

Indo-Afghan Relations: Challenges and Options for Pakistan in Post 9/11 Era

Sarwat Sultana and Noor Fatima***

Abstract

The Indian soft power image in Afghanistan and strategic partnership between the two countries has become a great challenge for Pakistan political and security forces. India wants to prevent Pakistan from regaining “preponderant” influence in present day Afghanistan, and in this context, the paper discusses the history of troubled Pakistan-Afghanistan and Pakistan-India relations. The paper will present a comprehensive analysis on why Afghanistan is strategically important for Pakistan, how it affects Pak-Afghan relations, and how it provided India an opportunity to limit Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan? India’s idea of encircling Pakistan from east and west is a factor the importance of which India understood and used to her gain in 1971 East Pakistani crisis. Pakistan’s idea of ‘strategic depth’ can be understood as a lesson learnt from India’s two-frontier strategy against Pakistan. The paper suggests that Pakistan does not need strategic depth any more. On the contrary, it needs stable, mature and good neighbors so that both countries can come out of standoff. In this way Pakistan could become a partner in a wide range of areas from security to economic and social sectors.

Introduction

India and Afghanistan has mostly remained non-friendly neighbors of Pakistan. Despite having many commonalities in terms of culture (lingua franca, folklore) and religion (Islam) between the two, relations have remained more or less hostile all the way long. Pakistan and India have fought three major wars and many significant disputes between them are still continuing. Likewise Afghanistan has never accepted the Durand Line as the border between the two countries; had opposed Pakistan’s membership of the United Nations; always maintained cold and hostile

* Sarwat Sultana, PhD Research Scholar, Department of International Relations and Political Science, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

** Dr Noor Fatima, Acting Chairperson, International Relations and Political Science, Department of International Islamic University, Islamabad.

nature of relations with Pakistan, and extended undue support for Pakhtoonistan movement.¹

During the last decade India has emerged as an important player in the on-going reconstruction and long term development program of Afghanistan². India and Afghanistan's long and strong relationship got strengthened by India's role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan in the recent years. The principal stated objective of India's development partnership, covering entire Afghanistan and all sectors of its developments, is to build indigenous Afghan capacity and institutions. Republic of India was the only South Asian country to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the 1980's. Their relations diminished during the 1990's Afghan civil war and the Taliban government.³

Many regional and extra regional powers got involved in the Afghan crisis for more than three decades.⁴ However, 9/11 changed the course of history; the United States of America undertook military action against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and Pakistan had no option but to join the US in its war against terror.

Current context of Indo Afghan Relations

India's perception is that it is a victim of terrorism generated from Af-Pak region, therefore, an India friendly- Afghanistan keeps Pakistan in check and takes international attention away from the embattled Kashmir region. Moreover, India is helping and has recently heavily invested in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Pakistan is paying for helping Afghans to oust the Soviets from their country. This price has literally worsened the situation of law and order in Pakistan with growing suicide attacks and drone strikes in the cities and villages of Pakistan. These incidents pose threat to the very fabric of the country. Pakistan can no longer afford to succumb to all outside pressures to the determinant of its own interests. The intelligence agencies of Pakistan hold the Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif responsible

¹ A.R. Siddiqi, "What Lies Ahead For The Fateful Triangle", *Dawn*, 28 January 2007 www.fesea.org/publications/proceedings/Proceedings4.pdf

² Barbra Crooette, "India to provide Aid to Government in Afghanistan", *New York Times*, *Foreign Relations Archived*, 30 May 2008. http://everything.explained.today/Afghanistan%E2%80%93India_relations/

³ Dr Ross Masood Husain, "Basic Determinants of foreign policy of Pakistan", *New Directions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 36. www.fesea.org/publications/proceedings/Proceedings4.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

for provoking troubles and insurgencies across the border in Balochistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.⁵

After Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, India's Research Analysis Wing (RAW) closely worked with Khadamate-e Aetlaat-e Dawalati Afghanistan (KHAD) and Komitet Gosudar stvennoy Bezopasnosti USSR (KGB). India even voted against seven United Nations resolutions regarding Soviets withdrawal from Afghanistan. During Taliban tenure, India's role and relation were diminished in Afghanistan as India was fearful of Islamists as role model for insurgents in Indian held Kashmir. That is why, they fully supported the Northern Alliance. When Hamid Karzai took office of the President of Afghanistan, India extended its co-operation to his country and has invested in many sectors in Afghanistan.

After signing the Strategic Partnership Treaty with Afghanistan, in 2012, first of its kind in South Asia, India is in a position to enjoy a considerable influence in Afghanistan⁶. Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh's visit to Kabul in May 2011, when the treaty was signed, was in immediate response to Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Yusuf Raza Gillani, and his armed services chief's visit to Kabul in April 2011. During this visit, Pak-Afghan leadership pledged for future friendship and co-operation in many fields of common interest. During Indian premier's visit to Kabul, Afghan President, Hamid Karzai was reported to have said that India and Pakistan are twin brothers while India and Afghanistan are friends.⁷

According to India's Foreign Office brief⁸, India's three stated objectives in Afghanistan are as under:

- Denying any political or military space to ISI or other Islamist groups to support Taliban.
- To break the relations between Norco-trafficking and insurgency.
- To secure Afghanistan as a trade and transport link to hydrocarbon rich Central Asian States.

