

## **Post 2014 Spillover Effects of Afghanistan's Crisis on Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

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Foreign policy of any country can never be fully controlled by herself. There are always certain non-tangible which directly influences national policies that is geography, demography, economy and environment in the region. Regions like ours which happens to most dense in prevailing environment additional factors like terrorism, instability in Afghanistan, presence of two nuclear powers having history of conflicts further exacerbate the challenges. These factors combined put Pakistan in a catch twenty two. With challenges come to opportunities if played properly we can still accrue benefits to safeguard our national interests. In context of Pak-Afghan; a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is the only interest of Pakistan. More than a Decade US occupation has troubled not only Afghanistan but Pakistan is also the ultimate victim of Afghan fall out. There is escalating militancy in Pakistan due to non-state actors in the shape of Al-Qaeda and Taliban myriad groups. There arise questions that what are Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan? How Pakistan would safeguard her national and regional interests? What are foreign policy indicators in this scenario? Pakistan policy making elites should direct their course of action and to ensure constructive engagement at that hour. Pakistan should support an Afghan lead and Afghan owned solution for this. Scarlet thread in Pak-Afghan relationship is to have a friendly Afghanistan. It will not only stabilize our internal situation but in future enable Pakistan and India work together improve bilateral relations, which will improve the situation on both eastern and western borders. Furthermore, access to Central Asian Republics will be feasible and China can be more favorable to Pakistan in that context.

*Key Words:* Foreign Policy, Security, Drawdown, Taliban, Militancy, National Interests.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are intertwined, whose sphere of relations is not only inclusive of neighborhood but encircling the longest border, same ideology, Pashtun ethnicity. Besides the protracted war in Afghanistan, most probably the Jihad against communist forces of Soviet in which Pakistan's soil sorted out freedom fighters to exonerate Afghanistan from ruthless clutches of the Soviet. Afghanistan is connected with Pakistan in such a way that stability in Pakistan cannot prevail in case of insecurity inside Afghanistan. Peace and stability in Afghanistan is paramount for Pakistan national interest. Pakistan is dependent on Afghanistan for channeling its access to not only Central Asian Republics but cordial strategic and economic relations with China are also possible only due to stable Afghanistan (Haq, 2013). Moreover, the bilateral relations can take a significant turn by mutual cooperation regarding Gwadar sea Port, Durand Line and Pashtun issue. Furthermore, this ambit encompassed the regional interests and reservations of Pakistan against India while keeping balance of power notion in consideration, and is apprehensive about Iran's for her instigation of Shia militia in Baluchistan (Hanaur, 2012). Friendly and stable Afghanistan provides depth to Pakistan against India (Amin, 2013).

In the comity of nations every nation grapple to serve her national interests. "National interests is a concept which could be used to describe, explain and assess the foreign policies of nations" (Rosenaus, 1964). National interest is a basis for evaluating the appropriateness of foreign policy. "Each state plots the course it thinks will best serve its interests" (Waltz, 1979). Realists have attributed to the domain of national interests. For Morgenthau, national interests are legitimization of foreign policy while for Kenneth Waltz national interests are survival of state in anarchical world. So far Pakistan interests are contemplated then following grounds are main contours of Pakistan's foreign policy inside Afghanistan;

### **Stable Afghanistan**

Pakistan's stability is pervasively interlaced to Afghanistan because the ongoing turmoil across the western border has infested militancy and extremism inside Pakistan. One of main reasons of Pakistan insecurity is infiltration of militants across Durand Line. Pakistan has long border with Afghanistan, which is not well-managed and people sometimes move without visa. Some of that movement is healthy while other is unhealthy so the situation in Afghanistan has direct effect on Pakistan. (Khar, 2013) For example people after Swat operation were flee to Afghanistan and Pakistan government of PPP repeatedly asked Afghanistan to handed them over. (Khar, 2013)Therefore Pakistan has always asked neighboring countries to play their role in this regard by fixing intelligence devices, deployment of military check posts on the Afghan side of Durand line so as to curb militant's infiltration (News Karachi, 2008).

