

ISSN:1995-1272

Vol.1, No.2

Winter 2015



FWU Journal of Social Sciences

Published Biannually

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar, Pakistan

Special Issue

**NATO Drawdown from
Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges**

Editor

Razia Sultana

A two days International Conference titled "NATO Drawdown from Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges", organized by the Department of Political Science on 20th and 21st May, 2015, at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Garden Campus.

Patron in chief was Prof. Dr. Ihsan ali Khan and principal organizer was Prof. Dr. Jehanzeb Khalil. This conference included Seven International Speakers, four Ambassadors, twenty five National Speakers including scholars and eminent journalist. The International Conference was participated by four Vice Chancellors as Session Chair and speaker namely Prof. Dr. Ihsan Ali, VC of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Prof. Dr. Noor Jehan, VC of University of Swabi, Prof. Dr. Fazal Rahim Marwat, VC of University of Charsadda, Prof. Dr. Razia Sultana, VC of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar.

This conference papers have been published in two special issues of this journal as Special Issue.

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Impact of NATO Drawdown 2014 on South Asian Security and Competing Interests of Regional Powers

Mussarat Jabeen

University of Sargodha, Sargodha-Pakistan

After 14 years of war on terror, the coalition forces are leaving Afghanistan. There are claims of victory, but stipulated goals have not been achieved and international community is increasingly looking towards the impact of NATO drawdown 2014, which will directly impact the wider region. Not only there is a risk of instability spilling over to the South Asian region, but the drawdown will also accelerate the ongoing competition among the regional powers, particularly between India and Pakistan. Both have a real clash of interests and want to serve their relative geo-strategic, geopolitical and economic interests. These interests are varied and sometimes conflicting. Besides these interests they have strategic stakes in Afghanistan. Pakistan is pre-occupied with its 'strategic depth policy' and India with its security related to Kashmir. Other apprehensions include radical Islamism, extremism and drug trafficking. Emphasis is also on issues pertaining to internal security and the political settlement in Afghanistan as the weakness of the state and political fragmentation of the country will also influence the South Asian region. It is a well known fact that power in Afghanistan is extremely decentralized and real control is exercised by a handful of field commanders and warlords without having any real political affiliation. Their relations with neighbouring powers are to secure their respective interests only. There is a clear indication that the clash and competition in Afghanistan may create a conflicting situation transforming into a war after the drawdown. There is a need to manage the interests and neutralize their concerns regarding the post-2014 scenario in Afghanistan. In this regard, an enhanced regional cooperation is required to keep the region away from instability and insecurity. On the other hand south Asian powers' involvement will be viewed as a threat to the regional stability. This allegation is based on the past experience when the superpowers made Afghan territory a playground for their proxy war making alliance with regional powers. There is a need of co-operation among the regional powers in the post withdrawal scenario in the same manner as they did in counterterrorism operations. The paper will evaluate all these aspects and impact of drawdown 2014 on the security of South Asia keeping in view competition of regional power in the endgame politics.

Key Words: security, interest, economy, terrorism, drawdown, troops.

The landlocked Afghanistan is the last tribal society in Central and West Asia that is still in a transition while the other regional tribal societies have changed or been transformed less or more into modern states. The process of transformation is continued, but the trajectory of this evolution is tough, full of upheavals and instabilities. The major reason of this slow pace is the strategic location of the country, making it a gateway for Central, South and West Asia. The confluence of competing interests of these regions along with the American and Russian rivalries has made it a battlefield, first for the Soviets and later for the Americans. The Soviets attacked Afghanistan in December 1979, the invasion not only ruined the country for a decade, but also threw it into civil war, making it a breeding ground for un-lawful activities of war lords, foreign fighters and drug smugglers. Furthermore, this situation brought the Taliban into power and their success against experienced warlords added a new direction to the Afghan dilemma. America itself was the prime supplier of weapons and funds in fueling the proxy war in the unfortunate land, making it a sanctuary of terrorist elements. These elements threaten American security carrying the day of September 11, 2001 and ended the illusion that American citizens float above the hatred of the world. The assaults on the political and financial giants of the US made a mockery of Fortress America (Fineman, 2001, p. 28). In retaliation to the terrorist attacks, the US launched the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda on October 7, 2001, known as the Operation Enduring

Freedom. The aim of the war was to stamp out Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime in collaboration with the global community as American President George Bush Jr. claimed while declaring the war (Raunesar, 2002). The US-led war on terror entered in its final phase in 2011 when President Obama announced his exit strategy, but he did not disclose his time-table of withdrawal of all American troops from Afghanistan (Terkel, 2011). It was decided that ten thousand troops would leave Afghanistan in summer 2011 while twenty-three thousand additional troops would depart at the end of the summer 2012. President Obama announced, "Our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support" (Landler & Cooper, 2012). The US drawdown in Afghanistan began on July 13, 2011 when 650 American troops left Afghanistan for the first time as a part of Obama's plan (Heidi, 2012).

In the Chicago Summit of May, 2012, the leaders of the NATO-countries endorsed an exit plan for withdrawing the ISAF from Afghanistan, transferring the responsibility of the country to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In December 2014, this process of transition was completed and the responsibility was transferred to the Afghan forces. Now, the Afghan troops are to manage their own security and defence after the withdrawal of the major part of the 150,000 total foreign troops (Chicago NATO Summit, 2012).

Impact of Drawdown on South Asian Security

As far as the security of South Asia is concerned, there are two types of challenges in the post-withdrawal situation. First are related to stability in Afghanistan like incredibility of political system, poor law and order situation, economic frailty, fragmented society and above all inefficient national security apparatus. Second are the external challenges emanating from regional situation, these include Indo-Pakistan competitive interests, insurgency and sectarian threats of neighbouring states. South Asian security and drawdown of NATO-ISAF troops from Afghanistan are interlinked with the role of regional powers, apart from India, Pakistan, other countries like Iran, China, and Central Asian States also have a role in the evolving geopolitical situation of Afghanistan. The paper is focusing on the policy options and security issues in South Asia, particularly India and Pakistan after the US drawdown and analyzing how Afghanistan remains a zone of chaos.

Internal Challenges in Afghanistan after Drawdown

The withdrawal policy is actually a drawdown, as the responsibilities of NATO forces will be officially reduced but not cut out. The deal with the Afghan government is on the same pattern, which was applied by the US in South Korea and Japan. The US has decided to remain in Afghanistan, but its presence would be limited to a small number of troops (Wazir, 2012). Although the Afghans are now masters of their own destiny, yet they have to agree upon, to work in collaboration with the residual forces to engage in combat operations and counterterrorism missions. This position effectively provides Kabul a crutch to lean on in times of crisis. To another viewpoint, it means dependency of the Afghan government upon the US and NATO for its ultimate security and existence. Furthermore, the review of the US-Afghan agreements reveals that the US is still largely in-charge and a little has changed in reality.

Agreements of American Drawdown from Afghanistan

On May 2, 2012, the US and Afghanistan finalized the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) for determining the status of foreign troops and the details of their operation after the 2014 drawdown. The SPA was finalized after two years of negotiations between the two presidents. It was a legally binding executive agreement with the objective of a peaceful transition in Afghanistan, ensuring the support of the US after the drawdown of troops. Following areas were chosen to work together:-

- a. Protection and promotion of democratic culture and values.
- b. Durable and long-lasting security in the country.
- c. Strong regional cooperation for security purpose.
- d. Improvement in economic and social sectors.
- e. Reinforcing Afghanistan's administration by strengthening governmental institutions (White House, 2012; Gare, 2014).

Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA)

The present coalition government of President Ashraf Ghani took office in September 2014 along with Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer. The government signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) on September 30, 2014 for targeting al-Qaeda and its supporters (Dawn, 2014, October 01). This was the first executive agreement for power-sharing arrangement brokered by the US. The Obama administration tried to sign this agreement with the former president Hamid Karzai whom he relied for 13 years, but he finally refused. In fact, the American reliance upon Karzai proved wrong as he lacked the qualities required for a wartime leader. About this delay, President Ghani commented during his recent visit to the US, "Due to the refusal of our previous government... we had lost momentum and both partners had to operate under uncertainty resulting some eight months of lost time in the most critical moment of transition (President Ghani's Address..., 2015). The BSA has been enforced since January, 2015 and will remain in implementation until 2024 unless either party terminates it through serving in advance a two-year notice (Akhtar and Sarkar, 2015). Under the agreement, the US is to keep 9,800 troops in 2015 while reducing more troops by the end of the year with additional 2,000 non-combat NATO troops (The News, 2015, March 24).

Under the BSA, the US and NATO forces have been given the assignment of training, equipping and guiding the Afghan national security forces for counterterrorism, eradication of Al-Qaeda and prevention of the resurgence of the Taliban. Significantly, foreign forces will not involve in direct combat with more focus on training and a supportive role for Afghan security forces. This is a type of symbolically marking the official transition. No doubt, the presence of robust force is for defence purpose. In spite of transferring responsibility to the ANSF, the strategic importance of Afghanistan is not to be diminished in coming years for regional and international powers.

The other provisions of the BSA permit Washington to remain in the region for a long time for security purpose by retaining operative bases (Security and Defence Cooperation, 2012) Currently, the US has reversed the plan of withdrawing 5500 US troops at the end of the year 2015 as a response to the request of Afghan president (Dawn 2015, March 26). On the occasion of departure ceremony, held in a gymnasium of Afghanistan, ISAF Commander General John Campbell declared, "we have lifted the Afghan people out of despair of the darkness and given them hope for the future" (Dawn 2014, December 30). However, there is no truth in the General's words as the despair still prevails in Afghanistan because the current situation is disappointing and depressing showing no hope at the horizon. A big and frightening question mark hangs over the country's future.

Drawdown of Foreign Troops and Mission of Residual Troops beyond 2014

At the beginning of 2015, the major visible shift in Afghanistan is the role of foreign forces, as they have become more 'lean' and efficient in accomplishing their objectives. Instead of going out on the line of fire, they are placing responsibility on their Afghan allies to do for them. The operation under the name of Resolute Support will continue as the strategic importance of Afghanistan still matters (Simeone, 2014).

The main agenda of the US for residual troops is something more than its official mandate of training and supporting the Afghan security forces. Its actual design is to eliminate the remains of Al-Qaeda and curtailing the resurgence of the Taliban. President Obama is of the opinion that the Taliban must break with Al-Qaeda, relinquishing violence, abiding by Afghan laws, including respect and protection for women and minorities (Dawn, 2015, January 26).

Residual troops are to enhance the ANSF's abilities by providing support on a regular basis for slowing down the insurgency and securing the major cities of Afghanistan. However, there is doubt about the ANSF's ability to preclude the growth of insurgency in the countryside with this foreign military contingent. In this position, Afghanistan may look like a patchwork, with a few areas under military control, others under the Taliban authority while gray areas for attracting insurgency of local warlords, as well as criminal movements interacting to varying extents to challenge the Afghan government's writ (Iqbal, 2013). It is also assumed that residual troops would be helpful for a dignified exit of American troops from Afghanistan without offering any real long-term guarantee for the political future of the country.

Keeping in view all these aspects, it can be calculated that the war is going to end, according to Obama's watch, but not on his terms and expectations; and its final phase will be shaped by internal security dynamics of the country. Financial burden and war weariness are taking their toll on the American people. In a recent poll of the Wall Street Journal and survey by NBC News indicated that 65 percent of the Americans were of the opinion that NATO combat mission was not worth the effort and sacrifices made by the country. Another poll conducted by the *Washington Post* and ABC News found that 77 percent of the Americans favour Obama's decision for complete withdrawal of troops by 2016. In a CBN News poll, only five percent opined that Afghanistan is likely to become a stable country (Dawn, 2015, February 13). The American public's support has begun to decline as US casualties are escalating. Almost 2300 soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since 2001 while 20,000 wounded (Dawn, 2014, December 29).

Anyhow, the president is striving to make the departure an honourable ceremony with a great victory, through the presence of a symbolic garrison in Afghanistan up to 2016. Furthermore, the solution formula is not Afghan-led. There is a possibility that an Afghan-led resolution may prevent the outbreak of civil war between the warring factions. The drawdown of NATO troops is occurring without finalization of some sort of power sharing agreement with the Taliban and the situation is likely to be volatile and capricious. The time for NATO drawdown has approached and there are several transitions, which are underway in Afghanistan. Among them the security transition is the most important, which has almost been apparently completed and the ANSF and police are taking control of the country.

The Role and Ability of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

In the aftermath of NATO drawdown, the ANSF has become the primary guarantor of Afghanistan's security, but prevailing conditions in the country are asymmetrical to future's stability. It was politically imperative to declare the Afghan army and police "ready and capable" for taking control and responsibilities in the country. However, the ground reality is quite different. Despite official claims, the ability of the two institutions is not free of doubts and both Western and Afghan authorities know the actual capacities of these forces (Grare, 2014).¹

The ANSF began its independent operations in the early months of 2013, but with a mixed record. The ANSF performance in responding the attacks was without making significant gains despite huge casualties. This performance of short-term raised questions about taking over the responsibility for long times or regular basis. Above it, insufficient military personnel remain a great concern. The current number of troops of ANSF is 352,000, which is planned to reduce to 230,500 by the end of 2015, expecting an improvement in the security situation (Brattberg, 2013). However, the current attrition rates are appalling and threatening the force's long-term effectiveness.

Desertion in Afghan Army and Role of Police

Thousands of recruits are abandoning the Afghan police and armed forces every month. The ratio of desertion is alarming and its estimation is a matter of concern for coalition leaders as its number is 63,000 every year. There are other calculations, which indicate that it may be more than one third of the current number (Brady and Owen, 2013). In spite of desertion, recruitment still exceeds attrition ratio, but new entry cannot be an alternate for trained personals worsening the quality of the institution. The ANSF already lacks air power and intelligence capabilities, and is not capable of using all types of weapons with insufficient access to logistics. These drawbacks are making its path thorny and tough.

¹ Cited by Grare (2014) referring the article entitled "Afghanistan security forces' readiness for NATO withdrawal still a hard sell" by Emma Graham-Harrison published in *the Guardian* on September 4, 2013. She wrote that the top American and NATO commanders in Afghanistan like General Joseph F. Dunford are satisfied with the *quality* of Afghan forces. Showing his faith in Afghan forces, he appreciated them during the 'handover ceremony' in Kabul on June 19, 2013 that they are in the position to "take the lead right now." Ironically, after the speech, he confessed, [they] "still lacked air capacity, were badly integrated, and needed more heavy weapons and bomb detection and disposal skill."

The Afghan police, a key component of the ANSF, is characterized by corruption owing to the prevailing culture in the country (Singh, 2014). A report of Transparency International (2011) counted Afghanistan among the worst corrupt countries, ranking it 174 out of 176 nations. Somalia and North Korea are lower to it.

The reports of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2013 exposed the weaknesses of a coalition government as it failed “to prepare the Afghan security forces in time for withdrawal of coalition air assets.....creating a potentially fatal capability gap that the Afghan air force is currently unable to fill” (Owen, 2013). It is also confessed by the Afghan officials that the quality of the uniforms and other equipment is not up to the mark. Another is incompetency and theft as a common practice, which is reported by several concerned quarters (Singh, 2014; Emma, 2012). During the last 13 years, the armed forces and police worked under foreign troops. No autonomous status was given to them for launching the operation and their role remained limited than publicly advocated and acknowledged. In the current situation, estimation and calculation about the performance of ANSF are not reliable as there are still residual troops to guide and support the local troops. The future is also linked to the contribution of American troops as how far they will make serious efforts to compensate the coalition forces. In a recent statement, General Campbell endorsed the new Afghan government of President Ghani for giving a new turn to relations between the Afghan and international forces. He stated, “Ghani has embraced the Afghan security forces, the police and the army. That made an immediate impact on them and their morale, and again, I think that's going to be a great window of opportunity for Afghanistan as we move forward.” Campbell admitted that Afghanistan is still an uneasy environment for operation. Explaining the reason of high casualties (7,000 to 9,000) among the Afghan forces in the year 2014, he related it to their changed position where they were commanding their forces themselves. Prior to this, they were fighting under NATO umbrella (Simeone, 2014). About the future strategies of Afghan forces, two options visible on the scene, first is their inability of handling the situation or overcoming the crises without dictation and direction of their ‘guards.’ The second is optimistic view looking at the hind side of the picture as there are possibilities that the departure of the Western forces would embolden them enhancing the quality of Afghan forces by conferring them the central position and they will work themselves for their own survival that may be an additional motivation. This option is not viable and illusive as the internal rivalries and conflicts are so deep that all parties rarely agree for negotiation without the involvement of external powers. Pakistan, China and the US are attempting to bring Afghan government and the Taliban to the table of conciliation and Pakistan made several attempts for this purpose. Recently, a meeting held in Islamabad for this purpose. The joint statement showed concerns about the continued conflict, which is to inflict “senseless violence on the Afghan people and also breeds insecurity throughout the region” (Shah, 2016). The Taliban’s representatives often refused to negotiate with the government on one pretext or other. For regional development, stability is essential, for example, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a proposed plan of \$46 billion for infrastructure development is conditioned with the peaceful situation otherwise, it may be jeopardized or partially get damage.

The capability of the ANSF looks highly doubtful for effective eradication of the insurgency. Even if the regime survives, there is possibility that major part of the country would be out of government’s control. The recent occupation of Qunduz by the Taliban is one such example. A local reporter commented that “poor coordination between different government units allowed the Taliban to keep advancing” (Taliban capture..., 2015).

Security of South Asia

The location of Afghanistan at the periphery of South Asia is strategically much important. Simultaneously common borders with the Central Asian States are continuously playing the role of an insulator. India and Pakistan, two important contenders in Afghanistan are primarily reflecting their security concerns and aspirations for regional peace. Both are moved by the rationale of curtailing the influence of each other, continuing their proxy war on the Afghan territory, albeit indirectly and through non-traditional tactics. Pakistan looks its influence over Afghanistan as prerequisite of its security, where it desires to maintain strategic depth against India. At the same time, determining the status of the Durand line and quashing the demand of Pashtunistan are two irritants. India wants to portray its image as the major donor of the region, establishing its economic influence in Afghanistan. For India, it is imperative to turn the public opinion in its favour highlighting the threats of drugs and fundamentalist Islam emanating from Pakistan.

Afghanistan's strategic importance and terrorism are viewed with different perspectives by regional and external powers. Strategic location is important for regional powers, particularly India and Pakistan due to the risk of a nuclear escalation. The terrorist attacks on European soil (France) and series of shootings in other countries are directly linked with Afghanistan. It has been alleged that these attacks were carried out by those persons who had received military training and ideological accomplishment in Pak-Afghan border areas (Grare, 2014). There are still risks that Afghanistan would again become a training ground as well as sanctuary for terrorist elements. This formidable reality cannot be rejected or ignored altogether. The US has made arrangements, but drawdown would embolden the terrorists and the risk of aggression against neighbouring states is likely to increase. This phenomenon can overlap the other parts of the globe if the conditions for a consolidated Afghan state are not met. Pakistan, China, Russia, Central Asia and Middle East are surrounding countries. In real-political terms, instability in a region damage development process (Jackson & Sorensen, 2004: 38). Afghanistan's stability would contribute towards the development of the area, otherwise, continuing conflict in Afghanistan could easily damage energy projects like TAPI, CAREC, CPEC and several others. It is also observed by the analysts that instability in the region, particularly in Central Asian Republics, is a direct result of the unrest in Afghanistan (Rehman, 2015). American involvement in South Asia has been entered into a new phase after NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. Much uncertainty is there in terms of the most suitable strategy for maintaining stability and security in the South Asia. Internal turmoil and disorder in neighbouring states, particularly in Pakistan is continuing. The threats to civilian lives are there in India, Pakistan and Xinjiang (province of China). Beijing is already wrestling with the religious extremism in Xinjiang. The attack on the Kunming train station and incident of Tiananmen Square are such examples. Train attack of March, 2014 resulted in the death of 27 persons, injuring 140 persons. Tiananmen Square (October, 2013) took the lives of five persons, injuring 40 when a car plowed into a crowd (Tiezzi, 2014). Such events are the result of Uighur insurgency, which is inspired by the elements living in surrounding regions. Above it, they are being emboldened by the instable situation and growth of extremism in Afghanistan.

The US is still pivotal to the region because the possibility of returning a proxy war that characterized the decade of nineties cannot be rejected in the aftermath of drawdown. However, this proxy war would be different in nature owing to the involvement of new actors. Above it, it would take place in a different environment of nuclear South Asia as the main contenders; India and Pakistan have developed nuclear nukes. Nominal American presence in such a situation is a blessing for the government in Kabul, if not for the country as a whole. It may help to increase the ability of the state for better control of its territory slowing down the erosion of the state apparatus.

Impact of Drawdown on Pakistan's Security

Being the major contenders in the South Asia, India and Pakistan are directly involved in Afghanistan. As far as Pakistan is concerned, it is inseparable with Afghanistan due to deep rooted cultural, historical and religious relationship. These links are so deep that even Karzai, the former Afghan president compellingly admitted this reality during his visit to New Delhi that Afghanistan and Pakistan were "identical twins" (Wazir, 2012). However, the changing nature of current relations of the two countries is turbulence. There are various causes of rocky and uneasy relations ranging from Pakhtunistan stunt, status of the Durand Line, the emergence of the Taliban, terrorist attacks of 9/11, war on terror, and increasing interference of India in Afghanistan. The pattern of Islamabad's policy towards Kabul has predominantly been shaped by the doctrine of strategic depth. Since independence, Pakistan has been making efforts to maintain friendly relations with a pro-Pakistani government in Kabul and this aspiration has been mainly driven by Indo-Pak hostility and Afghanistan's refusal to accept Durand line's status as a border. With the passage of time, no change occurred in Pakistan's objectives in Afghanistan. It is still pursuing the policy of eighties and promoting a "friendly" regime in Kabul to reduce the Indian presence and influence. Foreign Office of Pakistan announced a "strategic shift" in 2012 in its Afghan policy and declared a changed strategy advocating an inclusive reconciliation process towards the Northern Alliance. The previous policy of supporting the Taliban isolated Pakistan and both neighbors and the international community began to allege it as a sponsor of insurgents. The Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan) have been continuously targeting the state institutions since Islamabad's overt support to the US-led war in Afghanistan. After the Red Mosque operation (July 2007) in Islamabad, an army operation dislodged

network killing nearly one hundred terrorists and extremists. This operation fueled militant retaliations against army, taking the two in rival camps. Previously the army was assumed to be a sponsor of the Taliban in Afghanistan. This operation also brought a change in Pakistan's policy towards the Afghan Taliban (Grare, 2014). Another is the events like the insurgency of Swat. All these factors have led Pakistan to advocate a power sharing formula implied a direct engagement with all Afghan actors (Yusuf, 2013, p. 17).

Internal Issues of Pakistan and External Impact

The internal situation of Afghanistan is increasing the security challenges as the post-drawdown scenario is dividing the neighbouring states along the lines of their rivalry and interests projecting their priorities and defining their viewpoints. Above all, the ambiguity of US policies is keeping the situation further tense. Domestic factors like extremism and fundamentalism are equally targeting the situation and playing a significant role in portraying the image of Pakistan.

The major issue is the TTP and its links with militant groups and fragmented leadership on the pattern of Tehrik-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA). It has been divided into several splinter groups, which rarely coordinate for terrorist activities. Most of these groups have rivalries and pockets among them. For instance, Mahsud group (Hakimullah Mahsud and Wali-ur-Rehman) is rival to Mullah Nazir Group. While Hafiz Gul Bahadar has great concerns about Mahsud group, which is operating in North Waziristan, but it does not possess the capacity to enforce its authority. Similarly, another instance is of three different groups of Khyber agency, which are at arms with each other. The situation in Parachinar and Orakzai Agencies is depressing with the same problem while similar environment is prevailing in remaining areas (Wazir, 2012). All this indicates that the spillover impact of US drawdown will negatively impact the law and order situation in Pakistan particularly in FATA. This area was gravely affected by the war on terror as the al-Qaeda and its supporters exploited the porous border and a society with similar culture on Pak-Afghan border and instituted several sanctuaries there. These elements also extended the war in FATA and Pakistan, declaring jihad against the Pakistani Government for its support of US-led war on terror. It is imperative to observe that in the post-withdrawal scenario, these militant groups will either adopt strategies to continue their so called agenda or will attempt to merge into society. In both scenarios, the prospects of the growth of extremism are there.

Pakistan has also great concerns about Fazalullah and Fakir Muhammad for their alleged involvement in sabotage operation in Pakistan. About these persons, it is claimed that they are being sponsored by a notorious Indian intelligence agency named Raw (Research and Analysis Wing) and the National Directorate of Security, an Afghan intelligence agency (Wazir, 2012). Their underground activities are continued and the absence of NATO/ISAF forces would further embolden them. The TTP carried out a massacre in Army Public School Peshawar, killing 148 people, mainly children on December 16, 2014. Immediately after the tragic event, Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Shrarif met President Ghani in Kabul and sought their assistance for arresting and punishing militants. The accused Fazalullah is assumed to hide in Kunar province of Afghanistan, which borders Pakistan's restive tribal areas. Pakistan has repeatedly asked the Afghan government to capture and hand over Fazalullah, but he is still at large (Dawn 2014, December 23). Each country has a long list of accusations against the other for providing shelter to militants in the border areas for bloody attacks.

As a part of counterterrorism strategy, Pakistan lifted a moratorium on death penalty in terrorism cases and hanged over six convicts within no time (Dawn, 2015, January 20). All this was to intensify the efforts against militancy in the wake of Peshawar's events. The TTP commanders are overtly using Afghan soil against the interests of Pakistan. However, it may become hard for them to operate freely after withdrawal of foreign troops from Kabul. The post-drawdown will bring opportunities for Pakistan, if handled properly, otherwise they will convert into challenges creating further security problems as the internal conflicts in Afghanistan are likely to increase.

The drawdown may slow down problems vis-à-vis militancy and terrorism if the Taliban become part of the mainstream in Afghanistan. Though the process of such change would be slow but reintegration is not out of question. There are two factors, which may make them the part of the mainstream. First is the diminishing attraction of the recruitment as the pretext of foreign troops on their land is no valid. In the absence of cause,

the justification of waging *jihad* against the West is no more relevant. Secondly, religious political parties of Pakistan are effective to some extent to pacify the militants advocating them to gain their objective in peaceful and democratic manners.

Recent extension of political parties Act for FATA (2012) is an affirmative measure taken by the government. Prior to 2012, political parties were not permitted to work in FATA and people were politically less aware. In the changing situation, they will be in the position to play a positive role in the post-withdrawal scenario for strengthening peace. A recent survey showed that people of the area are aware about the significance of the dialogue and development, taking them key for restoration of peace. About 50 percent respondents preferred development while 30 percent believe in dialogue. The people were optimistic about the role of political parties (Khan, 2014). Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Islam is an influential party having access to people of FATA. Other political parties can offer a variety of options to the tribes by opening their offices in the area and including dissent elements into mainstream. This will be helpful in curtailing terrorist activities and radicalization of FATA in post-drawdown situation (Wazir, 2012).

The situation in Balochistan will probably be influenced by the drawdown. India and Afghanistan are allegedly sponsoring an insurgency in the province using Afghan soil against Pakistan's interests. It is also assumed that funds to separatist movements are being provided by India whereas the militants are getting refuge in Afghanistan. India also takes Balochistan as a balancing factor in its turbulent relations with Pakistan, remarkably in Jammu and Kashmir. Due to suffering from claustrophobia, Afghanistan is reliant on Balochistan for direct and easy access to the Indian Ocean and seaports. Circling its interests in Afghanistan, the US also looks at Balochistan through the prism of "Quetta Shura"² and ongoing conflict between sub-nationalist elements and the federal government, which is not letting the economic activity and exploitation of the energy resources. The US is also interested in ousting China and keeping Iran away from the area. This was evident from the fact that creation of Jundullah (army of Islam) had a CIA signature (Jundullah in Iran..., 2009).

With the drawdown of NATO, it will probably become difficult for India to operate from Afghanistan. India may have to close down most of its consulates in Kabul. With the closure of American bases in Afghanistan, the US influence will be probably reduced in the region and insurgency in Balochistan may be diminished. Baloch insurgency is already funded and fanned by external powers. In case of peace, these powers have no role or justification to remain in the region and funnel the money. The end of funding would reduce their importance. In the absence of foreign funding and weapons, the separatist elements would be compelled to think about their role. This situation will place separatist forces in a tough and uneasy scenario for gaining support and finances from India and Afghanistan (Wazir, 2012, p. 95).

Pakistan's Efforts for Including the Afghan Taliban in Power-Sharing

Since the emergence of TTP, Pakistan apprehends the fears of collusion between the two categories of Taliban and never wants them to join their hands with each other against the state. The Afghan Taliban have friendly relations with the Pakistani military since 1994 when they attacked Spin Baldak to clear the roads from chains and bandits, providing a guarantee for security of their vehicles. At that time, various channels were at work to support them, particularly the ISI had a long established network in and around Kandahar, where Pakistan had a consulate and ISI had close links with 'Airport Shura' of Taliban commanders (Maley, 1998, p. 44).

