

## **Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations-Third Party Role**

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***Abstract:** The trajectory of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations has been inert for the last seventy years. The two neighbors, incidentally Muslims, have not been able to develop a paradigm for a friendly conduct of their bilateral relationship despite the fact that the two countries share a number of potent similarities. This article identifies Afghanistan's status as multi-ethnic, landlocked and Parentier state, inter alia, contributory factors in shaping the trajectory of Pak-Afghan relations as they have served a determinant in introducing the preponderant role of the third party in Afghanistan's policy matrix. The two countries need to revisit the traditional trajectory of their interaction and seek a mechanism for developing good relations. Certain provisions of the Geneva Accords 1988 could provide a theoretical framework to this effect. Balancing of internal contradictions approach has been employed to explain theoretically the third party role.*

**Key Words:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, Pashtunistan, Landlocked State, Parentier State, Geneva Accords.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Pakistan and Afghanistan are so inextricably wedded in terms of astride religion, culture and ethnicity that any political upheaval in Afghanistan directly affects Pakistan in the long-term because whatever political developments which happen in Afghanistan always take historical direction towards areas comprise Pakistan. Afghanistan has been twice, in the immediate past i.e. 1979 and 2001, center of international political gravity and on both occasions Pakistan's role has been critical. The former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Z.A. Bhutto (1971-1977), was of the view that no two countries share commonalities which Pakistan and Afghanistan do.<sup>1</sup> Hamid Karzai, the erstwhile president of Afghanistan, had appropriately pointed the nature of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations by describing the "two countries as conjoined twins."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Ashraf Ghani observed that Pakistan and Afghanistan are not mere neighbors, we are more than that, we are connected by Muslim bond of brotherhood. This indicates the strategic thinking of Afghanistan about Pakistan.

Notwithstanding, the above convivial statements, there have been asperities, few congenial while others related to their progressively deteriorated relations that have prevented the two Muslim South Asian neighbors to develop a paradigm for a friendly conduct of their bilateral relationship. Dearth of credible trust and confidence best epitomized the nature of their bilateral relations. Accusations and counter-accusations appear as a characteristic corollary of the mistrust and lack of confidence.

### **Objective**

The founding Father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, called the two countries as "sister nations."<sup>3</sup> The objective of the article is to ascertain why the two 'sister nations' have failed to develop stable ties despite 'commonalities' and have strained relations ever since their inception. It has been argued that, apart from other factors, it is the role of the third party in influencing internal as well as external policies of Afghanistan driven by latter's status as a

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<sup>1</sup> Hanif ur Rahman, "Pak-Afghan Relations: Past and Present", *Daily Times*, 04-07-2019.

<sup>2</sup> "Pakistan, Afghanistan tied by bond of brotherhood: Ghani" *Dawn*, 29-06-2019.

<sup>3</sup>Op. Cit., Hanif "Pak-Afghan Relations: Past and Present".

'multi-ethnic'\* 'land-locked\*\* and a 'Parentier' state\*\*\*. This correlation has overwhelmingly guided the drawing up of contours of Afghanistan's external relations with its neighbors, in particular Pakistan, and beyond. The second purpose of the article is to suggest that certain provisions of the Geneva Accords signed in 1988 to facilitate the exit of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan may be proposed to provide Pakistan and Afghanistan a framework to address concerns relating to use of each other's soil against each other.

### **Theoretical Framework: Balancing of Internal Contradictions:**

The framework of Balance of Contradictions is based on the premise that the domestic power structure of a state is comprised different power centers; the relative stability of a political system depends upon how successfully it manages to balance the contradictions inherent between the power centers in order to promote balance between them. In a democratic dispensation, the exercise is relatively less complex as power centers are more inclined to maintain balance. However, states which lack in democratic experience or have no such exposure face a tougher challenge; the situation becomes acute where the state is an ethnically heterogeneous and no denomination holds clear majority. In such a case, the ethnic majority needs an external fall guy to channelize contradictions challenging its rule Afghanistan is essentially a multi-ethnic state. There are a number of ethnic groups which make up the Afghan society but Pashtuns, Tajilks, Hazaras and Uzbeks stand out as principal blocks. The Pashtuns constitute the largest ethnic group but they do not possess numerical majority; consequently, they feel their dominant position in the domestic power structure vulnerable. Consequently, Afghanistan's problem has invariably been finding an equation which represents a satisfying paradigm for all ethnic stakeholders of Afghanistan.

