8-b033-d2f6d4e12a56/US-Ratchets-up-Economic-Sanctions-Targeting-Irans-Central-Bank-and-Its-Crude-Oil-Exp.pdf); Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

Finding common grounds to foster peace and stability based on mutual interests is a more durable option as compared to an imported solution which could not address the complicated tussle in the region. These common grounds are based on the mutual interest of access to each other's markets, sharing the natural wealth for mutual benefits and providing law and order necessary for sustained economic growth in the region. In Afghan neighbourhood scenario these common grounds look a distance objective, however, a closer look on the recent developments may allude that a strong underlying structure is already shaping up which could be used to build on further.

Economic interdependence between the regional players is probably key to cracking this conundrum. In this regard major work is already underway. Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline is under construction since 2009.²²⁶ India was a part of this mega project (IPI) which is not only necessary for Pakistan's economic development but equally important for India in order to attain desired industrial output. This project is not only important for economic development but was a stepping stone for future stability in the region. It would have not only partnered India and Iran in development but would have fostered the economic growth in Pakistan in the shape of transit fees which was 1.2 USD per mBtu.²²⁷ India backed out from this project based on higher rates being demanded by Tehran and possible malaise and insecurity from Pakistan, if not under US pressure in exchange for civil nuclear deal with US. However, the opportunity is not totally lost as

²²⁶ Gulf Oil and Gas, "Project Focus: Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline," <http://www.gulfoilandgas.com/webpro1/projects/3dreport.asp?id=100730>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 8, 2012.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*,

India is a huge country and will need fresh energy resources in future which will partner it with Pakistan.

In the current form the IP gas pipeline is likely to defuse Iran – Pakistan rivalry in the Afghan conundrum which in turn with common interests in Greater Baluchistan²²⁸ issue will further mitigate the effect of Shiite and Sunni rivalry. Iran-Pakistan interdependence in the shape of 1100 megawatts²²⁹ of electricity for Gwadar Pakistan will further strengthen Pakistan-Iran relations as well as will facilitate to weaken India-Iran alliance against Pakistan.

The other historic change is probably Pakistan's inclination to grant India MFN status which will not only bolster the trade between India and Pakistan but will build interdependence which at the moment is more vital for Pakistan. However, where this will give more leverage to India in the short term, it will also increase India's dependence on Pakistan for possible opening of land route to Afghanistan and CARs. Other likely projects such as Pakistan-Iran-Turkey / EU rail network will further increase the trade in the region. Possibility of India joining this railway links is even greater as Pakistan has already extended rail link to India.

For CARs the common ground is the possibility of exploiting their full economic potential in concert with Pakistan and Iran, if situation in Afghanistan stabilizes. This will not only give Pakistan and India access to energy rich CARs but will also give them direct access to warm waters which is an Old Russian dream. The ongoing railroad

²²⁸ Baloch separatists who want a greater Baluchistan carved out of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are a major source of concern for Iran and Pakistan.

²²⁹ Pakistan Defence, "Pakistan to purchase electricity from Iran: Gilani (Pakistani PM)," <http://www.defence.pk/forums/economy-development/169723-pakistan-purchase-electricity-iran-gilani.html>; Internet; accessed on 8 April 2012.

project between northern Afghanistan and CARs under US auspice may be vital when linked with Torkham, Pakistan. This will link south eastern Russia and CARs with Pakistan's deep water ports, which is a lucrative interdependence / economic incentive to foster tans CARs-Russian support for a consensus on Good Neighbourhood approach.

Though, common grounds provide unique opportunity to merely connect the dots in order to lead a possible solution to this complex problem however, the undercurrents which hinder a solution include Indian desire to leverage the current situation to gain maximum concessions from Pakistan. Not understanding that US drawdown may clamp down this fleeting opportunity as interest groups in Pakistan also realise an advantageous position under new scenario. On the other hand, IP project is not pulling along well due to US restriction on Iran, and Russia is trying to block Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline due to its vested interests in CARs.

SUMMARY

Short term solution to long standing issues do not work and the perfect example is the Afghan conundrum which has been simmering for centuries if not for a millennium. Afghanistan has been unlucky, not for being poor but for being located in a bad neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is restive due to the competing interests of the regional and international players which in turn fuels the insurgency. Availability of highly profitable commodity such as heroin and cocaine draws narco-terrorist syndicates from the rest of the world making it an ever more dangerous for the World in general and region in particular.

As a result of Buffer State role government functionaries of Afghanistan could not develop as they did in other states. This shortcoming does not allow democratic

institutions to take root and flourish. Moreover, the immediate neighbours Pakistan and Iran are also struggling with extremism and poor economy. Under these circumstances it is very difficult for Afghanistan to pullout of current stalemate, ever. The only option left viable is to mitigate the intensity of competing interest in the region by re-defining it in the first place and then by inter vowing it with economic interdependency. The same good neighbourhood approach that after centuries of wars changed the political landscape of Europe. It must be understood by all stakeholders that peace will not prevail in the Eurasian content till the heart of Asia will not knit into the larger mutual good. Bitter issues like Kashmir, Water distribution and regional dominance have to be relegated in order to achieve this, but perpetual peace can only be achieved by resolving the core issue of Kashmir.

