



INDIA'S REGIONAL STRATEGIC OUTLOOK AND INFLUENCE VIA AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract:

India's regional security outlook has significantly changed owing to the post 9/11 world politics and the post-Taliban developments in Afghanistan. The regional strategic layout in South Asia has been dominated by the two rivals, Pakistan and India. Both have sagaciously projected their multifarious strategies in Afghanistan. More recently, India's two traditional rivals, Pakistan and China have strengthened their strategic partnership which would undermine India's role and influence in the region but India's gigantic investment in Afghanistan has strengthened India's endeavors to protect its 'regional strategic outlook'. The U.S which is fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan has granted a greater role to India in 'peace building' process and ignored Pakistan's long partnership against war on terrorism in Afghanistan, because Pakistan, according to the U.S, has failed to control and curb Taliban and militants in Afghanistan. India, however, has become the U.S. ally and has defined its policy vis-à-vis the regional powers, Pakistan and China

Key words: Strategy, India, Afghanistan, Taliban, Pakistan, Security, Terrorism, United States, China, Iran. Politics, Power, CPEC, Interest, Partnership

Título en Castellano: Perspectivas estratégicas regionales de la India e influencia a través de Afganistán

Resumen:

La perspectiva de seguridad regional de la India ha cambiado considerablemente en función de la política mundial posterior al 9/11 y la evolución post-Talibán en Afganistán. El trazado estratégico regional en el sur de Asia ha sido dominado por los dos rivales, Pakistán y la India. Ambos han proyectado sagazmente sus múltiples estrategias en Afganistán. Más recientemente, los dos rivales tradicionales de la India, Pakistán y China han fortalecido su asociación estratégica que socavaría el papel e influencia de la India en la región, pero la gigantesca inversión de la India en Afganistán ha reforzado los esfuerzos de la India para proteger su "perspectiva estratégica regional". Los Estados Unidos que luchan contra el terrorismo en Afganistán han concedido un mayor papel a la India en el proceso de "construcción de la paz" y han ignorado la larga Asociación con Pakistán en la guerra contra el terrorismo en Afganistán, porque Pakistán, según los Estados Unidos, no ha logrado controlar y frenar a los Taliban y los militantes en Afganistán. Sin embargo, la India se ha convertido en un aliado de Estados Unidos y ha definido su política frente a las dos potencias regionales: Pakistán y China.

Palabras Clave: Estrategia, India, Afganistán, Talibán, Pakistán, Seguridad, Terrorismo, Estados Unidos, China, Irán, Política, Poder, CPEC, Interés, Asociación.

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1. Introduction

“Indians and Afghan have always stood for each other, never against another”. Narendra Modi²

Regional and global crises impact upon domestic and foreign policymaking process of every state and they shape their policies, accordingly. Contemporary India is very much different than it was seen or expected by the founding father Gandhi and Nehru. It has taken off through its foreign and economic policies and has emerged as a powerful state in South Asia and world's largest democracy.

Since 9/11, India's regional strategy has been changed as the regional domestic landscape changed. Being a regional power India has established very strong and close relations with Afghanistan. Roots of this relationship can be traced back to the colonial time period when India developed relations with Afghanistan before its independence from Britain in 1947.³ After its inception, India continued the legacy of its friendly relations with the Afghanistan till the end of the cold war. The stint of long relationship was lapsed with Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan. Post-Soviet Afghanistan remained in turmoil and Afghan civil war and the Taliban's rule (1996-2001) had detached India from Afghanistan. The Taliban rule was the only era when India lost its influence in Afghanistan and this era provided an opportunity to Pakistan to promote the strategy of 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the Taliban regime for its security and strategic interests in the region. Pakistan successfully subverted the India's influence in Afghanistan and played its role till the end of the Taliban's regime in October 2001.⁴

Since Talibanization exacerbated India's security outlook *vis a vis* Pakistan, India therefore, supported anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in Afghanistan during Taliban's rule. The end of Taliban's government paved the way to India to re-evaluate its role in a weak and war-torn state. India reopened its embassy in December 2001 which was closed during Taliban's regime. Post-Taliban Afghanistan provided a favorable environment to India to instrument its security and strategic policy in Afghanistan to undermine the role of Taliban and Pakistan which abbreviated the Indian security objectives in South Asian region.

This contemporary shift in Indian foreign policy has its roots in Kautilya's doctrine⁵ which states as “Every neighboring state is an enemy and the enemy's enemy is a friend” and India is pursuing this strategy against Pakistan through Afghanistan by emerging as a principal “partner for reconstruction in recognition of the country's strategic importance for India within and beyond the South Asia”.⁶ India is astutely advancing its goals in Afghanistan as compared to Pakistan by investing in Afghanistan in almost every sector. India is heavily investing to develop Afghan's institutions to retain the writ of the state which had been challenged by the

² The Indian Prime Minister Modi addressed the Afghan Parliament on 24 March 2016.

³ See for example, Tunzlan, Alex von (2008): *Indian summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire*, London, Picador; Arwin, Rahi: “Would India and Afghanistan have had a close relationship had Pakistan not been founded”, *Dawn*, 22 August 2017.

⁴ On 21 October America attacked Taliban regime those were harboring Osama bin Laden, the leader of *al Qaeda*, who was blamed to plan 9/11 incident. Indeed, this incident has brought India in Afghanistan as a regional powerful player to change the security and political environment in South Asia.

⁵ “I shall oppose him (the enemy) with his rear-enemy's ally or with a *madhyama* king, or with a neutral king; I shall either capture or devastate his kingdom with the aid of a neighboring king”, for more detail see an excellent and classic book by Kautilya: *Arthashastra* translated into English by Shamasastri, R. (2013): p.429, at https://csboa.com/eBooks/Arthashastra_of_Chanakya_-_English.pdf

⁶ Fair, Christine: (2005): *India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints*, Washington D.C. The Center Foundation, p.4.



Taliban and will favor India as long as the Taliban remained out of power. To retain its influence in Afghanistan, India is providing social-economic and military aid to Afghanistan.

India's influence in the region is further strengthened by the U.S policy change from Pakistan to India on Afghanistan and terrorism. U.S, the only super power, has allied and accepted India as a major player in Afghanistan vis-a-vis Pakistan which has been dominating and influential actor before⁷ and during the Taliban's regime. The US President Trump and the Indian Prime Minister Modi both seem to be following the same doctrine in Afghanistan that is to reduce Pakistan's influence and eliminate the non-state actors (IS-Taliban) so peace can be maintained through development. The India-U.S nexus in Afghanistan is a new shift in India's security and strategic policy which is redefining its strategic outlook. This paper thus investigates the questions, for instance, why has India implemented realistic approach in Afghanistan? Why Afghanistan matters to India and how is India perusing its policy of regional influence through (via) Afghanistan? Which factors encouraged Afghanistan to prefer India over Pakistan and why the U.S has encouraged India to assume greater role in the security and stability in -via Afghanistan? These questions will help us to understand the India's strategic regional outlook and its contemporary policy particularly towards Afghanistan and to the region as a whole. To answer the aforementioned questions, I have used interpretive methodology and the notion of realism.