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\*Afghanistan's total population stands slightly more than 31 million: Pashtuns comprise slightly more than 42%, Tajiks make up 27%, Hazara account for 9%, Aimak, Turkmen, Baloch and diverse groups constitute 4%, 3%, 2% and 4% respectively.

\*\* A landlocked state is a state, according to Article 124(a) of UNCLS, which does not have any sea-coast.

\*\*\* 'Parentier State' is a state that derives a little portion of its income from domestic channels and relies upon other countries for financial assistance to defray its expenses. This is writer's own definition.

At the time of the creation of Pakistan, the Afghan ruling dynasty, belonged to Pashtun ethnicity, wanted an ‘external Aunt Sally’ to channelize internal ethnic contradictions and ensure Pashtun domination. The second objective was to divert the focus of the educated classes away from the internal power contradictions and direct the Pashtun propaganda in Afghanistan to the Pashtuns in Pakistan with a view to control Afghan Pashtuns without incurring any subsidies to the tribes.<sup>4</sup> However, the non-Pashtuns of Afghanistan regarded the issue of Pashtunistan as an attempt on the part of Afghan royal family, first, to strengthen its dominant position in the domestic structure and ensure the hegemony of Pashtuns; secondly, to use resources for the benefit of areas dominated by Pashtuns.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pashtunistan Issue+:**

Pakistan and Afghanistan could have, drawing upon strength of number of similarities, a propitious beginning but Afghanistan’s hostile attitude soured the opening and the first four decades of their bilateral ties. First, Afghanistan vocally opposed membership of Pakistan to the United Nations in 1948 “on the plea that it did not recognize NWFP as integral part of Pakistan.”<sup>6</sup> It was the only country to have cast negative vote on the occasion. Individuals may not remember long but collective memory of states tends to defy extinction. The negative vote had though been withdrawn two months later but it went a long way in influencing the direction of both countries future relations. Secondly, Afghanistan’s espousal of the Pashtunistan issue furthered the early acrimony between the two neighbors.

Afghan irredentism gave impetus to incumbent deterioration and from then until the Soviet military entry into Afghanistan in 1979, various Afghan regimes pursued policy of supporting tribal militias’ incursions into Pakistan’s territory to press, first, for renegotiation of the Durand Line; and, secondly, to gain access to the Arabian Sea at Gwadar: Sardar Najibullah Khan who paid visit, as a special envoy of his country’s ruler, to Pakistan and demanded that Karachi provide its country an approach to sea either carving a special corridor in western part of

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<sup>4</sup> Faridullah Behzan, “The Pashtunistan Issue and Politics in Afghanistan, 1947-1952”. *The Middle East Journal*, Volume 68, Number 2, Spring (2014), p.201.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* pp.201-203

<sup>6</sup> Kayathwal, M/K., “Pak-Afghan Relations: Durand Line Issue,” *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol.7 No.2(December 1994), pp. 37-46

Baluchistan or by cornering a free Afghan Zone in Karachi.”<sup>7</sup> Incidentally West Baluchistan is the same area where China now is operating a commercial port of its \$62 billion Belt and Road Initiative program in Pakistan.

### **Pashtunistan Issue and the Third-Party Factor-Soviet Union and India:**

Afghanistan needed political support of influential countries to strengthen its position on the issue of Pashtunistan. It raised the issue at a time when the Cold War between USA and now defunct USSR was at its height and the world was virtually divided into two blocs: the Soviet bloc and the American bloc. It sought to enlist American support but its response to Afghanistan’s overtures was, driven by Afghanistan’s marginal relevancy to Washington’s interest, rather lukewarm. Eventually, Afghan leadership turned towards the Soviet Union for soliciting political support on the Pashtunistan issue.