Pakistan is unflinching for having cordial and peaceful relations with Afghanistan. But Afghan Taliban's infiltration across Durand Line into Pakistan has ratcheted the parameter of stable bilateral relations by escalating militancy in tribal areas. This intricate security situation has been troubling to the country and demand exigency because resultantly it has doubted Pakistan's role in war on terror. Pakistan has been accused by the US on more than one ground that ISI is backing, nourishing and harboring Taliban. If a realistic look is taking of Pakistan and Afghanistan relations, then it come to the surface that Pakistan and Afghanistan relations have been remained murky due to various reasons, among which Pashtunistan has been one of main troubling aspect since long. On Afghan side, Pashtunistan nationalism is based on argument that Pakistan's Pashtun are integral part of Afghanistan, furthermore Baluchistan being an outlet of Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean is inevitable to merge with it. Due to these factors Afghanistan had refuted the validity of 1947 referendum and its foreign policy till 1980s revolved around Pashtunistan (Qassem, 2007). Pakistan is averse to the Afghanistan claim on Pashtun inhabitants of Pakistan (Rashid, 2010). In order to settle the issue of Pashtunistan, Pakistan wants client state in Afghanistan because this grave issue can bifurcate Pakistan on the basis of ethnic strife (Weinbaum and Harder, 2008). Pakistan and Afghanistan have common religion, culture, customs and traditions but to the great dismay the superpower involvement in both minor states has upset the apple cart. Undoubtedly, in Pakistan the non-state actors with their external patrons have trembled national security with exacerbated extremism and sectarianism which are the direct fall out of Afghanistan turmoil. Whereas, the US is also dependent on Pakistan's role for degrading the momentum of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks.

Pakistan's foreign policy in war on terror decades is on head on not only for regional stability and peace but is neutralizing the immediate threats and leverages in Afghanistan from India (Siddiq, 2010).

### **Indian Influence in Afghanistan**

India has envisaged Afghanistan pivotal significance in its foreign policy after 1990s at the demise of bipolar world structure. . Basically, India carves to be most dominant power and player in South Asia and within Indian Ocean basin, to cater for its strategic interests and to grapple with all hurdles in this regard (Fair, 2011). India is farsightedly investing in Afghanistan in order to foster her nexus with Afghanistan, which could make it powerful stake holder at the exit and beyond 2014 (Ghazanfar, 2013). She is Afghanistan fifth largest bilateral donor, who has ventured so many infrastructure related construction projects (Ghazanfar, 2013). Moreover, she is contributing in development of Afghanistan and training Afghan integral security forces. Wherein India has disbursed more than \$2 billion in Afghanistan and has strategic ties with Afghanistan, therefore Afghanistan looks up to India for her development (Sherpao, 2013).

As far as the role of India is contemplated then India has always remained averse to Taliban regime and sided along Iran, Tajikistan and Russia to Northern Alliance because Taliban are considered closely allied to Pakistan. India can pose challenge to Pakistan's foreign policy because both India and Afghanistan are boisterous to Pakistan throughout the history. Southern and South Eastern Afghanistan is known to the Pashtun dominating areas, these appears to be a majority of Pro-Pakistan population , whereas presence of considerable number of Indian consulates on Af-Pak border indicates a certain degree of Indian interests with availability of some liberty of action. India sought proactive statecraft and pro-Indian lobbies in Afghanistan and has been succeeded to the great extent in this regard. It has flourished diplomatic missions in strategically significant areas which are maximizing Indian influence at the expense of Pakistan (Hussain, 2012).

Delhi is covetous to access Central Asia energy market and for an effective trade, transportation and infrastructure in Afghanistan. As China is nightmarish for US in this region but dominant role of India will curtail China influence in South and Central Asia which is desired by US and Delhi (Pant, 2010). On the other hand, Indian hegemonic status in Afghanistan is strategic defeat to Pakistan (Gates, 2009). India reopened embassy in Kabul soon after Taliban was toppled. It has also opened four consulate offices in major Afghan cities of Qandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat and Jalalabad. Prior to that there were no consular offices.

Furthermore, India is said to be providing funding to Baluch dissident groups for exerting pressure on Pakistan (Rizvi, 2013). India is utilizing consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar, cities closer to the border, in order to instigate anti-Pakistan feelings in Baluchistan and FATA (Schaffer, 2011). Her interference and involvement in Baluchistan is a formidable threat. There is RAW, CIA, MOSSAD combined centre in Mazari Sharif which is very active in Baluchistan and had operated in Swat (Ghazanfar, 2013). This alliance is still playing in North and South Waziristan. It has been clearly manifested from the weapons recovered at Swat operation, which were labeled as 'Made in Banaras' (Ghazanfar, 2013). Islamabad objective is to prevent India from strengthening its strategic interests in Afghanistan, and to establish pro-Pakistan political set up in Afghanistan (Arnoldy, 2011). There is no doubt, that Indian presence in Afghanistan creates problems of many kinds in Pakistan. If India is hostile on Kashmir border, how can it be friendly on Afghanistan border?