2. An Over View of Indian policy from Theory to Practice

Before investigating the contemporary Indian's regional outlook, it is important to have a candid look at its theoretical (idealistic and realistic) policy in the past and at present. India's foreign policy since its inception in 1947 can be traced as a transition from idealism under Prime Minister Nehru to 'realism'⁸ which was geared up in 1960s -1970s.⁹ Prime Minister, Nehru decided to choose the itinerary of 'non-alignment' during the era of 1950s-1960s during the Cold War. Prime Minister Nehru argued that "India would have to plough a lonely furrow".¹⁰ Indian foreign policy during Nehru's era apparently looked very ideal to the region and to the international world, defining the Indian national interest in accordance with 'world co-operation and world peace'¹¹, Woodrow Wilson had also floated his idea for peace but the U.S government indulged itself in international wars and conflict. In South Asia after Gandhi, Nehru emerged as idealist statesman, "Jawaharlal Nehru was an internationalist and his love was for the humanity as a whole. His foreign policy of non-alignment with either of warring power blocs was his distinct contribution to the realization of world peace".¹² As we know the international politics is not based on desire and morality, and humanity is ignored when the state security is eroded.

Nehru's outlook for world peace was changed when China-India war occurred in 1962. This war, indeed, forced the Indian leadership to know the enemy and the reality of real politics which requires power to survive not the fancy words. Post-Nehru Indian foreign policy

⁷ Pakistan supported Afghan Mujaheddin against Soviet Union and it was a strong U. S partner. After 9/11 attack, Pakistan became the U.S ally to eliminate the Taliban regime and supported World view against terrorism.

⁸ See for instance, Morgenthau, Hans J (1948): *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, AA Knof, USA. He has defined *realpolitik* in terms of national interests, military and economic power.

⁹ Prime minister Indira Gandhi emerged as a powerful leader who believed in use of force and she did in 1970s, when civil occurred in East Pakistan, and she decided to support anti-Pakistan

¹⁰ See for detail, Nehru's speech to the Constituent Assembly of India, 4 December 1947, reproduced in Appadorai, A. (1982): *Select documents on India's foreign policy and relations 1947-1972*, vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.10.

¹¹ "Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches", at <http://krishikosh.egranth.ac.in/handle/1/20341>.

¹² Navtej, Kaur: "Nehru as a Prophet of world peace", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 69, nº 1 (January-March 2008), p.204.



transformed after that and was no more based on 'idealism'. India-Pakistan war of 1965 was fought for Kashmir¹³ had further changed the dynamics of Indian's foreign policy. Nehru's daughter, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi initiated "a new era of Indian foreign policy"¹⁴ that was to weaken to Pakistan and compete with China. Prime Minister Gandhi surprised the international community in 1974 by testing the first India's nuclear weapon, a response to that of China's nuclear test 1964, and upset the regional balance of power. Pakistan, as a result, decided to develop its nuclear weapons and acquired nuclear technology to deter India which maintained balance of power in South Asia and in 1999, Pakistan detonated its first nuclear bomb. Thus, South Asia has become the only region in the world where three nuclear powers of the world including US, Russia and China are assisting two nuclear powers of South Asia (India and Pakistan) simultaneously to pursue their interests through India and Pakistan and Afghanistan has appeared as best ground to play the 'power politics'. By the end of 1980s, India still projected the policy of nonalignment as its core goal to ensure global and regional stability. The Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, for instance, expressed his view in front of the American Congress that "India sought independence and nonaligned status for Afghanistan."¹⁵ To please the Soviet Union then India had refused to involve herself directly in condemning the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979.

Post-cold war not only transformed the international world order from bipolar to unipolar but also provided a turn-off to India from non-alignment to alignment. Presently Indian policy has taken a gigantic shift and does not reflect their antecedent's world view (*idealism*). Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, was a rational leader who salvaged Indian policy by developing security relations with U.S during Bush era. President Bush improved the previous lukewarm relationship with India to a, "a natural partnership in theory that was in practice unnaturally fraught, raising India to the status of strategic ally".¹⁶ India's behavior as the biggest democracy and nuclear state astutely convinced the Bush administration to sign nuclear deal with India. Pakistan also solicited for the same concession which was negated by the Bush administration. Prime Minister Modi has further extended India-U.S. ties and emerged as a realist and hard Indian leader in India's political history whose engagement with U.S has enhanced India's regional strategic outlook. Since the U.S. has accepted India's role in Afghanistan, it seems more convenient to India to execute its long-term strategic goals. Thus, India-U.S. partnership has generated new dynamics for within the regional political sphere in South Asia.

After the end of the Cold War, the U.S emerged as a powerful 'modern empire'. Soviet Union lost its power and supremacy in Afghanistan and the fall of the Soviet Union left an anarchic Afghanistan. The U.S did not learn from the fall of previous empire/s in Afghanistan. Fortuitously, 9/11 incident provided justification to the U.S to invade Afghanistan to eliminate the Taliban's rule. U.S needed Pakistan's support against Taliban and terrorism and allied with Pakistan and India respectively in the war on terrorism to pursue its own objectives. India on the other hand is investing billions of dollars in Afghanistan¹⁷ to pursue its power politics

¹³ India and Pakistan have inherited Kashmir conflict since 1947. Both have fought three wars and still are ready to pull their mussels for the next war. Kashmir is a bone of contention and long-standing issue between the two nuclear states. It is true that both states are active in Afghanistan to undermine each other owing to Kashmir problem. Kashmir factor has fostered terrorism in region and both Pakistan and India are victims.

¹⁴ Rohan, Mukherjee: "Indian Foreign Policy and Contemporary Challenges", *International Affairs*, vol.87, nº1 (2018), pp. 87-104.

¹⁵ Bernard, Weinraub: 'Gandhi in speech to congress, calls for nonaligned Afghanistan', *The New York Times*, 14 June 1985, at <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/14/world/gandhi-in-a-speech-to-congress-calls-for-nonaligned-afghanistan.html>

¹⁶ Ananda, Giridharadas: "India has a soft spot for Bush", *New York Times*, 10 January 2018.

¹⁷ Ashraf, Haidri: "India and Pakistan: A Growing Partnership", *The Diplomat*, 16 September 2016.



under the umbrella of cooperation. Indian strategy in Afghanistan is apparently meant to curb terrorism and promote peace building efforts which also immensely convinced the U.S administration to take India on board instead of Pakistan but in reality, it is the part of the 'great game' in Afghanistan, where politics and power both inevitable.