By virtue of this partnership, the India- Afghanistan relationship cannot be termed as a simple bilateral engagement. India's Afghan policy is driven by and is dependent on many extraneous factors such as India's

⁵ Seema Kumari Wadhvani, "New security challenges ahead of Pakistan: a Geopolitical Perspective", 98. www.usindh.edu.pk/seema.kumari/

⁶ Vinod Anand, "The emerging situation in Afghanistan and Indo- Afghan Relations", www.vivekanada.org

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pooja Roy, "Indo Afghan Relations at Crossroads". <http://www.ndtvmi.com.aprna%20pdf's%20dpshts...nd>.

troubled relationship with Pakistan, its search for a land transit to Central Asia through Iran and Afghanistan and its concerns regarding use of Afghan territory by Pakistan to the detriment of Indian interests. Given the geographical constraints, India has relied on Iran for land access to Afghanistan. This has been complicated by Iran–US relations, the two countries with whom India shares common interests. India has also tried to address Pakistani apprehensions regarding its engagement in Afghanistan. Its decision to resume bilateral dialogue in spite of domestic pressures against any such initiative post-Mumbai and the inclusion of Balochistan in the joint statement issued at Sharm-al-Sheikh in 2009 are part of New Delhi's policy to build confidence with Islamabad. Simultaneously, India has gained enormous political capital through its economic engagement with other countries of the region. This is likely to help it to sustain its presence in Afghanistan even when the Taliban may well be a part of the government in Kabul.⁹

Pakistan's security concerns have been based on the belief that it needs to continue to fight India for its existence. These beliefs have only added to the traditional rivalry pitting Hindu India against a Muslim Pakistan. Countering India is Pakistan's basis for its nuclear deterrence, the need to secure its western border, and maintaining the defense budget, as such, a high priority.¹⁰ Pakistan also fears that India has a number of plans with the objective of destroying Pakistan in an effort to reclaim South Asia. India and Bhutan were the first nations to recognize Bangladesh after East Pakistan seceded in 1971. Following wars with Pakistan in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999, India is currently waging a proxy war from inside Afghanistan.¹¹ From Pakistan's point of view, this proxy war is aided by the use of Indian terrorist training camps in Afghanistan used to train Baloch dissidents.¹² Pakistan believes that the United States has the leverage to control India, and, therefore by default, sees Indian efforts to destabilize Pakistan as condoned by America. In the aftermath

⁹ Smruti S Pattanaik, "India 'Afghan policy': Beyond Bilateralism", *Strategic Analysis* 36, 4. Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis www.idsa.in.

¹⁰ Peter R. Lavoy, *Pakistan's Strategic Culture* (Fort Belvoir, Va.: Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 31 October 2006). <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/pakistan.pdf>

¹¹ Ashraf Javed, "India Intensifying Proxy War in Afghanistan", *The Nation*, 20 March 2010, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/20-Mar-2010/India-intensifying-proxy-war-in-Afghanistan>

¹² "Afghan Soil Being Used for Terrorism: ISI Chief," *Dawn*, 13 January 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/18-afghan-soil-being-used-against-pakistan-am-01>.

of the 2008 Indian embassy bombing in Kabul, the Afghan Foreign Ministry quoted India as “brother country” and the relationship between the two as one which “no enemy can hamper”.

Challenges and options for Pakistan

Indo-Afghan relations are posing serious challenges for Pakistan. In this scenario, in order to meet these challenges, there are numerous options available as well. These will be discussed at length below:

Political challenges and options available for Pakistan

Indo-Pak subcontinent was a geographical unit and separated from Afghanistan by the mountain ranges of Hindu-Kush. However, since time immemorial, both the regions were mutually interactive. They had political relations with each other. India was divided into small independent states as was Afghanistan. Different warriors from Central Asia and Europe selected the route of Afghanistan for invading Indian sub-continent. In recent past, this area was the center of attention of major powers; earlier in late 19th century of Czarist Russia and British Empire and later on in 20th century of Union of Soviets Socialist Republics and United States of America. However, Afghanistan remained a buffer state for most of the time. Pakistan shares almost 2430 km. long border with Afghanistan. Since the inception of Pakistan, Afghanistan’s attitude with Pakistan has been unfriendly for most of the period. On the other hand, India, despite of being a distant neighbor, developed cordial relations with Afghanistan. Due to this Indo-Afghan nexus, Pakistan has to face many political challenges in Afghanistan such as:

Demarcation of boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan: At the time of partition, the issue of demarcation of boundary was raised by Afghan government but British government reminded them of the Durand Line Agreement of 1882. Infact, demarcation of the boundary and Pakhtoonistan issue were the core reasons of hostile attitude of two geographically adjacent Muslim states. The boundary of these two countries should be demarcated scientifically. It will definitely give a boost to the cordial relations between them.

