

Geostrategic Challenges and Prospects in Pak-Afghan Relationship

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Abstract

The article evaluate various key issues that emerged from Pakistan-Afghanistan Geo strategic relationship in the context of Afghan-Soviet war, Taliban rule and War on Terror. It spotlight on security challenges and dead lock in friendly relation between the two immediate neighboring countries Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both countries face terrorism, security dilemma and lack of mutual understanding and trust deficit that results in more complex situations with the passage of time and intervention of foreign troops. Indian factor cannot be denied and the flux of refugees need mutually agreed situation from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Extremist infiltrators get benefit from both countries unfriendly relations and they not led the rebuilding of Afghanistan and peaceful trade environment for both the countries. Pakistan's long term mutual interest

has negatively affected and thousands of people lives were lost in this ongoing terrorism. Assuming Taliban has lost control on many areas in Afghanistan is like itself preparing for serious consequences after Post US with drawl. Pakistan and Afghanistan need better friendly relations in areas of Geo-strategic, socio-economical and political settlements to work mutually for combating Terrorism and give boost to economy of both the states through various trade agreements and security arrangements. Both the states need to convey the world about facing serious trouble some issues and proper management of issues through dialogue and peace.

Keywords: Nationalism, Terrorism, Cross border Attacks, Peace and stability, cross border management, Factionalism, Security Dilemma, War on Terror, Extremism etc.

Introduction:

Geostrategic tells about control over land, resources, Surface of the Earth, Geographical Factors and it guides the political, military strategies and different Factors related to security and threats. It gives information about Country boundary, borders, and minerals and in broader sense it is related to the Politics and factors affecting the Politics due to Security and common interests between the States. Geostrategic Studies evaluate the available options for trade route, rivers, sea route, specific Strategic location for the purpose of curtailing immediate threats and building trade relationships with other states. It also helps in formulating foreign policy and forecasting the foreign policy of other neighboring states and great power that sometimes helpful for country if properly assessed and disastrous for country if Geostrategic studies are ignored. Pakistan lies in the middle of great powers like Russia, china and India. Pakistan and

Afghanistan shared 2250 KM porous border. Great powers of the world several times intervened in Afghanistan to tackle the emerging economic powers and sure presence to watch over the activities of South Asia. Importance of Pakistan Geostrategic location cannot be denied. Persian Gulf, 70% of oil is transported through all over the world lies near to Pakistan. In south lies the Arabian Sea and in north lies the Wakhan strip separating Tajikistan from Pakistan. Afghan-Russia war testified the Strategic challenge for Pakistan as US indirectly restrain the existence of Russian forces in Afghanistan by providing military support to Mujaideen, in result flood of refugees came to Pakistan in time of Afghan-Russia war. After 9/11 incident Pakistan was given strict instructions from the US to help in curbing War on Terror. Pakistan became reliable on US aid and 70 thousand people live lost and results in major security challenges (Gall, 2014). The US State department and American think tanks several times realized that War in Afghanistan could never be won without the help of Pakistan. Containing the rise of China as economic power is another challenge for US. CPEC project will be affected in Future if the Tensions between US and China grow. Pak-Afghan relationship is several times reached to lowest point of the History due to blame game scenario. Terrorists has halt the Afghan peace process , Every time the Peace process starts the Terrorist made attacks inside in Pakistan and Afghanistan and the peace process get delayed. Pakistan want Peace in its neighboring countries and peace in Afghanistan can be brought by mutual trust and cooperation. The location of Pakistan in world map is more challenging for Pakistan itself due to the hub of major powers. Geostrategic realities are in continuous fluctuation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and ground realities are not the same as they were in Past. There are multi

players and new actors that have taken place in the region after 9/11 along Afghanistan and Pakistan side. India and Iran is in continuous struggle to take charge of Afghanistan's future stability after foreign troops leave Afghanistan. Blame game , mistrust and assuming Pakistan responsible for all the troubles in Afghanistan continuously derailed the improvement of relations between both Pak-Afghan relations.