Pakistan can adopt following policy options to counter India in Afghanistan. It can impede Afghanistan export to India through Pakistan, can abort pipeline construction project among Turkamanistan, Afghanistan and India, to foster bilateral pipeline project with Iran, further to invigorate military, commercial, infrastructure development with China and to the most constraining will be blocking the US convoy (Fair, 2011). Pakistan can render diplomatic offensive against Indian presence. Media campaign can be launched to expose India's sinister designs in Afghanistan. Pressure on the Kabul government to control Indian activities can also be helpful. Furthermore, in case India deploys military forces in Afghanistan then Pakistan should have security options ready to deal with it (Mir, 2013).

### **China Factor**

China has great market in Afghanistan and is important stake holder inside the latter. As consider the US response on China's leverage in Afghanistan and Pakistan, then the US is comfortable with Chinese contribution to the region such as investment, civilian capacity and aid in Northern distribution network for NATO-Led ISAF. There is consideration that China can play a pivotal role in bringing Pakistan to the point of rendering headway in subjugating insurgency emanating from western border rather than confined only to India and eastern border. But this notion of the US has gone awry due to Chinese negligence. It is palpable that China can exercise leverage by asking Pakistan to settle militancy and extremist threats, which have been arise from Central and South Asia. Pakistan will concede with it hence these threats are detrimental to both Pakistan and China internal security.

China is hungry for natural resources. Pakistan should cooperate with China because its natural resources are exploited in China. Pakistan will provide transit route for carrying it to china and Pakistan can assist in setting up natural resource extraction industries as well (Noorani, 2013). China has covertly requested Pakistan to curb Uighur separatists in Pakistan tribal areas. China is preferring Pakistan interests as China is not opening Wakhan passage to NATO because it will bereft Pakistan from revenue generation (Toby and Nicholas, 2015). China is uncomfortable over Indian leverage in Afghanistan. However, in post withdrawal China will cautious to own security and will try to be neutral towards all regional countries.

The huge investment in Afghanistan has been carried out by China in order to be fully benefited by Afghanistan natural resources as Chirtian Le Miere, Jane's Intelligence Review editor stated China is very interested in Cheap resources of neighbouring country and is already with lion investment \$3.5 billion the project of Aynak, fields of copper which is situated in the province of Logar.

China does have its own regional and global concerns and is not oblivious of the challenges resulting from the US-led uni-polarity or its 'pivotal' ascendancy in Asian regions. For this purpose the establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was a step towards creating a regional bloc to withstand American ascendancy in

this region (Ahmad, 2013). Chinese economy is already nightmare for the US because the US economy has come to the shutdown.

#### **Access to CARs**

Regional countries are striving to have market in these countries. Pakistan is connected to CARs through channels of history, common tradition, religion and culture. Pakistan is in dire need of oil and natural gas and central Asian Republics are abundant with mineral resources so Pakistan through trade agreement can import such commodities from these states (Ahmad, 2013). Pakistan can be shortest outlet for landlocked CARs to connect them to world economy and to Arabian Sea. CARs could provide its mineral treasure like gas, oil and electricity to Pakistan in order to recover this dearth to her. Pakistan throughout its history has grappled to have cordial political, economic and social relations with CARs on the basis of sovereign equality, non-interference in each other's affairs and shared interests (Javed, 202).

There are myriad hurdles in Pakistan access to CARs market as for instance economic factors like infirm industrial infrastructure, literacy lower ratio, no advance in science and technology and financial turbulence. There are other competitors in this region as India, Iran, Turkey who are trying to surpass each other. India is main hurdle in this background which is favorite to CARs than Pakistan. To cap it all, India is successful in creating strained atmosphere for Pakistan in this area. Pakistan has no railway link with CARs. Afghanistan's imbroglio has hampered Pakistan economic agreements with CARs and still its fulfillments are connected with peace and stability in Afghanistan (Javed, 2002).