Rise of ISIS and Daesh: Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Hekmat Karzai, in one of his interview said that the Taliban militants and other warring groups are shifting their loyalties to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Daesh. Now, they are after those resources which were once used by Taliban, natural gas and narcotics. He said that ISIS is

getting hold in three provinces of Afghanistan namely Nangarhar, Zabul and Farah and their emergence is a security challenge for the whole region.¹³ Keeping in view, the already poor and deteriorating situation of security in the region, this statement is alarming as Pakistan is already struggling with Taliban and terrorism. If, as the Afghan defense minister has quoted, ISIS is presently showing its presence in Afghanistan, then it is definitely a disturbing situation and security challenge for Pakistan army and civil establishment as well. It is appropriate, at this alarming point, that both Afghanistan and Pakistan should co-operate with each other against common enemy i.e. Daesh/ ISIS. Recent border clashes and harsh statements from Afghan leadership have only served the purpose of those powers which are against lasting peace in the region. Pakistan being professionally and technically superior can devise better field strategy in these joint operations. Without whole hearted co-operation from both sides, nothing can be achieved.

Negative image of Pakistan among Afghan people: Any unrest in Afghanistan has always strong and lasting impact on Pakistan. The large influx of refugees after Russian invasion towards Pakistan brought a lot of problems for Pakistan in the years to come. They were economic, social, political and security problems. Despite all that Pakistan hosted the Afghan refugees for decades. But the modern propaganda tactics are so strong that an ordinary Afghan talks about Pakistan in negative terms. The perception of Pakistan's political elites in this context is that wrong policies of our successive governments and intelligence agencies had built this impression that Pakistanis should be blamed for every wrong doing in Afghanistan. Pakistan is facing a similar situation vis-à-vis India where each and every problem is believed to have originated in Pakistan. Any kind of terrorist activity like bomb blast or suicide attack is always blamed on Pakistan.

In order to improve the situation, Pakistan has many options: First, foremost is to develop close relations with the people of Afghanistan following the example of India. India is investing less in Afghanistan but whatever it is investing is directly on the people. It is investing in social sector where common man get the results. Second, Pakistan should not give the impression of dictating them. Afghans often get offended by this attitude. Afghanistan is an independent country and

¹³ Dipamjan Roy Choudary, "Economic Times Bureau", 21 November 2015. www.economic-timesindiatimes.com/topic/India-Afghanistan-trade, *Daily Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.daily.times.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012/5/21>

its interests are connected with Pakistan. Ultimately, it will realize the sincerity of Pakistan. Other countries have interests in Afghanistan but Pakistan has stakes. Borders cannot be changed. Two neighbors share a lot of things and they are inseparable. Instead of fighting and blaming each other, relations should be normalized. In the modern political world, centuries old rivals are engaged in business and other activities with each other. By following this pattern both the countries can create peaceful and healthy environment.

Indian soft image and diplomacy

India's development in Afghanistan is not huge in terms of financial input but their impact is long lasting on masses. Ordinary Afghans, who are raised and educated in any part of the world, considers Indians their friends. For Pakistan, Indian favoring people on two sides of its boundary, namely Indo-Pak and Pak-Afghan borders, are definitely a big challenge. India is also able to project a considerable amount of soft power.

India is a multi-ethnic, democratic society with a thriving economy and vibrant media. Its Bollywood movie industry portrays glamorous lifestyles and extravagant events. These cultural products have extensively penetrated in the Afghan market. Grassroots level Indian aid projects have also helped to make a favorable image of India among ordinary Afghans. It seems that many of its aid programs are deliberately high-profile, such as the construction of a new parliament building, the donation of planes to Arianna Afghan Airlines, and the construction of a large pediatric hospital in Kabul named after Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

In order to meet this challenge, Pakistan has to rethink its policies, political as well as strategic. Pakistan was investing on certain groups and factions within Afghan political set up. Pakistan being anti-Russia never supported the communist groups of Afghanistan. Likewise, as discussed earlier, a well work out plan in this context will normalize the relations.

Indian hegemonic designs: India is a big country and its economy growth rate remained above seven in the last decade. It compels India for search of new markets to sell consumer goods & is trying since long to reach the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan through land route of Pakistan. This is shortest and cheapest available route. Pakistan is the only hurdle in between as it is not allowing India to use its land route from Wahga to Peshawar. India has border disputes with both China and Pakistan. At the moment, both are co-operating with each other. The

proposed CPEC project is facing many security threats from India backed nationalist organisations. India has disputes with almost all its neighbors; especially those that refuse to accept its hegemony. It is because of this New Dehli has created hurdles in the way of promoting trade relations, intra-countries traveling facilities, issuance of visa to the artists of each other countries etc. After Bhatia Junta Party government came in office, the situation has become worst. This Indian attitude is posing a challenge to Pakistan's interests in the region.

To meet this challenge, there are many options available for Pakistan. War and hostile relations cannot solve the problem. Ultimately both the countries have to come towards dialogue. India has all the rights to develop good relations with Afghanistan, but it must not interfere in the internal issues of other regional countries. Pakistan is continuously facing and complaining against Indian interference in Karachi and Balochistan at international forums. Pakistan now even declares Pakistani Taliban as the prodigy of India. Well planned and systematically conducted terrorist activities, with the help of intelligence support attacks on air force bases and destroying strategically important assets could not be the activity of Pakistani Taliban alone. Pakistan should involve some neutral third party in this issue, where all the allegations and solid proofs should be presented.