Theoretical Perspective :

Security dilemma is a term most widely used in international relations and it present to a situation when two or more states feel insecure in relations with other and it is also called as twisting model. In conflicting situation, a state increases its security, military power, forming alliances, counter alliances and in reaction another state find it threaten and also increase it defense. This action and reaction give birth to tensions and complex situation without the desire of state (Zahid, 2015). The term was first used by different scholars like John H.Herz in his famous book political realism and political idealism, Herbert Butterfield in History and Human Relations. One state increasing its defense strength is assumed as potentially offensive and threatening for other states. Relations are not friendly and it can cause unwanted situation , which no state like. It is difficult for state to secure its national interest in conflicting situation. Sometimes state became isolate diplomatically by the pressure of other states . Other example of Security dilemma is case study of Germany in World War I when alliances went to war with the threat of aligned state. Supporters of this theory also narrate with Functionalism that successful communication and signals avoid war. Security dilemma narrates with other theories and doctrines of International Security.

Geo-strategic challenges in Pak-Afghan relationship:

The geo strategic confront in Pak-Afghan Relationship are vibrant in nature, like crippling economy , rampant flow of refugees , monetization of cross-border movement of militants , civilians, smuggling of goods and cross border attacks and presence of militants in border belt. US is suspicious about the presence of militants alongside border in spite of 18 years unending war. The fear is that Pakistan will face drastic security challenges from instability in Afghanistan historically like in time of Afghan-Soviet war. The presence of NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan is challenging for Pakistan due to no any agreeable situation of Afghan Peace process. Trust deficit in Pak-Afghan relationship will throw the region in War like situation due to blame game and revenge of Afghanistan from Pakistan by becoming non NATO ally with US. Violence, tumult, civilian losses, hopeless governance, flourishing drug trade and a growing Taliban uprising in Afghanistan continue to pose serious threats to Pakistan. After the visit of President's Ashraf Ghani to Pakistan , relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have improved , blame game minimized to lower level and both countries agreed to work mutually to work together for Peace and Security Building in the region. Afghan National Army attended the Training in Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) as the previous Afghan Government opposed this training. In 2014 geo strategic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were deteriorated due to APS school attack that results in 141 school children dead and more than hundred wounded and in response Afghanistan helped Pakistan provided 5 suspected militants that were Supporter of APS attack. Trilateral meeting was inaugurated in Islamabad on December 23, 2014 between Afghan National Army chief,

ISAF commander Gen. John Campbell and Pakistani Army chief Raheel Sharif to improve cross border management and peace on both sides of Pak-Afghan border (Kathrine, 2011). Every time peace process has been derailed by terrorists and led to mistrust between both neighboring countries that share common culture , religion and Ethnicity.

The resist and problems face by Pakistan and Afghanistan are mutual and need proper strategy based on trust. Hamid Karzai was pro Indian and blame game started on each other and Pakistan is suffering the consequences of Afghan-Soviet war and War on Terror. Pakistan acquire positive enterprise to greeting the new government in Kabul, which incorporated President Mamnoon Hussain's visit to Kabul on September 29, 2014. The major challenges faced by Pakistan are the APS school attack on 16 December 2014 , 8th August attack on lawyers in Quetta and many LEA's personnel were attacked in Target killing.

Indian Factor

Evident threat from Indian side Pakistan has made arrangements to secure its border with Afghanistan. The Indian influence in Afghanistan is ultimately threat to Pakistan internal and External Stability and its role is not restricted to Development and rebuilding in Afghanistan But India is seeking to destabilize FATA, Baluchistan, and Karachi. The strategic shift of India towards Afghanistan, alarming presence of Indian's in Afghanistan and enhanced political and economic presence of India in Afghanistan is issue of concern for Pakistan Security strategic building in the region. India main aim is to have presence of India after NATO and US troops with drawl and signing of strategic Partnership with Afghanistan in October 2011 (Butt, 2011). In past India get chance to pressurize Pakistan by reinforcing Pastunistan issue from Afghanistan that led to the closure

of Afghanistan embassy in Quetta. Pro-India government in Afghanistan was deadlock in friendly relations between the two neighboring countries Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Arrest of Kalboshen Yadev is the solid proof of Indian presence in Balochistan. India aim is to have presence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of NATO and ISAF forces . India is investing in Afghanistan markets to pressurize Pakistan from Afghanistan's side and destabilize Pakistan internally. Anti State elements in Pakistan is supported by India and trying to destabilize Pakistan internally like Baluchistan Factor and aiding the non state actors.