3. Afghanistan Matters to India: Interest beyond Region

In the modern state system every state need alliances and friends not only for its survival but also to achieve its interests and to pursue its futuristic policies. Geo-strategic position of Afghanistan, Pakistan-Afghan deteriorated relations, emergence of militancy and terrorism in the region and presence of India's ally, US, in Afghanistan have encouraged India to enhance its sphere of influence in the Afghanistan and also in South Asia. These dynamics are also strengthening the India's security doctrine which is to make Pakistan incapacitate state and less influential state. Post-Taliban Afghanistan has recreated opportunity to India to review its old relations because during the Taliban regime India, apparently, preferred to stay away from the Taliban dominated Afghanistan owing to their hostile behavior towards the Afghan Hindu and Sikhs and the Taliban's edict on Kashmir, the training of Pakistanis, Kashmiri Mujahidin (*Warriors*) in Afghanistan's camps.¹⁸ Consequently, India would continue its support to anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, thus throughout the Taliban regime India's foremost objective was to strengthen the Northern Alliance¹⁹ to lessen the Taliban's power who removed the government of the Northern Alliance led by Burhanudin Rabbani in 1996 but the Taliban's victory would take Afghanistan out of its sphere.

Indian interests and national image both were immensely undermined during the Taliban regime. India faced embarrassment at home and abroad in 1999 when Pakistani terrorists hijacked an Indian airbus in Nepal and landed in Afghanistan, then the Taliban failed to arrest these hijackers rather facilitated them in negotiating with the Indian minister, Jaswant Singh. The hijackers demanded to release Maulana Masood Azhar and other Kashmiri fighters. Maulana Azhar traveled to India in 1992 to help the militants, but he was arrested in 1994 and was held in jail in Indian-held Kashmir.²⁰ Surprisingly, India accepted the demands to release their three²¹ comrades and handed over them to the Taliban's government, later they entered in Pakistan via the Afghanistan border.

Two years after the Indian Airlines saga, the ruthless regime of the Taliban was eliminated by the U.S led NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces. Several security officers shared their views with author that "9/11 incident was a turning point to India's policy makers that they would not allow Pakistan to use Afghanistan against India". India's partnership with U.S and Afghanistan has provided a great opportunity to India to use all tools to achieve its strategic interests vis-a-vis Pakistan. India's role is increasing in Afghanistan because the U.S., against the wishes of Pakistan, has encouraged India to assume greater role in the security and stability of Afghanistan which is not in Pakistan's interest. A well-known scholar, Dr. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, defines the new regional shift which reinforces the Indian policy vis-à-vis Pakistan. Dr Rasul is of the view: Relations between Pakistan and the US have become intertwined with the larger issues of not only war and peace in Afghanistan but also the rapid geopolitical shifts this region is witnessing with the rise of China, American

¹⁸ See for example, "who are the Kashmiri militants?", *BBC News*, 1 August 2012, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18738906>.

¹⁹ Northern alliance was formed by Burhanudin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood after Taliban took over in 1996. The alliance included non-pashtoon groups e.g Tajiks and Hazara. Northern alliance was supported by India, Iran, Russia and Tajikistan.

²⁰ "India negotiating with hijackers in Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 28 December 1999, at <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/122899india-hijack.html>

²¹ Pakistani hijackers secured Maulana Masood Azhar, Sheikh Omar and Mushtaq Zargar.



sanctions against Iran and assertiveness of Russia. American strategic partnership with India and its emphasis on New Delhi to play a greater role in the security and stability of Afghanistan has not gone well with Pakistan. Neutralising Afghanistan from the India-Pakistan rivalry, if that is really an objective, is in conflict with an ambitious Indian role in the country that Washington seems to be encouraging.²²

Both India and the U.S have reached on consensus that Pakistan is supporting and sponsoring Taliban in Afghanistan, thus the rationale behind India and U.S partnership is their common objectives which is to curb the rising Taliban and Islamic militancy. To them Pakistan has not done enough to eliminate militants ,and the U.S policy toward Pakistan “do more’ would not work To sideline Pakistan, disappointed President Trump has suspended Pakistan’s security aid and said Pakistan had “given us nothing but lies and deceit.”²³ President Trump expects India to play more active and vigilant role in Afghanistan in finding a peaceful process. Thus, both India and U.S have the same strategy in Afghanistan –to eradicate terrorism.

India blames Pakistan for every wave of terrorism in region and hence is successful in sidelining the Kashmir conflict in all international forums. Indian has also kept war on terror confined to Afghanistan and Pakistan.²⁴ This unique and first India-U.S. partnership against terrorism in Afghanistan is a new addition in India’s foreign policy which started after incident of 9/11. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister Modi both have nurtured India’s security and regional outlook to incapacitate its traditional rival- Pakistan in Afghanistan through this alliance.

India’s tilt toward Afghanistan is not only Pakistan centric but also it would use Afghanistan as a gateway to connect Central Asian states; however, Pakistan will remain the main target which has challenged India’s influence in Afghanistan.²⁵ Currently, Afghanistan provides its frontier to India to design its policy to subvert Pakistan and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Pakistan-Afghanistan border is more porous in comparison to the Pakistan-India border. Pakistan’s internal security condition can be exploited by India-Afghanistan cordial relations which will endanger or even halt the CPEC.²⁶ India assumes that China-Pakistan nexus may curtail Indian’s influence in Afghanistan and can threaten its regional security outlook. CPEC project will change the regional and international dynamic which may hurt the U.S and India’s influence, consequently India and U.S both have common concern which was raised by the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Jim Mattis, opposed CPEC during the Congressional hearing which categorically reflected to India’s concerns on CEPC. Mattis said: The One Belt One Road strategy to secure China’s over both the continental and maritime interests, in their eventual hope of dominating Eurasia and exploiting natural resources there, things that are certainly at odds with U.S policy. So, what do see China playing in Afghanistan, and particularly related to their One Belt One Road.²⁷

China has determined its long-term goals to globalize its economic and security interests, Afghanistan is an important state which may lead China’s plan to connect CPEC with Central –Western Asia economic corridor and China is striving to gain Afghanistan’s trust to join CPEC which eventually increasing India’s apprehensions. In Afghanistan, China and India

²² Rais, Rasul Bakhsh: “Will Pakistan take Kabul-route to Washington?” *The Express Tribune*, 10 October 2018.

²³ Olson, Richard. “How not to engage with Pakistan,” *The New York Times*, 9 January 2018.

²⁴ Haroon, Raja Asif, “Indo-US –Afghan Agenda to against Pakistan”, *Pak Tribune*, 10 October 2017.

²⁵ Interview of Khalil, Fida. Retired security officer, Islamabad. 15 October 2018.

²⁶ Pakistan and China launched mega project in 2016. Some economic zones of this projects pass through Gilgat Balitistan which is to India a disputed territory. Through western border (Pak-Afghan) China can have a great connectivity by road and train and Afghanistan would be included as a ‘route’ which irked India.