Opening of Indian consulates in Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas: Issue of Indian consulates in Afghanistan is controversial. Indian stand is that there are only four consulates of India in Afghanistan and they are in Heart, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Qandahar. Pakistan's stand is that these consulates are the centers for terrorism activities in Pakistan generally and in Balochistan particularly. Indians deny Pakistan's stance of 12 or 13 consulates. They say that these are just information centers¹⁴. In fact these consulates are used for developing contacts with locals as well. For instance the former Soviet Union provided twelve airplanes to Afghanistan in 1971. In return they were allowed to open consulates in Qandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat and Ghazni. Ultimately, these consulates provided opportunity to Russians to build closer relations and contacts with the local Afghan population. It was a long term planning.¹⁵ Pakistan takes these consulates as Indian spy centers and challenge for its security. All these consulates are situated near the Pak-Afghan border which is a porous border. Surveillance is only possible at legal crossing

¹⁴ Professor Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, personal communication.

¹⁵ Kamal Matinuddin, *Power struggle in the Hindu Kush: Afghanistan, 1978-1991*, first ed. (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1991).

points which are few. According to Pakistan's authorities, these consulates are field control rooms and centers for terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Pakistan has many options available if it wants to solve this issue. Above all, if Afghanistan wants to develop friendly relations with Pakistan, it must not allow any other country to use its land against Pakistan. Every country has the right to form relations with the others but it must not be harmful for any third country. India has consulates in Iran as well. Pakistan cannot ask for its closing. This is the obligation of Iran to maintain the balance by keeping eye on the activities of Indian consulates there. If they are involved in any suspicious activity, not only Indians but Iran is also responsible for that. Likewise in Afghanistan, consulates are not an issue but the activities going on in these consulates are alarming.

Proxy wars between Pakistan and India; China and America: Many analysts believe that there are two kinds of proxy wars going on in Afghanistan i.e. Pakistan and India's proxy war and China and America's proxy war. Some are of the view that India and Pakistan are actually fighting the proxy war of America and China. India has always had very friendly and cordial relations with Russia. For that reason too India remained in anti-China in the past. Infact, China is the only great power of the region which is a potential threat for India. India has fought two wars with China and they still have border disputes. On the other hand, USA considers China as a challenge to its supremacy in the world. The pace of development of China is quite alarming for India and America as well. Pakistan and China developed friendly relations at an early stage. They claim that their mutual friendship is deeper than the oceans and higher than the Himalayas. These notions and developments are obviously not acceptable for Americans as well as Indians. Recent developments in the area clearly define the sides and alliances. That's why it is said that these countries namely Pakistan and India are fighting the proxy war of China and America.

Military and security challenges

As this region is the central part of a conflict which is ongoing for last four decades, Pakistan is obviously conscious of its security. Therefore, it has many military and security challenges in this context. They are as follows:

Doctrine of strategic depth: Since the inception of Pakistan, its military have always focused on the strategic depth doctrine against India.

Therefore, they have looked towards Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics for this reason. This doctrine was the sole reason why Pakistan decided to assist Afghanistan against the Soviet invasion, during Zia-ul-Haq's regime. This war ended and Russians left and so did the Americans. Pakistan lost its doctrine, immediately after USSR's occupation of Afghanistan.¹⁶ Pakistan was left with 3 million refugees, thousands of foreign funded *madrassas*, Kalashnikov culture and the drugs.

Another matter of concern is increasing influence of India in Afghanistan. As Dr A.Z Hilali writes:

According to Michael Scheuer (former chief of CIA), policy makers of Pakistan believe that India's expensive, extensive and growing Afghan presence is a direct and even existential threat to Pakistan and after the incident of 9/11 this area of strategic depth has been transformed into a second military frontier with India.¹⁷

Former army chief, General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kiyani's statement that "Pakistan wants a strategic depth in Afghanistan but it doesn't want to control it",¹⁸ was taken as Pakistan's wish to have a favorable government in Afghanistan. The nature of Indo-Pakistan relations is that there is continuous violation of borders by Indians. On the other hand India is pursuing its long term policy of 'strategic encirclement' of Pakistan. India's strategic co-operation treaty with Afghanistan has allowed it to be the part of the strategic alliance with Afghanistan. In this way, it is encircling Pakistan from western side along with eastern border. The failure/non-existence of strategic depth anymore is obviously a challenge for Pakistan. It definitely forces Pakistan to keep its western border secure so that to avoid the situation of being in the nutcracker. In case Indian influence in Afghanistan increases then India will be on eastern and western borders simultaneously, therefore, to avoid this situation is a challenge for Pakistan in Afghanistan.

¹⁶ Lt. General Rtd. Asad Durrani, Personal Communication, 9 September 2015.

¹⁷ Amber Aziz, "Strategic Depth – Pakistan's Defense Doctrine", 22 December 2011. 06:57 Retrieved from <http://www.pakistananalysis.com/en/analysis/national/item/256-strategic-depth-%D0-pakistan%D5s-defense>

¹⁸ Editorial *Daily Times*, 03 Feb 2010. Retrieved from http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010?2?3-story_3-2-2010_pg-3-1; Zahid Gishkori, "Economic Corridor: Pakistan, China Agree on Four-Layer Security", *The Express Tribune*, 1 November 2015. Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/983033/economic-corridor-pakistan-china-agree-on-four-layer-security/>

Cross border terrorism and cross border movement: Almost 2430 km long border of Pakistan and Afghanistan is unique of its own kind. The porous nature of the border has further made the situation complicated, wherein, it is estimated that on average 50, 000 persons cross the border daily, either legally or illegally. This easy access has made it a haven for militants fighting at both sides of the border against their respective enemies (Afghan Taliban against NATO troops and Pakistani Taliban against Pakistani security forces). Drug, arms smugglers and criminals, operating across the border, also move freely in to both the states through the unprotected border. Thus cross border security and movement management has emerged as a prime challenge for both states.