In this background, Pakistan's army remained reluctant to assault on the sanctuaries of Afghan Taliban and in changing situations, is actively busy to make them part of power, emphasizing their significant role in Afghan politics. It is also contacting the elements of the former Northern Alliance. This policy represents an inflection

² The Quetta Shura is a militant organization comprised of prime leaders of the Afghan Taliban. It is believed that they are based in Quetta (Balochistan) since 2001 when the Taliban regime was toppled in US-led war on terror and the senior leadership including Mullah Omar crossed the border. They see them as the legitimate Afghan government in exile. In February 2010, several key members of the Quetta Shura, who were disappeared in different areas of Pakistan, were detained by Pakistan through ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). Pakistan agreed to repatriate them on the condition of not committing crime against Pakistan.

rather than a departure from previous policies. The rationale behind the current policy is the inability of the Afghan Taliban to be part of power in Kabul. Therefore, negotiating a power-sharing arrangement is a better option than moving to military solutions. The reconciliation process currently brokered by Islamabad was backfiring and proved counterproductive in Pakistan. The frustrated Taliban in Kabul obsessed with ethnic Pashtun sentiments could threaten the regional security. There is possibility that of making an alliance with the TTP against Islamabad with temptation to create a limited but ideological version of Pashtunistan. In such a context, a stable Afghanistan is more imperative for Pakistan as compared to other neighbours.

Pakistan tried to bring the Taliban and the US closer to each other for political dialogue, conducting 'secret' talks in Doha and also made efforts to open an office in Doha for reconciliation. These efforts were endorsed by the leaders of the two countries as Presidents Zardari and Karzai shared their views to work together, moving to a peace deal within six months. The two leaders tried to convince the Taliban for becoming part of the reconciliation process and issued a joint statement that stated, "All sides agreed on the urgency of this work and committed themselves to take all necessary measures to achieve the goal of a peaceful settlement over the next six months... They supported the opening of an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations between the Taliban and the High Peace Council of Afghanistan as part of an Afghan-led peace process (The Express Tribune (Islamabad), 2013, February 05).

The Taliban signaled to contact American officials as they wanted to exchange the prisoners and opening of a liaison office in Doha otherwise, they cut off contacts with them in March 2012. The Taliban persistently rejected direct negotiation with the US-backed Kabul regime as they have been waging a war against it for the last 13 years (Dawn, 2013, March 13). After becoming the president, Ghani sought to establish a peace process with the Taliban to end the insurgency. The supportive signals are coming from Pakistan, but the Taliban are still refusing to go into negotiation with the government in the presence of foreign troops. Criticizing the Obama's reversal plan of withdrawal from Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson, declared that they were not defeated by 100,000 and nothing could be done with 10,000 (Dawn 2015, March 26). On the other hand, at the end of the game, Pentagon has announced not to target Mullah Omer, a man with a bounty on his head (He died in April 2013, but his death was not announced and his successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour became leader in 2015). The US has left the matter of Omer and other Taliban to President Ghani and his adviser to ponder about them (Dawn 2014, December 30). Pakistani efforts are in limbo without creating any positive impact.

Pak-Afghan Joint Efforts for Counterterrorism

Afghanistan and Pakistan made an agreement to cooperate and combat the Taliban on both sides of the border. But its success is doubtful as both sides are victim of militancy. Terrorist elements are hitting the border areas to achieve their heinous designs. Pakistan is also alleged by the West for parsing out the good militants from the bad ones, whereas militants are only militants threatening the lives of innocent people. Despite it, the idea of joint operation cannot altogether be rejected as a change in regime may improve the relations. Since September 2014, the situation has been changing as Ashraf Ghani has taken the office of president. Ghani stressed that peace in the region cannot be maintained unless the relations between the two states improved (Dawn, 2016, March 20). Joint venture of security forces will work in some kind of unison for targeting terrorists in a difficult terrain. For disrupting the terrorist network, the coordinated efforts could show some positive change.

Since June 2014, counterterrorism operations known as Operation Zarb-e-Azb is continued against local and foreign Taliban forces operating from North Waziristan and other areas. The US is wary of the purposes and achievements of this operation and showing its mistrust through several policy statements. This position can cloud the future intelligence-sharing between the US and Pakistan. In this situation, American renewed drone attacks for targeting militants in North Waziristan that can distort the relations between the two allies as inimical to Pakistan's interest.

India and Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan share no border, but a long history of common interests ranging from economic relations to security concerns regarding neighbouring states. Indian support to the Afghan government and its anti-Taliban stance has always been appreciated in Kabul. Like Iran, India supported, funded and armed the Northern Alliance in the war on terror to overthrow the Taliban regime in 2001. The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai called India as the most trusted ally and an all-weather friend. He always showed his trust in India, which was evident from signing the first Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with New Delhi on October 2011 (Agarwal, 2014). During the first meeting of the SPA in New Delhi on May 02, 2012, India announced the host of conferences for regional investors. The purpose of these conferences was to bring capital to Kabul. It also extended its consent to train the Afghan forces. However, its entire engagement is to what unfolds the post-NATO combat mission. India has been trying to increase its presence showing its interest in peaceful and stable transition that would provide an opportunity for increased influence in the region.

India has been the fifth-largest donor pledging US\$1.2 billion since 2001. This aid is to provide assistance in health and education sectors as well as for infrastructure development (Agarwal, 2014). However, Afghanistan's reconstruction and rehabilitation are linked with a secure environment and peaceful territory. The natural resources of Afghanistan i.e. copper, cobalt, gold and metal like lithium are important for India. Lithium is crucial for green energy with its use in mobile phones, batteries of electric cars and laptops. The threats of climate change require development of technologies of clean energy. The quantity of natural resources is estimated to be worth about US\$ one trillion apart from gas and oil reserves. Indian private investors are interested in the mining sector and expected investment is US\$ 10 billion (Kumar, 2012).

The two countries are consulting on different projects for enhancing trade activity. A few of them are Kunar River hydroelectric dam, Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), its purpose is to transmit electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Another project is Turkmenistan- Pakistan Motorway, which is being extended from Peshawar to Jalalabad and then from Chaman to Spin Boldak while 32-country Asian Highway Network project is promotion of trade and is funded by the EU, (Destradi, 2012; Bochkarev, 2012). Furthermore, an important project is TAPI (Afghanistan, Pakistan and India Pipeline), which is estimated to generate US\$ 5 million annually in transit fee for the Afghans. The length of the pipeline is 735 kilometers, which will pass through Afghan territory (Upadhyay, 2012).

India has constructed 215 km long road between the Iranian border and Afghanistan's arterial highway that will facilitate India for transportation of its goods via sea to the Iranian Chabahar seaport. Revival of the silk route, which is proposed by the US, will be a gateway to Central Asian energy resources. It will provide India an access to energy trade of Central Asia. India has already been ousted from the China-funded Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) (Kumar, 2012). The success of these projects is linked with security of Afghanistan otherwise the project will be jeopardized.

Apart from encircling Afghanistan through economy, India is equally involved in security matters by cutting an edge against Pakistan. At the time of drawdown, Afghanistan is optimistic about India taking it as a source of support while India is showing concerns for threats emanating from Afghan territory in post-withdrawal scenario as Indian officials are expressing their fears for becoming Afghanistan as a base of anti-Indian terrorist groups in case of the Taliban's success in ongoing war. In response, it is being expected that India would increase its support and work as broker between Uzbek, Tajik, and even Pashtun warlords for power-sharing in Afghanistan.

Increased attacks on Indian interests may lead to think in two directions. First, is its allegation against Pakistan for becoming the cause of violence and terrorism. India perceives that Pakistan's army is involved in terrorist activities and launching them as a state policy. According to Indian view, the army has lost control over the Taliban and other such groups and now is fulfilling this inefficiency with continuous support of persons like Hafiz Saeed (prime suspect behind Mumbai attacks of 2008), whose venomous harangue against India is a strategic asset for the Pakistani security forces (Tadjbakhsh, 2011; Mukhrjee, 2014).

It is also observed in India that a crisis can ensue if terrorist attacks will be conducted against Indian facilities in Afghanistan with the support of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. This situation will intensify the

crisis with a hard response from New Delhi that would further destabilize the regional security where heavy military is already stationed. In such a situation, Kabul would feel the fear of losing a major source of investment for its impoverished economy. Kabul's effort to secure its economic interests can take it away from Pakistan that would enhance Pakistan's sense of insecurity. Revisionist tendencies by Islamabad in retaliation can increase cross-border insurgencies in Kashmir with instability in the region. Second are recalcitrant non-state actors that can threaten India in the wake of the US withdrawal as this situation will further embolden them (Tadjbakhs, 2011). This scenario is like the decade of nineties, when jihadi element turned their guns to Kashmir for its liberation, which destabilize the internal situation for a long time. In the post-drawdown period, the non-actor can play the same role and once again destabilize the region.

Iran, Central Asian Republics and China

Iran is equally interested in Afghanistan and eager to transform its current sphere of influence in the west, making it a buffer zone, while neighboring Central Asian Republics like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are also interested to develop their own sphere of influence in adjacent border areas. However, this situation will be alarming for Pakistan raising the chances of both confrontation and cooperation with the Afghan Taliban (Grare, 2012). An Indo-Iranian axis will largely destabilize the region because it would pose a direct threat to Pakistan's position in the region and the American cause in Afghanistan. Its friendly relations with Iran are due to its support of non-Pashtun, Northern Alliance against the Sunni Taliban take over.

The Sino-US geopolitical rivalry has also divided the regional states, particularly India and Pakistan along their lines of conflict and interest. Their alliance with China and the US are based on their specific interests. Pakistan wants to maintain good relations with China for security purpose against India, which is a common enemy while India is interested in economic gains. In the post-drawdown, a crisis can violate the relations between China and Pakistan if Pakistan-based terrorist groups directly threaten the Chinese economic interests in Afghanistan. China is keen to invest on a larger scale in Afghanistan to avail its natural resources, rehabilitation work, development projects and construction of trade transit routes. After the American departure, China will be in a better position to augment its commercial and security ties with the region. However, the nexus of Al-Qaeda-TTP-ETIM is there to sabotage proposed Chinese investments in Afghanistan posing security threats to other Chinese investments in the region (Hsiao and Howard, 2010). A stable Afghanistan will be an opportunity and prize for Chinese engineers and development workers. In FATA (Pakistan), Chinese companies used to distribute money among the tribes for their security purposes, there is possibility that they would pursue this practice in Afghanistan to protect their interests. In case of failure of this strategy, several terrorist groups and Afghan warring factions can target Chinese workers, causing a regional security crisis and damaging Chinese investments. Chinese reactions to such acts of terrorism can further intensify the Afghan imbroglio. Terrorism seems a major game-changer for defining mutual relations of the regional countries (Rabia and Sarkar, 2012).

Conclusion

Afghanistan has long been taken as an arena of 'Great Game' among the neighboring states and major powers. After passing 13 years of combat mission, the US has decided to withdraw NATO troops, but there is still uncertainty prevailing in the country. The insurgency and militancy are curtailed through military operations, but not rooted out as prospects of their growth are still there. The institutions created in the aftermath of the December 2001 Bonn Conference are as fragile as ever. The confidence of the people in the system has been evaporated since long. The options for a brighter future beyond 2014 are very dismal despite the investment of billions of dollars in the reconstruction and rehabilitation projects. However, undoubtedly progress has been made in social, economic and political areas, but its sustainability is conditioned with the supportive state apparatus. Drawdown decision has also intensified the security competition among regional and extra regional powers. No doubt, the drawdown has determined the shape and influence of regional dynamics, yet it would return back the different sub-state actors, exacerbating ethnic and sectarian fissures not only in Afghanistan, but also in other South Asian countries particularly Pakistan would be their target. The rivalry between India and Pakistan is already intensifying the situation in South Asia. Despite having common goal of peace and stability, competition between the two is still inhibiting the region. Pakistan, for its part, is likely to continue the support of both the Taliban insurgents and peace negotiators, with an eye toward assessing, which track is appropriate. Exit of NATO troops will influence Pakistan's internal security and overall stability of the region. The widening

cleavage of trust deficit between Kabul and Islamabad is a great blow to bilateral relations, whereas New Delhi is making its path and this would be at the cost of Pak-Afghan relations. Pakistan needs to pursue those policy choices, which are appropriate for reducing tension between the two neighbours. The peace of the region is associated with the role of India and Pakistan, pursuing flexibility in their incompatible stance on traditional points of disagreement. Counterterrorism activities and operations against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban require extensive intelligence sharing between all the stakeholders. All neighbors are showing their preference for a stable Afghanistan, but one with securing their respective interests.

There are a few recommendations:

- The impoverished economy and declining security situation of Afghanistan requires cooperation of South Asian countries for peace and prosperity.
- All the three states must show zero tolerance for any type of terrorist activity without alleging each other.
- Pakistan must make a broader consensus for peace and security in the region with Afghanistan's cooperation on priority basis.
- A priority list of areas where Afghanistan needs support to be created with consultation and both India and Pakistan should assist it.
- There are strong indications that the spillover effects of US withdrawal will negatively impact law and order situation in Pakistan and especially in FATA. There is need to control all this through proper strategy.
- Any regional solution is difficult to achieve without cooperation of New Delhi and Islamabad and the resumption of peace talks between the two will be helpful for preventing and controlling terrorist activities, making the region a peace zone.
- Taliban must be part of government to restore peace in Afghanistan.
- The need of the hour is to review the situation abandoning any backing to militants in Kabul, Islamabad and New Delhi.
- The future of Afghanistan would not be determined by Bonn, Washington, Moscow or Tokyo but the Afghan themselves.
- Restoration of peace in Afghanistan will bring Central Asian Republics closer to the rest of the world. All the regional countries need to cooperate and develop friendly relations in order to get economic opportunities.

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Received: June 24th, 2015
Revisions Received: March 9th, 2016

India- Pak Rivalry in Afghanistan

Muhammad Tariq and Manzoor Ahmad

Abdul Wali Kan University Mardan

Saima Perveen

Women University Swabi

Abdul Ghaffar

Abdul Wali Kan University Mardan

Abstract: Afghanistan has always drawn the attention of the world due to its geo-strategic location. Its proximity with the Central Asian States makes it more important for the world. The 9/11 episode, US intervention in Afghanistan and now the drawdown of ISAF from Afghanistan have further compelled both Pakistan and India to play a zero-sum game there. This has given great momentum to the Indo-Pak rivalry each with its own set of stated objectives and strategies. This paper analyzes the Indo-Pak rivalry in the post 9/11 scenario. This will also analyze the different objectives and strategies adopted by both the archrivals to increase their rivalry against each other. For Pakistan, Afghanistan is more important for its strategic significance and easy access to the CARs. India, on the other hand, seeks all the objectives that are hostile to Pakistan in order to deprive Pakistan of her strategic depth in Afghanistan.

Key words: Strategy, intervention, drawdown, zero-sum game, rivalry

Rivalry between India and Pakistan has increasingly shaped events in South Asia since the emergence of the two powers on the map of the world in 1947. Since their emergence, the two countries have fought three wars and the prospect of future conflict has driven each of two to develop nuclear capabilities and to debar the other from anticipating acts of aggression. This found a clear manifestation in 1998 when the two arch-rivals detonated nuclear explosions. Pakistan sees India as posing threat of severe nature to its security concerns on the eastern border while the same fears are also expressed by India on many issues especially with reference to Kashmiri issue (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012: 2).

Despite bitter rivalry, both Pakistan and India have cooperated on “non- securitized” or “non- zero sum issues like natural calamity and catastrophe by making timely pledges. A clear manifestation of it was India’s relief to Pakistan in the aftermath of earthquake scenario while Pakistan reciprocated in the same spirit by providing relief to the flood affectees in the Indian administered Kashmir. This cooperation on humanitarian basis issues prognosticates the hope that the two countries could coordinate on more issues in future. Thus an opportunity would be provided to both of them for choosing cooperative strategies when interacting with their counterparts. Pursuing a non-cooperative strategy would worsen further the already security situation in both the countries.

Since the withdrawal of soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1990 and most particularly since the fall of Taliban regime in 2001 in Afghanistan, both Pakistan and India have infused their conflict in the internal affairs of Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012: 11). Each is bent upon perceiving its influence in Afghanistan as she is a *sine qua none* for achieving primary objectives of national security with increased utility. Both assess Afghanistan as a zero-sum dynamic in which one country’s loss prognosticates the victory for the other. Though in comparison to India and Pakistan, Afghanistan is a far weaker country but not as passive to become a silent spectator to the designs of the two. Former President Hamid Karzai and current President Mr. Ashraf Ghani have

fully attempted to balance the two countries in Afghanistan and works to consolidate control over the country and extricate it from the clutches of the civil war.

Both India and Pakistan have their divergent strategies to shape the government in Kabul with maximum influence for attaining their objectives. The former has been striving hard to strengthen the government in Kabul and integrate Afghanistan into a strong political and economic actor in the region. India is not doing so for any altruistic motives but is concerned with grinding its own axe in the region. In strengthening Afghanistan, India wants to achieve its own national security objectives enshrining upon the eradication of a critical safe haven which the Indians suspect to have attacked India and plans to do so in future. It is with this objective that the Indians are concerned with protecting their power in the entire region and beyond and want to have an easy access to the Central Asian States and their resources.

On the other hand, Pakistan's goals in Afghanistan are merely India-centric. Pakistan seeks a weaker government in Kabul comprising all the ethnic groups dominated by the Taliban in order to maintain its strategic depth in case of India's invasion on Pakistan (Haq & Shafaqat, 2011). Pakistan's stance on strategic depth centers around three grounds: Firstly, India's emergence as a dominant power in the region. Secondly, India's dominance has intensified the security syndrome of Pakistan and thirdly, it has turned Pakistan into a realist country that keeps the national interest on the topmost level in terms of security. The notion of strategic depth serves Pakistan many purposes; it provides safe haven for anti-Indian proxies, it undermines the influence of Delhi in Afghanistan; it prevents the Indian power projection in the region especially in the Central Asian States with rich resources and above all, hinder India's ability to support separatist movement especially in Baluchistan and Sindh province.

India's Objectives in Afghanistan

The objectives of India in Afghanistan emanate from a meticulous observation based on the assessment of its domestic, regional and global interest. Curtailing Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan is probably one of India's objectives but in reality Delhi pursues a policy based on broad range of interest in Afghanistan with more certain other motives that goes beyond the competition of its arch-rival in the region. Some of the key objectives enshrine upon increased access to Central Asia, prevent anti-India terrorism, undermine Pakistani and Taliban's influence and share military personnel with Afghanistan.

Increase access to central Asian States

Both India and Pakistan need to have an easy access to Central Asia with their rich natural and oil resources. Both want to have a loin share in their resources. India increased annual economic growth of over 7% since 1997 has made it the world's second largest fast growing energy market which calculates that the country will have to import more than 80% of fuel by 2030 (Raghav, 2009: 2). The proposed one thousand (1,000) mile gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) with an estimated cost of \$ 7.6 Billion is likely to carry 33 billion cubic meters per year of Turkmen gas, producing a much needed \$1.4 billion annually in transit fees for Afghanistan (Pipliner, 2011: 2). Both India and Pakistan would benefit from this project and would receive 14 bcm/y (billion cubic meters per year) each, catering for 1.5% of India's total annual energy consumption and 15% of Pakistan's consumption (Observer 2011). This transportation of energy resources to the incumbent countries in the form of TAPI enjoin upon both Pakistan and India to promote security (Raghav, 2009: 2).

Prevent Anti-India Terrorism

India's most important objective of increased activity in Afghanistan lies in the fact as to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base for Pakistani supported insurgents to launch terrorist attacks in India or against the interests of India in Afghanistan. In July 2008, India's permanent representative to the United States stressed that security within Afghanistan and joint ventures based on coordinated efforts require to stop terrorists from operating with impunity beyond Afghanistan's borders be the foremost preferential priority of our collective efforts in Afghanistan. (Bhasin & ed, 2009: 2534) In November 2008 Mumbai attacks, just four months after, was suspected by the Indian to have been perpetrated by the Pakistani backed *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT)* terrorists hardened the India's resolve in Afghanistan through military operations if necessary (Jenkins, Jones, Shestak, & Tellis, 2009: 14).

Weaken Pakistan and Taliban's Influence in Afghanistan

A calculated fear prevalent among some of the Indian thinkers is with regards to the drawdown of ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) from Afghanistan which would place Pakistan on a dominating position in the political landscape of Afghanistan. They are haunted by the fact that this will enable Pakistan to use the country by providing sanctuaries and training capabilities for anti-Indian extremists. The Indian newspaper Mint in 2010 observed that once Islamabad gets the guarantee of an amicable government in Kabul, this will have a direct bearing on the security of India and hence Indian security will be jeopardized in the region. This will add further fuel to the ongoing trouble in Jammu and Kashmir and will give further impetus to the terrorist groups in attacking the Indian cities with greater frequency (Mint, 2010). With this objective in mind, New Delhi has been seeking a more stable, democratic, multi-ethnic government which can establish strong control over the whole country by maintaining peace and order and preventing the ascendancy of Taliban and mitigating the element of anti-Indian extremism (Tellis, Mukharji, & eds 2010: 28). India's favor for a multi-ethnic broad based government in Kabul is in line with its vested interest to sandwich Pakistan both on its eastern and western border.

India's Quest for Investment in Afghanistan

One of the essential objectives of India in Afghanistan is to focus on increased trade and investment and to continue limited security measures and assistance therewith. Keeping in view this factor, India seeks to develop close ties with the Tajik and Uzbek Communities of Afghanistan as well as the fragile factions of Taliban in an attempt to develop productive relationship with the Kabul (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012: 11). This state of affairs in Afghanistan in terms of Indo-Pak rivalry poses serious threat to the developmental process making it a Herculean task to achieve stability in Afghanistan. The NATO drawdown from Afghanistan is viewed by Islamabad with suspicion and would open up a new game of power politics coupled with power struggle from which India could benefit (Yossef, 1995)(Tellis, "Berader, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban: What Grieves?", 2010). Pakistan, as a counter consequence will have a clear incentive to maintain and strengthen ties with Taliban (Wilkens, 2010).

India's investment in Afghanistan revolves around a few areas such as firstly increasing assistance for development and investment inside Afghanistan. Secondly, deployment of additional paramilitary forces for protecting Indian aid workers and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan (Brandt & Hanna, May 2013). Thirdly, by providing limited military training and assistance to Afghan National Security Forces on the Indian soil. Fourthly, capacity to provide military and police training inside Afghanistan and fifthly, to deploy combat troops in Afghanistan to carry out counter insurgency operation (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). India's excessive involvement for trade and investment in Afghanistan is another imbroglio towards Indo-Pak rivalry (Brandt & Hanna, May 2013).

India's Multi-purpose designs in Afghanistan

India, though do not have a common border with Afghanistan but its activities and interests are quite contrary to those of Pakistan. Indian objectives in this perspective encompass: firstly to deny Pakistan the notion of "Strategic Depth in Afghanistan to be used against them; Secondly to deny Pakistan's ability to debar India from trade and investment in Afghanistan; Thirdly to curtail the approachability of India to the Central Asian States for their rich resources; Fourthly, to encourage militants in Afghanistan by attacking Indian targets and installations. In Taliban's hosting of Al Qaeda during 1996-2001 as a potential threat to India itself on account of their association with the radical Islamic organizations in Pakistan. Sixthly, Pakistan, stand on the issue of Kashmir.

Afghanistan, on the other hand, has left no stone unturned in building close ties with India. It has focused on India's large and growing economy. A practical manifestation of this inter-marriage merged in May 2011 when India and Afghanistan announced a "Strategic Partnership" agreement demonstrating India's support for United States' efforts by integrating Afghanistan into a regional political, economic and security structure in a sound way. The agreement in question put Pakistan on an alarming position as it provided India with an

opportunity to act as a guarantor of Afghan security and facilitated areas of cooperation between India and Afghanistan on political and cultural fronts (Katzman, 2013).

Hegemony of Power Project

India's growing commercial and trade objectives in the region has created a perception among the Indians that India is a regional power and seeks to mold the world around it (India) as per its policies. A Norwegian think tank, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) states that Indians consider their aspiration to be extra-regional power with to be legitimate in harmony with the growing size of India. (Tadjbakhsh, 2011: 33) It has projected its influence around the world by using military as a tool of influence. Over 100,000 Indian troops have participated in about 40 peace keeping missions under the United States since 1995 while more than 8,000 are currently operational in different areas (Lynch, 2011). But above all, the Indians have a strong perception that they should exert more influence in South Asia to get its stated objectives of being regional power realized. An eminent scholar, Harsh V. Pant examines that for India to play its due role in the regional policies Afghanistan is a litmus test for its ascendance as a regional and global power. Dealing with instability in Afghanistan will be a real test for the Indian capacity to emerge as a global power of major import. (Ploch, Blanchard, & Rourke, 2011: 25) With regard to Indian military involvement in Afghanistan, Mr. R.K. Sawhney, former Indian Army Deputy Chief of staff, stresses more vocally that India cannot afford to have a retreat from Afghanistan if it wants to remain a major regional player (Sawhney, Sahgal, Kanwal, & eds, 2011: 12).

India's Strategies in Afghanistan

To seek political and economic influence in Afghanistan and further strengthen its interests, India uses a wide range of strategies in Afghanistan. To do so it strives to integrate the war stricken multi-ethnic groups into a unified regional economic structures coupled with providing training and assistance to the Afghan National Security Force development through strategy of soft power.

Establish Diplomatic Presence

To advocate its diplomatic presence in Afghanistan India has adopted many strategies such as reopening its embassy in Kabul and consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad just after the fall of Taliban regime to capture the major commercial markets in the western and northern parts of Afghanistan, India opened consulates in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif. These diplomatic ties enable Indians to establish trade and investment. Pakistani officials allege that these ties are being used by the Indians to support separatist movement in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. Foreign Ministry is of the view that the Indian consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar provide a nourishing place to RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and its accessories (Dawn, 2003). India denies the truth in this allegation (Ganguly & Howenstein 2009: 127).

Keep the Northern Card in its back pocket.

India supported the northern alliance in true spirit during the rule of Taliban. This was due to the fact that the northern alliance comprising ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks were mainly famous for their hostility towards the Pakistani backed Taliban (Ganguly & Howenstein 2009: 127). Weapons, materials, equipment maintenance and defense advisers were provided by the Indians and got a field hospital constructed in Tajikistan to be used by its fighter (Fair 2011: 179-192). These moves by India exacerbated the situation to such an extent between the northern alliance and Pashtun administration almost leading to a much hotter proxy war (Jacob, 2010).

Help in Political Reconciliation in Afghanistan

Indians fear that any reconciliation process in Afghanistan backed by Pakistan in which Taliban may have a dominating position will be quite detrimental to the interest and security of India. A prominent Indian think tank shows his concern in these words, "the interest of Indian security primarily centers round deriving any political or military vacuum to the Taliban backed by the ISI- backed Taliban and other such fundamentalist group (Ganguly & Howenstein 2009: 127). However Indians have been unsuccessful in curtailing Taliban though they have maintained their influence there. In 2010 multinational peace talks in Afghanistan left open the possibility of Taliban's entry into India's side. They even agreed for negotiation with the non-violent Taliban but this fact by

itself infuriated the common masses against this decision as this would give an upper hand to Pakistan against India in the regional politics. (Raghav, 2009: 2).

Assistance in Development

Development in socio-economic sector is a key factor for ensuring the future prospects of Afghanistan's regional stability (Verma, 2012). India is the major donor of Afghanistan and provides more foreign aid to it than any other country (Comments, 2011). India is the largest South Asian donor to Afghanistan and serves as the fifth most prominent source of development assistance (Fair 2011:179-192). Besides, providing assistance in development sector, the Indians also undertake to make them secure. About 500 personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) have been deployed by Delhi for the Security of Indian development workers and diplomatic facilities following a series of high profile attacks that caused losses to India ("Obama Appreciates India's Role in Afghanistan, 2010, 2011). In 2003, a preferential trade agreement was signed between India and Afghanistan concerning reduction of trade duties on Afghan exports, primarily agricultural goods (Devisingh, New Delhi). The agreement facilitated $\frac{1}{4}$ th of Kabul's exports prescribed for Indian market, with bilateral trade to achieve a target of \$ 1 billion by 2012 (Pyatt, 2011). To flourish their market mechanism, India wants to utilize Iran for transportation of trade.

Military Assistance

Military assistance to Afghanistan has been provided by India to safeguard its development assistance and trade. To achieve the stated objective, 500 men have been deployed with the sole responsibility of protection of aid workers, diplomats on compounds, and development project but the irony of the situation is that these have not been assigned with any offensive counter-insurgency (COIN) program or maintaining law and order situation. It is also an admitted fact that limited military training to the Afghan army has been provided in India (Joshi, 2011). The Indian military deployment to Afghanistan would place India in a better position *vis a vis* Pakistan. To strengthen their bilateral relationship the two countries agreed on a strategic partnership strategy whereby India had to assist Afghanistan with light weapons, training in offensive counter-strategy (COIN) and high altitude warfare to the Afghan army, police and air force (Ganguly, 2011).

Pakistan's Objectives in Afghanistan

Pakistan, being a close neighboring country of Afghanistan, has its own objectives and strategies from a geostrategic perspective there. It wants to maximize its influence in Kabul and maintain strategic depth to deter Indian invasion. To have an access to the Central Asian Republic is another determining factor. These objectives can be enshrined in a number of ways.