The Soviet Union provided Afghanistan the political support, on the issue of Pashtunistan. Premier Bulganin who paid an official visit to Afghanistan along with Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the Communist Party of USSR in 1955, observed “We think the demands of Afghanistan to give the population of bordering ‘Pashtunistan’ an opportunity of freely expressing their will are justified.”<sup>8</sup> In 1960, Nikita Khrushchev visited Afghanistan once again and advocated right of self-determination to resolve the Pashtunistan issue.<sup>9</sup>

Soviet Union’s extension of political support to Afghanistan on the issue of Pashtunistan was a sinister development from Pakistan’s perspective; however, the more ominous was the impending cooperation between Afghanistan and India. No two countries find the trajectory of their relations is so determined by the role of the third country as Pakistan-Afghanistan’s due to India. Pakistan’s preponderance with India can be gauged from the fact that Islamabad has always kept New Delhi in consideration while evaluating its relations with Kabul. The underlying factor that had prompted Pakistan’s strategic volte face in the wake of 9/11 and

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<sup>7</sup> S.M. Burke, “Pakistan’s Foreign Policy,” (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph J. Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: A Study in the Use of Force in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Massachusetts: Lexington, 1986): p.26

<sup>9</sup> Tahir Amin, *Afghan Crisis: Implications and Options for Muslim World, Iran and Pakistan* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1982), p.56

declared its support for the US-sponsored ‘War on Terror’ was countering Indian threat as well as protection of Kashmir issue.<sup>10</sup>

The early leadership of Pakistan believed that India had been implicitly goading Afghanistan to keep raising the issue Pashtunistan.<sup>11</sup> The view was based on the fact that Afghanistan had, being poor, not the potential of its own to question the international border validity of the Durand Line and Indian equivocal approach regarding Pashtunistan drove Pakistan to conclude that a nefarious design existed between India and Afghanistan. It led to two implications: first, the conflict forthwith assumed regional dimension because Afghanistan, following the principle ‘the enemy of your enemy is your friend,’ sought to enlist Indian support on the issue. Afghanistan has, a weaker country vis-à-vis Pakistan, been invoking Indian support to countervail Pakistan’s influence. Secondly, the situation led to increase in Pakistan’s security anxieties vis-à-vis India, a relatively powerful eastern neighbor of Pakistan with which it had a number of territorial and other disputes. This coming together of New Delhi and Kabul in opposition to Karachi gave birth to a ‘quasi alliance’ with a view to exerting pressure on the latter. And ever since the development Pakistan has been circumspect and seeking ways to counter it.

### **Afghanistan- A Landlocked State**

Afghanistan is, being a landlocked state, dependent upon its coastal neighbors for its transit trade. Pakistan is still crucial for Afghanistan for its transit trade and areas that constitute Pakistan have been providing geographical continuity to Afghanistan before the partition of the Subcontinent, and Pakistan continued the pattern and as per international law and conventions facilitated Afghanistan for its transit trade. Owing to differences with Pakistan, Afghanistan has lately diversified its transit routes but, given Pakistan’s geographical stationing, it is critically important for Afghanistan. Pakistan has, in order to consolidate its position, allowed Afghanistan to use Gwadar port for its transit trade. And, Pakistan’s Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Muhammad Sadiq observed on the eve of beginning Afghan transit trade through Gwadar that

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<sup>10</sup> “Pakistan Security Comes First,” The News, September 20, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> S. H. Zaidi, “The Taliban Venture and the Lesson for Pakistan,” Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 54, No. 4, October 2001, p.34.

the city had successfully achieved the status of transit city.<sup>12</sup> Besides, Pakistan has further deepened its commercial collaboration with Afghanistan and has allowed transit trade and exports via Chaman, Torkham and Ghulam Khan Border crossings.<sup>13</sup>

The two neighbors concluded revised Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) in 2010 to replace the 1965 Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA). The conclusion of the Agreement was an important development because it was expected to narrow the gap of mistrust between the two neighbors. Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State of the United States along with Richard Holbrook, Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, was also present on the occasion of the signing of the Agreement. Their presence was indicative of the fact that the United States attached great importance to steps aimed at improving Pak-Afghan bilateral ties.