During Musharraf period, in order to monitor cross border illegal movement, on a 35km area of Pak- Afghan border, fencing was made possible with great difficulties. It is a difficult terrain; mountains and sandy areas are both there. Alternatively Musharraf also suggested mining the border. Both the suggestions were turned down by the Afghans. Their reason or logic was that they do not accept the Durand Line as border. Even Pakistani tribes did not accept it. They said that their families and business were at both sides of the borders.

According to the latest news briefing of Director General Inter Services Public Relationing Directorate, out of 1200 km long border proposed for fencing, about 802 km has now been fenced. Therefore, the Pak-Afghan border check posts which were 469 in 2016 reduced to 331 in December 2018.¹⁹

Role of RAW: Pakistan has presented its case at different international forums and levels but not much heed was paid by the International community. Nevertheless, it has presented solid proofs to the supporters of India that India is involved in the terrorist activities in Balochistan and Karachi. These proofs were presented at different forums. For instance, Pakistan's foreign affairs advisor presented a comprehensive report with proofs in the session of United Nations Security Council in 2016.

There are no two opinions that intelligence agencies are formed to safeguard the interests of nations but these activities must not be directed towards the neighbors in order to de-stabilize them. As neighbors can not be changed so developing good relation is a reciprocal strategy. Only then, these nations can play positive role in order to maintain peace in the region.

¹⁹ *Dunya News*, News Bulletin, 30 December 2018.

Taliban factor: Taliban, after fighting with the super power and its allies, has been trained in war tactics. Most part of Afghanistan is still under their control. The government in Kabul is not capable enough to control the country. Every day, hundreds of soldiers leave the army along with their equipments and ammunitions to join Taliban quarters. Their power is increasing and gradually they are capturing more areas. They are inflicting more loses to the ISAF forces. That's why their withdrawal is delayed as Afghans are not able to control them.

Major roads are under Taliban control. They even bargain with Afghan government officials for the provision of security to the troops and, in return, they demand dollars. Afghan defense minister's son was owner of a security agency which was paying those dollars to Taliban which Americans gave them to fight Taliban. Therefore, along with drugs and extortion money, Taliban are earning from road taxes. One of the major ring road which connected major cities of Afghanistan, Delaram-Zaranj Highway, is under Taliban control. They did not interfere during the time of construction but soon after its completion, they control it.²⁰

Serious efforts are required to solve this issue. The Taliban are representing sizeable part of Afghan society. They have power; they must be given due share in the politics. Only then their guerilla activities could be controlled. It will ultimately lead to the peace and stability in the country of Afghanistan, as well as in the region.

Proposed withdrawal of ISAF forces: Afghanistan, post withdrawal ISAF, is also a big concern for Pakistan. Afghan National Force is not yet prepared to manage the threat of Taliban. Afghanistan is completely dependent on foreign aid. In case of withdrawal, the flow of foreign aid will definitely slow down. The war torn country still needs lot of investment in material and human capital after nearly four decades of war. The status of American forces is also a question. Many countries, regional and non-regional, are keen to enter in Afghanistan for their own interest. India and Pakistan are favoring certain groups in the pursuit of influence there. Pakistan has been favoring Taliban while Northern Alliance is openly supported by India.

The best strategy in order to handle this issue is a well worked out plan where all the stake holders get their due share in polity. Only then, each of the group will let others to rule. Infact, Afghan society is a tribal society. It is the general attitude of these people that might is right. Democracy has no roots in Afghanistan. All the Presidential elections

²⁰ Rahim Ullah Yousaf Zai, personal communication, 5 September 2015.

held so far were controversial. Therefore, the strategy of peace talks with certain groups and killing others in drone attacks seems to be the current strategy. However, ISAF Forces must not leave Afghanistan in haste? Foreign funding must be channelized towards long term planning of infrastructure and building of institutions.

Economic challenges and available options

In the post 9/11 scenario, due to the Indo-Afghan nexus, Pakistan has to face many challenges in the economic field. These economic challenges and their options will be discussed in detail under following sub headings:

MFN status by Pakistan to India: Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status means that under World Trade Organisation Agreements, countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners. If a country grant someone a special favor as lowering tariffs, it has to grant so to all. It is called MFN status.²¹ India has granted MFN status to Pakistan in 2006 but Pakistan is reluctant to do so. Pakistan's point of view is that Indian economy is more developed and huge. Pakistan economy cannot compete. Moreover, if India is once granted MFN status, it means that it will be able to transport goods to Afghanistan as well. In this way the Afghan markets will be open for India. Pakistan did not want to lose its leverage of border sharing with Afghanistan. Pakistan has issued a list of 300 items for low tariffs imports. India wants more and is pressurizing Pakistan for the same. It is therefore, a major challenge for Pakistan.