Resist Indian Influence

India has remained hostile to Pakistan since its emergence in 1947 and has fought three wars against it and has always been busy to undermine Pakistan's position in the region. The east Bengal got separated from Pakistan due to their conspiracies. The military leadership of Pakistan is aware of their nefarious designs and has a zero-sum view of the Indian-Pakistan dynamics whereby anything that provides benefits to India caters for a loss to Pakistan. Former French diplomat and expert on South Asia, Frederic Grare states that whatever India does in Afghanistan is a subterfuge against Pakistan whether it is economic investment, infrastructure or any other related matter. This has led Pakistan to the view that Indian interests would be blocked whenever and wherever possible (Tellis & Mukharji 2010: 21).

Maintain strategic Depth

Faced with unfriendly relations on the eastern border and in the event of any untoward Indian invasion, Pakistan wants to maintain strategic depth in Afghanistan. With this view in mind Islamabad sees a friendly regime in Kabul which is more inclined towards Pakistan. The doctrine of strategic depth favors a weak and unstable government in Kabul so that it may provide greater capability to Pakistan to retreat to Afghan premises, if necessary, to repel an Indian attack (Ahmad, 2000: 22-35). So, the main objective of Islamabad is

Kabul is to block Delhi's penetration into the country by seeking a pro-Pakistani government in Kabul (Ben, 2011).

Do away with Afghan claims on Pashtunistan

The Durand Line has never been recognized by Afghanistan to be an international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan as it has divided the Pashtun tribes into two different entities (Hayat, 2005). Pakistan claims that it is an international border drawn in 1893 with the consent of the then government. Their calls for an independent homeland comprising parts of Baluchistan, FATA (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) would jeopardize Pakistan's territorial integrity and pave the way for its disintegration along ethnic lines (Weinbaum & Hamayoon, 2009: 96). With this perception Pakistan supported the Taliban regime in Afghanistan with multifarious objectives, i.e. to withdraw their claims on the Durand Line, to drop Kabul's claims on parts of KPK and FATA and do away with the issue of Pashtun nationalism but all these moves were refused by Taliban regime. The Taliban rather imbued it with greater religious fervor to Pashtun nationalism (Ahmad, 2000: 96).

Access to Central Asian Republics

Central Asian Republics enjoy the most significant status in the geopolitics of the region. Both Pakistan and India are strong competitors to have an access to the region for enhancing their regional commerce and economic uplift. To have an upper hand, Pakistan must strengthen its grip over the northern trade routes which would reduce the value of Iran's Chabaharport and Zaranj-Delaram road built by India connecting Kushka-Herat-Kandahar highway. Grip on the northern trade routes by Pakistan would undermine India's efforts to boost up their economic ties with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (Mukhopadhyaya, 2010, 2006). Pakistan is more eager to have direct approach to CARs for the natural gas in order to cope with the current energy crises in the country. Serious concern has been expressed by Mr. Asim Husain, Pakistan Federal Minister for petroleum in January 2012 stating that unless Pakistan discovers new sources of natural gas quickly, "the whole energy system of the country could collapse" (Hussain 2012).

Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan

To counter balance Indian strategies in Afghanistan, Pakistan embarks upon different strategies to shift the power to its own side. It has backed proxies to counter Indian interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the Taliban and other networks in the shape of training, funding, munitions, supplies and sanctuaries in some parts of the tribal areas. In the recent years these networks have proved quite contrary to the interests of Pakistan and so it has to start crackdown against them in reciprocation of Peshawar Tragedy on 16 October 2014 when some unknown terrorists entered into the premises of Army Public School and College Peshawar Killing about 150 innocent students and staff members in a brutal way and injuries of approximately the same number. The responsibility of this incident was accepted by a faction of Taliban (Black Day, 2014).

Role in Afghanistan Reconciliation Process

The role of Pakistan in the reconciliation process of Afghanistan cannot be gainsaid at any cost. Following a NATO attack on Pakistani border in November 2011, Pakistan strongly condemned this violative act on its territorial integrity and consequently boycotted the multinational summit regarding the stabilization of Afghanistan after the US troop's drawdown (Pakistan to Boycott Key meeting on Afghanistan, 2011). Pakistan's absence in the said summit that held in Bonn in December 2011, was absolutely viewed as undermining the efficacy of the summit (Tharoot, December 5, 2011). To bring in reconciliation process to a successful framework, Pakistan seized every opportunity whether negotiation or capture of those who put the peace process on the doldrums. A glaring example of this was the capture of Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was second in command to Mullah Omer (Rutting, March 2010). The arrest was highly appreciated by Washington as a "sea change" in furtherance of US Pakistan cooperation against the war on terror and counter-insurgency (Allbritton, 2010) but on the other hand; Pakistan also wanted to get control over the Taliban's political agenda. It may also be noted that most of the Taliban wanted to settle peace transaction with Kabul independently of Pakistan. Through diplomatic efforts Pakistan has made its stance quite clear by focusing on three messages. First, to bring around those who take part in the reconciliation talks in Afghanistan Second, to play a pivotal role in putting an end to violence in Afghanistan? Third, not to facilitate any negotiations that does not advance its interests (Rutting, March 2010).

Provide Aid and Trade to Afghanistan

Soon after US intervention in Afghanistan, process for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan was started through the Bonn Conference. Pakistan has supported Kabul in promoting Afghan exports and extends development aid. The government has provided them with about \$300 million aid, mostly meant for the construction of roads and railway. Afghanistan still lacks a functioning rail system and only recently completed its first significant link—a 75 kilometer track that links the Northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif with the city of Hairatan on the border with Uzbekistan. Connecting Pakistan to the Central Asian States, rich with energy resources. The APTTA (Afghanistan- Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement) signed between Islamabad and Kabul is a step forward in this direction. This would allow Pakistani goods to be carried to the CARs en route to Afghanistan and in return to allow Afghan products to transit to the Indian markets through Pakistan (V, 2011).

Oppose Afghanistan's Regional Integration

Pakistan has always stood by the Afghani brethren through every thick and thin and facilitated them where the occasion demanded. She supported Kabul in 2005 when Kabul sought the membership of SAARC (Hussain I. , 2005). But when the national interest of Islamabad smelled any rate, it never missed any opportunity and it has been opposing Kabul's political and economic integration into Central and South Asia as this would reduce its importance in the region and India would gain great commercial benefits. On November 2, 2011, Pakistan granted India the status of MFN (Most Favored Nation) which is a testimony to the fact that it wants to normalize its own bilateral relations through trade but still continues to block Indian exports to Afghanistan suggesting that Pakistan does not want to hurt the Indian economy as much as limit its access to Afghanistan (Rodriguez & Magnier, 2011).

Ensure Access to Central Asian Trade and Resources

To overcome its energy crisis and enhance its significance in the region *Vis a Vis* India Pakistan signed many agreements with the Central Asian States. The proposed TAPI would make up for 15% of current energy consumption but to have trade with CARs and capacity to procure oil and gas, Pakistan has embarked upon a two-pronged strategy, to establish cordial regional relations but at the same time to diminish India out. Sharing common religious and cultural links, Pakistan wants to conclude energy deals with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and has offered to construct roads and railway lines throughout the CARs (Yossef, 1995). The silk route has provided an opportunity to Pakistan to strengthen its trade with countries like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Further Pakistan has assumed a degree of influence over the Kushka –Herat-Kandahar highway in relation of its past support for the Taliban. This is the only strategy that provides to Pakistan the non-Iranian trading route between Central Asia, the India Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

Persuade Washington to Safeguard Pakistani Interest

Taking advantage of US dependence on Pakistan for counter-terrorism cooperation and transit supplies to US-troops in Afghanistan, Pakistan has reiteratedly persuaded Washington to safeguard Pakistani interests there. Islamabad has been insisting on Washington to minimize India's role in Afghanistan particularly in the security matters and has collected US military aid amounting to \$16 billion since 9/11 (Kronstadt, 2012). Indian officials are also ambivalent of this aid as they fear that much of this has been directed against anti-Indian.

Policy Options

A few policy options would shift the balance of power in Pakistan's favor.

- Pakistan should try its level best to block Afghan exports to India.
- The TAPI pipeline project is proving to create problems for Pakistan, better to pull out of this project as this would transport national gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and India and Pakistan as well. In the larger national interest, Pakistan should focus on Pak-Iran pipeline project only.

- To curtail India's hegemonic position in the region, Pakistan should concentrate more and more on China for its military and infrastructure development assistance. This would weaken India's position and would place Pakistan on a sound footing against India in any conflict.
- To help in escalating the tension and conflict in Kashmir which many in turn create domestic unrest in India itself?
- To provide with greater support than before beyond the level of sanctuaries and logistic support. This would also earn a fair image for Pakistan.

Conclusion

Indo-Pak rivalry in Afghanistan is based upon zero-sum game due to the strategic location of Afghanistan as well as the incumbent countries. Each is trying to pull the other's legs for grinding its own axe. The bargain of give and take would resolve the issue to a greater extent. Both the countries need to compromise on certain issues such as resolution of Kashmir issue. The TAPI Project would be another area of strengthening relations among Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. The status of MFN needs to be extended by Pakistan and India to each other which would contribute a lot to normalcy of relations between the two countries. The notion of strategic depth in Afghanistan needs to be reconsidered from the perspective of Pakistan.

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Power Interest And Rivalry of Major Powers (United States, Russia And China) In Central Asia

Manzoor Khan Afridi

International Islamic University Islamabad

Musab Yousufi

Qurtaba University Peshawar

Manzoor Ahmad

Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

With the collapse of Soviet Union, competition of great powers started in Central Asia which is known as New Great Game. Those great powers mainly include China, United States and Russia while U.S. interests for Europe as well. The research analyzes interests of those powers in the region, like U.S. goals about War on Terror, to prevent the emergence of regional powers like Russia or China, to discontinue the Islamic movements and to achieve economic goals and democratization in Central Asia. While research also explores the Russian interests in the region like elimination of Islamism as common to U.S. interest, status quo of Russia and to keep establish authoritarian governmental structures. Another major power China wants stability in the region to develop and hold its economic market in Central Asia. The paper concludes that whole struggle and rivalry of U.S., Russia and China is for the purpose to attain, remain and enhance power in the region, while also covet to hold energy resources of Central Asia.

Key words: Authoritarian Government, democratization, economic goals, Islamic movements, rivalry, terror.

In 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed it gave birth to some new states in Caucasian region and Central Asia. Central Asia has Muslim states like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This region is prominent for their rich energy resources. Asian continent considers Central Asia as a core region and wider from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east and from Afghanistan in the south to Russia in the north (Foster, 2010).

Central Asia is a land-locked region; generally slopply towards north hence almost all the rivers and streams flow toward north. The five countries that are referred to here as Central Asian states occupy a territory of approximately four million square kilometers with about 60 million inhabitants (Kurecic, 2010). Geographically situated between Russia, China, South Asia and the South Caucasus and rich in energy resources, the region is emerging as geostrategic and geo-economic nexus between Russia, the European Union, United States and China.

The region has two main characteristics about climate i.e. the region is land-locked and situated far enough from open sea or ocean. Hence, the region experiences harsh climatic conditions with warm to mild summers and extremely cold winters. The Central Asian region has three major ecological zones; steppes, deserts, and high mountains. These geographical factors mean that Inner Central Asia does not produce much food and cannot support high population densities (Rossabi, 2004). Due to remoteness from sea and land-locked geographical position, the countries of the region are dependent on Iran and Russia to provide them the facility of transit route and seaport for access to their products to international markets. Second, the region is important for the presence of large deposits of crude oil and natural gas reserves. Estimation is that proven oil is 10 to 32

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Manzoor Khan Afridi, Assistant Professor / Incharge Department of Politics and IR, International Islamic University Islamabad, Email: manzoor.afridi@iiu.edu.pk, drmanzoorafridi@gmail.com

billion barrels with 233 billion barrels probable oil reserves and assets. If we talk about the gas reserves, it is estimated or predicted in 243-248 trillion cubic feet proven and verified while 293 trillion cubic feet possible gas (Abilov, 2012).

As we know that Central Asia is rich in natural resources therefore every major and small power has their own interests which turned out into a 'New Great Game'. The term "*The Great Game*" is usually attributed to *Arthur Conolly*, an intelligence officer of the British East India Company (Kurecic, 2004). In major powers we consider China, United States, Russia and collectively EU while in small power we consider Turkey, Iran, Pakistan etc. The main focus of study is to find out the rivalry and power interests of major powers i.e. China, Russia and United States in Central Asia. This also provides thrust to the long standing and ongoing debate in both the academic and political professional circles about the power interests of major powers in Central Asia.

There is convergence and divergence among the three major powers regarding Central Asia. Washington's Central Asia detour to Afghanistan, Moscow's quest for privileged role and the rise of China has intensified the competition and cooperation for expanding influence in Central Asia. United States want to gather support for its campaign against terrorism by eliminating the Islamist radical forces in the region and making strategic partnership with Central Asian Republics for the regional security. Parallel are the US' goals of utilizing the region's natural resources and work for the democratization. Russia is doing efforts to keep the status-quo in the region by supporting the authoritarian regimes and wiping out the Islamic ideological movements, and to maintain and maximize its influence. China's interests are concerned with energy resources to be utilized for its rapid industrialization, tightening the security environment, especially on borders and to keep out the US and other forces from the Central Asian region. Mainly three problems (natural/energy resources, Islamist movements/forces and political regimes/democracy) have been selected here to investigate the power interest and rivalry among the United States, Russia and China; in the region of Central Asia. The three problems here are important to mention as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War not only brought independence to the energy-rich Central Asian states, but also triggered the Islamist forces to fill the vacuum in the newly independent states; and also the efforts from some major powers to democratize the region or keep its authoritarian nature of regimes under the global unipolarity.

Theoretical framework

The Neorealist theoretical structure has been used for the current research. This theory is also known as Structural Realism. Waltz (2000) defines it in his paper "Structural Realism after Cold War" that sudden change in world politics occurred after the cold war; that change shifted to New Great Game in Central Asia. The New Great Game has been discussed here in theoretical framework within the concept of Neorealism. The New Great Game is all concerned with power, competition and rivalry of major powers in Central Asia. The New Great Game is all about the economic resources and strategic importance while Structural Realism is also concerned about power to increase capabilities and ensure security.

Kenneth N. Waltz is considered as a pioneer of this theory. Neorealism explains international behavior that international structure emerges from the interaction of states. States do not differ while their capabilities define the position; through its capabilities state tries to define global system. According to structural realism the relative distribution of power is very vital to understand important outcomes like war, peace, politics, alliance and balance of power. Neorealists have ranking of states according to their capabilities to count the number of great and small powers. The world system is anarchical therefore states need power to minimize security. To gain power and end security therefore states use different measures for it like self-help, alliance, etc. (Bordner, 1997).

The New Great Game is also a struggle to gain more power and capabilities, as Central Asian region possesses 45% of world's gas reserves and 10% of oil resources (Billon, 2005). Existence of such huge resources has started the rivalry between different major powers. As Neorealists define the power as a central concept; for state, need power to its survival. Waltz divided power in two types; first is internal efforts to increase economic capabilities, to develop your strategies and military strength (Kegly et al, 2008), while the role and interest of major powers like USA, Russia and China also related to Waltz' aspect of gaining capabilities and power. The

second power is external efforts to strengthen its own allies and weaken an opposing one (Kegly et al, 2008). In Central Asia, the US' interest and the pipe line routes problem has assembled huge importance. Different kinds of suggestions and proposals were forwarded for the building of pipelines. Russia does not agree to lose its status quo over the area. The largest obstacle for US' role in the region is Russia, as the latter controls transport of oil and gas to Europe. The US wants to strengthen the EU in Central Asia but Russia is the barrier (Legvold, 2003).

Mearsheimer argues that global hegemony in international system is impossible but still states do struggle. They struggle to win the competition for which Structural Realists argue that the foreign policies of states are driven by the system. Thus we have to focus on foreign policy; what kind of ideology or leader prevails there, is no concern (Baylis et al, 2008). China too is competing for control over economic resources like gas pipeline without concerning their political systems. China's growing investment in energy fields is very important for its policy in Uighers. China and Kazakhstan decided to build an oil pipeline in 2006. Later they constructed a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China, which was inaugurated in December 2009. Chinese also share the interest to make sure regional stability for economic market. Rise of China in Central Asia has created troubles for the US (Fatima & Zafar, 2014).

Neorealists also suggest that policies of the states are fluctuating because of change in domestic politics through their changing leader or bureaucratic policies. The Central Asian states are so much changed after the collapse of USSR. They change their policies, concerns, aims and objectives and welcome every state who gives them economic benefits. Therefore, USA and other major powers also tried to implement their political model not particularly in Central Asia but to implement it in the whole world. Neorealists argue that once a global system formed, it will be easy to gain power through uni-polarity and implement own policies (Waltz, 1988). As Russia wants its traditional control over territory, the US wants democratic and capitalist model and small powers or Islamist movements want their own control over the region.

Power interest and Rivalry in Central Asia

In Central Asia the New Great Game is a geopolitical game amongst the great powers of the world to control the energy resources (Foster, 2008). United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, Turkey, Iran and other powers are in competition among each other for control of the Caspian's oil and gas reserves which has been called or dubbed as the New Great Game (Sobhani, 2000). Many of those changes pertain to the interaction of external actors in Central Asia what might be called "the new great game (Blank, 2012)." It is particularly an important region because it symbolizes the microcosm of United States' foreign interests, also Russia's renaissance, regional and global footprint of China (Wishneck, 2009).

The vast oil and gas reserves in the region have attracted the attention of three big powers i.e. United States, China and Russia. However, all these three big powers give importance to the region according to their own perspective. Russia as being an energy power has different point of view as compared to two other players of the New Great Game. Due to strategic and geopolitical importance, Russia calls the region its "New Abroad". Russia's concern is about the territorial and ethnic disputes in the region, because a huge number of Russian citizens are living across Russian border in these Central Asian countries (Abilov, 2012).

Therefore, one of the main reasons that three big powers are involved in the political rivalry and competition in the region is due to glut of the rich energy resources. They want control on oil and gas production and grip on the transportation pipelines that transfer and provide the energy resources to the world market. Along with these interests of major powers, they have some other interests as well.

Russo-Chinese Alliance

Soon after the fall down of the USSR, Russia initiated to create cordial bilateral relations with China to solve their disputes. Russia and China comprehended very well that we should to resolve border disputes. Under the Gorbachev Government in May 1991, the Soviet Union signed the first border agreement. While in 1996 under Yeltsin, second agreement was signed. Both the states entered in a strategic partnership in 1996. Moreover, also

in 2001, SCO was founded out of *Shanghai Five* grouping, with Beijing and Moscow as the leading nations which was a further confirmation of a growing link of the two actors (Haas, 2013).

In 2001 when they signed the treaty of friendship and cooperation, strengthening of Sino-Russian bilateral ties became noticeable in like-minded observation on foreign policy and security issues. First time in 40 years the Chinese and Russian militaries conducted formally an exercise of armed forces under the aegis and sponsorship of SCO, agreed out large joint exercises, called Peace Mission 2005. The Russo-Chinese alliance, obviously, works in anti-US direction to reduce the US influence in the region. The US has heavily invested in energy sector to share its part for the development of the region but predominantly to counter China as well as Russia. US sees China as its main rival force. Russia is also not behind in any way to China in Western enmity, especially during Putin and Medvedev eras, Russo-Chinese joint efforts proved fruitful to reduce the influence of the US in Central Asia. Russia was backed by China in the call at the annual SCO Summit in 2005 for foreign forces, Western or NATO forces to withdraw from the region or countries of Central Asia (Haas, 2013).

Russo-Chinese alliance has particularly paid attention to SCO, regarding cooperation and security issues. They have also focus on economic cooperation in the region, while China and Russia want to get more benefits from Central Asia's natural resources and to make Central Asia as their common market (Paramonov & Stokov, 2006).

Following research questions have been formulated for the study:

1. Why Central Asian region is very much important for global powers?
2. What are the power interest and rivalry among the US, Russia and China in Central Asia?
1. What is the status of economic, political and strategic interaction of the major powers in Central Asia?

To address these questions and to understand the nature of competition and cooperation among the US, Russia and China in Central Asia, the following hypothesis formulated. "The post-Cold War strategic vacuum and importance of the region has led to a new strategic game by the three powers to influence developments in the region in a way that is consistent with the interests of each of the three major powers".

Method

Qualitative method has been used for conducting this research which includes documents and related research work already conducted on the same issue. It contains books, research articles, news articles and reports. For the research, information has been retrieved from internet sources and different websites as well. By the help of this data, research has analyzed the power interest and rivalry of China, United States of America and Russia in Central Asia.

Major Powers' Interests in Central Asia

As the research mentions three major powers, therefore this research has discussed rivalry of US, China and Russia and their power interests in Central Asia. All the three states have major political and economic goals in the Central Asian region, because Central Asia has huge economic potential and this potential cannot be fulfilled until the stable governments come into power.

United States' Power Interest and Rivalry in Central Asia

United States has major political and economic goals in Central Asia. First objective of United States is its concern about War on Terror to achieve and maintain stability in the region. Secondly, United States is concerned about to avoid the emergence of regional powers' influence in Central Asia. United States' interest is also concerned with the prevention of rising Islamic ideology. Another goal of United States is the attainment of key geopolitical interest which belongs to economic goals in the region. Even though the United States has interest about democratization in Central Asia, when that objective comes into conflict with the power's other

aims in the region, the United States administration seems to "fall quiet" in working toward this goal (Liedy, 2010).¹

The Struggle of "War on Terror"

The first concern of United States in the region is countering terrorism, by "War against Terrorism" especially after 9-11 against Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Due to attack on Afghanistan this region became very important; both strategically and logistically. Kazakhstan and United States aim to develop cooperation with NATO and also to have focus on nonproliferation, and stemming narcotics trafficking. Therefore in 2002 the United States' President George W. Bush met Islam Karimov in Washington at the White House (Krumm, 2007). The struggle was to make military alliance in the region for "War against Terrorism" and security purposes. United States also funded the Central Asian states for anti-terrorism, nonproliferation, International Military Education and in related programs. But they stopped funds to Uzbekistan in 2009 due to lack of progress and human rights violation issues. In 2003 Kazakhstan supported United States operation in Iraq to counter terrorism. It means that anti-terrorism and security is central focus of United States in the region, hence they want to achieve victory in the region and particularly in Afghanistan (Wishnick, 2009).

To Prevent the Emergence of Regional Powers

United States also has interest to avert the regional power emergence, such as the renaissance and rebirth of the Russian empire and the possible rise of a Chinese empire and especially its economic market. If Central Asian states become weakened, having instability and not able to build their institutions strengthened and make political and economic structures strong enough, then their neighboring powers, China and Russia would have the opportunity to assert power over Central Asian governments. They have also an option to weaken the presence of the United States in geopolitical affairs because US wants to keep influence in Central Asia.

Therefore Central Asian states have been funded by the United States government for military cooperation and military advancement to stop drug and human trafficking, anti-terrorism and nonproliferation etc. United States has also provided them with the additional strategic help of 40 million \$ fund for border control and 36 million \$ to build bridges connecting Afghanistan and many other assists. United States want to encourage and promote integration of the region since 2005 with South Asia to decrease Central Asia's dependence on China and Russia (Wishnick, 2009). The 2003 United States' intervention in Iraq was supported by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan while other Central Asian states had some support to United States in beginning but later the support became silent. While United States had strong support of Kazakhstan and contribution of some troops to support the US, later Kazakhstan called back its troops in 2008 (Nichol, 2010). This entire struggle is for the purpose to avoid the emergence of regional empires.

To End and Discontinue the Islamic Movements

United States has also an interest to stop the Islamic ideological movements because it is a great threat to the US' geopolitical and economic interest in Central Asia. If the movements become active and make the influence of their ideologies stronger, then in ultimate, United States cannot promote its political and economic policies. US is not ready to bear the emergence of such like Islamic movements by controlling the governments likewise in Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood) and Turkey (The Erdogan's AKP). United States views that in the destabilization of Central Asian governments, one factor is also "radical Islamic movements". United States is also concerned about the Jihad ideology in the region as Washington is engaged in a war against those groups

¹ United States policy toward the Central Asian states has aimed at make easy their cooperation with U.S. and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and their struggle to war against terrorism; proliferation; and arm, drug and person trafficking. Further U.S. aims have included promoting free markets access, democratization, human rights, energy development, and the forging of East-West and Central Asia-South Asia trade links. Such strategies aim to help the states become what various United States administrations have considered to be responsible members of the international community rather than to degenerate into xenophobic, extremist, and anti-Western regimes that contribute to wider regional conflict and instability. Soon after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian "front-line" states offered over-flight and other support for coalition anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also endorsed coalition military action in Iraq.

like Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, Salafi and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and other Central Asian Jihadi and Islamic Ideological movements like Islamic Jihad Union IJU. According to some approximations, there are some 4,000 IMU fighters in Afghanistan to support Afghan Jihadi groups (Nichol, 2010).²

To Achieve Economic Goals

The fourth most important interest of the United States in the region is its concern about economic goals. The United States wants to continue "unfettered and free market access" for the West to the energy resources of the region. Predominantly, the United States wishes to protect its right to use Central Asian sources of energy while avoiding all China, Iran and the Russia, thereby keeping influence over these players in Central Asia.

As Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor stated in June 2004 that the development of Central Asia is connected to economic development and economic potential, including its extensive natural resources and it requires free market access, economic reforms and foreign direct investment. She also mentions that this is the only way to develop and improve the people of the region (Blank, 2007).³ Free market access and economic development mean "unfettered and free market access" for the West and control of the Central Asian natural resources. United States is concerned to bypass the leverage of China and Russia.

As mentioned that China, Russia and United States have strategic and economic interests and rivalry in the region, the reason for their main interest is geo-economics, that the Caspian Sea contains vast oil and gas fields. To control the pasture or fields and the export of oil and gas from Central Asia, strategic capabilities and presence in the region are needed as a mean to control the oil and gas transport infrastructure. While also after the collapse of Soviet Union the United States did more focus and doing still now on Central Asian policies, also to break-up other countries' influence in the region and promoting regional cooperation, political and economic stability. If this region has no stability then United States cannot achieve her economic goals of "unfettered and free market access" (Kurečić, 2010).

Democratization in Central Asia

Lastly, it is to explain that United State have another main objective to promote democratization in Central Asia. When that goal comes into conflict with other power's aims in the region, the U.S. administration appears to "fall quiet" in working toward this goal. Democracy will bring good and stable governance and will be easy for United States to take favor from those governments as compare to present dictators.⁴

As discussed that United States has major policy for long-term development to make the democracy strengthened in the region. Mainly from 11 September 2001, the U.S. has done all efforts to go with its concerns about human rights and democracy in Central Asia with its interests in regional support for the Global War on Terrorism (Nichol, 2006). Though the attempt is also to eliminate the Russian loyal persons and dictators from the countries of the region, because democracy will reduce the interference of great powers; especially Russia. Democracy will also clear the way for United States to make the government and economy of the these states more liberalize and make sure free access of U.S. and West to Central Asian natural resources like "unfettered and free market access".

² It is also explained in different chapters of, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Islam, Oil and New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris Publisher, 2002).

³ In the same source also mentioned that U.S. comes here to protect the West from "Islamic Terrorism". If they come for counter-terrorism then why they are concerned about the natural resources of the region and economic development in which still we didn't see anything except U.S. interest in natural resources. The report also mentions that what might be called an open door or equal access for U.S. firms in regard to energy exploration, refining, and marketing, energy access on equal terms to American and other Western firms. The whole story again goes towards "unfettered and free market access" for the West to the energy resources of the region, p.3 & 4.

⁴ Good governance in the sense of good for U.S. and the present dictators or state representations are loyal to Russia and the United States not easily interfere in the Central Asia states affairs now. But if democratic government comes then it will be difficult for Russia to handle that governments as we see Afghanistan or many other developing countries that have democracy they mostly influence by U.S. policies also we see Pakistan.

By the opening of United States' bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and by granting the limited rights of landing to U.S there is a reason to worry, that leaders in Washington and different Western capitals may be more unwilling to hold the region to democratic standards, for fear of the political uncertainty it could cause. It is also normally argued in Washington that the people of Central Asia must not agree to accept and appreciate Western democratic ideology development and its political system. They are also unable to maintain democratic institutions as history has proven it. During the United States' bombing on Afghanistan, U.S. destroyed many of IMU camps and its leader Juma Namangani was reportedly killed. After that IMU warned all Central Asian leaders for new threats and incursions. While they also put into danger the U.S. or Western democratic ideology development in the region (Olcott, 2002).

As they consider that democracy avoid the Russian influence and develop the Central Asian governments and bring stability up to some extent but on the other hand some view that, United States' democracy promotion idea is also a threat for instability in the region as Kyrgyzstan Tulip revolution and the U.S. response to Arab Spring (Mankoff, 2013). It is widely viewed that promotion of democracy is just a theory that United States want to use it as a tool. By this propaganda U.S. wants to remove the Russia's loyal dictators and to make a way for its own trustworthy rulers, as happened in the result of Arab spring.