Indo-US civil nuclear deal will further result in unfriendly relations of Pak and US. This deal is pressurizing Pakistan that its nuclear arsenals are not safe and Terrorists will get access to the nuclear arsenals earlier or later. Unending Arms race in South Asia will throw the region in disastrous consequences. India quest for permanent membership in the UNSC is supported by US and Balance of power will disturbed in South Asia Region (Hameed, 2015). US-India partnership in trade, nuclear and Strategic building is the reason US main aim is to contain China and allies of China particularly The CPEC. Iran was also isolated and nuclear agreement with Iran has been cancelled after US realized the importance of CPEC. Pak-US relations were also strained after Pak-China signed different bilateral agreements and India is indulging Pakistan in contentious issues like Kashmir and Changes made unilaterally in IWT Indus water treaty provisions.

Concerns of Pakistan from Afghanistan:

Mismanagement of Pak-Afghan border is problematic issue between two neighboring countries. Pak-Afghan geo strategic relations cannot be improved unless border issues are addressed and managed properly.

Unprecedented movement of 55,000 people witnessed by Pak-Afghan border and mostly come to Pakistan for the purpose of labor work and health related issues (Shah, 2010). Militants come from the other side of border and they have made safe heavens. The hurdle in the management of border issue is the previous Afghan Governments, the Taliban and the Karzai government has rejected the Durand line as a international border. Properly monitoring the Pak-Afghan border is unsuccessfully due to no support of Afghan government. Militant's activities not led the friendly relations between the two neighboring states. TTP, Al-Qaeda, the Haqqanis and Taliban insurgent groups denied the legality of border and still infusing Phastunistan issue in the region. Another factor of the contentious border issue is the cross border attack of Afghan National security forces (ANSF) on Pakistani military personnel, cross-border-shelling and firing along the border. Due to these attacks relations get worsened and 730 cross-border attacks reported in 2012. The militants are destabilizing Pakistan internally and despite negotiations the number of attacks increased in Pakistan and Operation named Zarb-e-Azb were started in June 2014 and many citizens of Pakistan became IDPs Internally displaced persons. The withdrawal of international forces is another issue in the peace deadlock of both the countries (Benjamin, 2015) The ongoing situation of peace will worsen if the international forces withdrawn without Political and strategic solution of Afghanistan. Constant allegations have been made by Afghanistan on Pakistan by sponsoring Terrorism. Pakistan installed bio metric system in Pak-Afghan border and fencing of border is started since 2013 but Afghan government and people has intensely opposed the border fencing and several attacks have made to stop the border fencing. Afghanistan stance is not clear on one side it is opposing

border fencing on the other side accusing Pakistan meddling in Afghanistan's internal matter. One of the deadlocks in Pak-Afghan relations is the presence of more than 5 million Afghan refugees on Pakistan soil. Many Afghan refugees have properly established economic relations with Pakistani locals and capture various types of business like Export Import of goods. More than 3.5 million Afghan refugees are not yet registered and these refugees are security risk for Pakistan in supporting militants and hiding the militants in their camps and home. The second factor of refugees is they are not limited to their camps and openly moving through all over Pakistan. The refugees denied to go back to Afghanistan due to uncertain war like situation in their homeland country and secondly they have spend more than four decades in Pakistan and established their own economic relations and earning better than as compare to Afghanistan (Tellis, 2008). The situation will be more worsened if another bulk of refugees and IDPs internally displaced persons returned to Pakistan if security situation in Afghanistan became deteriorated in near future. As the population in Pakistan increased and more urbanization in the country proved economically and security risk for Pakistan, the country is not in situation to accommodate more refugees in Pakistani soil, effective mechanism and confidence building measure in necessary between Pakistan, Afghanistan and United Nation High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) at the tripartite meetings . Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) , khyber Pukhtoonkhwa KP and Baluchistan is mostly effected from the influx of Afghan refugees. Political, Economic and peace process are effecting in Pak-Afghan relations due to Porous border.