#### **Rapprochement with Iran**

Pakistan foreign policy stands for friendly relations with all regional states. While engaged in settlement of Afghanistan turmoil, Pakistan has to safeguard regional interests. In Afghanistan's perspective there arise various concerns and interests of all the neighboring countries. For instance, Iran whose foreign policy is dominated by two stances, one is to seek political leadership while semi-monarchy exists recently, the second is resistance against Islamic revolutionary power (Todge and Redman, 2011). Pakistan depends on Iran for import of energy in the shape of Iran Pakistan Pipeline (IPP), which is pending but determined to be fulfilled by Pakistan's administration. It is about \$ 7.5 billion pipeline, which would facilitate Pakistan with 7.8 billion cubic meter of gas from Iran's South Pars gas field, both countries are planning to have trade from scant \$ 1 billion in 2011 to \$ 5 billion in 2015 (Tehran Times, 2011). Pakistan Iran relations are not so smooth due to Sunni-Shia differences and above all favor to different sects in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's stability is conflated with Iran's, and the latter is averse to Taliban rule which is likely to become imminent either by chaos or by peace talks. In that aspect Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia relations have remained acrimonious throughout the history. Iran has aligned with Northern Alliance by all means whether political, economic and strategic. Moreover, Taliban have worked for degrading Shia Hazara minority as have trampled them in Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 (Toby and Nicholas, 2011). Iran has supported the temporary Karzai ruling and is supporting the Kabul government since then. In order to trouble the US in Afghanistan, Iran have disbursed million of dollars to Karzai and own officials there. According to New York 700,000 has been paid to Karzai, which has been conceded with gratitude in October 2010 (Filkins, 2010).

Iran is cautious about Pakistan and Afghanistan new trends. Moreover, Iran is hostile to the US/NATO presence on Afghanistan soil, which has trembled security and for that cause Iran is supporting even the Taliban with latest equipment (Toby and Nicholas, 2011). Iran is dense in Herat, which was previously her integral part and is supporting it with political and economic aids. CARs and Persian Gulf are alluring to Iran through Afghanistan. Iran can be side lined either by the US sanctions or by Afghan alternative trade route. Moreover, the Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's initiated peace talks with Taliban is also adverse to Iran. In 2014 the least US soldiers left over will induce Iran to support Afghanistan central government. Iran should ensure all inclusive set up based on regional consensus because the stability of Afghanistan is in interests of all regional countries.

#### **Way Forward**

The aforementioned policy contours of Pakistan are troubled due to turmoil in Afghanistan. The very first requirement is restoration of peace in Afghanistan. According to Brig. Asad Munir, peace in Afghanistan can only be ensured by Afghan Loya Jirga, a constitutional forum (Munir, 2013). While the rest of the countries like the US,

Pakistan, Turkey, UK, Saudi Arabia and partly UAE should be in cooperation to find a solution for Afghanistan after the US pull out (Munir, 2013). This Peace Council must bring all the groups on the same page to ensure reintegration because exclusion of any group will vapor the reconciliation process into the air. Albeit Taliban envisaged this Council as ineffective, incredulous and predicted its ultimate failure on the longer run (Yusafand Zaidi, 2011) but the peace talks with Taliban is the lynchpin, the only way leads to stability.

As for as negotiation is contemplated, then there are three levels for negotiation; internally amongst Afghans, secondly with Taliban and thirdly regional stakeholders could struck a peace deal to escape the repercussions (Jarvenpaa, 2011). Because not only the local stake holders but regional states could also play their role to restore peace (Dobbins; Shinn, 2011). For exit there is need to negotiate with Taliban because more than a decade military engagement has been unable to subdue the Taliban insurgency. It is apparent from the US recent strategy because when Obama talked about political strategy then he was referring negotiation with Taliban (Dobbins; Shinns, 2011). The U.S decision to bring about a drawdown of its forces from Afghanistan in 2014 also implies meeting the demand of the Taliban for a full withdrawal of foreign forces half-way. Accumulatively these developments are creating an environment in which restoration of peace in Afghanistan through dialogue with the Taliban has a chance. But only a chance, the availing of which would require some basic agreement among the power contenders and stake holders inside Afghanistan and imaginative diplomacy on the part of the U.S/West and neighbors of Afghanistan. Moreover, neutral foreign policy should be adopted towards its neighboring countries, an effective administration, propaganda and above all strong diplomatic relations with economically strong countries are viable policy options for Afghanistan. An ethnic strife has undermined any headway in both political and military aspects so an intra-Afghan dialogue should be arranged that brings together various ethnic groups like the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and anti-Taliban or at least moderate Pakhtuns to agree on power-sharing arrangements and changes in the constitutional structure (Sheikh, 2012).

As far as role of Pakistan is considered then Pakistan staunchly advocates Afghanistan led initiative because only stable Afghanistan can serve Pakistan's interests and escape her from two frontline hostile borders. According to Pakistan former foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar, their government has ensured Afghanistan that Pakistan is part of solution not part of problem. (Khar, 2013) As regard Pakistan political role in Afghanistan then Pakistan should cultivate relations with whosoever is in power in Kabul and stay away from direct involvement in Afghan politics. Pakistan has no other option rather than to be neutral in Afghanistan issue and with no favorite group there (Pervaiz, 2013).