Russia's Power Interest and Rivalry in Central Asia

Among the world powers and many neighbors to Central Asia, Russia too has political interests in the said region where its interests increased in international relations due to its regional location. Russia keeps some major aims in playing the political "great game" in Central Asia. United States and Russia also have a common interest in Central Asia. Russia's first objective in the region is, to maintain state stability through the elimination of Islamism or what they call as terrorism. Russia's second goal in the region is concerned with ensuring the whole status quo in the region or to remain intact. Moscow aims to maintain the authoritarian government system which maintains the "neocolonial status quo" of Russia in the region.

Elimination of Islamism

Russia and United States have a common objective in Central Asia, to eliminate the Islamists from the region to maintain its stability. Russia is concerned about some radical Islamic ideological tendencies like "Wahhabism"⁵, or rather Salafism in the region, also Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and other Central Asian Jihadi and Islamic Ideological Movements like Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). The elimination of Islamism is related to stable its hegemony in Central Asian States and also to protect Russian borders.

Islamic movements are active in whole Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. While Islam is deep-rooted in many parts of the region, so Islamic groups are anti-Russia and also against its uprising. Because Soviet government interferes in the holy teachings of religion Islam by saying that Islamic development must be defined and managed by the state. While they have said that government or state have the authority to influence or define the social evolution of society as history saw during Soviet Union rule in the region. The elite of Central Asia are not against the Islam as well as common people of the region. But Russia is to keep these republics as secular states and to prevent religious and devout Muslims from the region (Olcott, 2003).

Religious-political Islamists want to strengthen their presence in the region and influence everywhere their ideology to counter Russian, American or Western political thoughts. They also want permanent power and political-arena in the region for their Islamic ideology. While they want to counter nonbelievers' and Western liberal ideologies as well because that kind of teaching is threat to Islamic beliefs (Ochilov, 2007). But the

⁵ "Wahhabism" is a religious association, sect or branch of Sunni Islam. "Wahhabism", a movement to purify Islamic teaching, originated in the mid-18th century in Arabia as part of an influential purification movement associated with Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab ibn Suleiman at-Tamimi (R.A) (1703–1791) of Nejd. Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab ibn Suleiman at-Tamimi (R.A) inspired from a scholar named Imam Ibn Taimiyyah (R.A) (1263–1328), this religious reformer and his disciples called for a return to the purity of early Islam, as-salaf as-salih, or the Islam of "the (pious, honorable, virtuous) forefathers"; it adheres to the early jurist Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (R.A).

promotion of Islamic thoughts and principles is threat to Russia, U.S. and Western interests in the region; therefore Russia wants to eliminate

Islamism from the region. *Status Quo of Russia*

Russia and United States have different goals in this objective because United States support democratization and want her political and economic stability in the region; U.S. also supports the West in the region as discussed earlier. But Russia has different geopolitical and economic interests in the region especially rely on maintaining the authoritarian governmental structures in the region that currently exist in Central Asian states. Even Russia wants to defend status quo in the region (Kulchik et al, 1996).

Russia and China also established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁶ (SCO) to counter the U.S. stability and influence in the region. SCO members view the evolving and developing US engagement in the region as a threat. SCO nations also seek to establish new political and economic international order that is democratic, just and rational just to oppose United States' influence in the region (Alyson et al, 2007). The two leading powers Russia and China are agree that the presence of U.S should be bordered through such a new order, which they observe as their sphere of influence. The United States has leased military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan from the last few years; U.S. uses those bases in fight against Taliban in Afghanistan. After 2005, SCO also called the U.S. troops to vacate and withdraw the bases but United States is still present in the region (Voice of America, 2011). However Russian interest maintains to establish and develop SCO to counter United States and Western influence in the region. Now what about the China's question? As Russia wants her status quo in the region, if she counters U.S. then it is also possible that Russia counters China's interest and influence in the region. Even China and Russia have some shared interests and goals in Central Asia, but some analysts opine that Russian reservation belongs to the rising of China's economic boom in Central Asia; it means that China and Russia have also rivalry in the region. They also say that Moscow observes SCO as a mean to recover its historical position as a leading power and its domination of the region as was during the Soviet era. All it shows nothing but Russian struggle for "neocolonial status quo" in the region.

Authoritarian Governmental Structure

Russia wants to maintain the existing authoritarian government systems in Central Asia. This interest motivated Moscow to exercise her political influence over the region neighbor to Russia, especially to gain and regulate the commerce and trade in the region and out of the region. Russia has made herself as a key supplier of energy resources to the Far East and also to the West. It is to conclude that the Russian government retains a leading position in the regional energy market due to upholding the neocolonial status quo in Central Asia.

In Central Asian states the democratic system has no role but then even some little well-doing countries in the region like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also play no role in democratic development. As we see from 1992 the same individuals rule in Central Asia and they hold the government offices. In all three countries as mentioned above the Presidential elections are completely untrue and fictitious. If we see Kazakhstan every time the ruling party get majority of votes, in Tajikistan the opposition party always win two seats and Tajikistan's all parties support the president (Golosov, 2014).

As explained earlier that, this entire struggle is for "neocolonial status quo" of Russia in the Central Asia. To counter democracy and democratic governments and also through this strategy, Russia wants to rollback the United States objective for the Western enhancement of development in the region.

⁶ The "Shanghai Five," formed in 1996, included China, Russia and three Central Asian states that share their borders, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The regional bloc rose to six members with the entrance of Uzbekistan in 2001 and renamed itself the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. According to the SCO Charter and the Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO, the main purposes of SCO are: good-neighborliness and friendship among member states to strengthening mutual trust, developing their effective and efficient cooperation in political affairs. Another function is economy and trade, culture, science and technology, environmental protection, transportation and other fields. They are also working for to maintain regional peace, security and stability, and encouraging the creation of a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice and rationality.

China's Power Interest and Rivalry in Central Asia

China also has geopolitical and economic interests in Central Asia like other competitors have in the region. China wants to protect her state integrity; it is the foremost concern of Beijing, as the Chinese government does not wish for "crosspollination of influence" between its country and Central Asian states. China's initial concern regarding Central Asia was to improve the security of its Western border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Secondly, Chinese share the interest to make sure regional stability for her economic market; therefore they want to uphold a "zone of stability and peace" around China. While China also wants to minimize the Islamic movements' spreading influence and their political infrastructure, because China wishes to raise its economic and political control over the region. As mentioned above that China has geo-political and economic interests in Central Asia but most importantly China wishes stability in the region to gain more and more economic benefits and establish her business market in the region.

Most analysts do not expect Chinese territorial expansion into Central Asia, even though still China seems for greater financial influence. China is also the most important trading partner for Central Asian countries, might it become or will be the rising economic power in the region. Even if we compare the Turkish trade in Central Asia, it is less than China's trade in the region. China's business exceeded \$1 billion per annum by the late 1990s and subsequently prolonged very much, reaching \$30 billion by 2010. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have been skillful in constructing relations with China. They have assisted with China in defining borders, building roads, and increasing business and trade ties. The building of oil and gas pipelines from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China Xinjiang region mark China's rising economic influence in Central Asia and also in the neighbor region (Nichol, 2006).

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited all Central Asian states excluding Tajikistan in 2013, September. (President Rahmon had visited China and met with President Xi Jinping in May 2013). The president of China evidently signed agreements in Kazakhstan for up to \$30 billion, in Uzbekistan for \$15 billion, in Kyrgyzstan for \$3 billion, and in Turkmenistan for \$8 billion, as part of a more well policy of increasing trade and business with the region and encouraging the development of east-west transport relations. Chinese government called for the Central Asian governments to share information on economic policies with China and for better collaboration among the SCO and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Community in order to strengthen a Silk Road economic belt (Nichol, 2006). China wants to maximize and expand her economic market with Central Asian states to hold the market of the region. While she also wants economic influence in Central Asia's natural resources to transport energy resources into its borders. An example of this success is the new Turkmenistan-China pipeline opened in December 2009 by China's President, Hu Jintao (Macedo, 2009).

The rising geopolitical and economic importance of these five states to China is now defining the international relations of these Central Asian states. Especially Kazakhstan has paying special attention to the Chinese government. Geographically Kazakhstan contains common border with China's western province, Xinjiang, while Kazakhstan is still politically a dictatorship. China, not like the United States and European powers, records no objections to the Kazakh government's human rights violence. This builds China's economic and political dealings with the Kazakh government so easier. As China is struggling for natural resources like natural gas and oil, has aggravated Beijing to invest a lot in the markets of Central Asia, Kazakhstan will keep on to be a particular aim for that investment (Masoud, 2014).

Conclusion

It is beyond any hesitation that the economies of the most important powers depend on foreign energy resources. China, United States, Russia and other international and regional powers do not have sufficient resources of energy. Energy resources and international politics are linked like Siamese twins. It is also true that the mentioned three powers have strong rivalry and competition in Central Asia and every state wants to get more and more benefits from the region. With economic benefits the major powers want their own political stability in the region especially Russia and United States, while China wants stability in the region to improve her economic market and trade relations with Central Asian states. But when we talk about competition between Russia and United States in Central Asia, it is to gain economic or natural resources benefits and also both want their political and military gain in Central Asia. So as we cannot ignore the rivalry between China and Russia

because China is also a regional power and she wants her hegemonic stability or influence in the Central Asian region to gain her goals and objectives.

The above research discussed power interests of three states that, United States is in struggling to get control on War on Terror, also want to avert the emergence of regional powers like Russia or China. U.S' another goal is to discontinue and break off the Islamic movements, and to achieve economic goals like command on the market and natural resources of the region. Democratization is also the core goal of United States but U.S. wants the democracy like in Afghanistan, means democratic government which is influenced by the U.S and to support United States in Central Asia in any situation. But with United States interests we cannot ignore another major actor Europe as the U.S. is doing struggle for Europe and supports European interests in Central Asia. Europe has too much need of Central Asia's natural resources and it is Europe which has important route for United States to do business with Central Asia.

The research also explains the Russian interests in the region that Russia has a common objective with U.S. and to some extent with China to eliminate the Islamists or Islamic movements from the region. As all three states feel threat from the movements and according to their policies, such kinds of movements are against to their political and economic ideologies of democracy, socialism or capitalist structure economy. Russia has two more objectives to maintain her status quo and to keep authoritarian system of governments in Central Asian states. Another major power China wants regional stability in the region to develop and hold its economic market in Central Asia.

With all this discussion the role of SCO cannot be ignored because through SCO China and Russia is taking benefits to counter United States and its policies in the region. The SCO members are trying to make their ties stronger, and do regional cooperation with each other through SCO which is a deep concern for United States' policies and cooperation with the region. The year 2013 is witnessed for various economic cooperation and business agreements among China and Central Asian countries. It means that SCO is also a competitor and threat for United States in the region. The entire struggle and rivalry of China, Russia and United States is to attain, keep and enhance power in the region, while also covet to hold energy resources of Central Asia.

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Received: June, 24th, 2015
Revisions Received: March 2nd, 2016

Sino – Russia Competing Interests in Central Asia

Muhammad Saif-ur-Rehman

National Defence University, Islamabad

Saima Ashraf Kayani

Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

This paper examines an interesting phenomenon of contending interests of two major players of the region over resource rich Central Asia. The debate intrinsically explores the convergent and divergent aspects of interests particularly in the backdrop of NATO forces drawdown from Afghanistan. Russia derives her strategic ambitions while being influenced by its traditional approach towards Central Asia as near abroad. Security arena and political clout over Central Asian leadership are the major contours of Russian policy towards Central Asia. On the other hand, China though not maintaining matching inclination towards Central Asia vis-a-vis Russia, yet enjoys a considerable overture due to its regional as well as global economic standing. Hence, China conceives Central Asia as the region of opportunities in the contemporary and foreseeable future as well. The cardinal question arises, how both powers will play their cards while competing each other particularly focusing fossil/ hydro carbon assets of Central Asia. Both powers, being politically proactive members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, will certainly endeavour to preserve sustainability in the respective areas of interests, nevertheless, China is likely to supersede Russia in the long run.

Key Words: China, Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Security, Competition, Collaboration

The 20th century added a voluminous chapter in the geopolitics of the world. Number of happenings took place in that era, nevertheless, break up of former Soviet Union and emergence of the five Central Asian Republic (CARs) appeared to be the most noticeable development. Central Asia emerged once again as a region of attention after 18th century old great game. This time contours of global and regional politics are different as compared to the previous one. Strategic placement, massive fossil reserves, rich human resource and intrinsic derive of Central Asians to pace with the developments of modern world, created a sort of row among the regional and extra regional players to dominate the region for their vested interests.

With this premise, in order to have an in-depth analysis, the scope of this paper warrants delimitation of the subject matter rotating around the most closer and influential neighboring countries like China and Russia. Stakes of both of these players are much higher than any other power of the world. Over the years, increasing clout of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and likely withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, are considered to be additional factors while reshaping the policies of China- Russia towards Central Asia. Therefore, to investigate the issue, one can build the hypothesis like “Geopolitical and geo-economics factors compel both China and Russia for uninterrupted ingress in to Central Asia for attainment of respective motives”. This supposition also leads to a cardinal question “whether both China and Russia are collaborators or competitors in Central Asia”? There is also need to ponder upon filling of likely security vacuum in the wake of exit of NATO troops from Afghanistan. While considering the convergent and divergent areas of interest, what are the foreseeable challenges for both the regional powers? In this connection, Social Scientists generally seek support of a particular theory to develop an argument in order to analyze a particular situation or a case study in the arena of regional or global politics. The regional security complex theory and theory of interdependence are quite pertinent in this particular case study.

Considerable literature has been produced on this subject matter in the form of books and scholarly articles. The noticeable work from the Chinese perspective focus mainly in the realm of energy security, economy and regional politics. Chinese overture to Central Asia is consistent and gradual. Initiating with the

demarcation of boundaries; lessening CARs' concern and enhancing cooperation in trade and commerce coupled with security alliance (Olcott,2006) are the most noticeable areas. Whereas Russian perspective has mostly highlighted the traditional Russian approach to the region in line with the quest for maintaining politico- security hegemony.

Presence of extra regional forces in the garb of NATO troops in Afghanistan and establishment of US Military base at Manas, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) have enhanced Russian involvement in Central Asia's security. Consequently Chinese economic presence in Central Asian region has started deepening especially in the field of energy and security under the ambit of SCO (Olcott,B.M.2006,August 4).Central Asians have also welcomed Chinese investment especially in the infrastructural development. The same is ultimately going to benefit mainly China's energy and commercial goals; however, China has to gain expertise for succeeding since the cross-border setup demands a balancing act from the prism of diplomacy (Thapliyal, 2010).

Despite China's growing interest in Central Asia, it facing numerous challenges including logistical, heavy price of uncertain regional security environment, steady energy transportation etc. Nevertheless, both Chinese and Central Asians will have to find out a solid way for sustainable politico-economic security for either side (China's growing interests in Central Asia" Video, Sep 27,2013).

Of late an impressive account of analyses pertaining to the policies of regional and extra regional actors in Central Asia, including China and Russia has been added in the literature produced by experts on Central Asia. Russia has appeared to be an impressive pro-active actor despite a clear political disengagement in Central Asia, yet Kremlin is in a position to impinge upon the domestic politics of Central Asia. Nonetheless, security arena is the major concern for Russia especially in its South (Laruelle, & Peyrouse, 2013). While handling politico-economics matters, Russia enjoys a clear advantage in the spheres of economic and hydrocarbon transportation infrastructure and people to people contact due to its old bondage. On the other hand, contrary to Russia, China is yet looking for means to rediscover her neighboring CARs. However, Central Asia is a crucial factor not only in China's energy security but security on its Western borders as well (Laruelle, & Peyrouse, 2013).

China's Objectives in Central Asia

China's foremost outreach in Central Asia emanates from its geographical contiguity with Central Asia. Sharing 3700 Km long border with this region, that is, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Laruelle, & Peyrouse, 2013).

Mainly China's ambitions in Central Asian region are bi-dimensional i.e., Energy as well as border security. China being an energy deficient country, the world's second largest petroleum consumer after US, with the consumption of 10,480 thousand barrels per day always look for the diverse energy outlets. The motive behind multiple options for energy supply is to ensure energy security to meet her rising energy demands in foreseeable future (China's growing interests in Central Asia" Video, Sep 27, 2013).

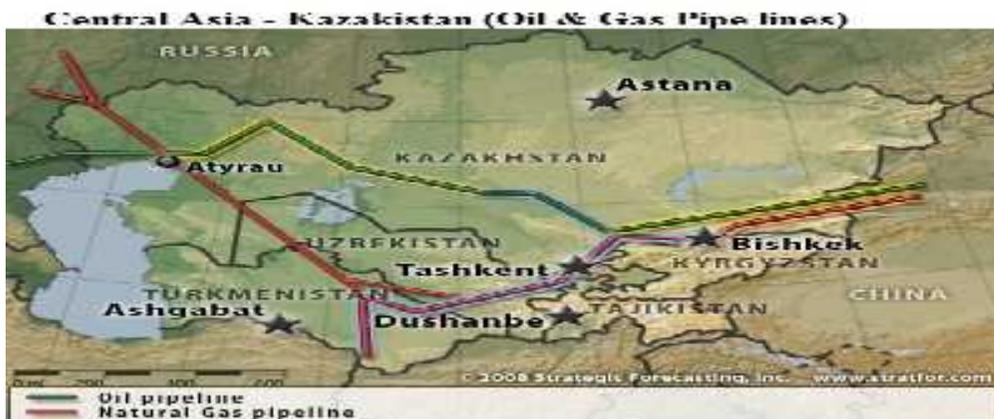
Central Asia due to its closer proximity becomes an attractive region in this regard. Sufficient hydrocarbon deposits on Central Asian soil (See table below) helped Chinese to get two prominent oil and gas pipelines materialized.

	Production in 2009				Reserves as of 1 January, 2011			
	oil		natural gas		oil		natural gas	
	%	score	%	score	%	score	%	score
Kazakhstan	2.0	16	1.1	24	2.0	11	1.3	15
Kyrgyzstan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tajikistan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Turkmenistan	0.9	40	1.2	23	0.04	48-49	4.0	5
Uzbekistan	0.1	46	2.2	11	0.04	49	1.0	19
CA-5	2.4		4.5		2.1		6.3	
Azerbaijan	1.3	21	0.5	32	0.5	19	0.45	26
Caspian-4	3.7		5.0		2.6		6.75	

Source: Oil & Gas Journal.

Sequel to ever increasing energy requirement, the very first Chinese choice was Kazakhstan as Kazakhstan ranks second in proven oil deposits after Russian Federation among Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Kazakhstan- China oil pipeline was the first ever pipeline from Central Asia to China. Both sides inked its construction in 1997 and till 2009, the third phase also constructed up to Kumkol (International Energy and Data Analysis(2013).The total length of this pipeline is 3200 Km with capacity of 20 million tons of oil transportation with estimated cost of 3-3.5 billion dollars. Total length of this pipe line is 2,228 Km with maximum capacity of 180 thousand barrels/day with estimated cost of US\$700 million.

Map below reflects the oil pipeline between Kazakhstan and China.



(Source: <https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=central+asia+china+oil+and+gas+pipeline+map&biw>, accessed July 23, 2015)

So far gas import from Central Asia is concerned; Turkmenistan- China gas pipeline is another venture on the credit of China. This pipeline was initiated as a result of Turkmen- China agreement framework signed on

the eve of Turkmen President's visit to Beijing in 2007. Later on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan both were also taken on board for the construction of this project. The first phase of this project was completed in 2009 and the work on the next phase is in progress. The total length of this pipeline is 1,833 Km with three parallel lines with accumulated capacity of 55 billion cubic meter per annum (Sukhanova, 2005).

Central Asians are equally beneficiary of Chinese investment especially in the infrastructural development including road- rail etc. The road-rail network has helped boosting of China- Central Asia trade. China- CARs trade volume in 2000-2007, raised 15 times as compared to the trade volume during 1990s (*Downstream today*, 2007). Besides developing road-rail infrastructure, China also paid attention on CARs' sector of communication and transportation. Particularly Railway has been a case in point, where Turkmenistan has appeared to be the Chinese leading client. The first consignment in this regard was provided to Turkmenistan in year 2006, comprising 48 locomotives and 50 carriages. In the same year, Turkmen placed order of 200 carriages, worth US\$800 Million. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan also appeared interested in availing Chinese expertise to develop their railway network (Paramonov, 2008).

Trade and commercial ties will indirectly help Chinese to address the concern in the security dimension. In this connection, the most favourable factors for China is its geographical contiguity, hence, reducing transportation cost between the two sides. Engaging ethnic factor constructively, that is, dominating Uyghur community not only in Xinjiang region but also in Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajiks' area will be a sigh of relief for Beijing. Therefore, addressing security issue for bringing stability through engaging separatist elements via commercial activities is quite novel in nature. Nonetheless, in order to make a smooth ingress towards Central Asian region, China is facing multiple challenges like obsolete trade & commerce practices, inconspicuous commercial atmosphere in Central Asia, rampant corruption and the tendencies of extremism.

Russia's Interests in Central Asia

Crack up of former Soviet Union and emergence of CARs in 1991 was a serious psychological blow to Russia as they had a Diaspora (ethnic Russians) in Central Asia, approximately 9.5 million people and 20% of total population in Cars (Peyrouse, S, 2015). Moreover, appearance of CARs led to shifting of Russia's south eastern border northwards to more than 1600 Km. New states took over the control of massive fossil and mineral deposits which were earlier under the control of Russians. The same was conceived as the topmost worrisome issue to the Kremlin. Thus, losing geopolitical standing coupled with potential dividends from the rich economic resources pitched Russia in a row with other stake holders in the region and beyond; most importantly China. Being cognizant of relation between geopolitics and energy deposits, Russian foreign policy was chalked out accordingly. The focus was continuation of unchallenged hegemony over transportation of CARs' hydro-carbon resources. Same factor became the source of contention between Russia and the US as well.

The Russians conceived this rivalry as marginalizing their geopolitical advantage and compromising geo-economics imperatives. The same element has forced Russia to realign strategic triangle among Russia, China and CARs under the ambit of SCO. Nevertheless, the player(s) holding control over the oil & gas outlet and proposed future pipelines will be the real beneficiary in the long run. Therefore, Russian geopolitical compulsion demands for the reintegration and realignment of her policies vis-à-vis Central Asia. However, such move will likely to face a tough resistance not only from Central Asians but from China as well.

Securing political economy of Central Asia from the prism of laissez-faire, extreme religious ideology and securing Central Asia from the traditional as well as non traditional security threats from its South; after the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, are the real issues of concern for Russia. The platform of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is the instrument of Russian military cum security extension and endeavours in the region. The joint military exercise on Mar 18, 2015 under the ambit of the CSTO on the Afghan-Tajik border is the manifestation of Russian regional agenda. This view is further consolidated with Moscow's vow to forces' surge in Central Asia from around six thousand to ten thousand over the next decade (Stratfor, 2015).

Russia is also preparing for extending military aid to Tajikistan worth US\$1.2 billion in the next couple of years (Stratford, 2015). This aid is being granted in the backdrop of suspected training of thousands of extremist elements by the ISIS fighters near Tajik-Turkmen borders in northern Afghanistan. Though Russian policy and ambitions toward Central Asia are quite explicit in nature, nonetheless, it faces challenges:-

- (i) Terrorism, the foremost challenge to Russian policies in Central Asia.
- (ii) Fear of replica of Arab reawakening in the Central Asian region.
- (iii) Pursuit of independent policies by the CARs' leadership in line with the multi vector foreign policy.
- (iv) Maintaining the posture of unchallenged security manager in the region.
- (v) Competition from the external players.

Analysis and Deductions

Competing Sino-Russian interests in Central Asian region has far reaching implications not only for the respective stake holders but will also have fallout for rest of the regional/ extra regional powers. While evaluating the equation of these regional powers (China and Russia), it is imperative to highlight the convergent and divergent areas of interests of both the powers.

Convergent Motives

Sino – Russian major areas of mutual interests in the region are:-

- (i) Inherent drive to develop a powerful and sustainable anti-US block to challenge the myth of unipolar world.
- (ii) Consolidating forums/organizations like SCO and CSTO to establish domination in the arena of economy and security.
- (iii) Formulation of joint strategy to resist consolidation of extra regional forces and move for closure of US military base at Mamas, Kyrgyzstan.
- (iv) Collaboration to fight against the menace of separation, extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
- (v) Diffusing the issue of migration of Chinese inhabitants to Russia's Far East and laying East Siberian oil pipeline from Siberia to China (Asian Geopolitics Report, 2006).
- (vi) Enhancing Sino-Russian economic relations due to excessive use of Chinese raw material in Russian products.
- (vii) Embracing soft power and mutual acceptance of cultural norms.
- (viii) Continuation of joint military exercises under the ambit of SCO and consolidating the security area.
- (ix) Sino-Russia affirmation for non-adherence to the Western neo-liberal model for promoting respective economies.

Divergent Objectives

China and Russia, on chess board of Central Asia, have certain diverging views as follows:-

- (i) Continuation of Russian control over oil & gas pipeline network.
- (ii) Enhanced Chinese involvement in exploration and development of Central Asia's fossil reserves.
- (iii) Approach towards the role of SCO in Central Asia. Russia focuses on the military rather security aspect while China is inclined towards economic aspect of SCO in Central Asia.

- (iv) Persistence of Central Asian politico-economic status quo.
- (v) Multi vector foreign policies followed by Central Asian leadership.
- (vi) Energy policies in Central Asia.
- (vii) Foreign policies and approaches toward Central Asia. That is, energy as an instrumental factor for securing Russian national interest and sovereignty. While economic outreach and prosperity reflects Beijing's foreign policy to solidify its sovereignty and national interest.

Deductions

Economic field is the real area of competition between China and Russia. China appears to be leading in this domain vis-a-vis Russia. China's excessive engagement in Central Asia's energy sector to meet her growing energy demand will challenge Russia's exclusive monopoly. Thus, leading to competition rather than cooperation between both players. Moreover, USA is an important factor in Sino-Russian strategic partnership. This partnership is likely to diminish gradually after withdrawal of US/ NATO forces from Afghanistan and the region. In such a situation, asymmetrical economic- security interests of both China and Russia might come up in future. This may lead to a serious row between both powers in Central Asia in the long run. Moreover, Moscow's weak economic outlook coupled with gradual exit of Central Asians from Russia will lead to declining trend of remittances in the region. Whereas, Chinese growing economy will bridge the gap in this regard. Therefore, this development is indirectly paving path for China's overture in the region.

Massive Central Asia's hydrocarbon resources are restructuring the geopolitical and geo-economic order of the region. Sino-Russian row for ultimate control over energy deposits, exploration, development and final destination of oil-gas pipelines will be the real factors to determine the fate of relations of both the powers in the long run. China's growing economic strength will eventually convert China into the leading power of the region by boosting her political clout through the prism of SCO.

On the other hand, it is important for Moscow to cooperate and collaborate with Beijing across the region. However, Russia in the past has restricted Chinese outreach in order to facilitate Indian induction as a member of SCO and creating its customs union, this will considerably reduce the flow of Chinese goods and services in Central Asia (Blank, 2011).

Russians being the custodian of the legacy of past and their concern about security of Central Asians warrant change of their mindset towards Central Asia. Kremlin must facilitate Central Asian's outreach to the developed comity of the nations (Blank, 2011).

Conclusion

In the wake of dominating US agenda of unipolar world, both China and Russia are flexing their muscles to develop a new narrative about Central Asia amidst issues rotating around joint and energy security. This congruity of interest will certainly impinge upon the geopolitical construct along with rebuilding their images as icon of regional hegemony. Thus, both states are looking for the passage of identifying common interests like strategic partnership to serve their long term regional agenda – security and stability particularly in the aftermath of US withdrawal from Afghanistan. This strategic alliance has further augmented at platform of SCO even at the cost of relations with US. Nevertheless, SCO is equally an instrument of diverging ambitions in Central Asia, particularly from the prism of security vis-a-vis economy. Whereas, China's consistent commitment in energy sector is conceived by Russia as an area of concern, hence, generating rivalry rather than collaboration in foreseeable future. Yet despite their concern challenging US presence in the region through shared geopolitical goals is attributed as a successful narrative.

In nutshell, China is likely to overtake Russia in the long run due to its huge size of economy, human resource and calculated inroads towards Central Asia.

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Received: July 24th, 2015
 Revisions Received: March 7th, 2016

Afghanistan and Central Asian States (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan): Post 2014

Saima Ashraf Kayani and Saif ur Rehman Malik
National Defence University, Islamabad

The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan has generated the debate regarding the future scenarios for Afghanistan, the emergent threat of the great game, the emergent security threats and challenges and the role of terrorist organizations. However what has been so far unable to get enough consideration is the impact of withdraw of NATO forces from Afghanistan on the Central Asian neighboring countries of Afghanistan (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) which share 2000 km long border with Afghanistan and have religious, cultural and ethnic affiliation with Afghanistan. Keeping in view the geo-political and socio-cultural relations between Afghanistan and Central Asia, it is likely to predict that this region will be more affected by any development in Afghanistan. Some scholars and researchers are predicting disaster for the region while some are optimistic about the future of Central Asian States after 2014. In this research work two important post NATO exit from Afghanistan scenarios are discussed, drug trafficking and religious extremism and its implications on three geographically contiguous Central Asian countries with Afghanistan. However it is presented here that the ground realities have been changed and religious extremists' elements are not getting enough support and also threat of growing extremism is perceived differently by three states of Central Asia. Further the drug trafficking has been increased; this has forced the neighboring states of Afghanistan to formulate their policies keeping in view the ground realities.

