

## **Delhi-Kabul Nexus: Regional Dynamics and Geopolitical Perspective (with reference to Pakistan)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Peace and security in South Asia is conditioned with the constructive role of India and Pakistan by sustaining their bilateral issues. In this scenario, Afghanistan is the new front and source of insecurity between the traditional rivals, India and Pakistan. Afghanistan appeared as the extension of Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan. The study is based on the grounded method of Indian role in Afghanistan and the changing regional security scenario especially in post-9/11 era and its implications on Pakistan. It outlines India security interests, economic, social, political and infrastructural developments, her smart efforts viz-a-viz Pakistan, her strategic influence in Afghanistan to reach the Central Asian Republics (CARs), and to be seen as super-regional power viz-a-viz China with US support. The changing embryonic regional paradigm is challenging the status quo and indicating a major shift in the security trends in South Asia with severe implications for Pakistan. Thus, the study analyses the dependent concept of security, which will be defined under an area of concern in South Asia rather than a precise condition, supported by the realist and behavioral paradigm Social Realism" justifying Indian realist ends through social means in Afghanistan. Second, it examines the historic chronological events of Pakistan's and India's ties with Afghanistan, and how their presence in current scenario is affecting peace and security in the region. Thirdly, it explores growing Indian influence in Afghanistan and her smart activities in order to attain her preferred outcomes. Fourthly, it discusses the possible repercussions for Pakistan's security, strategic encirclement and Indian hegemonic intentions and, takes into account the major global power presence, and interest-oriented decisions that opened another front and strategic struggle between the traditional nuclear powers and the major powers US and China, to fill the political vacuum. Lastly, according to the current regional security trends, Pakistan may encounter severe implications that can further worsen the regional security apprehensions in South Asia.

**Key Words:** **Delhi, Kabul, Nexus, Pakistan, Regional Dynamics Geopolitical and Geostrategic**

## **Introduction**

The roots of Afghanistan India relations dates back to 1855 when both the countries signed a mutual agreement called the “Treaty of Peshawar” and with the demise of Taliban regime resulted in the emergence of physical presence of India in Afghanistan. The notorious narrative adopted to justify its presence on the soil of Afghanistan was it would play a pivotal role in the reconstruction and development of country. Its primary interest was to curtail the presence of neighboring countries particularly Pakistan (Attiq-ur-Rehman, 2013). Indian foreign policy on Afghanistan is driven by using military and economic aid. Afghanistan has always been at cross roads of conflicting interests of external powers and their competition, be it British India and Russian Empire or US and Soviet Union or India and Pakistan. The only reason that differentiates India from all other actors is India’s genuine intention to destabilize Pakistan internal security. More than 70% of Afghans see India as a favorable country (Yousafzai, 1999). This is much higher than US and Pakistan, countries that have spent enormous amount of financial and human resources in Afghanistan. The notorious relationship between India and Afghanistan was halted by Taliban ascendancy.

Indian foreign policy on Afghanistan is driven by using military and economic aid. It has come up as a 5<sup>th</sup> largest donor for Afghanistan by pledging \$ 1.2 billion since 2001 (Joshi, 2010:22). It has invested \$ 25 million for the construction of Afghan parliament building. It had donated Airbus planes that has been included in the Afghan Airlines (The Ariana Airlines) and granted \$136 million on 125 km road to connect Zaranj province with Herat (Joshi, 2010:22). The Indian interests become more vivid through establishment of Gandhi institute for Children’s health to provide medical facilities to the people of Kabul Mazar-e-s-sharif Kandhar Jalalabad. Furthermore it supplies millions of tons of wheat to feed the Afghan nationals. In order to meet with the energy demand, it has established Power Grid Corporation and it is working on Salma Dam project (Yamin, 2013). Over a period of time Pakistan has claimed the occupied territories from the militants in North Waziristan and it is believed that those militant organizations were fully funded by RAW operating in Afghanistan (Saleem, 2010). The presence of RAW on the other side of Durand Line means the instability in Pakistan. The situations becomes more detrimental when the footprints of RAW is being found in the province of Baluchistan to sabotage the law and order situation that would ultimately debilitate the charm of foreign investors in the area of Gawadar which has turned to be a game changer for Pakistan. The CPEC has induced a new life into the financial structure of Pakistan’s economy therefore the liaison between the Dehli and Kabul means the diaphanously weakening of security and economy of the motherland. (Yamin, 2013).