²⁷ “The US backs India’s stand in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor”, *The Hindu*, 4 October 2017.



are two divergent forces; China is relying on its close partner Pakistan to stabilize Afghanistan by bringing the Taliban on table talks to end the seventeen-year-old insurgency. India, on the other hand, has been investing in economic and security programs to strengthen the Afghan government against the Afghan Taliban.

China is keen in development in Afghanistan because a peaceful Afghanistan would help in completing China's long strategy, CPEC; China knows that unrest in Afghanistan would pose a great threat to its interest. Afghanistan is a place where Pakistan, China, and India are playing their cards in the name of 'development' and the U.S.'s presence, undeniably, has changed the dynamics of regional power politics and has involved India in Afghanistan. Now there is a nexus between India, U.S. with Kabul regime playing the poodle. The bloc they target is Pakistan-China, with scuttling CPEC as their immediate aim.²⁸ Completion of CPEC is not feasible without Gwadar port which provides 'direct access to the Indian Ocean'.²⁹

China's direct access to Indian Ocean is expanding its influence to deter the U.S "from blocking the Strait of Malacca, a key passage in the Indo-Pacific region".³⁰ To curtail China's economic and military influence in the Indian Ocean the U.S has renamed the U.S Pacific Command as 'U.S.-Indo Pacific Command' in 2018 and Secretary Mattis categorically stated that "in recognition of increasing connectivity of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, we renamed the U.S. Pacific Command".³¹ The former commander of the U.S. Pacific Command has pointed out China's impact on the region and he is of the view that "great power competition is back. I believe we are reaching an inflection point in history. A geo-political competition between free and oppressive visions is taking place in the Indo-Pacific".³² China's presence in South Asian region is an irritant for the U.S and India and the Afghan factor would nurture India-U. S strategic partnership.

India's major concern is to curtail China's influence which is using Gwadar deep sea port located in Balochistan adjoining Afghanistan's Kandhar province, which has the U.S military bases in the war-torn country. Likewise, this port provides the shortest route to Pakistan to reach Kandhar within few hours. India believes that China, particularly, will pose a great threat to 'Indian trade through Indian Ocean' and also Pakistan would be able to control enormous energy avenues. China's control over Gwadar port is irritants for India because this port will enable China to observe India's activity in the Persian Gulf, a, Arabian Sea, and future maritime activities between India and Iran would be smoothly observed by China. Comparably, Iran has intelligible concerns about the use of Gwadar port by the U.S as a base to observe activities inside Iran.³³

Afghanistan had always mattered to India but today on account of CPEC it matters more than it was considered in the past because it is Pakistan's immediate neighbor and the post-Taliban era, comparatively, witnessed the unfriendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. India, being the regional power, has taken an opportunity of these deteriorated ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and successfully established stronger ties with

²⁸ Dulat, AS Durrani, A and Sinha, A: (2018). *Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, p.108.

²⁹ Singh PK: "China's Strategic Gateway to the Indian Ocean," *Reconnecting Asia*, 24 May 2017, at <https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/analysis/entries/chinas-strategic-gateway-indian-ocean/>

³⁰ Mourdouskoutas Panos: "What's China Doing In The Indian Ocean?", *Forbes*, 1 April 2018, at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdouskoutas/2018/04/01/whats-china-doing-in-the-indian-ocean/#4e0cdfel3633>

³¹ "INDOPACOM, it is: US Pacific Command gets renamed" *Military Times*, 30 May 2018, at <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/05/30/indo-pacom-it-is-pacific-command-gets-renamed/>

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Mazari, Shireen: "Balochistan and the Great Power Games", *Asia Times*, 29 February 2005.



Afghanistan. Theoretically speaking, India has shaped its policy to contain Pakistan economically and militarily by using Afghanistan and also attempting to refrain both Afghanistan and Pakistan to have a healthy relationship'.³⁴ As healthy relationship would not support India's interests in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's long borders are penetrable and provide direct trail to enter in Pakistan's two main troubling provinces-Balochistan and Khaiber Pakhtoon Khawah (KPK). These provinces have been under the target by the cross border terrorists since the U.S forces attacked Afghanistan.³⁵ Balochistan conflict³⁶ was emerged with the birth of Pakistan and it never been resolved politically rather Pakistani governments used force to silent the Baloch leaders which eventually increased alienation in Balochistan. Knowingly, Afghanistan and India would support their cause 'independence of Balochistan' the Baloch leaders (insurgents) sought help from Afghanistan or India.³⁷ India and Afghanistan both took advantage to aggravate and exploit the Pakistan's internal conflict because both believed that Pakistan was meddling in Afghanistan by supporting and protecting Taliban.³⁸ Afghanistan always inculcates Pakistan for its chaotic and anarchic security conditions which strengthen India's perception that "terrorism is bred not in some faraway land, but across our border to the west"³⁹ so "whatever goes wrong in India is attributed to the ISI"⁴⁰ the Pakistan's most powerful spy agency.

India-Pakistan long time rivalry has emboldened 'spy war' to undermine each other. Since Mumbai incident both India and Pakistan have awkward relations. India believes that Pakistani spy agency, ISI, was involved, though, Pakistan denied but the ex- the DGISI, General Pasha, confirmed that the Mumbai 'attackers were our people' but it "was not our plan".⁴¹ The year of 2016 remained tense between India and Pakistan when terrorist attacked on Pathan Kot, an air port in India, and Uri, located in state of Jammu and Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan for these attacks. Modi and his team both are determined to teach Pakistan for sponsoring terror in India.⁴² Both countries are countering each other through their agencies. National Security Advisor and ex-spy master, Ajit Doval who has been in Pakistan for spying purpose, cautioned Pakistan that, "you can do one Mumbai and you may lose Baluchistan" and Indian active politician and BJP's leader, Manohar Parrikar, said "we should neutralize terrorists through terrorists only". These statements have deteriorated relations between India and Pakistan and Pakistan believes that "India has been fomenting unrest through terrorism using Afghan".⁴³ A Pakistani defence analyst is of the view that India may use Afghanistan to

³⁴ Ashraf, Sajjad: "India and Pakistan Compete for influence in Afghanistan", *East Asia Forum*, 25 October 2013.

³⁵ "Transcript of RAW's agent Kalbhushan's confessional statement", *Dawn*, 30 March 2016, at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1248786>

³⁶ For detail see, Akhtar, Nasreen: "Baluchistan Movement and unrest in Pakistan", *South Asian Survey*, vol.18, n° 1, (March 2013), pp 121-135.

³⁷ See for example "India, Afghanistan supporting Baloch nationalists", *Dawn*, 11 October 2016, at <https://www.dawn.com/news/495687>

³⁸ "India blames Pakistan for Taliban-sponsored violence in Afghanistan", *Afghanistan Times*, 18 September 2018.