Holbrook observed that it had been the objective of Obama administration ab initio to bring the two neighbors together and the signing of the Agreement pointed to explicit expression of the endeavor.<sup>14</sup> Hamid Karzai, the then President of Afghanistan, expressed felicitation on the occasion and observed that the step would not only boost the trade in the region but also facilitate its development.<sup>15</sup> The President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari hailed the development and commented that the implications would not confine to enhancement of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan merely but also ensure regional peace and stability.<sup>16</sup>

The specter of the third party that has been pervasive in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations has cast its pall over the 2010 Trade Agreement too. At the time of the signing of the Agreement, the two parties agreed that initially the Agreement would be for a period of five years from the

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<sup>12</sup> “Afghan Transit Trade via Gwadar Port Begins,” The Express Tribune, July 28, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> “Afghan Transit Trade via Gwadar Port Begins,” The Nation, July 27, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> “Pak-Afghan Trade Deal Signed,” The Express Tribune, 20-07-2010.

<sup>15</sup> “Afghan-Pakistan Transit Pact Signed,” Aljazeera Television, 10-07-2010 available at [www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2010/07/20107193110185521.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2010/07/20107193110185521.html) accessed on 12-12-2019

<sup>16</sup> “Pakistan, Afghanistan Sign Transit Agreement,” Outlook India International, 20-10-2010 available at [www.outlookIndia.com/newswire/story/pakistan-afghanistan-sign-transit-trade-agreement/699250](http://www.outlookIndia.com/newswire/story/pakistan-afghanistan-sign-transit-trade-agreement/699250) accessed on 02-12-2019.



day it came into operation and it would be renewed for a further period of five years.<sup>17</sup> The two neighbors had to renew the Agreement in September 2015 but they failed because Afghanistan stressed upon not only India's inclusion in the treaty negotiations but also Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan trilateral agreement.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Issue of Two-Way Access**

The Agreement allows Afghanistan single-border crossing facility for the conduct of its transit-trade with India via Wagah, a boundary between India and Pakistan located east of Lahore. Afghan vehicles carrying Afghan goods are permitted to enter Pakistan and travel up to Wagah, where these consignments are unloaded on the Pakistani side of the border. From here they will be loaded to Indian trucks under strict supervision. Afghanistan will reciprocate by transporting consignments for export to Central Asian republics up to their borders."<sup>19</sup> Afghanistan insists that single-border crossing be change into two-way i.e., India be allowed to export its goods to Afghanistan via Wagah border rather Karachi port.

How important is Indian inclusion in ATTA from Afghanistan's perspective can be evaluated from the statement made by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wherein he forewarned that Afghanistan would close the Pakistan-to-Central Asia transit route if Pakistan continued to deny Afghanistan two-way access; and in October 2017 he announced that that the trade agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan had lapsed and had Pakistani trucks barred from entering into Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent to Ashraf Ghani's announcement, a spokesman from the Afghan Transport Ministry announced the expiry of the APTA. He further observed that in response to Pakistan's decision of not allowing Afghan vehicles to enter into its territory, Afghanistan had decided not to give permission to Pakistan's trucks to cross into Afghanistan; and Pakistani goods bound for Central Asian would be unloaded at Afghan borders and Afghan transporters would transport goods to Hairatan and Sher Khan Ports.

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<sup>17</sup> Text of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement 2010, Article 54

<sup>18</sup> "Afghanistan, Pakistan Resume Transit Trade Talks," Dawn, 13-07-2019.

<sup>19</sup> Makhdoom Amin Fahim "Afghan-Pak Transit Trade: A Few Clarifications," The Nation, 28-07-2010.

<sup>20</sup> Najma Minhas, "Pakistan-Afghan Transit Trade: New Opportunities and Challenges," available at <http://www.globalvillagespace.com/pakistan-afghan-transit-trade-new> accessed on 21-02-2020

## **Pakistan's Viewpoint**

Firstly, Pakistan has rejected the idea of making the Wagah border facility, into two-way border crossing. Second, Pakistan refused to allow India to transport its goods through Wagah crossing into Afghanistan, claiming that the transit trade between Islamabad and Kabul is not a trilateral point.