Taliban was quick to launch their tirade against US in line with its ideological compulsions. The new regime invited Osama Bin-Laden, aided and abetted him in attacking US. 9/11 terrorist attack, and the reaction to that attack has changed the whole approach of dealing with terrorism globally. Amidst all these developments,

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how India's relations with Afghanistan have taken shape is of a great interest to all students of International Politics and Strategic Studies. Pakistan by the virtue of its position geographically and ideologically has been a major driver of policies of India and Afghanistan on their bilateral relations. Hence understanding the role played by Pakistan in Afghanistan is necessary. It should not be a surprise that right until 9/11, Pakistan was the only state that has recognized Taliban regime apart from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (Raiphea, 2013). The Taliban ouster after 9/11 attacks has only posed more questions than to solve the existing ones, which have a direct bearing on regional peace and India-Afghanistan bilateral relations (Raghvan, 2004). India is clear in its goal. It does not want to see Afghanistan once again to become a safe haven for the Talibanization with the aid of Pakistan and for that matter it can go to any extent to ensure its physical presence on the soil of Afghanistan. Such a situation is not only a threat to regional but also to global peace. Afghanistan which is stable and secure is not only a win-win situation Pakistan and India but fort the entire regional. (Yamin, 2013). The aim purpose of research are to explore;

1. The impacts on Pakistan what are internal security due to the Indian Afghan nexus after the ouster of Taliban regime.
2. The economic rise of India reduces the role of external actors in Afghanistan as India can expand its aid program in Afghanistan?

The basic objective of the research is to understand the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan and examine the India's efforts to raise her influence in Afghanistan. Beside this, to analyze the impact on Pakistan from this nexus and find out how Indian presence in the region would harm the peace in the region 'India's geo-strategic environment' explained that India has a complex geo-strategic environment; there are understandably four clusters in this environment. China-Tibet-India and the Himalayan kingdom, China-US-Pakistan-India, Talibanized-Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan-India. India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan is constrained by the last cluster that is mentioned above. The role of India in building good relationship vis-à-vis Afghanistan is conditioned by the role of Super power – US and its relationship with Pakistan and how willing is US in recognizing India as a non-expansionist status-quo power in South Asia. There are too many issues in the list that fall in the cluster that is west to India, such as oil politics, opium trade, religious politics and terrorism. It is apparent that the Taliban is just an extension of the state of Pakistan (Kapur, 1999). The economic growth achieved by India through liberalization in the post 1990 period and a gradual reconciliation of US with India a case in point. While there is a heavy competition behind the scenes between India and Pakistan for leverage in Afghanistan for the post withdrawal scenario of ISAF forces in 2014, Pakistan is driven by the paranoia that a regime in Pakistan which is pro-India is detrimental towards Pakistan's interests. In the midst of such an intense competition between two unequal powers how Kabul navigates its own national interest is an interesting

dimension to learn appropriately concludes that there will be new shift in divergences and convergences in India- Pakistan relations. And Pakistan needs to get out of this collective siege mentality for a meaningful development in Afghanistan (Mishra, 2014). Prospects for India-Pakistan Cooperation in Afghanistan” describes the threats to the stability of Afghanistan and the challenges which are classified in to three heads, security, economic and political and how India is already partner in contributing to the stability of Afghanistan. It is rightfully mentioned that Indian engagement in Afghanistan offers promising contributions to stability in a period of great uncertainty, but Indo-Pak rivalry threatens to adversely affect developments in Afghanistan. Apparently it is certainly true as it is claimed by the authors that India is an ally partner and its interests are in congruent with that of USA, chief among them are preventing terrorism, decreasing Taliban influence in Afghanistan and increasing access to Central Asia. This only re-affirms the point that India-Afghanistan bilateral relations are not entirely independent but dependent on many factors that are external (Sadika, 2012).

Focused study on bilateral relations between India and Afghanistan is either minimum or none that covers the recent developments, most of the work talks about India’s involvement in Afghanistan as a leading aid donor. Much of the work on Afghanistan is done on a standalone basis analyzing and understanding internal sources of instability. Often India-Afghanistan relations are seen in the context of Pakistan. It is natural to consider Pakistan for this work and understand India-Afghanistan bilateral relations by lessons learnt through inferences from those studies that are done on Pakistan. The type of literature will be integrative review.