Afghan transit trade: Afghanistan is a land locked country and Pakistan is being providing transit trade facilities to Kabul. In 1965, a formal agreement namely Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) was signed between the two governments for a systematic transit trade. Since then there have been many changes in the pattern or means of trade. The APTTA was revised and it was effective from July 2011.²² This transit trade facility is often misused by certain elements. For instance, illegal trade and smuggling is major issue. It is badly damaging certain industries of Pakistan. On the other hand, USA and India are interested that Pakistan should allow somewhat same facility to India. Pakistan has allowed the Afghan goods transportation to India but not anything more than that. Recently Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani

²¹ World Trade Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.wto.org/english/thewto-e/whatis-e/tif-e/fact2-e.htm>

²² See PILDAT discussion papers, "Pak-Afghan Trade".

demanding that Pakistan should allow India to export its products to India.

Pakistan is already bearing many financial losses in the form of duties and revenues. During an inquiry, it was revealed in July 2011 that about 28900 commercial Afghan trade containers were missing while travelling to Afghanistan from Karachi seaport. They caused Rs.55 billion loss in revenue to the government of Pakistan.²³ Those goods which are not required in Afghanistan, are coming through this route like black tea, tyres, polyester fiber etc. These smuggled things being duty free, are cheap and obviously a loss to the government exchequer.

Another issue regarding Afghan transit trade is that India is trying its level best to get the same status. In that way, it will be able to export vegetable or fruits to Afghanistan which will ultimately limited the prospects of the export of Pakistani food and vegetable items. Due to the energy crisis in Pakistan, prices are comparatively high in Pakistan, while agricultural produce is cheaper in India, therefore, Pakistan is facing another challenge in this regard.

In order to meet this challenge, Pakistan should form policies to secure its economy. The illegal trade from Afghanistan and especially of those goods which are being manufactured locally should be guarded attentively and vigilantly. India is in search of markets. Pakistan should formulate policies with utmost care in order to protect the local industry as well.

Gwadar seaport versus Chahbahar seaport: Afghanistan is a land locked country. It is heavily dependent on Pakistani seaport, Karachi, since the inception of Pakistan. After the signing of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement of 1965, Pakistan allowed Afghanistan to use Karachi sea-port for transit trade. Since then Afghans are using this facility.

Afghanistan's foreign trade depends on Pakistan. After the fall of Taliban led government, India was much interested to access Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics markets. Indian economy is a huge economy and obviously looking for new markets. However, Pakistan always denied Indian access to Afghanistan via Pakistan's land route through Wagha to Torkhum. Latest Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement of 2011 only granted permission of Afghan export to India and did not allowed Indian export back to Afghanistan. Therefore, India devised a solution that it approached Iran directly. India and Iran signed an agreement in 2003 to execute a project of developing a seaport in Chahbahar in Iranian Baluchistan. It is just 75 km away from Gwadar

²³ Lt. General Asad Durrani, personal communication, 9 September 2015.

port of Pakistan which is funded and operated by the Chinese. At the launching ceremony of Pakistan, China Economic Corridor Media Forum, on 17 November 2015, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that Iran-India funded Chahbahar port would be seen by Pakistan as a security threat. He reminded Iran that due to the pressure of USA, India announced to part ways with Iran- Pakistan-India gas pipeline project in 2006 while it joined TAPI projected due to western support. Pakistan stood with Iran in that difficult time.²⁴

If the Chahbahar port becomes operational then India will have an easy access to Afghanistan and Central Asian markets. The dependence of these areas on Pakistan will be over. Pakistan economy will be deprived of a huge market. The army will be denied of its strategic depth. Despite of all these apprehensions of Pakistan, India has built a 270 km Delaram-Zaranj ring road which connects all the important Afghan cities to Iran. A link road from Zaranj in the province of Nimroz to Iran has been built by Iran. However, this road is nowadays under Taliban control. It is in the use of Taliban, not the ordinary Afghans. Indians are asking their government about the legitimacy of heavy Indian investment in Afghanistan.²⁵ Anyhow Chahbahar is posing a challenge for Pakistan's sea port.

Security of Pak China Economic Corridor: China and Pakistan are enjoying friendly relations since the very beginning. Pakistan was the first country which recognized the modern China in 1951 and supported its United Nations membership. During Sino-Indian wars, Pakistan supported China's official stand. Likewise during Pakistan-Indian wars of 1965 and 1971, Chinese supported Pakistan openly. Since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's era, every Pakistani head of government preferred to strengthen ties with China. Due to the rivalry of China and USA, now Beijing and Washington are openly supporting Pakistan and India respectively. Americans are supporting Indians in nuclear and other important fields; China has planned a huge project which will be mutually beneficial for both the nations.

In May 2013, an agreement between government of Pakistan and China was signed in order to establish the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to connect Kashghar, a city of western China, close to

²⁴ Senator Mian Ibrar, "Senator Warns Iran against Indian Funded Chahbahar Seaport" 18 November 2015. Retrieved from www.PakistanToday.com.pk.2015/11/18/news

²⁵ V.K. Shahshi Kumar, "Indian Built Delaram-Zaranj Highway under Taliban Control", *Indian Defense Review*, 1st October 2011. Retrieved from www.indian-defence-review.com/news/