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan is in a state perpetual flux for centuries if not a millennium. Bactria as the soldier of Alexander the great called this place. The land was inhospitable and treacherous as were the inhabitants who spoke a mix of foreign languages and fought savagely from the obscurity of mountains. But this was not Alexander's destiny; he was merely using this land as a vessel to reach India and beyond. Persians, Central Asian Turks and the Great Mughal Emperors all used this land-bridge as a staging area for the virtual ambition of reaching the riches of Indian subcontinent. This bad luck stuck with this nation for ever, as the world around them including India, Persia and Central Asia developed on the fast tracks whereas, they were relegated to the status of "Buffer State" as part of ignominious 'great game' between the Czarists and the British empires.

Afghanistan, today is not only a poor nation but is unfortunate to inherit a bad neighbourhood which is strangled by the competing interests of its neighbours, undercutting each other and inadvertently fueling the ongoing conflict. Understanding this complicated clash of interests is vital for formulating a comprehensive response to the current conundrum. These interests range from mere economic benefits to jealously guarded national security issues. Compromising these interest for a third party, even if it is the only superpower, looks a far cry. Taliban, look central to the conflict but when viewed from the perspective of regional players, they merely look the terminal beneficiary of the greater plot of interstate rivalry. No one wants them back in power but still they tend to take advantage of everyone's weaknesses.

In purely intra-regional perspective, Shiite-Sunni or Iran-Pakistan/Saudi Arabia, Pakistan-India, China-India and Russia-CARs and Russia-China/Pakistan, rivalries have deep seeded insecurities emanating from definite historical lineage which cannot be brushed aside. Indeed, among these contentions, Pakistan's name pops up more than any other country so is its importance, not because it is a direct neighbour but for the reason that in the presence of US-Iran standoff, Pakistan holds the only land route to Afghanistan which links it with the main sea ports. Pakistan is again the only country that has the largest Pashtuns population other than Afghanistan that shares a common origin, language and traditions. It therefore, wields maximum influence as well as holds the highest stakes in any future solution to the Afghan conflict. Any effort that may jeopardise the security concerns of Pakistan is likely to fail due to the same reasons. Af-Pak approach to the issue was likely to fetch maximum results however, in view of growing Indo-US strategic cooperation. The process could not achieve the desired momentum for lacking commitment on behalf of US. Pakistan being left out of Civil Nuclear deal, felt stabbed in the back when bulk of sacrifice in War on Terror was being given by Pakistan whereas, major incentives of regional development were being rewarded to India.

India, on the other hand based on its experience of decades of Afghan civil war, felt naturally threatened and therefore, heavily invested in the reconstruction work. Most of it though was to counter Pakistan's influence and economic interest; however, it did oblige US who could not undercut its services and long-term US partnership against China. At present, India may not only be perturbed by a ceaselessly smouldering Taliban

insurgency which has direct linkages to resurgence of insurgency in Kashmir, but also by a growing Iran-Pakistan economic cooperation and interdependence.

Conversely, Iran caught up in an international isolation especially at the hands of US is genuinely concerned about presence of massive US force on its eastern and western borders. Though aspiring for a major regional role, Iran still sees itself as the leader of Shiite Muslims and therefore will staunchly fight for the domination of Shiite forces in Afghanistan. Its economic interests also conflict with other regional player, nevertheless, international isolation and US presence outweighs all others and pushes it towards a regional settlement of disputes.

Other players who have very little say in the overall conflict also have a single point agenda to keep Taliban or any extremist organisation out of the power loop. They, on the contrary, have rich hydrocarbon resources which could bond the energy hungry region into an interdependent economic merger like EU that could facilitate to mitigate the effect of conflicting interests and create Keohane's 'Good Neighbourhood'. It though, looks a long-term approach to the issue, but with a closer look, actually many major milestones en-route to the good neighbourhood approach are round the corner. These, round the corner milestones can take many years to fulfil or could be achieved in matter of years.

For example, "re-defining the Region" is the Keohane's first milestone. The stakeholders have already redefined the region where India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, CARs, and China are the new region. The new region has economically prosperous countries which can have a stabilising effect on the other economies. Moreover, economic

interdependence is also just a few steps away as the work on IPI and TAPI are already underway. Trade between India-Pakistan-Afghanistan is already opening up and its further expansion to China, Iran and CARs / Russia is just a matter of time.

Regional and international stakeholders have to understand this bitter truth that no short term solution will last in the long run. If these stakeholders want to live with the menace of terror then probably they could put this issue on the backburner. Moreover, mere interdependence might alleviate the current situation but would not subside the long-term insecurities. Thorny issue of Kashmir, between India and Pakistan is central to the bitterest rivalry brewing in Afghan conundrum. This issue will keep surfacing due to numerous sensitivities attached with it.

In a nut shell, the approach to current situation in Afghanistan has to look beyond a COIN strategy which should address the thorny issues at the very core of the problem. The decision has to be made by the stakeholders to either keep fighting this war again and again or fight it once and for all, as Afghanistan is the heart of Eurasian continent and peace will not return to the world in general and Eurasia in particular unless Afghanistan is stabilized.

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