³⁹ Maria, Sanminiatelli: "Indian Foreign Minister accuses Pakistan for harboring Terrorists", *Time.Com*, 29 September 2018.

⁴⁰ Dulat, Durrani and Sinha. *op. cit.*, p 24.

⁴¹ "Ex-ISI chief admitted Mumbai attack planners were 'our people', claims Husain Haqqani", *The Express Tribune*, 10 May 2016, at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1100407/ex-isi-chief-admitted-mumbai-attack-planners-were-our-people-claims-husain-haqqani/>

⁴² Kanchan, Gupta: "Action, not talk, will teach Pakistan a lesson for sponsoring terror in India", *The Pioneer*, 25 September 2016.

⁴³ For detail see "India is fomenting terrorism in Pakistan: DG ISPR", *Global Village Space*, 19 March 2018, at <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/dg-ispr-focuses-on-indian-supported-terrorism-as-main-threat/>



implement its policy against Pakistan and India is investing in Afghanistan to achieve its security objectives in collaboration with Afghan security agency.⁴⁴ The former Pakistani Taliban leader, Ehsanullah Ehsan,⁴⁵ surrendered before the Pakistani agency (ISI) in 2016. He was the most wanted terrorist, hiding in Afghanistan, in his confessional statement he reveals that “Taliban are Indian’s agent they are funded and trained by Indian spy agency, RWA,”.⁴⁶ India has been using TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) as an active card against Pakistan, a well-known Indian journalist, Bharat Karnard, analyzed the RAW-TTP relations. Karnard categorically stated that “Severing relations with TTP will mean India surrendering an active card in Pakistan and a role in Afghanistan as TTP additionally provides access to certain Afghan Taliban factions,”⁴⁷ Thus, India and Pakistan both are countering each other in Afghanistan to establish their influence. Since Afghanistan is not contended with Pakistan, this antagonistic approach of Afghanistan is a new paradigm shift which defines Pakistan as ‘Afghanistan’s enemy’ and Modi’s doctrine “confrontational”⁴⁸ policy toward Pakistan is now taking place.

India’s close relation with Afghanistan has increased Pakistan’s security concern which provides legitimate justification to Pakistan to protect its strategic interests in Afghanistan being a part of be part of the ‘great games’ which has been staged by the U.S where “India is being enough, Afghanistan is hot enough”⁴⁹ Many security experts in Pakistan believe that Pakistan’s policy of ‘strategic depth’ and support to the Taliban regime was a wrong decision. As Cohen states, “Afghanistan has been the most suitable territory of direct “India- Pakistan strategic competition, each rival supporting its own proxies, including the armed forces during the civil war that followed the Soviet departure,”.⁵⁰ The cost of this ‘strategic competition’ is very high and has developed war like approach instead of peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan. Even the civil- military establishments have realized that Pakistan had fought other’s war and made grave mistake by indulging itself in Afghan war in 1980s by General Zia and disseminated the germ of terrorism and extremism in the region. Pakistan’s participation in war against terrorism was another blunder made by the military regime led by General Musharraf. Consequently, Pakistan’s wrong doings in Afghanistan have long-term impacts on Pakistan’s security, and society. To India, today’s Afghanistan is more significant frontier and a central point to be associated with Iran, and U.S to keep eyes on its rivals Pakistan and China.

Pakistan’s long presence and influence in Afghanistan (1980s- 1990s) had created imbalance between India and Pakistan. After decades India has made her way to implement security and economic policy via Afghanistan. As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan provides a direct route to connect the Central Asian states. According to Chandra Suba, “India enhancing its ties and presence in its immediate and extended neighborhood and Afghanistan is important for its plans in Central Asia.”⁵¹ Geo- location of Iran also compelled India to develop Chabahar port in ‘south east’ Iran which enabled India to open its strategic transit route between India,

⁴⁴ For example, see, Talat Masood,” Working toward reconciliation in Afghanistan”, *The Express Tribune*, 11 July 2018.

⁴⁵ Ehsanullah Ehsan was the most wanted, Taliban Leader who had planned attack on Malala in 2009.

⁴⁶ For example, see “Taliban are Indian agents, admits former spokesman”. *The News*, 27 April 2017, at <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/201024-Taliban-are-Indian-agents-admits-former-spokesman>.

⁴⁷ Bharat, Karnard: “Afghanistan-Pakistan and the F-16: Mattis has to hard sell on these issues on his visit to India”, *Hindustan Times*, 21 September 2017, at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/afghanistan-pakistan-and-the-f-16-mattis-has-to-hardsell-these-issues-on-his-visit-to-india/story-qvL9NS6wgl17sy756hE2WN.html>.

⁴⁸ Dietrich, Reetz: “What does the new U.S policy on Afghanistan means for India and Pakistan?”, *World Economic Forum*, 12 September 2017.

⁴⁹ Dulat, Durrani, Sinha. *op.cit.*, p.26.

⁵⁰ Stephen, Cohen (2013): *Shooting for a century: Finding Answers to the India-Pakistan conundrum*, India, Harper Collins, p.191.

⁵¹ Chandran, Suba: “Why is Afghanistan important to India? *Friday Times*, 24 June 2014.



Iran, and Afghanistan that bypassed Pakistan⁵² this port increases trade among three regional states-Iran, Afghanistan, and India after Pakistan has refused transit access to India for trade with its two neighboring states. Iran's did not recognize the Taliban's government owing to their anti-Shia behavior. Post-Taliban Afghanistan is enjoying its relations with Iran which has invested to lift up Afghanistan economically and socially "Iran has signed agreements with Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to provide access to international routes for three landlocked countries".⁵³ Thus Iran is a common friend of India-and Afghanistan. Sectarian conflicts within Pakistan and Pakistan-Saudi relations have always been irritating Iran. Thus, divergence of interest caused distrust between Iran and Pakistan and convergence of interest bring India and Iran closer in Afghanistan. Pakistani perceives that India's strategy follows Kautilya, military approach, who argued that "immediate neighbors are considered as enemies, but any state on the other side of a neighboring state is regarded as an ally".⁵⁴

Afghanistan has become the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy because Afghanistan is indispensable part of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline. India needs energy from Iran and Central Asia, 'pipelines from Iran and Central Asia would be important'. To achieve its objectives India wants a stable and peaceful Afghanistan because chaotic and troubling Afghanistan would sabotage Indian interests and create security risk if the pipelines completed. To secure its long-term interests in Afghanistan India has developed a strong nexus with Iran, and Chahbahar port⁵⁵ would serve India's regional strategic purpose.