Key Words: Post NATO Afghanistan. Turkmenistan. Tajikistan. Uzbekistan. Religious extremism.

Afghanistan is a country which has deep historical, political, economic and cultural relations with South and Central Asia. As far as Central Asia is considered three countries, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are the neighboring countries of Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan does not share direct border with Afghanistan. Eight out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan are geographically close to Central Asian region. These provinces have ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious connections with neighboring region of Central Asia .

After 9/11 attacks, US with its allies invaded Afghanistan to eliminate terrorism and terrorists' network. The war on terror immediately brings the three Central Asian states to the lime light and their strategic importance increased significantly. However the presence of foreign troops on the soil of Afghanistan became a contentious issue for US. Finally in June 2011, the US president, Barak Obama declared the US and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) exit from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. In fact Strategic Partnership Agreement between US and Afghanistan signed in June 2012, did provide framework to station some of the US military troops in Afghanistan after 2014.

Before leaving Afghanistan, US adopted two level strategies. Firstly it rebuilds Afghanistan's government structure like Afghan security institutions Afghan National Security Forces (Afghan National Army and Afghan Police) and May 2014 elections, new parliament and president, and secondly it favored talks with Taliban to reach on any negotiated arrangement (Rahmanullah, 2014) with no success so far.

Central Asia and Afghanistan

Afghanistan share 2000 km (1,240 miles) long border with three Central Asian states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Present-day Afghanistan, northern region, once remained the part of four Central Asian

states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. These were the part of Transoxiana and historical Silk Road connected Afghanistan with Central Asia and for centuries Afghanistan remained a land for military campaigns of different kingdoms which latter ruled the Central Asia. This established common cultural, economic, political, social and security relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan. In 19th century the area became the part of Great Game between Russian and British Empire. As a result Afghanistan acquired the status of buffer zone, resulted in ethnic division of Turkmen, Tajiks and Uzbeks on both sides of the borders. This established demographic, socio-cultural, economic, security and historical relations between Central Asian region and Afghanistan Thus Afghanistan multi ethnic character has been enhanced. Many people, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens, in order to avoid Stalin's brutal policies fled to Afghanistan. In 1920 the last Amir of Bukhara took refuge in Afghanistan. This has its impact on the politics, economy, socio-cultural and security of Afghanistan.

Under Afghanistan Prime minister Mohammad Daoud Khan, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union developed strong relations, thus resulted in increased Communist influence in Afghanistan. This caused Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. During Soviet-Afghan war the ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Kyrgyz stand with their Afghan brothers and fought against communist forces (Laruelle, Peyrouse & Axyonova, 2013).

With the disintegration of Soviet Union, Central Asian States acquired unexpected independence and so do new neighbors and new relations. Afghanistan became a safe haven for the Tajikistan's Islamic opposition leaders and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum established links with Dushanbe and Tashkent respectively (Ibid., p. 6.). Further the Central Asian states were unable to stop the radical Islamists ideology spillover effects from Afghanistan. Taliban extended their influence in Central Asia Region. This brought them in conflict with moderate Tajiks and Uzbeks and Hazaras who formed Northern Alliance against Taliban (Central Asia and Afghanistan: A Tumultuous History, 2013), resulting in civil war in Afghanistan. Iran, Russia and Central Asian States supported Northern Alliance, and cut off their diplomatic relations with the government of Taliban. Further due to Afghanistan's low economic development and its connection with Pakistan and Iran, the three Central Asian states remained cautious in developing any strong relations with Afghanistan, still their preference is Russia and west (Bleuer & Kazemi, 2014).

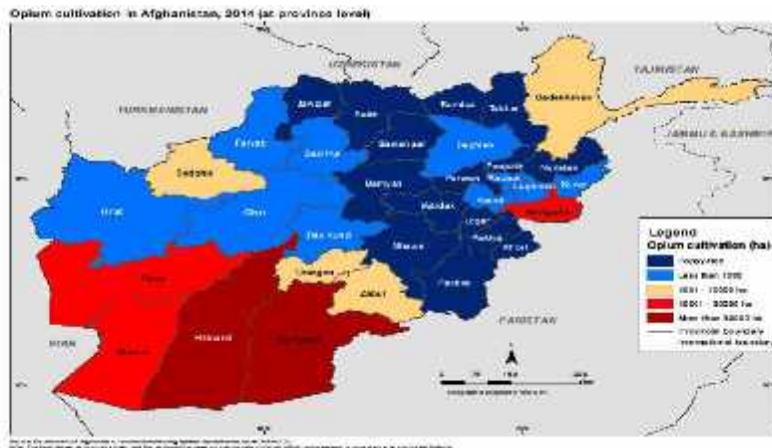
Relations between Central Asian States and Afghanistan resumed with the coming of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan in 2001. This time relations are more economic oriented. Uzbekistan started electricity and transportation projects in Afghanistan. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan with the help of international donors are also investing in hydroelectric projects. Kazakhstan invests in Assistance Program for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan. These states are also involved in projects related to trade, infrastructure development, food security, scholarships, medical assistance, engineers, construction and other related ventures (Laruelle, Peyrouse & Axyonova, 2013).

Central Asia: Post ISAF

Keeping in view the existing geo-political and socio-cultural relations between Afghanistan and Central Asia, it is likely to expect that this region will be affected by any development in Afghanistan. Some scholars and researchers are predicting disaster for the region while some are optimist about the future of Central Asian States after 2014. In this research work two important post ISAF scenarios are discussed, drug trafficking and religious extremism.

Drug Trafficking Activity and Routes in Afghanistan

According to Michel Chossudovsky "In 2014 the Afghan opium cultivation has once again hit a record high". (The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's 2014 Afghan Opium Survey). Experts are convinced that the largest opium cultivation, heroin production and cannabis resin, in world is found in Afghanistan. There is 7% increase in the opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in 2014 and 89% of the cultivation is done in south and west provinces of Afghanistan (Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production, 2014). Furthermore there is drastic decrease in poppy eradication activities in 2014 in Afghanistan.



Source: Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production. UNODC November 2014. P. 8. <http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>

Drug routes from Afghanistan are via Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Most of the drug trafficking from Afghanistan follows Central Asian routes, as Iran and Pakistan routes are well guarded with capabilities to check and fight drug smugglers. Further the Central Asian route is the shortest route to European markets, thus have low cost of transportation and other expenses are also low.



Cited in Liana Rosen and Kenneth Katzman. Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. Congressional Research Service Report. May 9, 2014p. 10. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43540.pdf>

Three kind of drug trafficking is going on in Central Asia, green by religious militant groups for fund raising, black by individual or small groups for domestic markets and red by organized transnational groups (Peyrouse, 2012). “ In 2010, about 90 tons of heroin and up to 40 tons of opium were trafficked into Central Asia (and some 75–80 tons of heroin went on towards Russia)” (UNODC, 2012a) It is anticipated that after 2014 there will be an increase in drugs related activities with not much achievements by the anti-narcotics organizations, international and regional states efforts.

Religious Extremism

The most serious threat these countries have from Afghanistan is religious extremism. There is link between extremist forces, drug trafficking and terrorism. The spread of radical Islamic ideology and activities from Afghanistan is considered as a major security threat to the region of Central Asia. The connection between Afghanistan and Central Asia's Jihadi movements has been established from the fact that Afghanistan support Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan opposition Islamic parties during Tajikistan civil war. The withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan, the threat of renewal of Jihadi activities became a threat for the regional states. There is a belief that the Jihadists who fought in Afghanistan are waiting for the right moment to return to their homeland and carry their activities. However it is presented here that the ground realities have been changed and radical Islamic elements will not get enough support due to vigilant check by all the Central Asian States on any kind of extremist elements in their respective states and also neighboring states of Afghanistan are making use of any available means to combat terrorism and extremism. All extremist and terrorist organizations are banned, religious hatred has been discouraged, and measures are taken, bilaterally and multilaterally, to control any kind of extremism in Central Asian States.

Turkmenistan and Afghanistan

Turkmenistan shared more than 700-km long border with Turkmenistan. It is contiguous to the north provinces of Afghanistan – Badghis, Faryab, Herat and Jowzjan. Turkmen are 3%, of the total population of Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan achieved its independence in 1991 and Afghanistan is the country which immediately recognized Turkmenistan. Initially the government at Ashgabat was engaged internally to set its own house in order. Many socio economic and political reforms were introduced in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has abundant natural resources. It has the world fourth largest natural gas reserves with ample oil and other natural resources reserves. Thus new great game for oil and gas reserves started in Turkmenistan where governments of US, China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Israel, India, Pakistan, and many more tried to establish cordial relations and get share of oil and gas reserves of Turkmenistan. To minimize the new great game the first president of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov declared policy of neutrality for Turkmenistan in 1992. The policy became the part of the constitution of Turkmenistan and is internationally recognized. It became operational in 1995.

Once the Taliban government was established in Kabul, government in Turkmenistan maintained "de facto diplomatic relations" (Bleuer & Kazemi, 2014, p. 51) with Taliban, although Ashgabat never recognized officially the government of Taliban, but did have business relations. As meeting was held in Almaty in 1996, regarding the takeover of Kabul by Taliban, Turkmenistan did not participate and the reason mentioned was the neutrality policy. Further Turkmenistan government, in 90s, believes that there is no security threat from Afghanistan. The president Saparmurat Niyazov said

"Being a neutral state, Turkmenistan does not intend to take part in such meetings. All that is happening in Afghanistan is the internal affair of the Afghan people while we do not see the Taliban movement as a threat to our security. For more than a year now, a part of the Turkmen-Afghan border has been controlled by representatives of this movement and this section of the border is by far the quietest today" (From Niyazov's statement on Turkmenistan television, 6 Oct. 1996).



Source: Turkmenistan- Permanent Neutrality <http://www.ciee.org/highschool/host-schools/lessonplans/lessonplan-turkmenistan.html>

Two reasons are clear for such relations. Firstly TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) gas pipe line route which required approval of Taliban government to allow the transit route for TAPI on their territory and secondly to restrain Taliban from carrying any destabilizing activities inside Turkmenistan. In 1999 Turkmenistan entered into an economic agreement with Taliban – first ever agreement with a foreign country by the Taliban government. Turkmenistan did not provide any asylum or refugee camps on its soil for ethnic Turkmens of Afghanistan.

In war against terrorism Turkmenistan did not allow its territory to be used by the NATO forces, North Distribution Network or for the US forces. However it permitted the use of its territory only for the purpose of humanitarian assistance. On the other hand it is said that all this is for public to believe. Behind the scene Turkmenistan since 2002 did provide its territory to be used by US for combat purposes like US military over flights, refueling for US fighter planes (Bleuer and Kazemi, 2014, p. 51). Turkmenistan was involved in multilateral peace initiatives for Afghanistan in 90s and mediated between different warlords of Afghanistan. In 2010 the president of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow gave peace plan for Afghanistan, which proposed “economic co-operation, training for Afghan bureaucrats, improving transport connections and increasing energy exports” (Ibid., p. 52). In 2014 again Turkmenistan showed its willingness to host Inter - Afghan National dialogue under the auspices of UN. However, it is said that there seems to be an understanding between Kabul and Ashgabat that Turkmenistan will not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and in return Afghanistan has to check any security threats to the border areas of Turkmenistan (Startseva, 2013).

Turkmenistan Afghanistan border is long, open, plain, solid and porous. Its easy to cross. Border guards lack technical facilities. “In short, when ISAF leaves Afghanistan, the burden of border security will weigh more heavily on Turkmenistan, whose operational tradition and capability to handle it are both weak” (Ibid., p. 22). Such ground realities make it easier for the drug trafficker to cross the border and armed opposition groups to reorganized them and start their activities. Cross border terrorism, illegal migration and refugees can be the main issues for Turkmenistan. Main concern for Turkmenistan is drugs smuggling, as Turkmenistan provide route to Iranian, Turkish, Russian and European markets. In 2010 104kg of heroin and 757 kg of opium was confiscated at Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border. 3-5 percent of drugs flow into Turkmenistan from Afghanistan (Ibid). The drug trafficking via Turkmenistan seems to be increased:

- 1: Turkmenistan (only CAR) share border with Iran, which is also a drug route.
- 2: Tajikistan and Uzbekistan strictly guard their borders, while the Turkmenistan and Afghanistan border areas is not under strict surveillance.
- 3: There is lack of cooperative measures between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to deal drug smuggling.
- 4: Increase of drug addictions in Turkmenistan.

- 5: Abundant and cheap availability of drugs in Turkmenistan.
- 6: Corruption facilitates drug trafficking (Ibid., pp. 22-24).

Government in Ashgabat in 2009 has taken measures to control the drug trafficking to Turkmenistan. The national drug control legislation was amended, and more men power has been deputed on Afghan Turkmenistan border to check the illicit flow of drugs; State Counter Narcotics services was established which was renamed as the State Services of the Turkmenistan for the Protection and security of a Health Society and Law for the treatment of drug addicts has been implemented. It signed bilateral agreement with Iran to share information, joint activities and cooperation on drug trafficking. Drug treatment clinics and Psychological and Narcological hospitals are working in Turkmenistan where free treatment is provided to the drug patients. It also initiated Sports against Drugs program in collaboration with US. Government also started a public drug abuse awareness campaign. Although Ashgabat government is trying to control drug trafficking but the corruption is considered a main hindrance for the success of such initiatives.

“Like most other Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan suffers from corruption, which hinders its progress to combat drug trafficking and loses the trust of the general public. Law officials receive low monthly salaries and carry broad general powers, which fosters bribe solicitation, and the acceptance of payments at border crossings to allow smuggling to occur. Furthermore, some senior government officials are reported to be directly linked to the illicit drug trade. For example, the chairman of the state-controlled bank “Dayhan” was involved in the sale, as well as the consumption, of opium. High ranking military and Border Service officers are also often reprimanded for cross-border smuggling”(US DOS INL, INCSR, Turkmenistan, p 547).

The main concern for Turkmenistan is the status of its neutrality policy. The policy of neutrality go for non interference in the internal affairs of other states, not to use force in solving interstate conflicts and military and political alliances to be avoided. So far Turkmenistan always tried to maintain its neutral status. However, it is predicted that in post 2014 Afghanistan, keeping in view the border conditions between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, Turkmenistan is looking for any cooperation to secure its border and citizens. In this regard the president of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan meet in Ashgabat to discuss the vulnerability of borders (Startseva, 2013., p. 25). Furthermore Turkmenistan is in a secret meeting met Afghanistan clerics in February 2014. There are reports that Taliban are taking control of the border areas near Turkmenistan Afghanistan border like Jowzjan and Faryab provinces.

The threat of religious extremism is not so much vibrant in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan constitution provides freedom of religion but government strictly controls extremists’ elements in the country. Swati Parashar mentioned following reasons for non existence of religious extremism in Turkmenistan.

- 1: Turkmenistan’s tribal and ethnic loyalties are stronger.
- 2: Turkmenistan government strongly and affectively controls religious activities.
- 3: There is synthesis between tribal and religious identities.
- 4: Policy of neutrality saved Turkmenistan from threats of religious extremists organizations in Turkmenistan.
- 5: Afghan Turkmenistan border area is mostly desert which no one dare to cross.
- 6: The forced conscription in law in Turkmenistan saved the unemployed youth from becoming a member of religious or terrorists organizations. (Parashar, 2004)

However in 2013 Taliban controlled the area near Turkmenistan border and Afghan Turkmen joined the Taliban forces. This is alarming for government in Turkmenistan, which is trying to find a way to keep its neutral status and also to combat threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“For the near future, the capacity of Turkmenistan’s security and military forces will remain relatively poor. Furthermore, as the country’s neutrality policy has left it outside of regional security groupings like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Turkmenistan’s potential political and security problems remain outside formal assistance from these organizations or its members, leaving Ashgabat to face internal or external threats alone. In such a case, Turkmenistan might find

that its explicit neutrality and lack of defense agreements with other countries is a diplomatic liability rather than an asset”(Daly ,2014).

Tajikistan and Afghanistan



Source: http://www.maps.com/ref_map.aspx?pid=12392

Tajikistan southern border is shared by Afghanistan, its 749 miles long, which is adjacent to Balkh, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar. The border between two countries is largely mountainous and thus not properly demarcated. Second, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is Tajiks which are of 27% of the total population (Tajikistan and Afghanistan), concentrated in Northeast, Center and west of Afghanistan. Both countries established diplomatic relations in 1992. However, relations between the two countries have historical linkages.

Many scholars believed that emergence of fundamentalism and eruption of civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) is the extension of what is happening in Afghanistan. There are ethnic, cultural and religious continuity between the population of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Dushanbe is just 100 Km from the Afghanistan. Most of the present settlers in northern Afghanistan had left Central Asia as refugees during anti-Soviet Basmachi Movement (1917-1927) and the Collectivization campaigns by Stalin. Leaders of Basmachi in Afghanistan launched guerilla operations against communist forces from north of Afghanistan. Thus, their relations cannot be explained through state controlled approach. They have multiple channels.

For Tajikistan the threat of religious extremism is more evident than compare to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. From mid 80s the link was established between religious parties in Afghanistan and southern and central Tajikistan. Dr Ahmed Hassan Dani (late) told that it was during Afghan jihad that Islam was politicized and fundamentalist movement in Tajikistan started. The reason he gave was that Tajiks of Afghanistan are more religious than Uzbeks and had the greater potential and capacity to exert Islamist influence on their ethnic cousins across the border. The fundamentalist parties of Afghanistan keep a strong presence along the Afghan-Tajik boarder. The Afghan Mujahideen established contacts with the Tajiks and started crossing the border into Tajikistan. They used to smuggle anti-Soviet Islamic and fundamentalist ideology literature into Soviet Central Asia via Afghanistan. The Mujahideen have been the source of inspiration to the Tajiks (Hetmanek, 1993). Ahmad Shah Masood and Burhanuddin Rabbani, both Tajiks and belonging to Jama-i-Islami factions, supported Tajikistan opposition parties and opposition from Kurgan, Tyube, Dushanbe and Gorno-Badakhistan crossed regularly into Afghanistan to secure arms, training and safe heaven (Warikoo,1996). Tajikistan opposition parties publically appealed Afghanistan for help. This created panic among the CIS, Russia and Uzbekistan and situation on the Tajik-Afghan border became tense.

Due to Tajikistan civil war, refugees poured in Afghanistan. These were mostly the opposition supporters who fled to northern of Afghanistan. These refugees lived in three distinct areas of or around the city of Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh province, Tashqurghan and in the province of Kunduz borders directly on Kurgan Tyube (Rubin, 1993/94) Afghan Mujahideen leaders provided training to Tajik extremists (Warikoo, 1996).

Tajik government in exile in Taloqau, Afghanistan, was set up by the Tajik opposition groups included of IRP, DPT and Lal-e-Badakhshan. Voice of Free Tajikistan, a new radio-station had been also working in Afghanistan, (Ibid) which propagated the opposition propaganda and Jihad. Not only that the Tajik opposition were radicalized but also they received military and political support from the difference forces in Afghanistan. The main Afghan Lords Ahmed Shah Masood, Burhanuddin Rabbani the Tajik, Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek and Hikmat Yar, the Pashtun not only shared the refugees among themselves but also provided military and diplomatic helps to their ethnic brethren across the border. Gulbaddin Hekmatyar's, (he is from a town near Afghan-Tajik border), party Hezb-i-Islami supplied weapons to pro-Islamic forces and trained the Tajik fighters in Kunduz (Bird,1993/94) while Masood's Supervisory Council of the North (SCN) provided training facilities to the pro-Islamic forces in Tajikistan. These forces used to wear the uniforms of Masood's SCN. Burhanuddin Rabbani's, from Badakhshan, Jamiat-i-Islam-Yi-Afghanistan (JIA) also provided help to pro-Islamic forces. (Rubin, 1993-94)

However, it has been said that after 2001 political elites in Dushanbe didn't emphasize the common ethnic aspect between the two countries. Similarly negative and offensive views existed about each other. Afghanistan is considered as precarious, unsafe and backward country with extremism and fanaticism. Afghans are considered as dirty, savage and uncivilized by Tajiks of Tajikistan (Bleuer & Kazemi, 2014, p 27) and Afghans also share negative views about Tajiks (Ibid). However some American and Russian scholars are of the view that ethnicity do play its role in Afghanistan and Tajikistan relations (Ibid., p.29).

Keeping in mind the different dimensions of relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, it is recognized fact that security and stability in Afghanistan will have an effect on Tajikistan stability and security. Three types of concerns are highlighted by the Tajikistan experts, religious extremism, territorial integrity and drug trafficking. Majority of Tajiks believe that the main security threat to Tajikistan is from Afghanistan. Polls and surveys conducted showed that 43 percent Tajiks believe that insecurity in Afghanistan will have implications for Tajikistan and Central Asia. After Uzbekistan, Afghanistan is considered main security threat to Tajikistan (Ibid., p. 31). Tajikistan is more vulnerable to any threat from Afghanistan.

Tajik-Afghan border is mountainous and not demarcated; it is a soft target from where the religious extremists entered Tajikistan. One of the agenda of such movement is to spread their message and ideology. Thus Tajikistan security issues have multi dimensions. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is involved in Tajikistan, drug and human smugglers are also active, activities by left over commanders of Tajikistan civil war (1992-1997), presence of foreign terrorists in Gorno-Badakhshan and Rasht valley. However there are Afghans, illegally residing in border areas of Tajikistan and people also cross border to meet relatives, collect fire woods or pistachios and herbs.(Ibid., pp31-38)

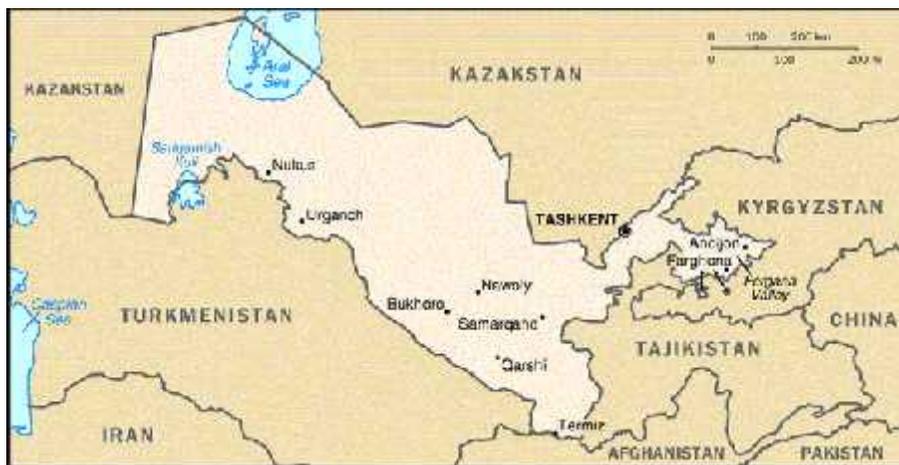
Tajiks are also worried about the fact that any insecure situation in Afghanistan will result in influx of refugees in Tajikistan. These refugees are called mixed refugees with disguised criminals, extremists, and weapon and drug smugglers. It is in 2011 at Almaty Declaration that four Central Asian states signed an agreement to cooperate and provide assistance for the migrants'. Thus, Almaty Process provides a regional platform to Central Asian states to discuss and cooperate (Kassenova , 2014). Tajik-Afghan border which was previously guarded by Russian Border Guards has been handed over to Tajik Border Services in 2005. This further makes the Tajikistan vulnerable to smuggling, narcotic, weapons and terrorism. Tajikistan not only has the threat of Islamic militancy by Taliban but also the threat of growing conflict of Shiit and sunnit version of Islam. Iran supported shiit and Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are in favor of Sunni version of Islam.(Olimov, 2013). In 2007 Supreme Court of Tajikistan banned terrorist organizations and different laws are passed which prohibits ethnic, communal and religious hatred and gave more power to State Committee for National Security. However, there are incidents where Taliban tried to cross Tajikistan border and attacked Tajik security forces. It is a believed that like Uzbekistan and other Central Asian repressive regimes, government in Dushanbe called its opposition crackdown as campaign against terrorists and Islamic militants. It is believed that in Tajikistan Taliban, Al qeda and IMU or other jihadi organizations can be regrouped. "Ruttig goes on to point out that much of the activity described as IMU/Taliban penetrations along Tajikistan's borders is actually related to smuggling rather than jihad" (Ruttig , 2013).

To counter the threat of increase drug trafficking, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has taken measures to control it. Drug Control Agency was established in 1999. In 2000 Tajikistan approved by governmental decision the Regulations Governing the Procedure for the Issue of Licenses to Engage in Licit Trade in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors. In 2002 Customs Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, which includes specific instructions to prevent the illicit transfer of narcotic and psychotropic Tajikistan has developed National Strategy for Combating Drug Trafficking for 2013–2020. It is also cooperating with International initiatives to control drug trafficking from Afghanistan. One such initiative in which Tajikistan participated is EU-funded Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP). Tajikistan and Afghanistan are also bilaterally cooperating to counter narcotics smuggling measures. Further Tajikistan is also taking measures domestically to keep a check over the drug trafficking. “ Agency for Drug Control under the president of Tajikistan had an impact on the narcotics situation by establishing a system for seizing drugs and for the agency to collaborate and communicate with its counterparts in Russia, Afghanistan and other countries and to do joint training” (Olimov, 2014, p. 41).

Like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan Tajikistan is also supporting international allies to “...advocating stronger international cooperation and the formation of a broad coalition of countries interested in building a peaceful and stable Afghanistan” (Ibid., p42). Tajikistan is imparting training to Afghanistan National Security Forces, BOMCA, OSCE and CADAP program. It also has Tajikistan president special representative on Afghanistan issues. (Ibid). It is on the request of Tajikistan that Afghanistan get the status of cooperation partner in OSCE. Tajikistan in order to fight the growing threat of terrorism, is advocating and cooperating the multilateral organizations like EU,CSTO, NATO, OSCE, SCO and UN, and other organizations. It also support the joint efforts by Tajikistan, Iran, Pakistan, Russia (ibid., p.43) Tajikistan has also started public awareness campaign about the drug abuses.

Tajikistan is also involved in economic, trade and infrastructure development of Afghanistan. Tajikistan export electricity to Afghanistan since 2008 and is working to develop northern regions of Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan and Afghanistan



Source: Uzbekistan. <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blcuzbekistan.htm>

Uzbekistan share 137 km long border with Afghanistan. Nine percent of population of Afghanistan is of Uzbek origin (Central Asia and Afghanistan: A Tumultuous History, 2013). Uzbekistan, after independence, established its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in October 1992. However relations between the two countries were not on good terms. Uzbek president Islam Karimov in 1992 accused the Afghan government for

supporting radicals Islamists elements in Central Asia and also exporting of radicalism in the region. Further Uzbekistan supported ethnic Uzbek General Rashid Dostum in Afghanistan (Uzbekistan supported Northern Alliance against Taliban) and in return it has been said that Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan get support from Afghanistan. The border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan was sealed and it's unlawful for any political organization in Uzbekistan to receive foreign funds. In 2001 government in Tashkent, with no results, showed its willingness to recognize the Taliban government in Afghanistan, in return for Afghanistan to stop its support to IMU (Uznews.net.2012)

Still Uzbekistan considered religious extremism as a major threat to Uzbekistan and Islam Karimov's regime and thus takes a strict stance against Taliban. However due to its growing economic projects and trade initiatives, North Distribution Network, infrastructure projects made Uzbekistan to soften its stance on Afghanistan. Now Uzbekistan sticks to the formula of Six plus Three, which included six neighboring countries of Afghanistan and role for Russia, US and NATO. It is emphasizing regional and non regional states cooperation. It seems as if Uzbekistan is pursuing bilateral diplomacy with Afghanistan and advocating multilateral diplomatic elucidation for Afghanistan post 2014 NATO exit.

Uzbekistan is considered as a country becoming a victim of opium and narcotic. The reasons mentioned are the well developed infrastructure in Uzbekistan and easy access to Russia and Europe. It is said that the drugs to Uzbekistan from Afghanistan are coming via Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and south of Uzbekistan that is bordering areas of Afghanistan. As Uzbekistan share shortest border with Afghanistan, it's possible for Uzbek authorities to guard the border. However it is strongly believed that terrorist organizations like IMU, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, are involved in drug trafficking in Uzbekistan. The drug money is used by these organizations to launch Jihad against the government in Tashkent. To counter drug trafficking, Uzbekistan entered in bilateral and multilateral agreements with countries like Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Italy, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Germany and many more, also Uzbekistan is utilizing regional and international organizations like SCO, CIS, CSTO, CACO, and NATO (Tuyluoglu).