Pakistan border, with Gawadar seaport, situated in Balochistan, Pakistan.²⁶ The less developed parts of China will be benefitted along with around \$ 46 billion investment in Pakistan on roads and energy sector. However, Chinese officials are very much concerned about security situation in Pakistan.²⁷ Almost 23% of the total reported terrorist attacks in Balochistan were made on this economic corridor trade route.²⁸ Therefore, Pakistan has established a special force of 6000 men with 4000 reserve police and 1000 Frontier Constabulary force for protection of CPEC in Balochistan.²⁹ A special security force (nine battalions) comprising an estimated 12,000 personnel, is being set up headed by a serving Major General.³⁰

Water management Issues: Pakistan has the world's largest contiguous irrigation system catering to 45.2 million acres.³¹ The irrigation system of Pakistan mainly comprises of a single river basin of the Indus and its water regulation through storages and regulators.³² A study done by the Irrigation Department of NWFP (now KPK) states that the limited irrigated agriculture in the northern part of the province is heavily dependent on the waters of river Kabul.³³ In the south of the province 157,000 acres are flood irrigated by the Gomal River which has its

²⁶ Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan, *Pakistan2025: One Nation One Vision*. Retrieved from www.pc.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf

²⁷ "China to invest in Gawadar Project", *Dawn*, 29 August 2013.

²⁸ Safdar Sial, "The China Pakistan Economic Corridor: An Assessment of Potential Threats and Constraints", *Conflict and Peace Studies* 6, 2 (2014), 24. Retrieved from san-pips.com/download.php?f=265.pdf

²⁹ Shabaz Rana, "ECNEC Clears Projects Worth Rs.428 billion", *The Express Tribune*, Karachi 04 July 2014. Retrieved from tribune.com.pk.

³⁰ Zahid Gishkori, "Economic Corridor: Pakistan, China Agree on four-layer Security", *The Express Tribune*, 1 November 2015. Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/983033/economic-corridor-pakistan-china-agree-on-four-layer-security/>

³¹ Fatehullah Khan, "Water Problem, its Causes and Solutions" (paper presented at National Seminar on Problems and Politics of Water Sharing and Water Management in Pakistan, man organized by the International Policy Planning & Research Institute, Islamabad, 7-8 November 2005, p.3). Retrieved from www.criterion-quarterly.com/need-for-a-pak-afghan-treaty-on-...

³² Khalid Aziz, "Need For A Pak – Afghan Treaty on Management of Joint Water Courses", *Criterion* 2, 4 (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/category/articles/>

³³ NWFP Irrigation Department, 2009.

headwaters in Ghazni in Afghanistan³⁴ The NWFP and tribal areas, with a combined population of 24 million, depend on four Afghan rivers which flow into the Indus; namely, the Kabul, Kurram, Kaitu and the Gomal. Furthermore, it may be noted that the water of the Kabul River includes that of the river Chitral, which joins it near Jalalabad, and provides about 2.5 MAF of water annually – this is the contribution by Pakistan to the river Kabul's flow.³⁵

Pakistan should have talks with Afghanistan on an equal level, but Afghanistan, at present, is in a weak position. The ultimate expectations are that if Afghanistan agreed on any water management treaty with Pakistan right now, in future when it becomes stable again, it will take a stand that it had signed it under pressure from Pakistan as it did after signing Durand Line agreement. If any progress is to be achieved, Pakistan must exhibit statesmanship. Pakistan and Afghanistan should exchange data about the additional water needed for the proposed new projects on River Kabul.

Heavy Indian Investments in Afghanistan: Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources but due to a number of reasons, no systematic mining has been started so far. However, now many countries are coming forward for this purpose. For instance China is working in copper mining area Ainak. Similarly India is working in Hajigak iron ore mines. Obviously, the iron ore has to be refined enough to turn into iron. For that purpose it has to be transported to India. Therefore it is a complex project where India is already building road, Delaram-Zaranj high way. It is a ring road which connects all major cities of Afghanistan to the Chahbahar sea port of Iran. India is planning to build a railway track parallel to Delaram- Zaranj highway. These long term heavy investments by India, clearly depicts the intention of India that they want to stay in Afghanistan. Moreover this stay will be of long term, posing a challenge to Pakistan.

Social Challenges

Pakistan has to face many social challenges in Afghanistan due to Indo-Afghan relations. They are as follows:

Expatriation of Afghan refugees: Pakistan is the only country which provided refuge to millions of Afghans after Russian invasion. As compared to other countries of the region, there were no restrictions

³⁴ Khalid Aziz, "Need For a Pak – Afghan Treaty...". Retrieved from <http://www.Criterion-quarterly.com/category/articles/>

³⁵ Amber Aziz, "Strategic Depth – Pakistan's Defense Doctrine", 22 December 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.pakistananalysis.com/en/analysis/national/item/256-strategic-depth-%D0-pakistan%D5s-defense>

imposed on Afghans regarding movement within Pakistan. Therefore, the Afghan refugees did not confine themselves to the premises of the refugee camps. They got settled at the places of their choice in Pakistan. They even got National Identity Cards as proof of their Pakistani citizenship. The common language and religion supported them. As there is already very little difference in culture and way of living, Afghans easily adjusted in the local population of KPK and Balochistan. Inter marriages are common within Afghan refugees and local Pukhtoon. Gradually Afghans started buying properties and setting businesses in various areas. Afghan children started attending government run schools and colleges in cities. After 9/11, the whole world was looking at Pakistan. As Pakistan was the sole supporter of Taliban, it was expected that Pakistan will help America in the war against terrorism. It did as per requirement but gradually Pakistan's tribal areas turned into safe havens for terrorists. It was estimated that that about three to four million Afghan refugees were living in Pakistan. Voluntary re-patriation programme was started with the help of United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other donor agencies. Those who voluntarily opted for repatriation were provided with food and sustenance allowance. But the living condition is still poor in Afghanistan. In the absence of basic amenities, it is difficult to survive.