4. Post-Taliban Afghanistan: A New Paradigm Shift in India's Regional Policy

After the fall of Taliban, Indian supported Northern Alliance had conquered Kabul and they controlled half the country, Taliban were routed in the north of Afghanistan and the main Taliban leadership including Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda leadership, survived during the American invasion, they all took sheltered in the different areas of Afghanistan and some of them fled to Pakistan and re-organized their group which was known as Quetta Shura, Balochistan.

The U.S invasion in Afghanistan not only eliminated the Taliban's government but also provided an opportunity to India- to restore its influence and establish its authority to implement its futuristic goals. After the fall of the Taliban India became an active player in Afghanistan. The Bonn conference 2001, advised the plan for a war-torn country and an interim government was established under Hamid Karzai who gave a significant role to the Northern Alliance which provided opportunity to India to establish its old links with the Northern Alliance. The collapse of the Taliban regime had changed the regional security dynamics and India actively played its role in reconstruction of Afghanistan. In 2002, Tokyo Conference was held to invite the international donors to contribute in Afghanistan, India being a member of the Bonn agreement, pledged to assist karzai's government because without India and the United States's support Northern Alliance could not continue their control over Kabul. Karzia was considered pro-India and anti-Pakistan due to his anti-Taliban stance, Karzai directly blamed Pakistan for supporting and protecting Taliban (Quetta Shura). Pakistan and Afghanistan relations were deteriorated in 2008 when Karzai threatened Pakistan to send Afghan troops into Pakistan to haunt down

⁵² "Why developing the Chahbahar port in Iran is important for India: 10 points", *The Times of India*, 16 February 2018.

⁵³ See for detail, Mohsen, Milani: Iran's policy towards Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal*, vol.60, n°.2, Spring, 2006, p.252.

⁵⁴ Shamasastry. *op.cit.*

⁵⁵ India and Iran have constructed a North South Corridor that would allow movement of Indian goods from its own port to Chahabahr, from which it moves through Iran via road and rail to the Caspian and beyond. .For detail see "North –south corridor ' vital link' between Iran, Russia, CIS nations", *Azernews*, 18 July 2018, at <https://www.azernews.az/region/134951.html>.



the Taliban's leadership, but Pakistan denied⁵⁶ despite the fact that both Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership were hiding in Pakistan.

India-Afghanistan partnership during the Karzai era was the offshoot of two basic concerns. One, Obama-Karzi rift which had increased in 2009. President Obama had criticized Karzai's government which was involved in corruption and failed to build the state institutions. Karzai then turned against the U.S and the West⁵⁷ and he strengthened his tie with India. Second, Karzai solicited Pakistan's support in facilitating negotiations with the Taliban⁵⁸ which remained unresolved and Karzai decided to move towards India knowingly that both states have been archival rivals. Karzai signed a 'strategic partnership agreement' in 2011 which eventually up lifted India's strategic and security policies in Afghanistan.

Swiftly changing regional security environment have played tremendous role in shaping India and Afghanistan friendship. For an exceptional friendship, India also supported Afghanistan at every forum and strongly advocated for Afghanistan's admission into SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) that completed regional 'identity' in South Asia.⁵⁹ Afghanistan now has become a strong partner of India and has endorsed India's policy vis-à-vis Pakistan. India decided to boycott the 19th SAARC summit in 2016, Afghanistan also joined along with India to show its solidarity. Other three members (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives) also refused to attend the summit and the SAARC conference was cancelled.⁶⁰

Apparently, Modi's policy to 'isolate Pakistan' in the region had succeeded, but he could not reduce Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan-Russia developed their strategic ties in 2016 and held joint military exercises, both signing the agreement 'Friendship 2017'.⁶¹ Pakistan may have triumphed in bringing Russia and China in Afghanistan which would attempt to oppose the U.S 'made peace' and its permanent 'occupancy' in Afghanistan. The emergence of IS (Islamic State) in Afghanistan, and rift with the U.S, encouraged Russia and Pakistan to develop strong partnership. The expanding role of 'Trika' may cause more tension in the region which would affect India's regional security outlook.

4.1 Continuity and Change in Afghanistan: Challenge and Opportunity for India

Afghanistan is not a land where any forces would enjoy untrammelled power. So India also has the opportunity to challenge Pakistan and China by establishing strong relationship with Afghanistan but it faces hurdles and challenges by the militants groups in Afghanistan. Karzai's thirteen years long epoch left Afghanistan without peace. The new government was formed by Ashraf Ghani in 2014. He adopted a flexible approach towards Pakistan to establish peace in his country. President Ghani had altered the previous anti-Pakistan (pro-India) policy and he tried to normalize relations with Pakistan. Relations remained fraught during Karzai's era because of Durand Line (disputed border between Afghanistan and Pakistan). Trust deficit increased despite the fact that Karzai visited Pakistan twenty times during his long tenure.

Karzai left behind an Afghanistan which was more chaotic, and weak. President Ghani wanted peace in Afghanistan and there was a discernible shift in policymaking. To please

⁵⁶ Declan, Walsh: "Karzai threatens to send troops into Pakistan", *The Guardian*, 16 June 2018.

⁵⁷ Ahmad, Rashid: "How Obama Lost Karzai", *Foreign Policy*, 11 February 2011.

⁵⁸ For detail see, Yousaf, Moed and Scott Smith: "Ashraf Ghani's Pakistan Outreach", *Special Report*, U.S.: Institute of Peace, July 2015. p.1.

⁵⁹ Afghanistan inducted as 8th member: 14th SAARC summit begins" *Dawn*, 4 April 2007.

⁶⁰ Terrorists killed Indian soldiers in Uri village in the Indian controlled Kashmir. India blamed Pakistani agencies and forces though Pakistan denied its involvement, but Modi decided to isolate Pakistan at regional and international level.

⁶¹ "Why Russia and China are expanding their roles in Afghanistan", *Stratfor*, 5 September 2018, at <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-russia-and-china-are-expanding-their-roles-afghanistan..>



Pakistan Ghani, for instance, cancelled the arms deal with India signed previously by President Karzai. Ghani's visit to the Pakistan army General Head Quarter astonished India and "the Indian media went berserk, reacting adversely to an unexpected rapprochement between the Afghan and Pakistan security establishments. The decades of vitriol that India had instilled within the Afghan military psyche took less than two hours to dissipate,"⁶².