The extremists or Jihaddi movements in Uzbekistan is IMU. The Uzbekistan Karimove regime still remember the nexus between Taliban and IMU and Taliban support to IMU Jihaddi activities and establishment of training camps of IMU in Afghanistan. IMU carried their activities in the neighboring states of Central Asian region. However with the passage of time the IMU leaders followed Bin Laden vision of "clash of civilizations against Jews and Christians, and thus went beyond the notion of a struggle solely against the Central Asian regimes". (Balci and Chaudet,2014). IMU continued their Jihad against the oppressive regimes in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian States. After 2001 campaign in Afghanistan, most of the IMU members joined either Al Qaeda, Taliban or TTP. Till 2009 IMU carried very limited activities and mostly remained in search of safe haven. IMU have some weaknesses which are:

- 1: IMU didn't have more than 1000 to 2000 active members. Also these are scattered in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asian states.
- 2: It's not possible for IMU to recruit followers from Uzbekistan, while sitting in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of their members are now from Afghanistan, which hardly feel any compulsion to fight against Karimove regime.
- 3: IMU with the passage of time loss its centralized holds over its member. Now it established its local cells in Afghanistan and Pakistan with members from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. It's not possible for IMU to just focus on Uzbekistan.
- 4: The ground realities also make it difficult for IMU to destabilize any government in Central Asia (Ibid).

It is predicted that IMU and other radical organizations are now concentrating on Middle Eastern front. However there emerges a new threat in Afghanistan when ISIS claimed the suicide attack in Jalalabad in Afghanistan on 18th April 2015. This is foreseen as ISIS has entered Afghanistan and has the capability to joint

hand with all the banned radical organizations of Central Asia and launch a new wave of terrorism in Central Asia. One thing is sure; the radical groups are finding it difficult to get support of public of the region.

Conclusion

Three neighboring Central Asian countries faces the problem of border security, drug trafficking, refugees influx and religious extremism and terrorism. While their level of concern to theses emerging state of affairs is also not the same.

Turkmenistan feels itself somewhat relaxed due to its policy of neutrality and is not so much concerned about any security threats from its border with Afghanistan. Turkmenistan is also confident regarding non emergent of any threat of Jihadi organization on its territory. It keeps a strict check over the drug trafficking. Turkmenistan is looking for any venue to exploit its natural resources/ energy resources and Afghanistan is at a top of list of priority for any government in Ashgabat. For Uzbekistan the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan is tightly controlled and is keeping an eye on any signs of reorganization of IMU on its soil. Further there is more possibility that the Uzbek radicals join the Middle East front rather than coming back to Uzbekistan where the strict laws existed. Tajikistan is much concern about the Islamic opposition, not to join hand again with the extremist elements of Afghanistan. For this government in Dushanbe has taken strict measures against extremist organizations. While drug trafficking is still a major issue for Tajikistan.

The three Central Asian neighboring countries of Afghanistan have few following commonalities:

- 1: All the three states consider Afghanistan as a main source of security threat to CARs.
- 2: There are repressive regimes in all the CARs. This can be a fertile ground for the extremist elements to rise again. None of the government of Ashgabat, Tashkent and Dushanbe admits the domestic situation (dealing with opposition, repressive laws, poverty, and corruption) as the source of security threats and recruitment factory for the Jihadi organizations.
- 3: All the three states are facing problems to strictly control their porous Afghans border.
- 4: High level corruption in all three states of Central Asia facilitated the smugglers and created problems for anti narcotic efforts of the states.
- 5: Refugees problem is not much acute for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as the refugees from Afghanistan prefer Pakistan and Iran from where there are more facilities for refugees then in the CARs.
- 6: Regional rivalries and trust deficit among the political leaders is the main obstacle in pursuing any regional initiatives to combat collectively post 2014 threats from Afghanistan.
- 7: Governments of CARs prefer to enter into infra structure, trade and energy related projects with Afghanistan.
- 8: Ethnic affiliation, as used to be in the past, is not going to play major role in CARs relations with Afghanistan.

Presently the governments in Tashkent, Ashgabat and Dushanbe are well aware with the threats of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. That's why strict measures have been taken by all the Central Asian States to combat any kind of spillover effects from Afghanistan. Still there are much to be done and the main vulnerable area which three states are still unable to strictly monitor is the border area between Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

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Received: Sep 22nd, 2015
Revisions Received: March 22nd, 2016

An Appraisal of Pak-Afghan Role in Resolution of Afghanistan's Conflict

Jehanzeb Khalil

Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

Saima Perveen

Women University Swabi

Manzoor Ahmad

Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

Babar Shah

University of Peshawar

Pakistan is immediate neighbor of Afghanistan hence any turmoil in Afghanistan has direct fall out for Pakistan in general and for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in particular. Pakistan has been caught in security quagmire. The best possible solution of Afghanistan imbroglio is negotiation because the military option did not work so far. But for reconciliation the most important requirement is the exit of foreign troops and to bring chaos actors on the same age. Ethnic strife should be overcome because it has undermined both political and military aspects hence intra-Afghan dialogue should be arranged for integration of various scattered factions. Furthermore, Afghanistan's government should adopt neutral policies towards its neighboring countries. In post withdrawal the regional configuration will give edge to Pakistan by Gwadar port, which will be alluring to both Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). We should adopt twin track strategy in Afghanistan's backdrop. In order to escape the post withdrawal repercussions, Pakistan should establish state writ in FATA in order to clean its own house.

Key Words: Pakistan-Afghanistan, cooperation, peace, reconciliation, militancy, Taliban.

Pakistan's stability is directly connected to Afghanistan's stability. Afghanistan's turmoil has affected Pakistan security, economy and foreign policy and recently Pakistan's foreign policy is Afghan centric. Pakistan interests in Afghanistan have been converted to challenge for Pakistan foreign policy due to turmoil in Afghanistan. Pakistan security has been deteriorated from the last three and half decades. On Afghan soil we have faced challenges and costs as we could an alternative transit path for Central Asia trade to the globe for transfer of fossil fuel to the South Asia so as to counter Russia dominancy. (Sheikh, 2012) Afghanistan turmoil will keep Pakistan with myriad security threats in shape of restive FATA, illegal infiltration, consequently refugees deluge, spike in drugs trafficking, uprising in Pashtun nationalism which will ignite Afghanistan imbroglio and both Pakistan and India will try to steal the march on each other (Report, 2011, p. 24). The one and half decade's long US engagement has deteriorated Afghanistan security and political set up to the utmost. So there arise questions that how both states can cooperate for resolution of the conflict which has perturbed the whole region? What can be Pakistan role in rebuilding Afghanistan? How Pakistan will secure her own national interests in Afghanistan's backdrop?

Following grounds are the only way leading to the solution of Afghanistan's conflict:

Pak- Afghan relations

Peaceful Afghanistan under Afghan led initiatives.

There should be Afghan led and owned set up for the resolution of Afghanistan's imbroglio. High Peace council by Hamid Karzai (Ex-president of Afghanistan) was important in this aspect. According to Brig. Asad Munir, Afghan Loya Jirga is indispensable for provision of peace in Afghanistan. (Munir, 2013) After the US withdrawal the turmoil in Afghanistan would get solution by cooperation of UAE, Turkey, UK, US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. All-inclusive setting is required for national unity because reconciliation will be in doldrums if any of group to be excluded (Yusaf and Zaidi, 2011). The prime most is the peace dialogues with Taliban because without it there can be no any resolution of the conflict.

Undoubtedly, the gruesome situation of Afghanistan has horrendous consequences for the region. The foremost requirement is the exit of foreign troops, and then on national level the chaos actors should be brought on the same page. The realistic solution of Afghanistan problem is to induce these elements for becoming part and parcel of government within constitutional measures. Furthermore, foreign policy towards neighboring countries should be balanced and other essential policy options should be effective administration and diplomatic relations with economically strong countries. As the political and military aspects have always been affected by ethnic tussle hence there should be dialogue process among Afghans as to ensure integration of Tajik, Hazaras, Uzbeks, anti-Taliban or at least moderate Pakhtun to be abided by power sharing set up (Sheikh, 2012).

After the US withdrawal the major power holders will be Taliban representing the Pashtun majority, Northern Alliance and Gulbadin Hikmatyar's faction to some extent. Outside powers who would like to influence the situation in Afghanistan may be Russia with Central Asian republic, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arab and possibly Turkey (Shah, 2013).

Role of Pakistan in rebuilding Afghanistan

Pakistan support Afghanistan led effort for peace because Pakistan's interests can be served inside Afghanistan only if there is stability in Afghanistan and to secure her from hostile two frontline borders. Pashtun must be given due representation in Afghan political set up. Pakistan security has been affected by turmoil in Afghanistan than Saudi Arabia, China, Iran and US. For Pakistan, Afghanistan is the most important country because Pakistan has been adversely affected by Afghanistan's turmoil more than, Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, US, EU. According to Pakistan former foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan has always ensured their efforts for peace in Afghanistan because Pakistan is part of solution not part of problem (Khar, 2013).

Pakistan has absorbed large number of Afghans and has facilitated them with all amenities of life. Moreover, Pakistan has issued comparatively greater number of visas to Afghans and permitted all ethnic groups to live inside Pakistan. At some time there were 5.5 million Afghan refugees resided in Pakistan. Both should work bilaterally for trade, transit, agriculture, industry, energy, water, health and culture. Both should bury the hatchet and to utilize present for peaceful setup in both countries (Masood, N.D.).

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 (Pervez, 2013).

The turmoil in Afghanistan has mutilated Pakistan's security but the nightmarish for Pakistan is the enhanced leverage of India in Afghanistan now. The US has brought India to the Afghanistan front as strategic ally. Pakistan is at dismay by this turn of situation because despite entire export and import of Afghanistan through Karachi port, she is tilted towards India.

However, in the post withdrawal scenario three main factors will determine future Pak-Afghan relations; firstly, the advent of China as major factor 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 hard 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.

Safe guard Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan

Pakistan should have broader interests in Afghanistan comprising not only security but also energy, bilateral trade and reconstruction projects. These aspects of relations will be served fully if Gwadar port get developed which is lynchpin in connecting the whole region. 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 get direct access to CARs and China. The same very purpose will be served by Karakoram highway which is upgraded accordingly. Pakistan will be able to reach European markets in exchange for the trade opportunities it will provide to them for CARs.

The Indians have high stakes in Afghanistan. Her leverage is apprehensive for Pakistan's interests and influence in Afghanistan. Besides creating a base for themselves for trade and commerce with CARs they benefit strategically vis a vis Pakistan by keeping it engaged on its western borders to divert forces from Pakistan's eastern front and to reduce pressures on Kashmir and adjoining areas. The establishment of a large number of consulates in Afghanistan is otherwise not justified. Simultaneously, 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.

Access to CARs through safe and peaceful Afghanistan

Pakistan has no common border with CARs hence it depends on a stable Afghanistan for having a safe transit route. Tajikistan is most significant for Pakistan from strategic point of view. Wakhan which is an area in far northeastern Afghanistan a vital linkage of Afghanistan with China, can be an easy connection between Pakistan and Tajikistan. But Afghanistan's imbroglio has hampered trade through this area and economic interests have also been in doldrums. Our relations with the Central Asia Republics (CARs) are in dire straits due to the same reason. Secondly, because of the increasing influence and activities of Taliban and various Jehadi groups operating in Pakistan, the governments of these countries are wary of closer links with Pakistan. Unless the war on terror terminates in Afghanistan and Pakistan there is little hope of promotion of active bilateral relationship with these nations.

Afghanistan can serve as route of oil and gas to Central Asia and Iran but this beneficial aspect can be enjoyed by Pakistan and CARs only through Afghanistan stability. Pakistan is crucial due to the presence of 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 (Mir, 2013).

There is need of turning hurdles into opportunities. Pakistan must welcome all official visits of diplomats and think tanks to each country so that economic ties could be ensured. All the developmental aspects as of infrastructure, professional services and insurance groups must be flourished. We should independently have good relations with CARs.

Mitigating effects on internal situation of Pakistan

Peace in Pakistan is connected with peace in Afghanistan and the turmoil inside Afghanistan will tremble security of Pakistan. In adverse situation the consequences will be more infiltration of Afghan Taliban and greater number of refugees to Pakistan. The culprits will commit in Pakistan and then will harbor in Afghanistan (Yusafzai, 2013).

The viable policy against such attacks can be military strategy and border management. In the exit strategy scenario, Pakistan is indispensable for the passing of US/NATO supplies. In case of any border tussle and attack, Pakistan should give diplomatic support at international level to China, Turkey and Iran.

Be it Taliban, be it a state, be it Uzbek, be it a group of Turks, be it group of Taliban, none to be allowed for challenging the writ of state. For the very purpose the APC is stepping stone to held peace talks with Taliban. But the unresponsiveness of other side is dismay because Taliban leaders are continuously perpetrating against the state. (Khar, 2013) To my mind the biggest folly, the biggest challenge for the state is to allow non-state actors entry and their survival within the state (Khar, 2013). This has raised countless questions from our immediate neighbours, extended neighbors and from all over the world, besides it has deteriorated internal security, peace, law and order situation and above all Pakistan equanimity has been destroyed. Pakistan can no longer afford such horrendous challenge to persist any more so peace talks is the only viable policy option in this regard.

Government has adopted policy for FATA settlement and various developmental works are in process. However, government should take numerous measures to neutralize forces creating likely hurdles so that insurgency could be curtailed. (Noorani, 2013) Furthermore, people of FATA should decide whether they want to become an independent province, to merge with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or remain with same status. (Sherpao, 2013) There can be positive change in FATA when Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US will on the same page and India stops her covert activities in FATA and KPK (Aziz, 2013).

Pakistan facilitation for talks with Taliban

Pakistani official since long have proposed that the only viable policy for Afghanistan peace can be negotiation with Taliban but the US has preferred military option instead of political settlement. The US has always hesitated to undergone negotiation with Taliban until 2010. In spite European allies of the US have tried to convince her that military is not the ultimate solution of Afghanistan turmoil. After 2010 the US has keenly arranged and participated in negotiation with Taliban of both Kandahar and Haqqani groups. Peace process between Taliban and US can only be carried out by trilateral efforts of the US, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan can play a pivotal role in bringing the Afghanistan problem to the table talk. Pakistan has no full control, however to some extent she can influence Taliban for peace talks (Amin, 2013). Negotiation with Taliban is an intricate issue and needs meticulous planning based on a genius report. It is only Pakistan which can bring USA and Kabul government into conclusive talks with Taliban. There should be a final settlement for peace in Afghanistan including all these parties (Mir, 2013).

In past, numbers of negotiation sessions have taken place. Pakistan, being a neighboring country and key ally in war on terror can make peace process between the US and Taliban in order to restore stability in Afghanistan. But her role can be only of mediator not of dictator because Pakistan have no tremendous influence over Taliban. Pakistan only can act as negotiator because she can convince them, but ultimately the process will take a turn as per Taliban own will. (Yusafzai, 2009) Albeit Qatar talks have been proved as futile effort but in future it will be resumed (Yusafzai, 2013).

Pakistan and Afghanistan's leaders have arranged myriad summit meetings since 2002 along with sidelined discussion on peace process in international conferences and telephonic conversation as well. But all these efforts have been revolved around only on that surface issue which has hampered any feasible solution of this turmoil. The matter of fact is that Afghanistan is under the US siege and Kabul deems this presence of NATO/ISAF boots on its soil as main source of exoneration from militant's brutalities. All the key power holders of Afghan government are in favor of "status quo" because their perks and privileges would be vanished away

with drawdown (Mohmand, 2013). The negotiation are troubling to Northerners as well because of acrimonious experience of the recent past Taliban regime of 90s decade. It will averted their military and economic powers. Northern would better fought rather than to surrender their powers. People are also worried of Taliban due of decade long callous ruling of Taliban, whereby they were berefted of so many basic amenities. These apprehensions were worsen by murder of Tajik northerner professor Burhanuddin Rabbani in september 2010 by a person with suicide bomb hidden in turbine who succeeded in reaching to him. This tragic incident stalled the peace process because Burhanuddin Rabbani was of paramount value in peace process and the efforts of High Peace Council were came to the naught. Albeit Pakistan was alleged for this incident but that was a baseless accusation, the reality is that Taliban are indifferent in setting negotiation. It is reflection of miscreant's presence in Afghanistan who do not like any conflict resolution and power distribution (Brown, 2012).

Peace talks have preconditions that Taliban will segregate from Al-Qaeda. There lies a question that whether Taliban will concede to the demands of the world and would ready to set off from Al-Qaeda? Kandahari faction may better have come to the fact that their association with Al-Qaeda has caused them power negation but they are indebted to the movement of global jihad. But recently Mullah Omar is with somewhat different standpoint as apparent from his eid's day message that we have learnt from past experiences, moreover he was advocating female education. It also seems that if they come to the ruling then they will not repeat the mistake to harbor the non-state actors on the costs of their country and people.

The Doha round of talks between the US and Taliban has been proved futile as the US is unwilling to entertain Taliban demands regarding Afghan prisoners release and about black list. This black list has also been refuted by UNSC. Karzai is between devil and deep sea as on one hand he is facing subject's resentment due to coalition forces presence. He also cannot go adverse to ruling class because their political, economic and other interests lied in coalition presence.

Peace talks between Taliban and US in Qatar has been set to the winds as before formal start Karzai stated that no negotiation can be carried out unless and until US presents no clear cut policy option and mainly US security presence beyond 2014 is matter of tussle with the US. According to Karzai the Taliban's flag and the banner of Islamic Emirate was ample manifestation of the US unclear policy for peace talks. Until and unless the US remains unclear, there can be no headway in this regard.

If Pakistan role is contemplated then it is effective on bilateral basis about Pakistan Afghanistan peace process. High peace council lead by Salahuddin Rabbani in December, 2012 has been succeeded in its aims and objectives. Pakistan released some of Afghan detainee so as to resume peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan, who always remained hostile to each others. This accomplishment of reconciliation in the guise of Peace council has been greeted. Mulla Baradar has also been set free because he has remained second in command of Taliban and can be effective in this regard. However, till this time he is in custody of Pakistan and in recent visit of prime minister Nawaz Sharif to United Kingdom with Karzai, Afghanistan has been offered to visit Pakistan in order to have meeting with Mullah Baradar. Before his capture in Karachi, in 2010, he was tried by president Karzai for the sake of negotiation. According to Taliban tradition detainee have no value for their movements and respective leaders whatsoever if they have been set free (Mohmand, 2012). So in this background there is no positive change. But in case of High command as Baradar, the Afghan Taliban will pondered over the matter.

Pakistan has advised the Afghan president to consult Taliban before proceeding for reconciliation in order to strengthen his stand represented by major ethnic groups. Albeit Karzai has taken this advise as procrastination from Pakistan by asking intra-Afghan consensus. But the reality is that hitherto there is no consensus among factions, being stated by Wali Masood the brother of late Ahmad Shah Masood, representative of Tajik (Panjshir) (Sheih, 2013). Karzai is getting blunt in case of West perhaps want to wash away his image of puppet as his tenure is going to be completed. He is unable to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and the former are with clear cut statements that now direct negotiation would be carried out between US and Taliban (Lodhi, 2012). Peace process can be sustained with certainly all factions, Taliban as well as anti-Taliban and the "peace roadmap for 2015" signed by High Peace Council when they visited Islamabad, conferred

Pakistan to play key role in reconciliation process. Whatever Pakistan is doing is in compliance of that responsibility not as interference.

The negotiation can lead to feasible drawdown strategy only if these four grounds be fulfilled such as a cease fire, if all or most American and allied forces exit, the emergence of coalition government or allocation of territories among local Afghan stake holders and most crucial is enforcement mechanism. As Afghan power holders, warlords had faced four decades of turmoil, civil war and brutal reigns so there is faint chance of their submission to agreement. Taliban will abhor cease fire and can be broker so this will lead to chaos.

According to a report published by the *Heritage Foundation*, “premature talks with the Taliban leadership could easily backfire (since) insurgents are more likely to negotiate if they fear defeat on the battlefield” (Khan, p.1).

To sum it, the AfPak region (APR) is an enchanting soil for all local and regional allies. Afghanistan with not only all Taliban types as Al-Qaeda, TTP, Afghan Taliban and other associates but with regional stakeholders as Pakistan, China, Russia and Iran respectively are catering for their own interests’ accomplishment. Allies are covetous to fill the power vacuum on the eve of drawdown and Taliban are contemplating for Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as harbinger of Universal Khilafat. Peace talks and any sort of negotiation can be fruitful if it would carried out on unanimity basis of all inclusive of the US and Taliban factions. Both sides have to concede with conditions otherwise nothing can be achieved of all this process in case of stubbornness.

Pakistan role is paramount in this regard and the recent government of Nawaz Sharif wants to resume relations with Afghan Taliban also for settlement of Afghanistan’s turmoil. If Taliban would come to the negotiation then it will make Kabul friendly to Pakistan (Report, 2013). The peace requirement for the US exit would be short term. Pakistan can use own influence through veteran warlords/Taliban.

The major change in Pakistan’s foreign policy has coincided with the Afghan transition leading to the formation of a new Pro- American leadership in Kabul. Washington believes that the US military presence in Afghanistan is now acceptable to Pakistan which is the key player among the neighboring countries. This has significantly improved its equation with the new leadership in Kabul. Pakistan has also adopted a new approach to take American help and crack down on terrorist groups threatening its national security from the tribal areas and from Afghan sanctuaries. The US – Pakistan relationship has vastly improved and they are able to harmonize their core interests- the Americans wanting to involve the Taliban in the peace process and the Pakistanis wanting to accommodate them in the power structure in Kabul politically and also rolling back India’s influence in Afghanistan (Khan, 2015).

The US relies largely on Pakistan to maintain stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan remains the key strategic and security player in the region due to its support of the Taliban and its natural Pashtun affiliation. The Northern Alliance is too small and India too weak to replace Pakistan (Hanif, 2015).

Pakistan has crucial role in initiating dialogue process. However there is contradictory set up as on one hand resistance is trying to be brought to negotiation while on the other hand the US is advised for delay in its exit. Despite the fact that resistance forces can agree for peace talks only when the timeline for withdrawal be made certain because the genesis of the Afghan problem is basically stretched back to occupation by foreign forces. (Mohmand, 2015) In Afghanistan presence of foreign forces is main factor fueling insurgency hence Pakistan would weave feasible policy for peace talk once this reality is acknowledged. Pakistan should convince the US for following an exit strategy with definite timeframe because force talk can never work in Afghanistan.

Talk with Afghan Taliban has been taken at exigency due to various reasons as firstly the coming of Dr. Ashraf Ghani into power who is different from Karzai to greater extent, secondly due to enhanced attack on NATO forces by insurgent and thirdly by desertion from Afghan army which is undermining the army morale. Afghan president is determined for taking Pakistan on board in order to foster the process of peace, China is also

included in Murree peace talk as it is also perturbed with rising insurgency in Xinjiang region, securing its economic interests in Afghanistan to countering the US policy of China containment by having access to its regional neighbors.

Conclusion

The only viable solution of Afghanistan's conflict is peaceful Afghanistan under Afghan led initiative. Pakistan will support this peace process because Pakistan is part of solution not problem. Furthermore, Pakistan can play the role of facilitator in reconciliation and not a dictator. Stable Afghanistan will safeguard Pakistan's interests by building economic and security ties. An access to Central Asian Republics (CARs) will be possible then. The internal security of Pakistan is trembled by infiltration from Afghanistan. So the cubing of militancy must be taken at exigency.

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Received: April 20th, 2015
 Revisions Received: March 9th, 2016

Pak-China Convergence of Interests in Afghanistan: Policy Options for Post NATO Drawdown

Saima Perveen

Women University Swabi

Jehanzeb Khalil

Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

Chairman CM Inspection Committee KPK

Pakistan and China have convergence of interests in the regional configuration whereby strategic and economic interests have connected both to inevitable cooperation. As far as Chinese goals are contemplated then it stretched to the pursuit of Xinjiang's security, having had development of greater economic links as investment in natural resources and the most important is to counter the leverage of the US and India. As far as Pakistan and China's convergence of interests are contemplated then related questions arise that what are Chinese interests in Afghanistan and how it converge with that of Pakistan's? How much is Indian leverage threatening to both Pakistan and China? Both countries are cautious to serve their national interests. Hence the related are interests of Pakistan whereby Afghanistan is the ground which has imparted security implications for Pakistan and Indian influence is also nightmarish to Pakistan. Consequently both countries are grappling for national interests to be served in this backdrop. Western countries particularly US would like to contain China because it is an emerging super power. The US presence in Afghanistan, strengthening of their positions in China-Japan sea and building up of India in the region are part of this policy. Pakistan has a strategic convergence of views on region and international issues and environments with China. We need to sign a bilateral security and strategic alliance pact. In spite of all hurdles signing of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will prove a great game changer in this region. After completion, project will be a shortest and major trade corridor amongst Africa, China and Middle East countries.

Key Words: Pakistan-China, strategic, economic, Xinjiang, security.

Pakistan and China are neighbors whose sphere of relations revolves around multiple factors. China has always assisted Pakistan in strategic and economic aspects. China is strategic partner of Pakistan since earliest history and at this hour of time the intricate regional security has made it indispensable for Pakistan to become closer to China. China is also carving her path towards Afghanistan as according to Michael Clarke in 'China's strategy in "Great Central Asia": Is Afghanistan the missing Link?' has raised questions about real goals of China and depicted that China is either covetous to surpass NATO efforts or her only concern is the security threat to its restive province of Xinjiang. As far as Pakistan and China's convergence of interests are contemplated then related questions arise that what are Chinese interests in Afghanistan and how it converge with that of Pakistan's? How much is Indian leverage threatening to both Pakistan and China?

Globalization process in the world has been mainly dependent on sea and land routes connecting different regions and countries. The Pakistan China Economic Corridor (PCEC) is an enormous economic project of approximately 2,600 km in length connecting Gwadar Port with Kashgar (Economic Corridor, 2014). After completion, project will be the shortest and major trade corridor amongst Africa, China and Middle East countries. This major investment in Pakistan will create a number of job opportunities, besides improving economic evolution and bringing in affluence especially in province of Balochistan. China has always been

dreaming to access Indian Ocean Region through Gwadar and which is the prime reason for investing in Gwadar for years. It is expected that new trends of regional cooperation in South Asian countries will surface after the development of this mega trade. Both countries are cautious to serve their 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). For Morgenthau, national interests are legitimization of foreign policy while for Kenneth Waltz national interests are survival of state in anarchical world. Anarchy determined the national interests, if not power based but atleast to serve material ends. The states internal preferences run up against challenges of anarchy, which reshaped national interests (Donnelly, 2000). Under anarchy, the primary national interest is security, to defend territorial integrity, protect citizen militarily, either by having adequate means to launch war or by cooperative defence and security arrangements.

Hence China and Pakistan are grappling for their security which is at stake due to non-state actors. They are enhancing trade and commercial agreements in order to cope with regional configuration whereby the US is preferring the Indian cause. China presence in Afghanistan is to serve her national interests, which encompassed mining contracts in Afghanistan, economic activities and to deter from strategic relations such weapons supply (Donnelly, 2000). China sought narrow than broader interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan because of rising extremism and terrorism in both countries. Due to these narrow interests, Chinese workers have security threats in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, wherein both minor states are grappling with the US egregious designs and cannot secure Chinese interests at the costs of the US (Small, 2010).

It is the utmost preference of China to take Pakistan and Afghanistan peace and stability head on in order to restore peaceful atmosphere in her Northwest province, where Chinese minority, the Uighur are of prime concern to Beijing. Because in that province, besides supply of weapons, militants and drugs, Pan ideological Pan-Islamic Jihadi groups are also exacerbating the security of Xianjiang and has activated pro-independence. China is with firm conviction that militants trained in FATA and Afghanistan East and Southern part are assaulting china (Small, 2009). These militants are associated with across the border Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan Islamic party (TIP) East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which are striving for an Islamic state in East Turkmenistan in Xianjiang (Batal, 2009). Keeping these threats in consideration, China is trying to develop economic relations with Afghanistan as in Afghanistan China metallurgical construction groups have contributed \$3.2 billion Aynak Copper Mine investment in Eastern province of Logar, holding as much as third of China Coal Reserves (Small, 2010). China has supplied substantial aid to Afghanistan as \$150 million in 2002 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002) and \$75 million from 2009 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009) Gwadar energy transshipment route if once get connected to expanded Karakoram Highway (KKH) then it can be utilized for naval purpose. China has started projects in Afghanistan, it has Ainak project and project on Amu Darya from where gas is to be exploited. (Ghazanfar, 2013) China is covetous for access to Central Asian Republics and especially Kazakhstan where china have 22% oil reserves (Ghazanfar, 2013). Recent Afghan president Ashraf Ghani's very first visit was to China in order to make new commitments. Hereby China promised 2 billion yuan (\$327 million) in aid during 2017, in furtherance to the 250 million dollars already contributed to Afghanistan since 2001.

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 arise from Central and South Asia. Pakistan will concede with it hence these threats are detrimental to both Pakistan and China's internal security.

By taking comparison of the US and China foreign policies it is evident that China has different strategy than that of the US. She knows better that Pakistan and Afghanistan's trained groups are hitting China and pose threat to China's security but the latter individually consult Pakistan's military and other Islamic parties to curb

these elements. Historically, China have contracted agreements with Taliban before 9/11 to deter militants and Uighur training on Afghanistan soil. China contemplated that the US objective in invading Afghanistan is not counterterrorism but is geopolitical because the US sought energy and mineral resources of the region and furthermore to counter China. As regarding the role of the US in Pakistan, China is desperately envisaging her curtailing leverage in trade aspects because the US and India would impede China's way either by weakening Baluchistan stronghold in Indian Ocean or by capturing Pakistan's nukes. In order to undermine India influence in South Asia, China is working on nuclear related programs with Pakistan, as Chashma III and IV plants are to be realized in coming time (Dyer, 2010). China is so cautious about her interests as when militancy in Swat and Buner was alarming, China was apprehensive that may it not stretch to the Karakuran Highway (KKH), due to this fear China disbursed economic and military aid to Pakistan's military to conclude this Operation successfully.