Because of political unrest and continuous fighting between different warring groups civilian population cannot lead a normal life. Foreign aid for major development projects only cannot change the life of common Afghans. They definitely want to live a comfortable life. In Afghanistan there is no infrastructure and the Taliban are getting strong again. In this situation, Pakistan is not able to host these refugees any more as foreign funding for refugees has been stopped. Now the flow of funds is towards Afghanistan for development projects in American forces controlled areas only.

The major bone of contention is the involvement of Afghan based terrorist organisations/groups in terrorist activities across Pakistan. After every incident, the other end of the activity of the terrorists reveal a link with Afghan based terrorist group. Pakistan government earnestly wants to send back them but is unable to do so because of the law and order situation.

Communication gap between Pakistan and Afghanistan: In the bi-polar world, almost all the countries of the world were the part of cold war. Foreign aid was also dependent on ideological affiliation. Afghanistan was being funded by the countries of both the blocs but Russian share was dominant. So do India's presence. After Russian invasion in Afghanistan, India supported the Babrak Karmal government. Afghan political elites fashionably condemn Pakistan.

India invested in creating a soft image and presenting Pakistan as enemy. YouTube is full of videos, posted by Indian nationals, where Afghan students studying in India, comments on Pakistan negatively. The successive governments of Afghanistan also added their share by continuing blame game. Every major event reported from Afghanistan is reported by some European news agency. Pakistan has no bureau office of any media group in Afghanistan while India has invested in media as well. The Afghan news channels are full of hatred for Pakistan. The flights from India brought thousands of people in Afghanistan daily but Pakistan has not even daily flights for Afghanistan. India has arranged a mechanism where Indian and Afghan delegates from all walks of life visit each other country regularly. These contacts at masses level have lasting impacts. This hostile scenario is a big challenge for Pakistan.

In order to fill this gap Pakistan has several options. They could be grouped as governmental and private. At governmental level, Pakistan officials from specific ministries should visit each other's country as a goodwill gesture. The parliamentarian and their committees for instance Foreign Affairs Committee of Senate and National Assembly can visit Afghanistan. Joint Forums could be formed to discuss bilateral interests. Pakistan developed sector of Information Technology can help Afghanistan in building Information Technology set-up in the country. The already established number of educational scholarships for Afghan students could be increased. The youth of Afghan could be provided with skill teaching. The major newspaper should publish special editions on the life of the country. These steps will clear misunderstandings and will bring people of the two countries together despite the effort of non-friendly countries.

The interference of regional and extra regional powers: Afghanistan is at the crossroads of civilization. One of the major and foremost challenges for Pakistan is the interference of regional and extra regional powers in the pursuit of their interests both political and economic. Despite friction between Pakistan and other countries, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, acknowledged that the alliance “can’t solve the problems in Afghanistan without a positive engagement of Pakistan”.³⁶

Peace initiatives by Pakistan: Whenever ISAF forces devised any withdrawal scheme, the concern quarters (remembering post-Soviet Afghanistan) fear that the bloody insurgency in Afghanistan will be

³⁶ Editorial, *Daily Times*, 03 February 2010. Retrieved from http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010?2?3-story_3-2-2010_

converted into another civil war. Therefore, Pakistan always supported peace talks with Taliban in order to end the decades old war in its immediate neighborhood. As Pakistan was one of the country which enjoyed cordial relations with Taliban regime, any initiative in this regard require Pakistan's support. Almost all such initiatives so far taken were supported by Pakistan whether it was Doha talks in 2013 or Murree talks held in Pakistan. It clearly shows Pakistan's seriousness towards peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Contrary to this, India was always reluctant and issued controversial statements at those occasions.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the challenges and options for Pakistan in the post 9/11 era, due to the Indo-Afghan relations. Pakistan is facing many political, social, economic, and strategic challenges. However many options are available in this regard.

India and Afghanistan are two independent states. They have the rights to safeguard their interests. According to the theory of neorealism, the security dilemma in the modern politics compel the state to cooperate with other states for relative gain, it results into balance of power. Therefore, in order to maintain balance of power, states uses internal or external ways. For internal, it develops its own capabilities by increasing economic growth or increasing military spending. When state enters into alliance, it checks the power of other states.

The same theory can effectively be applied to Indo-Afghan relations. What India is doing is due to its compulsion to safeguard its own interests. Pakistan should not be worried about it. Its problem starts at the point where the India and Afghanistan nexus disturbs or harms the interests of the state of Pakistan. Pakistan has, obviously, no objection regarding Afghanistan's friendships. But if this friendship turns into a joint venture of inflicting harm on Pakistan, the issue will arise and it will definitely affect relations with Pakistan.

Point to be accepted is that neighbors cannot be changed, whether it is Pakistan, India or Afghanistan. Keeping in view the ground realities, all three of them should work for a peaceful, war free South West and South Asia. This is the ultimate solution for a lasting peace in the region.