Ghani's tilt toward Pakistan was a dramatic shift which alarmed India. Ghani preferred Pakistan over India because Pakistan had agreed to cooperate with Ghani's government in bringing the Taliban to the table to talk for peace.⁶³ The Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif assured Ghani that enemies of Afghanistan could not be friends of Pakistan. Downgrading India to the borderline of his policy, Ghani sent a group of army cadets to Pakistan as opposed to India, where Afghan soldiers were trained. Pakistan hosted 'peace talk' in 2017 but the Taliban continued attacks and controlled a large area from which they had been removed.⁶⁴ The rise of Taliban, in fact, gave an impression to President Ghani that Pakistan enhanced its support for the group and incited them in Kunduz which was captured by the Taliban. Ghani believed Pakistan wanted to generate instability in Afghanistan and overthrow his administration.⁶⁵ The re-emergence of Taliban has changed Afghanistan's perception which encouraged the Ghani's government to reinforce its relations with India. The fall of Taliban would not change Pakistan's pro-Taliban stance it strived to facilitate between the government and the Taliban. "Pakistan did not abandon its alliance with Taliban nor altered its Afghan agenda. Pakistan desired a friendly regime in Afghanistan to facilitate its acquisition of strategic depth, access to Central Asia, and training of militants exclusion of India from the area".⁶⁶ Back to back attacks on Indian consulates in Afghanistan show that Taliban and other militant groups are increasing their strength and are capable of "attacking India's presence in Afghanistan and the whole spectrum of India-Afghan relations is the target of the attacks."⁶⁷ According to Kannan, an independent analyst in New York, India is determined to stay in Afghanistan for primarily two reasons: one, attempting to offset the influence of Pakistan's ISI, which has had a relationship with the Taliban and the Pakistan's relationship with China; and, second, in furtherance of its relationship as junior partner to the United States in South Asia and Central Asia, whereby it has provided supporting military infrastructure throughout the region.⁶⁸

Presently, India's contemporary strategic shift in Afghanistan has drastically changed the context of regional and global politics as Afghanistan has become a central point for the regional and western powers. These powers are gazing at Afghanistan as the most significant client where they have opportunity to achieve their security and strategic goals. All regional and international players are investing their all type of resources exclusively to achieve and protect their objectives in Afghanistan.⁶⁹ However, India has set its preferences and priorities to gain maximum interest in Afghanistan by allying with the U.S. Ghani is of the view that the

⁶² Sehgal, Akram: "The making of history", *Daily Times*, 19 November 2014, at <https://dailytimes.com.pk/102469/the-making-of-history/>

⁶³ Sayed, Sajjad Baqir: "Focus on security cooperation in talks with Ashraf Ghani", *Dawn*, 15 November 2014; "Pakistan reiterates offer to facilitate Afghan peace negotiations", *Asia & Pacific Edition*, 8 October 2015, at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-10/08/c_134693933.htm

⁶⁴ Almukhtar, Sarah: "How much of Afghanistan is under Taliban Control After 16 years of war with the U.S.?", *The New York times*, 23 August, 2017.

⁶⁵ Safi, Saleem: "Ghani and Pakistan:part-11," *The News*, 1 February 2017. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/183085-Ghani-and-Pakistan>

⁶⁶ Paul, TV and Ganguly Sumit: "The Jihad Paradox: Pakistan and Islamists Militancy in South Asia," *International Security* vol.3, n° 1 (Summer 2012), p.131.

⁶⁷ Haider, Suhasini: "9 killed in attacks on Indian mission in Afghanistan: Karzai blames Pakistan", *The Hindu*, 3 March 2016.

⁶⁸ Personal talk with Kannan Srinivasan, independent analyst, New York, U.S.

⁶⁹ Regional players include; India, Pakistan, China, Russia, and Iran. Whereas the U.S and NATO forces are



new U.S strategy (partnership with India) is “game changer” and he believes that the new U.S-India regional approach against terrorism would thrive. Interestingly, Pakistan has opposed the new approach initiated by the Trump government’s regional policymaking which has strengthened India’s role in Afghanistan. Pakistani Prime Minister, Shahid Khan Abbasi had categorically stated that “Pakistan sees zero- political and military role for India in Afghanistan. However, India’s economic assistance in Afghanistan would not make any difference to Pakistan. India is a stronger economic power by far than Pakistan. But Indian involvement in Afghanistan carries risk and may not be always popular, as witnessed in the kidnapping and killing of Indian technicians and engineers working there, as well as the attack on the Indian Embassy. India believes that emergence of Taliban is a great threat to its security and they (Taliban) can expand their network toward Kashmir which may change the Indian narrative on Kashmir.⁷⁰ Indian scholars were of the view that “about 22 per cent of terrorists operating in Jammu and Kashmir were either of Afghan origin or had been trained there”.⁷¹

Both India and Afghanistan perceive that Pakistan has its strong control over Taliban’s top Command who is a great challenge for India and the Afghan government. Moreover, Pakistani government is accused of treating injured Taliban fighters in Pakistan’s hospitals. President Ghani also accused Pakistan for the killing of powerful Police Chief, General Abdul Razaq, on 18 October 2018. Ghani said, “I wanted to say that this conspiracy was plotted in Pakistan”.⁷² In the current milieu of geopolitics, Prime Minister Modi has geared up India’s security policy and swiftly playing in Afghanistan by providing economic and military aid to which has strengthened defence partnership.

5. Priorities, Preferences and Consensual Doctrine in Afghanistan

India has set two main priorities in Afghanistan, one; the reconstruction and development, two; security goals to counter Pakistan and China’s influence via Afghanistan. In 2011, India developed its strong relationship with Afghanistan and pledged \$2 billion for the reconstruction. The policy of reconstruction and development has made India the mighty donor to Afghanistan; it has taken responsibility for reconstruction and development programmes. India is investing heavily in Afghanistan merely to project its own power into Central Asia, given that it has had a long presence in Afghanistan stretching back into the 1950s with major investments in development. Presently, to maintain its regional security design, India has engaged Afghanistan by massive economic investment. India has pledged \$3.1 billion to assist Afghan’s government in its 31 provinces.

India is building dams, air links, power plants, and investing in health and education sectors India is also facilitating and cooperating in diverse sectors- telecommunication through Indian setlines. India has invested to build Afghan Parliament which is named ‘Atal Block’, in memory of the former Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Bajpayee. India has also funded construction of a 135-mile road which connects Afghanistan with the Iran’s port Chabahar. India’ assistance has crossed \$3billion in developing socio-economic programmes. Though Pakistan is also investing in Afghanistan, there is little doubt that India has emerged as a major player utilizing the ‘soft power’ as well as the ‘hard power’ tactics in Afghanistan and, it has established long-lasting strategy to contain the network of regional rival states.

⁷⁰ To India, Jammu and Kashmir is no more issue; however, it is an integral part of India. Pakistan and Kashmiri leadership consider that Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of partition Plan of 1947.