Prime Minister's Adviser to Commerce, Abdul Razzak, observed "As the transit trade was a bilateral issue and it was not trilateral issue to drag any other into it, we therefore, urged Afghanistan not to link trade access through the Wagah border, and they agreed."<sup>23</sup> Islamabad contends that it is under no international obligation to provide India permission to export its goods to Afghanistan through Wagah. "Though, we do agree that Pakistan is bound to abide by international treaties, and it has been doing that since 1960s, but India's problem is different"<sup>24</sup>

At the bottom are bumpy political relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and these ties seem to have taken hostage the general trajectory of their relationships. Dr Ashraf Ghani, the erstwhile president of Afghanistan who had to flee the country in August 2012 after the assumption of power by the Taliban, in a 2015 conversation at the United States Institute of Peace, he noted that "the problem is basically about peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan, not fundamentally about peace with the Taliban. We have been in an undeclared state of hostility for 13 years."<sup>21</sup> However, realizing that the two South Asian neighbors could not remain in a permanent state of acrimony and smooth trade relations could provide them an opportunity to streamline their relations, Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized the 8<sup>th</sup> Focus Group Discussion on November 10, 2021 at Islamabad. Mr. Asad Qaiser, the erstwhile Speaker of National Assembly as well as parliamentarians from Pakistan side and

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<sup>21</sup> Jayant Prasad, "Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's Pakistan Gambit Was Based on 3 Promises and None Were Kept," News 18, updated August 13, 2021 <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/ashraf-ghanis-pakistan-gambit-was-based-on-3-promises-and-none-were-kept-4081850.html> accessed on 01-07-2022.

Afghan delegation led by Mr Khan Jan Alokozai, Co-Chairman PAJCCI attended. The moot discussed various obstacles to the smooth trade relations between Kabul and Islamabad.<sup>22</sup>

### **Afghanistan as a ‘Parentier State’**

Afghanistan is essentially a Parentier State and this has produced two broad implications: first, it has rendered Afghanistan afflicted by Aid Dependency syndrome. Aid Dependency may be defined a situation which has two characteristics: first, aid represents 10% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and, secondly, if the aid is available to the country it becomes impossible to execute its fundamental functions.<sup>23</sup> According to World Bank, international aid currently comprises 40% of Afghanistan’s GDP. Secondly, the Afghan state has certain limitations which constitute a standing motivation for third parties to control and guide the country both ideologically and strategically and influence the trajectory of Afghanistan’s internal and external policies.

The duration of ruling elite’s stay in power has been commensurate with their ability to ensure the steady flow of revenue from external sources. The Saddozai rulers of Afghanistan had raised the state structure on the foundations of tribal coalitions and sustained it with revenue derived from the Indian territories. The drying up of revenue from Indian territories resulted in consequence of their loss produced two results: first, it divested them of income with which they had been able to sustain their tribal coalitions; and, secondly, it led to collapse of the state control and paved the way for the emergence of regional power centers.<sup>24</sup> During the period of 1958 to 1968, and in the decade of 1970s the Afghan governments were able to meet 40 % of state expenses by “revenue accruing directly from abroad, including both foreign aid and sales of

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<sup>22</sup> Inam Ul Haque, “Pak-Afghan Trade-Righting the Expectations through a reality check will do both sides good” *The Express Tribune*, accessed on 18-11-2022

<sup>23</sup> Cooper, R., “Aid dependency and political settlements in Afghanistan”, University of Birmingham, September 2018, Helpdesk Report. <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/aid-dependency-and-political-settlements-in-afghanistan> accessed on 23-02-2020

<sup>24</sup> Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and collapse in the International System*, (Yale University, 1995).

natural gas to the USSR.”<sup>25</sup> And the fall of Najib Govt. in 1992 was not due to the return of the USSR troops from Afghanistan in 1989; rather, it was the end of aid in 1992 which eventually resulted in the collapse of his regime. ,