Recently Afghanistan's president Ashraf Ghani is more favorable to Pakistan and in this regard many positive trends have been emerged. Pakistan's foreign policy is recently with indicators that Pakistan should deal with all Afghan factions on equal basis whether it is Taliban, Tajik, Uzbek or Hazaras and it has already become policy part. From Pakistan side the military institution is with leading role in this regard due to adhoc basis arrangement.

Not only politically but economically also Pakistan should play her role. . It can use its economic ties, transit trade and ethnic ties to maintain multifaceted and mutually beneficial relations with Afghanistan (Rizvi, 2013). Both countries should flourish economic agreements and Pakistan should ensure maximum economic cooperation with Afghanistan.

Pakistan has great influence in Afghanistan and the US is aware of Pakistan's significance in the region. The US interests in Afghanistan are not secure without Pakistan's assistance.

As stated already that national interests of Pakistan and Afghanistan are interconnected and in the post withdrawal scenario three main factors will bind them close to each other; firstly, the advent of China as major actor in the game plan of the region will serve as a counterweight to the presence of India and the US. Secondly, the geo-strategic location of Pakistan makes it indispensable for Afghanistan. Thirdly, Gwader port will serve as the nearest trade terminal for Afghanistan.

In view of these facts, Pakistan will become essential for Afghanistan. Development of good relations will be in the interest of both countries. India will be eliminated from the scene sooner or later since it has no land link with Afghanistan (Haq, 2013). In Afghan backdrop our preference should be a twin track strategy. While improving relations with Afghanistan and the region, Pakistan should also make efforts to restrict Indian access in Afghanistan and simultaneously facilitate the US exit strategy from the region.

Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan can be best served if it stretched beyond security to bilateral trade, energy and reconstruction projects (Jinnah Institute Report, 2010). As the Gwader Port develops it will serve not only Afghanistan but the entire Central Asian Republics. As such it is Afghanistan's stability that is dependent on Pakistan. With the completion of Gwader-Kashger railway line, a Pak-China joint project is presently under construction, Pakistan will not have to depend on Afghanistan for its contacts with CARs and China. Karakoram Highway is being upgraded for the same reason.

It will be a golden opportunity for Pakistan to pursue an independent foreign policy in the region keeping in view its strategic location. Almost all countries of the region will be dependent on Pakistan for establishing social, political and economic relations with the rest of the world. Pakistan will be able to reach European markets in exchange for the trade opportunities it will provide to them for CARs.

We have to take serious steps to improve our relations with India otherwise it will continue to engage us on both the eastern and western borders besides creating internal problems for us which can threaten the stability of Pakistan. We should not forget what happened in East Pakistan in 1971 and what is now happening in Baluchistan (Jinnah Institute Report, 2010).

Afghanistan can be a conduit of oil and gas to Central Asia and Iran. This advantage can be reaped by Pakistan and CARs through a stable Afghanistan. Pakistan is of pivotal value due to deep sea port in Gwadar. If Baluchistan remained stable in security terms then it's an important channel to expansion of economic ties and cooperation with Central Asia and Pakistan would be an energy corridor for the region.

Pakistan's relations with CARs need to be developed further. The huge Central Asian land mass should be linked to Gwadar via Afghanistan. It is essential for peace that foreign forces exit Afghanistan, then Central Asia, Afghanistan trade route will flourish. Secondly, Central Asian states can join western China so trade and transit can take place through Kashgar – Gwadar corridor. The future of Central Asia and Pakistan are clearly linked.

### **Conclusion**

The US is not altogether going to withdraw from Afghanistan as there is no apparent victory and US interests in South Asia are still hang in the balance. Taliban force has been degraded but still they are not in mode to comply with the US terms and conditions for negotiations. The US is likely for some military engagement beyond 2014.

If the US is only keen on stabilizing Afghanistan then a resolution to the conflict is possible. The US should be seeking, ideally, to achieve the following objectives; no foreign militants in Afghanistan, no more use of Afghanistan soil against any other country, progress towards pluralism, protection of minorities and to ensure human rights. The resistance in Afghanistan is prepared to go along with all these conditions. Pakistan should play a role in bringing a consensus around these points. Pakistan, rather than being obsessed with India's role should focus on resolving the conflict.

Pakistan's foreign policy should be based on that scenario on following basis; non-interference in Afghanistan, cooperate and facilitate the US exit, to enhance diplomatic relations with Iran and to be on friendly terms with China, India and Russia. Only stable Afghanistan can ensure the fulfillment of policy contours of Pakistan.

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