Glen Howard and Russell stated in January, 2012, The China Brief of institute of Jamestown that china is actively engaged in Wakhan strip which have so much strategic significance, in 2009 some infrastructure mobilization in that area has been undertaken. This infrastructure comprised 75 kilometers road which stretched up to 10 kilometer from Afghanistan-China border. Chinese ministry of defense has constructed this road which is so crucial for carrying military concerned equipment to frontiers guards of China. Moreover a depot has been built by China in order to ameliorate quality of food items for police (Ghazanfar, 2013).

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.

Indian influence in Afghanistan as Threat to Pakistan and China

India has envisaged Afghanistan pivotal significance in its foreign policy after 1990s at the demise of bipolar world structure. Both countries had instigated friendship treaty in 1950 with good pace of diplomatic terms. Her enhanced cordial relations with Afghanistan after 9/11 and special turn of relations have come to the forefront in October 2011 with signing of strategic partnership agreements. 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 have strategic ties with Afghanistan, therefore Afghanistan looks up to India for her development (Sherpa, 2013).

There are three reasons for India investment in Afghanistan; firstly India wants to come out of Pakistan centric approach and to stretch her sphere beyond Pakistan to Central Asia and South East Asia. Afghanistan is channel for India's trade with Central Asia which will boost Indian market. Secondly, India has regional security threats and considerations. There are Militants groups such as Lashkar e Tayyiba, HUJI who have training camps on Afghanistan soil, are detrimental to both Afghanistan and India interests. The basic motive behind India presence in Afghanistan is close observance of Pakistan activities, whereby Pakistan as hobson choice has flourished close ties with Haqqani Network, Lashkar e Tayyiba and other groups in order to counter India leverage in Afghanistan. Thirdly, emerging India domestic security threats are alarming, as extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan is creating troubles for India as well. These Islamic militants groups recruit Indian Muslims (Fair, 2010), with whom they work in cooperation and arouse their anti-Indian sentiments which are perilous to domestic security on long run. This lead to suppression of Muslim in India (Jeffrelot and Bharat, 2010). Resultantly, propensity to rampage have mutilated internal security.

Pakistan has doubted Indian consulates at Qandahar and Jalalabad that these are not for commercial purposes but are used by Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analytical Wing (RAW) for covert activities inside Pakistan. India has established its consulates on multi ethnic basis as two consulates in Pashtun region

(Jalalabad, Quetta) and two in non-Pashtun (Mazar-e-zharif and Herat). Her reconstruction projects in Pashtun belt are pertinent to erase the label of anti-Pashtun from her. India has same position and standpoint as that of Afghanistan on all violent activities and treatment of militants. Both are high handed about Pakistan and set her responsible for all these insurgency rather than to contemplate the real root cause (Shayeq, 2009). There is mistrust between Pakistan and India and both are accusing each other.

Pakistan alleged Indian complicity in flourishing militants networks in Afghanistan various areas especially near Gereshk, in southern Helmand province; at army basis of Qushila Jadid, in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul; northeast of Kabul; and at Kahak and Hassan Killies in western Nimruz province (Frederic, 2006). Mushahid Hussain, Former Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs stated in July 2006 that RAW had been involved in 600 Baluchi training inside Afghanistan and is igniting radicalism in Baluchistan. Moreover he emphasized on Afghanistan covert agency inter-linkage with RAW. (Frederic, 2006) 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 centers in Mazari Sharif which is very active in Baluchistan and had operated in Swat. 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). Pakistan military considered India role in Baluchistan's turmoil which needs to be taken at exigency (The Express Tribune, 2010). On the other hand there are reservations from India side that Lashkar e Tayyiba (LeT) is working in Kashmir in order to counter India there and considered it insidious. (Mujahid, 2010) There have been resentment that militant groups are sided with Pakistan military as expert on military affairs Ayesha Siddiqas has depicted that Jaish e Muhammad (JeM) has linkages with Pakistan army which is working against India. JeM is aboded in Karachi, where they have relaxed living. Mullah Abdul Baradar was captured from Karachi in 2010 (Siddiqi, 2010). So if these grounds are to be contemplated than it is evident that militants are easing military cause, however, there is no concrete justification in this regard.

Pakistan is apprehensive of the Indian leverage in Afghanistan and the same is Chinese anxiety as China has uneasy relations with India. In this power competition Washington had its own priorities for this region as part of its China-driven larger Asian agenda and its ongoing post-9/11 Central Asia-focused 'great game' in pursuit of its worldwide political and economic power. In 2005, it signed a long-term multi-billion dollar military pact with India to keep its military industry running. It also entered into a country-specific discriminatory nuclear deal with India introducing an ominous dimension to the already volatile and unstable security environment of the region. 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).

China and India are emerging economies who are looking forward for energy resources, safe line of communication, higher productivity of larger market to maintain this growth. From the Indian standpoint, China's 'String of Pearl' policy, strategic cooperation with Pakistan, infrastructure development in Tibet, an enhanced footprints in the Indian Ocean are grounds of uneasiness for India (Kumar, 2012). China sees India as potential competitor in the region. Pakistan's anti-India standpoint is in favor of China hence China has always assisted Pakistan and is proxy for Chinese intention towards India.

Policy Options for Pak-China on the Eve of NATO Drawdown

Chinese foreign policy from 1990s has had preferences for 'cooperation' and 'regionalism' in its diplomatic efforts especially while dealing with immediate neighbors (Clark, 2013). For long periods of the late 20th century power was concentrated either in the two superpowers, or, with the fall of the Soviet Union, in the US as the global hegemon. While military power is currently concentrated in a few, great or major powers (MOD UK, 2014), economic power is more widely spread across a range of state actors and global institutions, and in this realm, power is already multi-polar. Moreover, in near future 'Rise of Asia' is certain and undeniable, therefore, every great power wants to enhance its influence in Asia to gain advantage from its huge consumer markets and resources. Russia turn towards east is also intended towards the same objective.

The US and her allies may find it increasingly difficult to capitalize on softer elements of their power, as rising and emerging powers grow in influence and confidence. The distribution of global power will change by 2040 (Global Trends, 2014), shifting the focus away from the US and Europe towards Asia, resulting in a multi-polar world. As the global economic center of gravity shifts to Asia, USA is trying to increase its focus on the Asia-Pacific region through its 'Pivot to Asia Policy'. US is asserting its influence in Central Asian states by providing them financial assistance¹ and through New Silk Road" (NSR) initiative, proposed by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Clinton, 2011), with the overt aim to improve regional stability but covertly directed towards containing China and Russia. Gawadar and Karakoram corridor thereby, as a potential outlet to Arabian Sea, assume added significance for both Russia as well China. Enhancing Focus on Asia – Pacific Region through "Pivot to Asia" policy. In South Asia, US has shown significant tilt towards India, especially in the field of defence co-operation², primary with the purpose of limiting Russia's role in Asia by elevating India.

The enhanced engagement of US with the Pacific and Indian Ocean 'rim' countries including, Japan, South Korea and India are part of this policy. As US 'Pivot to Asia' policy materializes and a crisis escalates in Eastern Europe, possibility of China – Russia co-operation in security aspects will also increase. Sino-Russian co-operation in the economic domain has reached a new height with both countries signing a US\$ 400 billion 30 years agreement to ship 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Russian gas fields in Siberia to China (Forbes Magazine, 2014).

Afghanistan has strategic significance in Asia as it is crossroad hence the pivot of the US has Afghanistan an integral part in its strategy. Afghanistan is the ground, from where the US wants to contain China and to have access to CARs. Pakistan under the US pivot to Asia strategy is destined to be sidelined and occupied in domestic security issues. Hence the demand of the hour is sort of full cooperation on part of both Pakistan and China. Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan can be best served at post drawdown if it stretched beyond security to bilateral trade, energy and reconstruction projects (Jinnah Institute Report, 2010). Hence China cooperation is indispensable as the Gwader Port develops it will serve not only Afghanistan and China 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.

Keeping all these factors in mind Pakistan should be cordial with China in order to have balance in the region. 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). 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.

Pakistan and China have convergence on strategic vision. Western countries particularly US would like to contain China because it is an emerging super power. The US presence in Afghanistan, strengthening of their

¹ Between 2010 and 2012, US provided about \$520 million in security assistance to Central Asia.

² In order to top the lucrative Indian defence market, US has already demonstrated its willingness to offer "groundbreaking" defence tech to India, including helicopters and UAVs. Moreover, US is also hoping for joint development and production of items such as drones and missiles with India, as part of the much-hyped "Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)".

positions in China-Japan sea and building up of India in the region are part of this policy. Pakistan has a strategic convergence of views on region and international issues and environments with China. We need to sign a bilateral security and strategic alliance pact. The Chinese may be willing but have some complaints because some terrorist operating from Pakistan in their Sinkiang province. In spite of all this signing of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will prove a great game changer in this region.

The Pakistan China Economic Corridor is a massive project connecting Gwadar with Kashgar comprising of 2,600 km route, rail links, special economic zones, dry ports and other infrastructures which would change the fate of Pakistan. Keeping in view the current economic condition of Pakistan, project is only hope for the revival of economy in such a way to cover-up all the poor economic policies of past. Besides thousands of job opportunities will be created for youth of Pakistan.

Project is of immense importance for province of Balochistan which will be main beneficiary of the project and will boost economic activities in the province. Moreover, keeping in view the current economy of Pakistan, trade project has direct impact for restoration of weak economy, meeting of energy crunch and consolidation of the federal government writ. Pakistan can become regional hub of power if utilises this golden opportunity and does not indulge in discussions for feasibility of economic corridor and then subsequently closing the project.

However, the cost of the project will be in billions of dollars and will have to be paid by China alone due to poor economy of Pakistan. There is also the challenging geography and may be a biggest challenge more than even to fund the Project as road infrastructure will have to pass through rugged mountains and severe and extreme weather in Northern portion of Pakistan. Furthermore, the stability in Afghanistan is directly proportional to the success of the project. Hence, for the achievement of Pakistan and China economic and strategic interests peaceful and stable Afghanistan is indispensable.

Conclusion

Post NATO drawdown from Afghanistan will instigate a power struggle in the region where the China Pakistan convergence of interests will work. Both the countries will grapple to maximize their economic and strategic cooperation. Presently, economy decides the power of a country instead of military supremacy. Development of Economic corridor is a big hope for revival of poor economy of Pakistan and can act as back bone of the economy. Pakistan China Corridor is a good idea having multiple benefits for both the countries and even for entire South Asia but there are many practical problems in its way. China will be getting many benefits from this economic project which includes direct access to Indian Ocean with the aim of boosting its economy and military reach. The Indian leverage would be tried to lower down as it is alarming to both Pakistan and China. China will collaborate with Pakistan in security settlement.

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Received: May, 4th, 2015
Revisions Received: March, 2nd 2016

Regional Economic Integration after NATO Withdrawal and its Implications for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Zahid Anwar

University of Peshawar

The war against global terrorism brought NATO troops to Afghanistan. The people of Pakistan generally and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly suffered a lot since 2001. The very terms militancy, insurgency and terrorism in the region bring to mind the demise of more than sixty thousands citizens of Pakistan and more than hundred billions dollars economic losses. NATO has spent trillions of dollars in this war and now it has minimized its footprints in Afghanistan. A consensus is emerging among the regional actors that economic integration of the region will benefit all the states in South, Central, West and East Asia. The construction of ports, highways, railways, pipelines and other means of communications through Pakistan will integrate these regions. It will help in overcoming the economic difficulties of the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, who have suffered huge losses throughout the 21st century due to terrorism. After independence Central Asian states got world attention for its huge oil and gas reserves. Pakistan is the shortest route for transfer of Central Asian hydrocarbons to energy deficient South Asia. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a major route for transfer of aid to resistance forces in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. It remained vital channel for transfer of goods to NATO forces in Afghanistan since 2001. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa throughout remained in the line of fire during this period. Democracy is peoples` empowerment, while governance means the way those with power use that power. The study of governance helps to know who controls what, and for whom. Democratic system of government is restored in Pakistan in 2002 and since then three general elections were held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Different factors shaped the political vista in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the restoration of democracy and one major factor was political wax and wane in Afghanistan. Regional economic integration is underway in the aftermath of NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. How it will impact the governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the focus of this piece of research.

Key words: Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Terrorism, Afghanistan, NATO withdrawal

In the war against global terrorism the people of Pakistan faced much hardship and suffered in countless ways. In the world where only fittest survive Pakistan has struggled hard for existence. The very terms militancy, insurgency and terrorism in the region bring to mind the demise of more than eighty thousands citizens of Pakistan and more than hundred billions of US dollars economic losses. No section of the society of Pakistan was spared: teachers, students, voters, candidates, members of national and provincial assemblies, journalists, businessmen, policemen, soldiers etc became victims of this particular kind of violence. NATO has spent trillions of dollars in this war and now it has minimized its footprints in Afghanistan. NATO has declared victory and is leaving the Pak-Afghan region. Afghanistan is not self-sufficient and cannot survive without the support of International Community. Beijing's OBOR initiative and the U.S. plans to support a "New Silk Road" (NSR) by promoting energy and infrastructure ties between Central Asia and South Asia (especially Afghanistan and Pakistan) refer to the significance of South and Central Asian economic integration (Cooley, 2015). Regional

economic integration will help Afghanistan to strengthen its economy and the region will also benefit from the increased economic interaction.

Theoretical Frame

The issue of regional economic integration is analyzed in the context of John Burton Basic Human Needs Model. John Burton purports that to resolve conflicts it is imperative to identify needs that are threatened and restructure relationship in a way that needs of all individuals and groups are accommodated.

In this paper, I argue that NATO is withdrawing from Afghanistan without restoring complete political calm, this shift in power struggle in Afghanistan may galvanize political violence in the country which will also affect the neighboring countries of Afghanistan. To cope with that situation there is need to explore alternatives; one such workable option is to adopt measures to strengthen regional economic integration which will help to overcome the problem of political violence in the wake of NATO withdrawal. The paper analyzes different aspects of economic integration of the countries in the region and underpins the challenges.

Backdrop

The war against global terrorism brought NATO troops to Afghanistan. The syndrome of terrorism in its neighborhood particularly Afghanistan has harmed every fabric of its society (Anwar, 2002). This was the most complex war of the 21st century. It was not a war of one state against another or some states against others. It was a war among state and non-state actors. The events of 9/11 have impacted global politics to a great extent. The NATO troops came to Afghanistan under the UN mandate to defeat those who perpetrated the events of 9/11 in the USA. The NATO targeted militants/insurgents/terrorists everywhere but its wrath particularly fell on such people in the Muslim World. When the Taliban government which was known as of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan refused to hand over Al-Quada and its leadership to the USA was toppled and its opponents in the Northern Alliance were given important portfolios in the new government.

In the complex war, in which it was difficult to comprehend what was what and who was who, the people of Pak-Afghan Region especially suffered. The military battle has been fought in the region but at enormous costs to human security and trust among nations and with huge financial costs (IPPNW, 2015).



Terrorism Havoc

A cursory view of regional current history highlights the terrific devastation of terrorism in Pakistan. The people of Pakistan generally and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly suffered a lot since 2001. In fiscal year 2010-11, Pakistan's exports decreased. It paid a big amount to in compensation to affectees, FDI also decreased,

Physical infrastructure damaged. The bad law and order situation negatively impacted tax collection and industrial output. Pakistan paid heavily in security and economic terms during the war against global terrorism. Due to rise of direct and indirect costs Pakistan's economy suffered and a big chunk of its natural and human resources were consumed by the war (Pakistan Defense Threat, 2013). In 2013 it was stated that in war on terror only 14 percent losses were reimbursed to Pakistan (Pakistan Defense Threat, 2013).



Source: <http://hippopotamas-travel.blogspot.cz/2010/07/prelude.html>

The New Silk Road And Regional Integration

The vision of a "New Silk Road" serve to enhance connectivity across South and Central Asia, reestablishing Afghanistan's historic role at the crossroads of Eurasia(Pyatt, 2013). There is no doubt that shared challenges from security to economic growth require a cooperative, multilateral response. The region is under transition and political, security and economic transitions are interconnected. One considerably influences the other. The result of the economic transition will be impacted by the region's collective efforts, the support of the international community, cross-border commerce and people-to-people exchange. The regional states from India to Central Asian Republics are realizing the benefits of joint and collaborated efforts for regional development and prosperity. Such thinking and joint projects will put the regional countries in the path of more prosperous future.

Though difficult to enhance regional connectivity yet it is a rewarding exercise. Regional connectivity is a driver of prosperity. A web of both north-south and east-west trade corridors, as well as energy grids and communications networks will increase economic cooperation. The 'Silk Wind' multi-modal trade and transport network are different initiatives in this respect. Regional Transit Trade Agreements and the Cross-Border Transport Agreements will further strengthen such economic interactions. Different programs are underway to strengthen greater regional connectivity between Central and South Asia. Central Asian States have completed many projects since 1997 under the Asian Development Bank's Central Asian Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC). CAREC has implemented more than 100 projects in regional transport, trade facilitation, trade policy, and energy, facilitating over \$20 billion worth in infrastructure and investment (Pyatt, 2015).

The construction of ports, highways, railways, pipelines and other means of communications through Pakistan will integrate these regions. It will help in overcoming the economic difficulties of the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, who have suffered huge losses throughout the 21st century due to terrorism.

Ports Integration

Pakistan is developing its ports. Karachi port has been developed. Port Qasim was added to coop with the country's requirements. In this connection G wader deep sea port mega-project was envisioned to fulfill the region sea trade requirements of Pakistan and other countries. Pakistan despite odds hugely invested in this project. The People Republic of China gave financial and technical assistance to Pakistan in the fulfillment of its Gwader dream. Gwadar is the most easy to get to deep sea port to the states of Central Asian region and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the People Republic of China. In CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) China is extending its East-West railway from Khashgar (Xinjiang) to Peshawar, capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Province of Pakistan. It will enable China to get cargo from Gwadar along the shortest route from Peshawar to Karachi. China can import oil from Iran and other countries of the Middle East by using Pakistan's rail network.

Highways Integration

Pakistan is constructing new highways and repairing old ones to prepare itself for the 21st century trade and commerce. From Peshawar to Karachi most of the Motorway projects have been completed. Pakistan Motorway project that will connect all the major towns of the country and will also provide Central Asian countries access to Pakistani deep sea ports on Arabian Sea. Being six-lane dual carriageway, limited expressway, it will cater to high speed travel (EAWORLD, 2015).



Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1148529/news-fits>

OBOR (one belt one road) is Chinese project to connect continent and CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) is south Asian extension of OBOR. CPEC is comprised of development of rail, road links, fiber optic cable, energy projects and special economic zones. It is a sort of 21st century Silk Road which will connect East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and East Europe. The completion of CPEC will not only strengthen the economies of two countries but will also rejuvenate regional peace and stability (MOFA, 2013). Pakistan is developing physical infrastructure to connect with Tajikistan via Wakhan corridor. Expansion of Lowari top tunnel (8.75 km) costing PKR 5,545.7 Million (USD 133 Million) is important component of this strategy. China, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are starting bus service that will promote people to people contacts and increase trade.

Pakistan Railways Integration

It facilitates large scale movement of freight and people as well as integrated different regions of the country (Pakistan Railways, 2015). Pakistan Railways Future Plans: Restructuring, track doubling, public-private partnership, International Lines: Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, Iran, Turkey, India (Pakistan Railways, 2015).



Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/02/03/city/karachi/%E2%80%98pak-business-express-conspiracy-of-pakistan-railways%E2%80%99/>

Pakistan is developing its communication and transport network towards the west and for the purpose feasibility study has already been completed so far Chaman-Kandahar section of the rail track is concerned. Pakistan is extending its rail track to Turkmenistan through Afghanistan. Karakoram Railway is another proposed rail track which will be completed in the near future via Khunjerab Pass. The Pakistan Locomotive Factory at Risalpur with the collaboration of Government of Japan is another forward step in this direction. Pakistan's estimated population in 2014 is over 186 million, making it the world's sixth-most-populous country. It's a big market for the hydrocarbon and other resources of Caucasus, Central Asia and the rest of Central Eurasia.

Casa 1000 Project

CASA-1000 is a long term regional energy trade plan which will benefit Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It is a transmission line from Tajikistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan. This project is more than twelve hundred KM long electricity transmission line and associated substations. The central point of this regional plan is transmission of surplus electricity produced in Central Asian countries in summer to Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is no denying the fact that electricity is essential for modern life, employment and economic development and Pakistan desperately needs this power to vitalize its industrial development. CASA-1000 will help in the development of CASAREM (Central Asia South Asia Regional Electricity Market). CASA-1000 project can be complementary to efforts by the ADB to build the TUTAP project, whose electricity lines from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan would flow to Afghanistan and ultimately, Pakistan (CASA-1000, 2015). The cost of the project is about \$one billion (Imas, 2013).

Pipelines Integration

Central Asian states are trying to diversify its transportation routes. The region is rich in hydrocarbon particularly Turkmenistan is rich in natural gas while Kazakhstan is rich in oil. Fast Industrial development is underway in Pakistan and India. Both countries need energy and in this connection Central Asia is important so the convergence of interests is emerging between Central and South Asian Regions. TAPI (Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India) pipeline project is significant for India and Pakistan. Without an iota of doubt it will enhance regional economic cooperation. The construction operation and maintenance of TAPI will increase regional employment opportunities. The length of TAPI will be seventeen hundred and thirty five KM. About two hundred km of the pipeline will pass through Turkmenistan, seven hundred and thirty five km will run through Afghanistan and about eight hundred km will pass through Pakistan. Ultimately it will be connected to Fazilka, India (TAPI, 2013).



Source: <http://www.pcq.com.pk/gas-companies-of-turkeyindiaafghanistan-pakistan-established-tapi-gas-pipeline/>

Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, which could be extended to include other regional countries is another leap forward in regional integration. Pakistan's location in the New Silk Road is important. The construction of Gwadar port and related Physical linkages with Afghanistan will considerably decrease the distance between Central Asian States and Pakistan. Some experts predicts that it will reduce the distance for

traffic by about five hundred km. The physical infrastructural connectivity between South and central Asia is increasing and the mega project underlines the geo-economic significance of Pakistan. Pakistan is offering vital physical linkages for inter and intra-regional energy and trade transactions. Pakistan is giving great importance to its trade relations with the regional countries. It is reconnecting itself through roads, rail tracks, pipelines and other communication channels with China, Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond. After independence Central Asian states got world attention for its huge oil and gas reserves. Pakistan is the shortest route for transfer of Central Asian hydrocarbons to energy deficient South Asia. China and India are two Asian economies which are growing with tremendous speed. For India the shortest access to Central Asia is Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan can provide easy to use and developed transportation routes. For economic growth in the region there is need of changing stereo type traditional thinking and zero-sum perspective. To end violence, alleviate poverty, and eradicate corruption in the region the way out seems to be win-win perspective.

Pak-China Linkages Development

Economic relations between Pakistan and China remained far below from the actual potential despite the fact that both countries have road connectivity and geographical proximity (Hussain, 2015). Pak-China relations are very cordial, both have signed FTA (Free Trade Agreement). They have granted to one another MFNS (Most Favored Nation Status). Bilateral trade has surpassed \$14 billion in 2014 between the two countries. On the other hand China trade with India has reached \$60 billion per year. The world has become global village in which economic considerations overlap strategic considerations in inter and intra-state relations and keeping in view this important development Pakistan and China are giving serious thought to expand their economic and trade ties. The ties remained low due to several reasons. Some causes may be mentioned in this connection. Pakistan was a British colony and its business community was inclined towards the West. Due to less people to people interaction linguistic contacts were poor and it was difficult to overcome language barrier. Political instability and lack of economic reforms were two other causes which did not allow enhanced economic interplay. Before Deng Xiaoping China's controlled economy during Mao's time, to a great have extent, caused the low trade exchange. The two countries are focusing on minimizing the negative impact of international macro economy and both are trying to increase cooperation in macro-economic areas.

China's economic growth, domestic surge in consumption, and future development ambitions have all contributed to a global commodities boom, primarily in energy and minerals. Closely connected both to the economic modernization of the country and to its growing international status, China's relations with resource-rich nations have become one of the defining features of its foreign policy in recent years (Kavalski, 2015).



Source: <http://viewsworld.com/world/the-new-silk-road-to-nowhere/>

In this connection China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a good development.

The corridor can act as a regional institution to boost bilateral relations. The CPEC is a comprehensive concept that encompasses economic and strategic integration between the two countries in the long run and it is also the name of regional economic integration beyond the geographical route; it represent the domestic

institutional arrangements and macro-economic coordination between the two countries in the transnational flow of economic factors such as capital, technology, information and labour. One important aspect of CPEC is the construction of transport links to establish connectivity and make economic factors move along smoothly.

CPEC fosters multidimensional cooperation between China and Pakistan especially joint efforts in the fields of energy, investment and human resource development will benefit both states. Convergence of interests can be highlighted in a way that China is searching for natural resources Pakistan (particularly Balochistan) is rich in natural resources; China needs markets for its products Pakistan is a country of one hundred and eighty millions which is looking for cheap products; China has surplus capital while Pakistan is looking for FDI, China is rich in modern technology, equipments while Pakistan require modern technology to enhance the pace of its industrialization. Chinese investment in Pakistan will help Pakistan to reverse its foreign debt trap; Pakistan is facing an imbalance in its international payments while China is looking for effective channel to use its foreign exchange funds. Due to important geostrategic location Pakistan can help China to construct transnational roads, railways and pipelines to expand its energy imports. China is investing in Pakistan to strengthen its long term ally and building Gwadar deep sea port and other trade routes to secure its import of oil and gas through sea and land routes (Rizenger, 2015). Both regional countries are jointly trying to integrate their economies which is clear from CPEC mega project. CPEC is across-the-board strategic and economic integration not mere physical infrastructural connectivity project (Hussain, 2015).

Pakistan-Afghanistan Linkages Development

In this point in time, Pakistan economic policy highlights the government is giving high priority to regional trade integration and liberalization and wants to revive economy by enhancing trade volume (Regional Trade Integration, 2014).



Source:<http://www.pukhtoogle.com/most-viewed-sections/news-blogs/383-reconstruction-of-peshawar-torkham-highway.html>

For trade connectivity and economic integration among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian states durable peace in the region was required. In this respect Gwadar deep sea port provides a golden opportunity to Central Asian countries to connect International markets. Through this port, land locked Central Asian States can increase its business and trade activities. South and Central Asian Regions can integrate their trade like ASEAN. Through the land and sea facilities of Pakistan regional countries can increase their commercial activities. Pakistan and other South Asian States could fulfill their needs of energy from energy rich areas of Central Asia (Regional Trade Integration, 2014).

Afghanistan has constantly tried to seek ways of cooperation with Pakistan (Future of Afghanistan, 2012). The future of Afghanistan and the region lies in economic integration. The key to realizing, this is the idea of the New Silk Road that aspires to bring the countries of the region and beyond together for commercial and

cultural exchanges. Playing its natural role as a land-bridge connecting through trade and commerce the economies of the South West and Central Asia, as well as beyond will bring economic prosperity for the people of Afghanistan. Working together for economic integration will build confidence, and understanding among the countries of the region.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two regional states which have cordial relations and also have convergence of interests. Afghanistan is a landlocked country and it has used Pakistan as a main route for its import and export. The economy of Afghanistan has considerably integrated with that of Pakistan. Pakistan is aware of the fact that political storm and calm in Afghanistan considerably impact its political, social and economic developments. Pakistan is trying to help Afghanistan in its reconstruction and rehabilitation endeavors. The construction of Torkham-Jalalabad Highway and Rehman Baba School Hostel are two important confidence building measures. Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan have endeavored trilateral agreement on transit trade. Afghanistan and Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement is another development in this regard. Steps are required to be taken to stop the abuse of this facility. A large number of products are imported in the pretext of Afghan transit trade and then dumped in the Bara markets of Pakistan without paying custom duty (Afzal, 2014).

Pakistan-India Linkages Development

Regional economic integration is multi-facet phenomenon in which tariff and non-tariff trade hindrances are either reduced or removed and factors of production, services and products are allowed to move freely among the member states. Common external barriers are raised also created to get development and trade advantages. In this process profit margins increases and development costs reduce because of short distance, better communications and similarities among the regional countries. This process was further augmented by the development of technology in the fields of computer, telecommunication, construction, transportation, shipping, container services and banking. SAARC leadership is committed to increase regional trade, promote peace and contribute to regional development. SAARC leadership has taken several decisions to implement the agreement on South Asian Free Trading Area since mid-1990's. SAARC countries have agreed on avoidance of double taxation, formation of SAARC Arbitration Council and mutual administrative assistance custom matters. SAARC countries are cooperating with one another in investment, finance and trade to achieve the goal of integrated South Asian Economy. Another development in this connection is SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement) which provides institutional base and framework for economic cooperation and trade liberalization.