⁷¹ Joshi, Shashank: “India’s Af-Pak Strategy”, *RUSI Journal*, vol.155, n°1 (2010), p. 20, at <https://shashankjoshi.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/journal-201002-joshi.pdf>

⁷² “Razaq’s assassination was plotted in Pakistan: Ghani”, *Tolo News*, at <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/raziq%E2%80%99s-assassination-was-plotted-pakistan-ghani>



Second priority is more strenuous, apart from economic aid, the grave internal security environment of Afghanistan needs a comprehensive strategic plan with India not with Pakistan, as Pakistan is expected to pursue its previous policies in Afghanistan.⁷³

The post-Abbottabad⁷⁴ scenario has broadened a vast gulf between the U.S and Pakistan and also constructed trust deficit between the two major allies against 'War on Terror'. Tension between the U.S and Pakistan was further aggravated when the U.S categorically blamed Pakistan for supporting and protecting the Haqqani network and Taliban's command in Pakistan. The U.S administration believes that Pakistan does not stop them from operating in Pakistan based localities and threatening Afghans and U.S forces, but Pakistan has rejected these allegations. India has taken a greater advantage of the prevailing tension between Pakistan and U.S and Indian policy makers have reshaped their security policy in the region vis-a-vis Afghanistan and ultimately succeeded in gaining the confidence of U.S and finding a greater role in Afghanistan's. Changing security dynamics in region have developed a consensual doctrine between India and U.S which would immensely affects Pakistan's security behaviour. Many scholars in Pakistan have shared their views with this author on the point that India is exploiting the situation or 'mistrust level' between the U.S and Pakistan and it has become reliable ally of the U.S. in South Asia.

President Trump's inclination toward India is more intelligible, and he has offered a key role to India in Afghanistan and appreciated "India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan,"⁷⁵ Chaotic environment in Afghanistan has eroded the regional security and stability. Afghan government controls 57% of its state and the rest is being controlled by the non-state actors—Afghan Taliban and their comrades. Afghanistan's forces are not capable to defeat Taliban and militants; they rely in American forces or Indian assistance. The former president Karzai had confessed that "Afghan army would collapse in six months without the U.S help." Knowing the security dilemma in Afghanistan, India is providing weapons and training to Afghan forces.

In 2015, Prime Minister Modi paid his first visit to Afghanistan. During the visit, he handed over four Mi-25 attack helicopters to the Afghan government. Supply of helicopters indicated a shift in India's position on supplying offensive military equipments. By providing defence security assistance, India seeks to achieve two core goals: first; it does not want the reemergence of Taliban or Islamic militants who may hurt Indian's strategy, second; India wants to refrain Pakistan to achieve its old policy of 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan which would harm India's security interest.

India provides training to the Afghan forces in order to prepare Afghanistan to defend it-self to deal with the militants and Taliban. In 2011, India trained 30,000 Afghans soldiers. The U.S has appreciated India's role in improving the profile of Afghan security forces- military

⁷³ As the new PTI government, led by Imran Khan, assumed office in August 2018, Shah Mahmood Quraishi, Foreign Minister, made his first visit to Afghanistan in September to discuss the security issues between the two states. After meeting with Shah Ghani, immediately went to meet Modi and expressed his exasperation that "there is no discernible change in the new government in Pakistan". Taliban launched multiple attacks in the largest city, Ghazni, in Afghanistan, and many security personnel were killed. For instance, see: Mohan Geeta, "No Change in New Pakistan's Govt, Afghan President tells PM Modi", *India Today*, 20 September 2018.

⁷⁴ The U. S forces raided Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbotabad and killed him in 2010. The attack, in fact, breached the trust deficit between the U.S. and Pakistan. Both blamed each other. The relations between the two armies and spy agencies (ISI-CIA) deteriorated. Pakistan ordered the U.S forces to vacate air base in Pakistan. Since then, the relations are strained between Pakistan and the U.S.

⁷⁵ Gowen, Annie: "India already gives Afghanistan billions in aid. Now Trump says India must 'help us more.' *The Washington Post*, 22 August 2017; George, Varghese. "Trump offers a role to India in Afghanistan", *The Hindu*, 22 August 2017, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/trump-offers-india-a-role-in-afghanistan/article19541645.ece>



and police. India's security doctrine in Afghanistan, in fact, has increased Pakistan's security concern. Growing Indian influence in Afghanistan is not acceptable to Pakistan as India is already perceived to be exploiting Pakistan's internal conflict in Balochistan.⁷⁶

6. Conclusion

Afghanistan and India are two different states and society, both do not share belief or culture, but these components are not essential when the state is vulnerable and weak to survive. In fact, it is the need of Afghanistan to associate with India, whereas, India-Afghanistan partnership exasperating Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistan and Afghanistan are two immediate neighbours, they share faith, culture, and ideology but after the fall of the Taliban's regime both have different preferences and priorities. Convergence of interest has remarkably reinforced tie between India and Afghanistan. Moreover, India's ingress in Afghanistan is designed to pursue its regional strategic objectives.

Since the 9/11 incident the international politics has been changed and it has immense impacts on the regional political map. South Asia is the more troubling and dangerous region in the world owing to direct conflict between the two nuclear states, India and Pakistan. Present geo-politics has greatly changed the India's regional security policy. Two major factors have encouraged India and to redefine its regional strategic outlook. One, the emergence of Pak-China strategic partnership which may affect India's economic and security interests through CPEC. Second, the U.S has changed its security paradigm in Afghanistan; the U.S has developed new strategic partnership with India and has provided an increasing role in Afghanistan against the wishes of Pakistan and also the U.S. has encouraged India to assume a greater role in the security and stability of Afghanistan. India-U.S. Consensual doctrine is taking place in region because both want to contain the influence of emerging China and Pakistan, certainly, India-U.S. partnership exasperating to both China and Pakistan. India has established a close tie with Iran which would provide a gateway to India to the Central Asian States. Apparently, the Trump administration has accepted India – Iran relations without condition.

The re-emergence of Taliban is a challenge to the U.S. and Indian interest. The U.S has successfully eliminated the Taliban regime but failed to crush them completely. Pakistan has played its pivotal role in supporting and strengthening Taliban but, presently, Pakistan's strategy is to convince them for the permanent peace in their country. But if both India and the U.S want to exclude Pakistan from the Afghan peace process; this strategy may not succeed because Pakistan is the most affected country due to unstable and troubling Afghanistan. Undermining Pakistan may develop security dilemma in the region contributing to further instability. Even the partnership between India the U.S may not succeed to undermine China and Pakistan, as China's economic strength and major initiatives far outweigh India's capabilities. On the other hand, Pakistan has established security connection with Russia which is re-emerging as influential and potential power in the world politics. Russia is keen to facilitate Taliban in peace process and if it has triumphed then Russia would develop its relations with the Mujahidin cum Taliban those defeated Soviet empire.

A veritable new Cold War seems to be going on between the regional and global powers in Afghanistan. Once again Afghanistan has become a central point among powerful states and India wants maximum benefit being a part of this game. India's new approach to lead as a regional power may not be as successful as it is expected because China's dragon has already made its way to lead via Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC is a central part of BRI. To

⁷⁶ For detail see for example, "India's influence in Pakistan", *Pakistan Observer*, 30 May 2017.



end the perpetual hostility, India should adopt rational approach and it must join CPEC thus it would enjoy economic and strategic fruit beyond the region.

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