### **Delhi-Kabul nexus; regional dynamics and geopolitical perspective (with reference to Pakistan)**

For much of the time in history and also now the goals of Pakistan and India in Afghanistan were opposite to each other or in other words their engagement in Afghanistan has been a zero sum situation, one’s advantage is seen as a detriment to the other and vice-versa. This is partly driven by India’s paranoia on Pakistan. Though Pakistan could only be blamed for fixating itself on India as far as regional diplomacy and foreign policy is concerned but it is gradually taking a departure from such a position and it is the feeling and desire of international community too that India should also start behaving in a manner befitting a responsible nation (Gross, 2014). As far as India’s ill and hegemonic engagement in Afghanistan is concerned, when Indian influenced United Nations Secretary General invited India to participate in a meeting convened by him on Afghanistan on 18.11.1996, such an invite only confirms that India seeks a proactive role in Afghanistan. The focus of Pakistan’s establishment is that India has never accepted the existence of Pakistan and has only grudgingly recognized the creation of the new state called Pakistan; such a thinking has been a central theme of its foreign policy towards

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India that India's presence in Afghanistan in some way or the other will exacerbate the situation on Baluch question, this is despite the fact that there is evidence submitted by Pakistan apart from some concrete references in this regard to western diplomats, this is in contrary to the way how India makes certain claims of Pakistan's support to terrorist activities in India along with baseless evidence, be it Pakistan's involvement in 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack or other destabilizing activities in Kashmir it carries out through terrorists based out of Kashmir or assist the infiltration through line of control in to India (Pant, 2010).

**Indian's Afghan policy**

As per the narrative of Riedel who is revealing Indian hegemonic intentions and designs in South Asia. Eventually their aim and objective is to develop their superior and powerful position in their own region. Mitchell focuses that considering India as an enormous power is based on the capability to influence instead of comparing her power with its contemporaries. Moreover under the prevailing circumstances India is envisaging for a powerful role in South Asia particularly in Afghanistan. Cohen emphasized that its additional growth and prosperity would facilitate her to grow her teeth in its foreign policy (Riedel, 2011). India is gathering active cooperation inside the region to win the help and support of adjoining states. She is capitalizing power as a mean to influence. India is using diplomatic mechanism to craft and mould relations based on her materialistic approach that eventually construct her hegemonic passage at the international level. Apart from her endeavors, India's is adopting a discourse that penetrates along limitations as a power, because of its "disproportionate capacity as compared to its neighbors, which include internal conflicts, chaos in neighborhood, and the on-going rivalry with Pakistan" (Mitchell, 2014).

In the post 9/11 era, the region has undergone through the same intimidating issues of security and hostile relations between important stakeholders, because of vivid radicalization [post-Soviet withdrawal] specifically within Afghanistan, that ultimately dug its heels in Pakistan. On the other hand the global players are witnessing India as an emerging power in the region, with arduous horizontal and vertical maneuvering to increase her role as a regional power along the peripheries of South Asia. As Hilali believes that "while other states may resist, India is excelling to play a hegemonic role in Indian Ocean and South Asian region" (Pant, 2010).

The adoption of vigorous strategy by India does not forecast pre-emptions; it subsequently promotes Indian power, and financial, political gains to increase her hegemony in the region. The Indian influence in Afghanistan advocates the on-going process of superiority and hegemony in the region, neither India nor Iran has any intention in the expansion of what we call the Afghan-Pak area both states have their strategic interests and establish the historical tradition of cooperation in

Afghanistan (Pant and Harsh, 2010). It has been observed that “India as an emerging power in South Asia is the only regional actor that owns both capacity and capability to deal with the extreme security threats arising from instable Afghanistan and along the Durand line”. As it is unfolded by Pant, Robert Gilpin has put light that a more financially stable state will be able pursue a huge pile of security and welfare goals as compare to the less privileged state in order to acquire ample control over her strategic interests. India by and large has all the ingredients to become a regional power vis-à-vis Pakistan and by all means capable of justifying her role in Afghanistan as the best possible alternate for US after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan (Pant and Harsh, 2010). However, US policies are also supporting Indian hegemonic measures in the region, which will ultimately debilitating the strategic and security interests of other stakeholders in the region. Therefore, India is promoting a vigorous policy in the region that unveiled the avenues for the less privileged states in South Asia and specifically in Afghanistan (Mushtaq and Hashmi, 2012: 258). Wagner emphasizes. That India has come up as the biggest donor to Afghanistan and staunch supporter, therefore, infringing meddling in the area historically influenced by Pakistan (Wirsing, 2007).

Kasturi mentions that, who so ever wants to understand the dynamics of the Indian role in Afghanistan in the prevailing scenario must realize that it is a careful designed peace of diplomacy”. The Indian smart narrative that a peaceful Afghanistan promotes the Indian interests, as it is sharing the joined commitment of the international community to reconstruct the war- shattered Afghanistan. India is of the view that Afghanistan will be facing severe challenges in post NATO withdrawal and the ground realities will likely to be awkward and not very rosy (Hyman, 2014). The situation can also make Islamabad in a position to design Afghanistan’s political geography. India dreams that Afghanistan cannot sustain at her own, and the precarious situation can bring drastic repercussions for India and the region (Maley, 2012).