## **International Community and America**

America along with the international donors pledged, at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, to furnish civilian aid to the tune of \$15.2 billion to Afghanistan through 2020. America alone has, according to the US Department of Defense, spent nearly \$822 billion in Afghanistan since 2001. And out of the total investment, \$137 billion-16% of all money in the last 18 years- has been spent for reconstruction purposes.<sup>26</sup> According to available figures, America has provided nearly \$29 billion civilian assistance to Afghanistan since 2001. <sup>27</sup> Lately, the United States has used the carrot of aid to bring Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah, his presidential rival, to agree on a unity government for talks with the Taliban. Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, on the conclusion of his visit to Afghanistan in March 2020, warned the two rivals that the US would cut its aid to Afghanistan by \$1 billion, and a further \$1 billion could be cut from the annual aid package of \$4.5 billion in 2021.<sup>28</sup> Besides, he observed that Washington was undertaking evaluation of all its pledges regarding contributions to programs and projects for Afghanistan with a view to considering further cuts. America contributes billions of dollars in Afghanistan’s annual budget, including the country’s defense forces.<sup>29</sup>

The two rivals eventually agreed to form a unity government; and this goes to show the limitations of the Parentier State. Had the two rivals failed to acquiesce in the formation of the

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<sup>25</sup> “U.S. Relations with Afghanistan: Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet,” *US Department of State*, available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/> accessed on 03-03-2020.

<sup>26</sup> “Afghanistan War: What Has the Conflict Cost the US?,” *BBC News*, 28-02-2020 available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821> accessed on 03-03-2020.

<sup>27</sup> 33. “U.S. Relations with Afghanistan,” *US Department of State*, 08-07-2019 available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/> accessed on 27-06-2020.

<sup>28</sup> Jim Borger, “US to cut \$1 bn of Afghanistan aid over failure to agree Unity Govt.” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2020 available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/us-to-cut-1bn-of-afghanistan-aid-over-failure-to-agree-unity-government> accessed on 12-06-2020.

<sup>29</sup> 35. “US Cuts Afghan Aid by \$1bn After Pompeo Fails to End Impasse,” *Aljazeera*, 24-03-2020 available at <https://world.rss24.news/us-cuts-afghan-aid-by-1bn-after-pompeo-fails-to-end-impasse/> accessed on 12-06-2020.

unity govt., the proposed cut in aid by the United States would have had disastrous impact on the economic sustainability of Afghanistan because its GDP is only about “\$20 billion per year, and much of that comes from international donations.”<sup>30</sup>

### **India: Soft Image**

Indian role in influencing, as a third party, Afghanistan’s external relations seems to supplement latter’s interest vis-à-vis Pakistan. As already has pointed elsewhere that Kabul has been using New Delhi’s leverage to counterbalance Islamabad’s influence in its internal politics. Secondly, it has been facilitating Indian investment in the country. India is, contrary to its policy of hard power which it has been employing to its immediate neighbors, using ‘soft image’ to realize its interests in Afghanistan and beyond. The ‘soft image’ policy is aimed at socio-economic development instead of military aid to Afghanistan and its objective, in political terms, is to de-root Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup> The policy has two aspects: financial and cultural and both accounts India has been enjoying significant edge over Pakistan in terms of sway in Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup>

Indian edge is evident from the fact that its development assistance to Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11 has exceeded \$3 billion and it has become donor to Afghanistan in the region. New Delhi has channelized its aid to building roads, dams, schools and even the Afghan Parliament

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<sup>30</sup> Hasib Danish Alikkozai, Niala Mohammad, Roshan Noorzai, “Experts: \$1Billion cut in US Aid to Afghanistan will have serious Implications,” available at <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/experts-1-billion-cut-us-aid-afghanistan-will-have-serious-implications> accessed on 12-06-2020.

<sup>31</sup> Anant Mishra, , “Winning Hearts and Minds” Assessing India’s Soft Power Diplomacy in Afghanistan,” *South Asia Journal* available at <http://southasiajournal.net/winning-hearts-and-minds-assessing-indias-soft-power-diplomacy-in-afghanistan/> accessed on 12-06-2020.