Analytical Overview:

India intended to trap Pakistan from two fronts, on one side from Durand line and from other side India-Pakistan border. New Delhi strongly expressed the execution of Najibullah after Taliban took control of Afghanistan and supported the opening of Indian consulates in Afghanistan and it led to unfriendly relations between India and Pakistan. India started propaganda against Pakistan and supported the terrorists training camps in Afghanistan to carry on terrorist activities inside Pakistani soil. Pakistan given the proof of Indian consulates involved in trouble some activities with the help of Baluchistan Liberation army (BLA) in Pakistan's territory. India denied the proofs and started to diplomatically isolate Pakistan. In tribal areas terrorists and funded economically, ammunition and weapons by Indian secret agencies that results in security risk in Waziristan, Baluchistan and tribal areas in Pakistan. It is difficult for Pakistan to tackle terrorists in its country, diplomatic isolation, Indian presence in Afghanistan Soil and policy shifting of US towards Pakistan after War on Terror and US itself accused Pakistan for not supporting US led war in Afghanistan. Sacrifices of Pakistanis citizens, army personnel and economic backwardness to Pakistan after 9/11 cannot be denied and Pakistan is still facing geo-strategic, geo-economic and foreign policy challenges.

Conclusion:

Pakistan and Afghanistan shared long porous border, ethnic, religious and political similarities. Each state has some responsibilities, geo strategic interests and both state want peace prosperity and better relations. There is an opportunity for both states in trade, foreign relation but instability in Afghanistan not led the situation friendly and often the time relations

between both the countries lack mutual trust. Many projects worth of billion dollars has stopped due to troublesome situation in Afghanistan. Central Asian states have abundance of minerals, natural resources but trade ratio is very less with Afghanistan due to insecurity in the region. The long prevailing refugee issue must be solved by the mutual understanding of both states (Afzal, 2017). Blame game, accusing and meddling in the interior affairs of one state in another is not the solution of common problem like Terrorism, Border management and dead lock in friendly relations. Neighboring state mostly India is filling the gape in Afghanistan-Pakistan friendly relations. Eastern border of Pakistan is active due to Kashmir issue and water terrorism on the opposite side Western border also receive many ups-down in the relation of friendly relations and increase in defense budget. Afghanistan should accept the sacrifice of Pakistan on many events like Afghan-Soviet war, refugees, cross border terrorism and the lives of thousands peoples lost in this un ending Afghan war. Mostly Afghan refugees caused serious problems for Law and order situation in Pakistan. These refugees are also working for foreign intelligence agencies. A foreign troop on Afghanistan's soil is directly threat for Pakistan's security, economy and geo-strategic interests. After the soviet with drawl Civil war in Afghanistan provided evidence of serious challenges and trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan came to end and fear was instilled that whole the region will flung into civil war like situation due to porous long border and presence of anti state elements in the border areas (Butt,2014). At the time of September 2001 Pakistan was left with no option only to help US to combat terrorism or face the serious consequences of War. Pakistan's image is internationally formed as suspicious to compel Pakistan for Do More action against the terrorist.

Khyber Pukhtoonkhawa (KP) and Baluchistan peace security and trade business seriously affected due to terrorists attacks and fear of another civil war. Peace Talks with Afghanistan of major countries and Taliban cannot deny the vital importance of Pakistan after Post-US scenario in Afghanistan as Pakistan is directly affected from the situation.

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