The revamping of Taliban and their role in political structuring within the government of Afghanistan is a huge hovering threat for India. India is a staunch follower of the fact that Taliban is a reality that have faced extensive air and grounded strikes for 14 years of (ISAF), and has the capability of reinforcing as an ideal candidate in the political hierarchy of Kabul (Afghanistan) (Tiwari, 2015). Hanaur and Chalk emphasize Indian motives in Afghanistan according to India’s calculation of her smart policies in post 9/11. India is more interested in curtailing Pakistan’s role and influence in Afghanistan. But India is also promoting her wide range of interests that would hinder the motives and interest of her traditional rival state. India is looking up for feasible options in Afghanistan, her growth will certainly alter the status quo and would form new setup according to her security demands and needs. India’s presence in Afghanistan shows her needs of increasing security by aggravating her resonance and control over the internal external security environment in Afghanistan” (Chalk, 2010).

### **The unstated Indian goal**

One of the important objectives of India's engagement in Afghanistan is to counter Pakistan. India approach this issue through confrontational tactics or by employing methods to destabilize. It hijacked the interests and minds of Afghan policy makers. To explain Indian behavior and engagement in Clausewitz terms, we shall say that general principles of war has three main objects like conquer and destroy the armed power of the enemy, possession of his material and other sources of his strength and gain public opinion (Yamin, 2013). Since the first two principles are met in a way by US through its military intervention as it is still a major security provider and has a complete control over Afghanistan resources etc., what is left out is nothing but gaining a favorable public opinion. Though US tried to gain a favorable public opinion for themselves through provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan, they could not do as the neoconservative's attention in Bush administration was diverted towards Iraq as explained by Ahmed Rashid in his book – *Descent in to Chaos*. In that sense India's engagement in Afghanistan has been a one that of cost- effective and a win-win situation for both Afghanistan and India (Mishra, 2014). When it comes to quantifying India's interest on its engagement in Afghanistan, there is no unanimity. But most of the experts more or less agree on the fact that it is primarily to deny any more safe havens for Terrorists in Afghanistan whose focus is Kashmir in Particular and India in general. It is erroneously supposed that the temptation is to equate India with Pakistan and to blame India of doing what Pakistan has been doing to India through its terrorist proxies for a long time. But India has stuck a different course. It has accepted that Pakistan too has an interest in Afghanistan, and made it clear that to support Afghanistan in its search towards stability is to help humanity. It is important to note that India has moved on from its anti-Pakistani strategy to that of accepting Pakistan's special interest in Afghanistan (Sawyer and Foster, 2008).

### **Security implications for Pakistan**

India and Pakistan are mingled into the geographical proximity and their security aims are associated with each other. While other factors as the social, political and economic are considered as pivotal in the ongoing process of security analysis at the local level (Buzan and Weaver, 2003). Since 1947, Pakistan and India fought war to gain Kashmir. India's secular federative lines and her Kautilian legacy have aggravated Pakistan's security concerns about the Indian hegemonic designs in the region. Whereas, Pakistan's footing on ideological principle of a separate homeland ignited. Indian fears due to her widely diverse and multi-ethnic identities (Rashid, 2015). President Musharraf (2004) said in a press conference, "we are like two elephants in South Asia, devastated the grass in our fight...Look where it has taken us. The bitter truth is that the South Asia is one of the poorest regions and its economy rejects to take off because of our obsession with this

dispute”. India and Pakistan considered on the zero-sum position that gain of one is the loss of other. Their hostile approach has put in danger the domestic security of South Asia. The historical conflicts between them seem as the core issue of the Regional Security Complex. Pakistan-India conflict continued to spark around the four issues,

- 1) Kashmir
- 2) Societal and religious Dines
- 3) Military rivalry, mounted by the increasing piling up of nuclear arsenals and missile capabilities of both sides
- 4) Pakistan feared the Indian hegemonic intention.

However, India seems to be an emerging power which to some extent succeeded in breaking the bipolarity pattern in the region vis-à-vis Pakistan. Contrary, Pakistan’s inside strength and stability is the key to security, the political instability is one of the major factor of the weakness of Pakistan (Buzan and Weaver, 2003).