<sup>32</sup> Bhairvi,Tandon, “India’s Soft Power Advantage in the Great Game of Afghanistan,” *Observer Research Foundation*, July 1, 2019 <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-soft-power-advantage-in-the-great-game-of-afghanistan-52624/>

building.<sup>33</sup> India's soft image strategies include the explicit examples like new Parliament building, Salma Dam in the region of Herat, and a highway leading to Chahbahar Port in Iran.<sup>34</sup> The cultural links between the two countries has supplemented their economic ties: apparently, Tagore's story *Kabuliwala* not only represents cultural affinity between India and Afghanistan<sup>35</sup> but it also provides an historical record of centuries old trade relations between India and Afghanistan. According to Ashraf Ghani, the influence of billion dollars pales before Indian film industry Bollywood's impact in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Pakistan's approach primarily centers upon military means and hard power and very little use of soft power tools such as art, culture, education, and other openings to further its objectives in Afghanistan. Islamabad has contributed nearly US\$ 1 billion towards Afghanistan development assistance ranging from health, education, development of infrastructure and enhancing capacity of Afghan professionals.<sup>36</sup> This 'soft image' approach and New Delhi's subsidized interference in influencing Afghanistan's policies has impacted Kabul's position on various bilateral and multilateral fora's to a significant extent.<sup>37</sup>

America's launching of War on Terror subsequent to the occurring of 9/11 incident produced two broad results fraught with deeper implication for Pakistan in the context of its relations with Afghanistan: first, it resulted in the end of that ephemeral phase in Pak-Afghan relations characterized by relative friendship and stability. Secondly, having liquidated the Taliban

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<sup>33</sup> "India's Development Aid to Afghanistan Exceeds \$3 Billion," *Times of India*, 04-01-2019.

<sup>34</sup> Abdul Rahman Rahmani "India's Soft Power is Very Effective in Afghanistan," *Hindustan Times*, 25-01-2019.

<sup>35</sup> 41. *Op. Cit.*, Bhairvi "India's Soft Power Advantage in the Great Game of Afghanistan,"

<sup>36</sup> "Pakistan's development assistance to Afghanistan reaches 1 billion US \$: Envoy," *The Nation*, 15-06-2018

<sup>37</sup> "Comprehensive Draft on Pakistan-Afghanistan Bilateral and Transit Trade Issues and Proposed Resolutions, April 2018." Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), p. 24.

government, the United States helped install a nationalist government at Kabul and with it reignited, on the one hand, political differences and, on the other hand, facilitated the reemergence of influence of India in Afghanistan that had dwarfed almost to a point of non-existence during the Taliban (1996-2001). Besides, there are number of asperities that have arisen on account of differences regarding diverse issues ranging from drug-trafficking to dialogue with terrorists' outfits.<sup>38</sup>The influence of these discords is two-fold as not only security relations between the neighbors have deteriorated but bilateral and transit trade too. Consequently, the spectrum of their bilateral relations widened due to complex dynamics of Afghanistan resulting from American War on Terror and its consequent security hazards for Pakistan.

### **Indian Paranoia:**

India is one of the very rare countries, if not the only country, that has inimical relationship with all of its neighbors. It is the Indian role that occupies pivotal niche in any exercise aimed at evaluating morphology of Pakistan-Afghanistan ties. India shares no physical border with Afghanistan but enjoys more privileged ties as compared to Pakistan due to historical connections and supplemented by its soft image related investments. The post-9/11 deterioration in Pakistan and Afghanistan relations due to India merely reflects past continuity because Afghanistan has been invoking Indian friendship since 1947 with a view to countervailing Pakistan's influence.<sup>39</sup>

The real cause of apprehension for Pakistan is the soaring Indian diplomatic and commercial clout in the post-9/11 Afghanistan which Islamabad fears may result in 'pincer movement' or "strategic encirclement if India and Afghanistan become allies."<sup>40</sup>Consequently,

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<sup>38</sup> "The Future of Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade Relations," United States Institute of Peace Brief, Peace Brief 191 August 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: Pashtunistan Issue Linger Behind Afghan-Pakistan Row," *Radio Free Europe* 24-03-2006 available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/1067048.html> accessed on 12-09-2021.

<sup>40</sup> Aparna Pande, "Reality or Paranoia: Why is Pakistan afraid of India Afghanistan ties? *HUDSON INSTITUTE* available at <http://www.hudson.org/research/9708-reality-or-paranoia-why-is-pakistan-afraid-of-india-afghanistan-ties-> accessed on 23-02-2020.

Islamabad's first priority is to have a pro-regime in Afghanistan in order to prevent such an eventuality; and, secondly, after 1971 it has been focusing Afghanistan as a strategic depth state where it could retire its nuclear arms in case of an Indian attack. Lately, Pakistan has begun to contend that the issue of strategic depth in Afghanistan is no longer on its agenda, and this assertion may be the case, but the fact remains that India factor still preponderantly influences Islamabad's security thinking towards Afghanistan. And this obsession with India will have decisive influence on Islamabad's policy towards Kabul.<sup>41</sup>

Pakistan has been accusing Afghanistan of supporting Indian agents along Afghanistan-Pakistan border and has provided space to India to "support the insurgency in Baluchistan through its consulates in Kandhar and Jalalabad."<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Islamabad cannot view its complex ties with Afghanistan as a bilateral concern because Afghanistan's foreign policy and security approaches "including its policy towards Pakistan, are shaped by the internal power politics as well as by the influence that the US and India exercise over Afghanistan's foreign and security policy."<sup>43</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In International Relations, the term 'zero-sum game', a part of 'Game Theory', refers to decision making approach involving two parties where one actor wins the other loses. However, states are rational actors and they may reach by permutation and combination a situation where both sides may gain and such a point is referred to positive-sum game. It is for Pakistan and Afghanistan to decide where they want to go: continue with the 'zero-sum game or not allowing the slip to obstruct the cup from reaching the lip and opt for positive-sum game.

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<sup>41</sup> Halimullah Kousary, "Ghani's Visit to Pakistan: Questions to Answer," *The Diplomat*, June 27, 2019 available at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/ghanis-visit-to-pakistan-questions-to-answer/> accessed on 30-06-2019

<sup>42</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Ron, "Afghanistan: Pashtunistan Issue Linger Behind Afghan-Pakistan Row,"

<sup>43</sup> . Dr. Hassan Askari Rizvi, "Pakistan's Afghan Problem," *The Express Tribune*, November 05, 2017



Pakistan and Afghanistan may be counted among few countries, who have strained ties, inter alia, significantly due to India. Indian exponentially increasing foothold in Afghanistan is seen by Pakistan an ominous development in strategic terms. Pakistan's preoccupation with India is so pronounced that it invariably looks Afghanistan in the context of its hostile ties with India.

Islamabad's volte face towards the Taliban government in the wake of the 9/11 incident had more to do with countering New Delhi's overtures to Washington as it believed India –USA cooperation could jeopardize the 'Kashmir cause' and nuclear program. Consequently, Pakistan opted to lend its support for the US-sponsored 'War on terror.'

For last four decades, Afghanistan has been under constant turmoil. Antagonism between Pakistan and Afghanistan and divergent geopolitical interests of multiple stakeholders, both regional and international, have so accentuated the complexity that peace appears elusive. The troubled ties of Pakistan and Afghanistan have been serving as a bottleneck in the implementation of any initiative aimed at bettering political relations between the two neighbors and facilitating economic integration of the South Asian and Central Asian regions.

## **Recommendations**

That Pakistan and Afghanistan need to revisit the matrix of their incumbent priorities is an obvious suggestion. However, the following recommendations are hereby put forward for the Pak-Afghan ties to move forward:

1-The main bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan right now is the cross-accusations of using proxies to meddle in each other's internal affairs. Article One, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Geneva Accords, which were agreed upon in 1988 to facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, can be used to address this issue. The Article forbids the two countries from meddling in one another's internal affairs and makes sure that their respective territories are not used in any way against each other.

2- Deep and stable commercial relations provide openings for parties to re-adjust the hostile trajectory of their relations. Pakistan and Afghanistan need to initiate talks for the renewal of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement 2010. The Agreement is required to be renewed after every five years; Afghanistan must not insist upon Indian inclusion for two

renewals and Pakistan must upgrade transit trade facilities for Afghanistan via Gwadar Port, Baluchistan.

3. Connectivity between the two neighbors needs to be enhanced and upgraded because not only does it remove physical barriers but mental too. Both countries, having realized the importance of it, especially economic, had signed MoU in July 2010 for establishing rail links for upgrading connectivity. The work has been going on the project but slackness due to periodic dip in political relations had put the project pending. Lately, the Government of Pakistan has decided to restart the work which will connect Chaman with Spin Boldak town of Kandhar.