### **Regional dynamic**

India is also looking up for assistance and aid from US and Israel against Pakistan and China’s designs. “China consistently supporting Pakistan’s motives to counter India’s stock in nuclear and missile technology, however India envisaging the more threat from China, as compared to Pakistan, as a clarification for its nuclear and missile stockpile and arsenals” (Buzan and Weaver, 2003). China’s prevailing concerns are very severe about the trend of extremism among the Pakistan’s Muslims while its relations with India are more inclined as the conflict freezing strategy. Since 1980, China and India have developed and maintained cold liaison (Buzan and Weaver, 2003). Apart from the fact that Afghanistan has close knitted stubborn Islamic ideology, India is of the opinion that they have cultural and historical ties with Afghanistan. According to Dupree’s point of view, Afghanistan had culturally and historically influenced with its adjacent states, especially Iran. According to Mishra Jawaharlal Nehru who is considered as an architect of India’s foreign policy after independence, said that the history of India-Afghanistan relationship shows both friendship and conflict, social and cultural contacts (Mishra 2014).

India played a significant role in War on Terror, not as a front line ally but as a facilitator, to use the Northern Alliance card in Afghanistan. Moreover, Indian representation in Afghanistan, Satindra Lambah” worked extensively in the formation of new government in post 9/11, and also developed well knitted Indian ties with major stake holders. “A number of new office holders, like the defense, foreign, and interior ministers paid their first visit to India.(Mishra, 2014: 220).

It is clear that it is impossible to fix Afghanistan without fixing India. By fixing we refer to the aspect of stabilizing polity and society. While fixing things at



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a societal level in India is not under the control of anybody, not even US but Indian military and Intelligence agency RAW. For that to happen US should start owning its responsibilities and initiate a process wherein the aid it has so far given to India is correctly accounted for and ensure that democracy is entrenched and put in effective measures to manage the aid it is about to give to India in future. And ensure that it is going to be utilized on civilian necessities, primarily education and health. Such a measure will go a long way to deepen US's strategic relationship with Pakistan and facilitating an environment where Pakistan – Afghanistan relations could also prosper. It would be a futile attempt to show that Pakistan – Afghanistan relations are absolutely independent. On the contrary it is all about the influence of external actors. The argument apparently should be to what extent both these countries can allow other entities to negatively influence their bilateral cooperation is a question that needs to be comprehensively answered. The key is economic growth. While India is making negative inroads towards that path, there is a need that it should assist Afghanistan too but not with the aim to destabilize Pakistan. India should explore the possibility of increasing the effectiveness of Iran-India- Afghanistan Pakistan quad relationship, as we know that Iran is a positive influencer of India – Afghanistan relationship. People to People contacts between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be improved. Mainly intake of students from Afghanistan should be increased to a considerable level.

The paltry number of 500 or 1000 per year is simply not enough. The current arrangement of governmental setup in Afghanistan is here to stay and no militant or India could erase that situation. India must be ready for a situation in the future if there is going to be some reconciled elements of Taliban forming part of government and India should not be apprehensive about it, if it is sure that the Taliban elements are indeed reconciled.

At the same time while it is must that Pakistan should move beyond its simple gestures in Afghanistan but it should also not lose sight of any activity that has a grandeur symbolic value, for example India is engaged in constructing Afghan Parliament at the cost of around more than INR 700 crores. This single act gives the kind of status to India which shall be the envy of many. The key is not to get lost in any one type of aid program. The fact that policy of India's aid program does factor in any major activity in security domain is indeed telling. If this is partly due to the fear of stoking Pakistan concerns, then it is right time to come out of such a misplaced understanding and subject every claim of Pakistan to an international scrutiny.

India – Afghanistan relations have been consistently negative barring the brief period for which Taliban held a majority of territory under its control and it has been negative throughout without any change since its ouster. The notion that bilateral relations between India and Afghanistan have always been influenced by external actors may not be incorrect entirely. India's degree of engagement may

have been affected by external factors but it was never eclipsed completely by any one external actor.

Even though Pakistan appeared to be accommodating India's concerns but when it came to securing its interests it had never hesitated even when objections were raised by India. Putting Frontier Constabulary force in Afghanistan adjoining areas to safeguard its interests is one such example after the series of terrorist attacks. There are tangible determinants in India – Afghanistan relations. A mere stand taken by India that it supports democracy and opposing Taliban is enough to consider as a determinant. India's policy oscillates from being Pakistan centric to humanitarian intervention and others; at best it is a muddle that India has got itself into as there is no clear cut policy for Afghanistan. A continuous and productive bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the only best anti-dote to all problems that inflict Indian Sub-Continent.

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