In January 2004 in SAARC summit SAFTA (South Asian Trading Area) agreement was signed. It was undoubtedly a milestone in economic integration at SAARC level. It has given a push to trade liberalization in the region and it was decided that till 2016 custom duties on products from the region will be gradually reduced. The countries of South Asian Region have realized that they should give priority to economic development and it can be done easily if they will cooperate and integrate their economies (Hanif, 2012).

Pakistan-Iran Linkages Development

Pakistan and Iran have common bonds of geography, history and culture. This aspect of the relationship was highlighted in Islamabad in February 2012 Summit of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan are gradually taking steps for better economic integration. Pakistan is enhancing its connections with Afghanistan and Iran in the fields of energy, transport, communications and exploring further avenues for joint ventures. It is committed to promote trilateral imports and exports (Shiekh, 2015).

There are close cultural, historical and geographical bonds between Pakistan and Iran. Iran is one of the great oil exporters of the world and Pakistan is one of the big importers of oil. There are many ways through which the relationship between the two countries can be strengthened on the basis of equality. It is stated that the government of Afghanistan has signed BSA (Bilateral Security Agreement) with the USA on 30th September 2014 which will be implemented 1st January 2015 and will remain in force till 2024. Its primary focus seems to be reduction of NATO troops in Afghanistan. Pakistan is struggling to increase its bilateral trade with Afghanistan which currently stands at \$2.4 billion. It has the potential to be doubled. Afghanistan and Pakistan are constantly consulting and exploring to start more mutually beneficial joint projects and facilitate trade. Among the

important such projects are hydroelectric dam on Kunar River, extension of Pakistan Motorway to Spin Boldak and Jalalabad. Another important measure is AHNPP (Asian Highway Network Project) with the help of European Union. The primary focus of this project is facilitation of regional trade. China has invested in Afghanistan \$3 billion while India has invested \$2 billion. The current big investors in Afghanistan are the USA, the UK, Japan, Germany and China. China has made commitment that it will increase its aid to Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the NATO troops and will help in the political reconciliation the country to restore peace and stability. It has cordial relations with Pakistan and joint efforts in this respect will be a quantum jump in this regard. China seems to be willing to invest in mines, raw material, transport, and electrical power network, construction of townships and joint Sino-Indian hospitals and schools in Afghanistan (Akhtar, 2015).

Impact On Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Kp)

Historically Peshawar valley and broadly the present-day province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was like a bridge between South and Central Asia. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP) is northernmost province of Pakistan. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is bordered by Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, Baluchistan, FATA and Azad Kashmir. There is cultural, ethnic and spiritual homogeneity among the people of FATA and KP. Its capital is Peshawar. KP is comprised of seventy four thousand five hundred and twenty one square kilometers and as per 2006 estimate its population is twenty one point four million (Britannica, 2015). The fertile valley of Peshawar carries half of the population of the KP province. The historic Khyber Pass connects Afghanistan with Pakistan particularly Peshawar and Jalalabad(Britannica 2015). There are many ethnic groups living in KP province but major ethnic group is Pakhtuns. Pakhtuns are further divided into many tribes, Yousafzai is the largest tribe of Pakhtuns in the province it inhabits Dir, Swat, Mardan and Swabi valleys. The other major tribes are Mehmand, Afridi, Khattak, Shinwari, Durrani, etc etc. Major cities of the province are Peshawar, Mardan, Bannu, Mangora, Dera Ismail Khan, Abbotabad, Kohat etc (Britannica, 2015).



Source: <http://www.lifewithstyles.com/wiping-terrorism-pakistan>

According to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan KP is federating unit. Its legislature is unicameral which is comprised of one hundred and twenty four seats. The provincial cabinet is led by chief minister who is elected by provincial assembly. Chief Secretary leads the provincial civil bureaucracy and each department is led by secretary. Chief Minister is Chief Executive as well. Governor is head of the KP province who is appointed by the federal government as per constitution. The KP province is partitioned into twenty five districts (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2015). The economy of the province is agriculture based. Major crops are wheat, maize, sugarcane, tobacco. Major industries are sugar, vegetable, tobacco, textile, cement, furniture, ghee and milled grains based. Major roads and railways connect the province with Punjab, Baluchistan and Sindh (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2015).

The area of the province remained part of the ancient Gandhara kingdom. It remained part of Persian, Greek, Indian, Indo-Bactrian, Sakas, Parthian, and Kushan rule. Muslim rule was extended to the area by Sebuktigin who conquered Peshawar in 988 ce. Ghaznavid, Ghurid, Mughal, Durrani, Sikh and British ruled the area and finally in 1947 it became part of Pakistan. During the 1980s hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees

came to the province due to the Soviet occupation of their country. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a major route for transfer of aid to resistance forces in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. After NATO invasion of Afghanistan Pakistan joined the war against global terrorism and the province became an important supply route. The name of the province was changed from NWFP to KP in 2010. It remained vital channel for transfer of goods to NATO forces in Afghanistan since 2001.

The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa throughout remained in the line of fire during this period. Democracy is peoples` empowerment, while governance means the way those with power use that power. The study of governance helps to know who controls what, and for whom. Democratic system of government is restored in Pakistan in 2002 and since then three general elections were held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Different factors shaped the political vista in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the restoration of democracy and one major factor was political wax and wane in Afghanistan. Regional economic integration is underway in the aftermath of NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. How it will impact the governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the focus of this piece of research.

The man-made and natural disasters impacted the province a lot. The inhabitants of KP suffered due to the fall out of the Afghanistan`s crisis since late 1970s and spill-over effects of militancy in tribal areas. The 2005 earthquake, the 2010 floods and IDPs crisis harmed the people of the province to a great extent. The recent developments highlight that the province is regaining peace and retrieving prosperity. The departure of NATO troops from Afghanistan may provide an opportunity to stabilize Afghanistan. These developments could open substantial regional trade and investment opportunities (Siddique, 2015).

Conclusion

There is poverty, backwardness, unemployment and political instability in the region. Education, job opportunities, poverty alleviation will help to strengthen regional peace and stability. Regional economic integration will be a breakthrough in this respect. There is no denying the fact that a consensus is emerging among the regional actors that economic integration of the region will benefit all the states in South, Central, West and East Asia.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan Region has suffered a lot during the last few decades. Stability in Afghanistan is needed to develop the region. After NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan collective efforts will be required to contain violence in Afghanistan. Economic integration will be a leap forward to bring prosperity and stability in the region. The construction and connecting the highways, railways and pipelines in the region will benefit all the states in South and Central Asia.

Pakistan location is very important in this connection. It's a bridge between South, Central, West and East Asia. Strengthening of the communication linkages will benefit not only Pakistan but the states of the region as well. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly faced calamities in the war against global terrorism. The geographical position of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is significant. This was pretty much clearly demonstrated by phenomenon of NATO Supply Routes to Afghanistan. Regional economic integration may usher new era prosperity and stability in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the wake of NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan because the stakeholders are visualizing that if they continue to tread the beaten track, they all stand to lose.

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Received: April 20th, 2015
Revisions Received: March 9th, 2016

South Asian Security and Stability and Regional Rivalries: Post 9/11 Indo –Pak Proxy War in Afghanistan

Naseer Ahmad Khan and Manzoor Khan Afridi
International Islamic University, Islamabad

After the incident of 9/11, US while exercising the NATO Alliance waged war against terrorism and Afghanistan was attacked while eliminating the Al-Qaeda terrorists staying in Afghanistan. Soon, the Taliban rule in Afghanistan led by Mullah Umar was toppled down. Apart from US concerns, many actors concentrated and raised their stakes in Afghanistan. Pakistan and India are among the major stakeholders. Pakistan's claim is that she is the immediate neighbor of Afghanistan and instability in Afghanistan has spillover effects in Pakistan. However, this is the well-known fact that Pakistan's security concern cannot be addressed without having peace and stability in Afghanistan or at least by recognizing each other's security concerns. Nevertheless, the event of 9/11 and US invasion provided an opportunity for India to revitalize its ties with Afghanistan. She has multiple purposes to be engaged in Afghanistan, she also claims Afghanistan to be its extended neighborhood. Indian policy toward Afghanistan is derived through Pakistan's lenses, to counter the Pakistan's concept of strategic depth, while maintaining cordial relations with Afghanistan. In this respect, Historically, Pakistan and India have been engaged to establish their favorable government in Afghanistan that could promote the interests of one while countering the other one. That's why Pakistan and India proxy war in Afghanistan is marked as "Zero-Sum Game". One of the most important factors pulling towards proxy war is Kashmir conflict. To have peace and stability in Afghanistan regional approach is considered more viable. It seems that after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, India-Pakistan rivalry would be intensified that could have adverse effects upon the efforts being made for peace and stability in Afghanistan. So, It is the responsibility of the international community to play his role to settle down the concerns of regional members particularly (Pakistan and India), otherwise peace and stability in Afghanistan would remain a dream, or even worse, a nightmare. This is a qualitative research based on secondary sources. The descriptive and analytic approach has been adopted to accomplish it in a comprehensive way.

Key words: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, US, Taliban, Proxy war, NATO

India-Pakistan Proxy war in Afghanistan can best be analyzed while applying the lenses of realism. Realist theorist fixed security as a top-most goal or concern of states, which is vital for their survival, and influence the consciousness of state actors in defining the relations with other states. India-Pakistan and Afghanistan-Pakistan relations steeped pre-dominantly by their security concerns. Historically, even after decades, there have been little scope and prospects of effective cooperation. Henceforth, the past miseries and aggressive agendas are still hurdles on the way to move forward in a progressive way. Pakistan and India proxy war in Afghanistan is not understandable unless the nature of their mutual ties are not taken into consideration. Security as well as unresolved issues are a defining aspect in their relations with each other. Although the two states Pakistan and India have bi-literal relations with Afghanistan. These relations goes back to their independence.

The rivalry between India and Pakistan is rooted in the events of pre-partition. Later on, after the end of British rule, the two independent states experienced hostile relations and wars. They fought four wars all were on the disputed issue of Kashmir except 1971, in which Pakistan was disintegrated into two parts Pakistan on western side and Bangladesh on eastern side. The direct conflicts between the two states compel them to follow the containment policies even in the regional scenario. Among the regional countries Afghanistan is the most important for both states. Pakistan and India consider Afghanistan their strategic zone. Pakistan share

about 2200 kilometer border with Afghanistan known as “Durand Line”. Pakistan had bitter start of relations with Afghanistan, as she raised territorial claims over Pakistan.

Historically, all Afghanistan rulers remained hostile towards Pakistan and friends with India. So Pakistan adopted the notion of ‘Strategic Depth’. India friendly Afghanistan was unacceptable to Pakistan on its western border. Instability in Afghanistan has spillover effects on Pakistan. Civil wars in Afghanistan and foreign interventions posed serious threats to Pakistan. Pakistan was frontline state during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

After the event of 9/11, Pakistan again became the front line state on war against terror. This was the golden opportunity for India to revive its ties with Afghanistan, as her embassy was closed during the Taliban era (1996-2001). This era of ‘New Great Game’ led Pakistan and India to fight proxy war in Afghanistan. India while having good relations with President Karzai organized its strategic plans particularly to destabilize the Pakistan. Pakistan and India regard Kashmir as their integral part. No state is willing to compromise on this core dispute. India has a stance that stable Pakistan and her favorable regime in Afghanistan, particularly Taliban type regime, would weak her position in Kashmir. During Taliban regime, Mullah Omar had pronounced his support in favor of Kashmir. India has fear that if again Taliban succeed in Afghanistan, Pakistan may encourage the Mujahedeen to fight against India in Kashmir. It is believed that Kashmir proxy is being fought in Afghanistan. In this regard, India has managed certain activities at Afghanistan soil, likewise, to train the terrorist to destabilize the Pakistan as well as to equip the Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) against Pakistan.

Indo-Pak Proxy War in Afghanistan

21st century started with the new era of war led by US against Al-Qaeda terrorists, who challenged the superpower by managing attacks on Twin Towers. Al-Qaeda members particularly the Usama bin Laden the chief of the organization was staying in Afghanistan, who once a time was supported by US to fight against Russian invasion in Afghanistan 1979-1990 (Paul L, 2006). After Soviets’ withdrawal from Afghanistan warlords indulged in power tussle, after all Taliban were successful to establish their rule in Afghanistan in 1996. America was conscious about new rule of Islamists who revived the Islamic discourse and maintained order in Afghanistan. After US invasion of Afghanistan a new ‘Great Game’ started with the rising concerns of multiple stakeholders (Gasper, 2001).

Although, Afghanistan had been a bone of contention even in medieval times between the neighboring states, particularly due to its strategic location, and being a great center of trade between India and Central Asia. In the 19th Century, Britain and Russia indulged in power game to expand their empires, particularly over Afghanistan, for Russia expanded her territories in Central Asia and Britain was advancing forward toward North from India. Hence, they patched up and Afghanistan was declared a buffer state (Hayat, 2005). Afghanistan is a landlocked country located approximately in the center of Asia. It is one of Pakistan’s most strategically important neighbors in the South and West. Located at the crossroads of South and central Asia, Afghanistan’s geo-political importance can never be ignored. The famous poet, Allama Iqbal, regarded it “the heart of Asia” and Lord Curzon (India’s Viceroy) called it the “cockpit of Asia” (Rashid, 2001). Pakistan’s geo-strategic location has a unique security environment. While studying Pak-Afghan relation, Indian factor cannot be ignored, taking into account as Pakistan’s security dilemma. Soon after independence, Kashmir conflict led to war between India and Pakistan. Pakistan policy makers calculated it as primary threat to its security. India’s aggressive attitude compelled Pakistan to sort out defensive measures.

On the western border, Afghanistan also had hostile relations with Pakistan. Initially, she delayed to accept Pakistan’s membership in the UN as an independent state, and soon raised territorial claims over Pakistan (the Durand Line and the Issue of Pashtunistan). India fully supported Afghanistan’s claims so that Pak-Afghan relations might be damaged further. India had the edge of warm relationship with Afghanistan, and these relations were energized by signing the “Friendship Treaty” in 1950. Later on, during Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan India was successful in establishing Soviet-Indo-Afghanistan nexus. India signed various agreements and protocols with Pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, and cooperated in developmental activities in industrial sector, irrigation and hydro-electric projects (McLeod, 2008).

All regimes in Afghanistan from 1947 to 1989 remained more inclined towards India. Pakistan was in defensive capacity to resolve its disputes with Afghanistan. This was fear that being trapped in a two-front situation with hostile India to the east and India friendly Afghanistan arises serious security threats. Due to its geographic position, Pakistan stands as sandwich between the two (India and Afghanistan). Therefore, Pakistan conceptualized the notion of 'strategic depth' as a defensive strategy (Filkins, 2008).

But the war ended, Pakistan remained alone to face the adverse consequences. Pakistan had to bear the burden of 3 million Afghan refugees. The prospect to install a friendly government in Afghanistan remained intangible until the Mujahedeen victory against Soviet Union. It was then that strategic depth through which a pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan was adopted as an important instrument of policy. During 1990s civil war in Afghanistan, Pakistan supported its favorite groups. Finally, in 1996 Taliban established their rule in Afghanistan (Siddiqi, 2011). In May 1997 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif recognized Taliban regime as legitimate one. In a press briefing, Pakistan's army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kiyani hinted at the contours of an updated policy. "We want strategic depth in Afghanistan but do not want to control it," and said, "A peaceful and friendly Afghanistan can provide Pakistan strategic depth." In his unprecedented statement, talking against wanting a Talibanized Afghanistan, he added, "We cannot wish anything for Afghanistan that we do not wish for ourselves." Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar had also stressed that if Pakistan was needed strategic depth it would not come through fighting a proxy war, rather the only way to secure it building trust with Afghanistan.

India-Afghanistan relation is also the case of Kautilyan's Theory, that the enemy of enemy is regarded as a friend. To counter Indo-Afghan nexus Pakistan was searching the ways to establish strong relations with Afghanistan as an ally, that she might not be a card in Indian hands. Afghanistan was strategically important for India to complete its security design, as if Pakistan start war over Kashmir conflict it would encourage Afghanistan to open its fronts against Pakistan. In this regard Pakistan strategic goal was to maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan and to dent the Indo-Afghan nexus (Khan Ayub, 1967).

The Rise of Taliban: Implications for India and Pakistan

Hence the rise of Taliban in 1996, obvious threat to Indian interests again marginalized the Indian influence in Afghanistan. India did not recognize the Taliban regime having in mind their Islamist ideology and attachment with Pakistan. With the rise of Taliban, in 1996, India had closed its embassy in Afghanistan. The Taliban under Mullah Omar had remained cross with India not because of Pakistan's instigation but because India had fully supported Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and later had extended support to Afghans Northern Alliance (Taliban's anti group in Afghanistan). India provided lot of financial, material and diplomatic support to Burhan-ud-Din Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood (Chief of Northern Alliance) in order to increase their capacity to with stand Taliban pressure. Frontier Post reported that Indian cargo planes landed at Bagram air base on 15th, 16th, 21st, and 27th June 1995. There were also reports of Indian pilots flying plans belonging to Rabbani forces. Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) provided the warfare equipment of Rs.10 billion worth along with technical advice to the Northern Alliance. Moreover a hospital was established in Farkhor on the Afghan-Tajik border to provide the medical treatment to the Northern Alliance.

India was serious about the Taliban pronouncements on Kashmir. The training of Kashmiris Pakistanis and foreign mujahedeen in Afghan campus forced India to assist and support the non-Pashtun Rabbani forces. Therefore, throughout the Taliban rule in (1996-2001), India supported the anti-Taliban factions to counter the Taliban power. Russia and Iran also had the efforts to damage the Taliban rule; India coordinated its efforts with them and developed its relations with Central Asian States. MR. J. N. Dixit in his book also suggested this strategy.

"India, in co-operation with all like-minded countries, should resist the coercive propagation of any kind of religious, social, or ethnic extremism which can profoundly de-stabilize Afghanistan's Asian neighbors. An early solution to the Afghanistan crisis is critical for realizing the enormous opportunities for energy and economic co-operation in the Eurasian region".

In 2001, After the US invasion of Afghanistan a 'New Great Game' started in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan and India again emerged as Potential rival indulged in proxy war. Pakistan's claim is that she is the immediate neighbor of Afghanistan and instability in Afghanistan has spillover effects over Pakistan. War against terrorism has worst condition over its socio-economic and political system; she has to pay the huge cost being a front line state. Terrorist started suicide bombing and over 50000 civilian and security personal have been killed, they targeted important politician and well known religious personalities. Even shrines, Mosques and churches witnessed bloodshed and human loss (Zaid, 2011).

Kashmir is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan regarded as the fundamental cause of deterioration of relation and also the leading cause of instability of the South Asian region. Pakistan and India consider Kashmir as their integral part; no party is willing to withdraw as the issue is more politicized. India and Pakistan turn down to acknowledge the legitimacy of each other's stake in Kashmir that threatens the prospect of eventual peace between the both states. Former President Musharraf had showed the flexibility by proposing his four point formula but falling out to reach any conclusion (Sharma, 2009).

Looking on the other face of Indian occupation, presenting the worst feature, there is severe violation of human rights violations, thousands of people have been killed in Indian occupied Kashmir. Indian heavy army presence (almost 7 lac) having the policy of hook and crook to oppress the Kashmir liberation movement.

International institutions are considered necessary for mitigating a security dilemma between two or more aggressive and violent states. In respect of Indo-Pak conflict, the role of international institutions remained insignificant. For Pakistan, Kashmir is the vital strategic problem which needs to be solved, whether through Bi-lateral negotiations or through mediation of third party. In this regard, India rejects and avoids the role of international institutions or mediation of third party. Until now, there is no instrumental effort in hand which might force India to accept external engagement. Thus, at present no internationalized mitigation option of the Kashmir conflict is on the horizon (Schweers, 2008).

Indo-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement

India strengthened its ties with Afghanistan signed by strategic partnership agreement. That was about equipping and training the Afghan forces to fill the gap of NATO forces withdrawal. India's cooperation in respect of national security, as well as in trade zone is significant, viewing Afghanistan as hub of trade, transportation and energy activities due to its strategic position and linkage to central Asia. Indo-Afghan strategic Partnership has security repercussions for Pakistan. Hence, President Karzai was aware of Pakistani concerns, he tried to convince Pakistan through diplomatic statement, "Pakistan is a twin brother, but India is a great friend. The agreement he had signed with his friend would not affect his brother. Both the leaders Karzai and Singh further expressed that agreement was not going to against any state or group of states. But it was hard for Pakistan to understand that claim in terms of Zero-Sum Game competition (Kasturi, 2012).

Indo-Afghan strategic agreement is further input to the rivalry between Pakistan and India. Indian training and equipment of Afghan armed forces mean energizing support for the Anti-Pakistan Tajik group of the Northern Alliance that dominates the afghan military (Kumar, 2011).

Pakistan has clear stance that the training of Afghan forces by Indian trainers is intolerable on its western border. Pakistan emphasized that it respected Indo-afghan relations but not at the cost of Pakistan's security interests. Pakistan was enthusiastic to train the Afghani forces but its offer was declined by US defense secretary Robert Gates. Pakistan seems Indian taking part in training the afghan forces would create conflicting and destabilizing situation in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Overall, if the Afghanistan-India Strategic Partnership concretizes it will be a great strategic gain for the United States, Afghanistan and India in the long term perspective (US Embassy Press Release, 2010).

Insurgency in Baluchistan: Indo-US Involvement

The province of Baluchistan is strategically important because of deep sea port (Gwadar), and its close proximity to Afghanistan and Iran. The Baloch are the second largest ethnic group settled on both sides of

Pakistan and Afghanistan border. There have been five insurgencies in Baluchistan, since the inception of Pakistan. In the last insurgency in 2005, Pakistan military killed Nawab Akbar Bughti (one of the most powerful tribal chief). For a long time, Pakistan has been accused India of using its consulate in Afghanistan for espionage and stirring up separatist insurgency in Baluchistan, and managing covert operation against Pakistan

India has maintained strong presence in Afghanistan and exerting its influence against Pakistan, establishing of 26 consulates along the western border maintaining terrorists' plans against Pakistan. She is troubling Baluchistan by providing weapons and financial assistance to the angry Baloch militants. Former President Musharraf presented the maps to President Hamid Karzai for Indian alleged support, funding and arms supply to Baluchistan Liberation Army, who is spreading insurgency for separation of Baluchistan. He urged him to restraint the Indian activities on Afghan territory against Pakistan.

Militants in Baluchistan are worsening and threatening the peace in Baluchistan. There is target killing of the people of other provinces, particularly Punjabi teachers, Indian support to these elements and promoting terrorism in Baluchistan is witnessed through its centers in Afghanistan. Indian consulates in Kandahar (Afghanistan) moved 100 Bloch dissidents to India for six month training. Former and present Chief Minister of Baluchistan indicated India's alleged intervention in Balochistan via Afghanistan. American huge Intelligence network established at Jabl-us- Seraj in 2001, to target Pakistan and few other states, is also being operated jointly by Indian RAW, Israeli Mossad, British MI-6 and BND.

Above all, US is also supporting the Indian activities by allowing her to strengthen spy networks near Pakistan border in Afghanistan. After coming solid proofs of both Indian and US intervention, the parliamentary committee has debated issue in the parliament. Pakistan has also decided to raise this issue at International forums. Even US encouragement to separatist in Baluchistan has been exposed by recent Congress resolution, and further pressing Pakistan to the opening of US consulate in Baluchistan. US Congress hold hearing of angry Balochs living in US that is to instigate them against Pakistan. Troublous in Balochistan suits to American interest, if any way it is separated from Pakistan. The US would have strategic zone to exploit the Iran as this province is the route line to Pak-Iran gas pipe line. Secondly, US believe that some of the key Afghan Taliban are staying in Afghanistan. It may be easy to search out their sanctuaries.

New Great Game: Secret Strategic Agendas

US invaded Afghanistan while following the terrorist responsible in managing the terrorist attacks at twin towers. Many analysts had opinion that actually US had certain other motives to be present at the heart of Asia and to control the energy resources of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Qureshi expressed skepticism that 9/11 attacked were suggested or managed by Jews or the US government. The war against terrorism phenomenon has been justified through media campaign and Muslims are at defensive position to deal with it (Qureshi and Sells, 2004). Pakistan and India proxy in Afghanistan besides the enmity and unresolved conflicting issues is the part of new Great Game. Afghanistan has become the center of gravity of international politics with the involvement of global powers and regional stakeholders. While perceiving the US motives under the umbrella of war against terrorism other actors upgraded their concerns and stakes at Afghanistan. Pakistan and India are the active partners in new great game engaged to marginalize each other influence.

But now the US has included India in its secret agenda by adding manifold strategic designs against Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia. December, 2014 was the scheduled date of NATO forces withdrawal from Afghanistan. Whoever, America is determined to stay in Afghanistan for long-time while having six permanent military bases in Afghanistan. In this regard they had extensive negotiations with the Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Furthermore US efforts to bring the Taliban on the negotiation table are also underway.

So keeping in view the future scenario and developments, Pakistan and India activating their cards to fill the withdrawal vacuum. Since the Post 9/11, secret strategic games are being planned to contain the interests of rival's states. Karzai government was also the part of these games to gain maximum interests in his favor. Great Game is carrying covert strategic designs against Pakistan, Iran and China. In this regard US, India, and Israel has combined efforts. CIA, Indian RAW and Israeli Mossad have unified their networks in Afghanistan.

The most upsetting things for Pakistan is India's consulates in Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif, apart from New Delhi's embassy in Kabul. The number of consulate is a serious matter of consideration Pakistan suspects that, through these consulates, India is involved in covert activities aimed at destabilizing Pakistan. The other side arguments is this it is up to Afghan government to decide number of consulates regardless of Pakistan's considerations. Further, these consulate are engaged in developmental activities to assist India's aid program, as well as reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. Pakistan is blamed for attacks on these consulates and on Indian aid workers. 7 July 2008, suicide bombing on Indian embassy killed 58 people and injured about 141. (Sengupta, 2010) Pakistan raised issue of the Indian consulates with Afghan Government but no warning was seen on the screen regarding condemnation. In July 2009, on the sidelines of the Non Aligned Summit (NAM), Prime Minister of Pakistan Yousef Raza Gilani presented report to Indian PM Manmohan Singh regarding Indian involvement to destabilize Pakistan by following up terrorist activities. (Rashid, 2009) Pakistan and Afghanistan has transit trade agreement, which allows Afghanistan to trade with India while using Pakistan's territory, but India is not permitted to use Pakistan's territory for trade with Afghanistan. (Ahmed and Bhatnagar, 2007).

Chahbahar Port has been constructed with Indian investment. India has also built Zaranj-Delaram road to connect Afghanistan with Chahbahar. Actually, India was worried of China's heavy investment to establish Gwadar port. As a counter strategy to ensure its success to Afghanistan and Central Asia she sort out the alternative, which is beneficial in term of economic gains and to undermine the strategic importance of Gwadar port (Rubin and Siddique, 2006).

Hamid Karzai who studied in India and once upon a time also lived in Pakistan was perceived as troublesome for Pakistan due to his time and again blame game on Pakistan. India and Afghanistan strategic partnership agreement apparently looks the deepening their security and economic ties, it is open strategic agreement but secretly India wants to strengthen its strategic environment in Afghanistan. RAW through Afghanistan has been sending well-trained agents in Pakistan who are involved in killing security forces and bombing schools, mosques and shrines and fueling the sectarian violence in Pakistan. Recently, Pakistan has provided the evidences of Indian alleged involvement to USA and UN.

US hidden agenda to support the Baluch separatists has been exposed with the congress resolution that encourages the Baluch separatists. India has the continuous support to Baluch separatist elements and to spread insurgency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Baluchi separatist leaders who are staying in Afghanistan are being supported by India and US. For instance, Brahmdagh Bughti has been operating against Pakistan from Kabul. On July 23, 2008, in an interview with the BBC, he stated that they had the right to accept foreign arms from other states including India (Shaukat, 2011).

Baluchistan has also become the arena of new Great Game, because of its mineral resources and geo-strategic position. Gwadar seaport connecting to Central Asia, particularly Chinese investment of billions of dollars exasperated America and India to seek counter measurements. Most importantly, India is wary of Pak-China economic corridor which is viewed as great breakthrough in the region. Jundollah (God's soldiers) a CIA and Indian supported separatist group is working to break down the Pakistan's cordial relationship with China and Iran. This group have kidnapped and murdered a number of Chinese and Iranian people in Pakistan. In this perspective, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini stated that foreign elements were involved in terrorist activities in Iraq, Pakistan and Iran aimed at to create division between Shias and Sunnis.

In the recent years several people became the victim of terror-incidents and ethnic riots in the large Muslim populated province Xinjiang in China. India tried to deteriorate Sino-Pak ties, blamed that Pakistani militant are responsible for these attacks and unrest. Infact, India had given refuge to Dalai Lama (the Tibetan spiritual leader), whose sponsored militants has been involved in fueling upsurge in the Tibetan and Muslim areas of China. In the Second secret strategic game India and President Karzai have joined hand together and creating circumstance for US long stay in Afghanistan. If US leave Karzai could not stand by on its position, therefore, US presence and backing is inevitable for his survival as President. India is also seeking the US long stay in Afghanistan, because if US withdraw India could not maintain its position in wake of the successful

guerilla warfare of the Taliban. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his visit to Washington in 2009, had encourages the American long stay in Afghanistan with the argument that otherwise Afghanistan situation will turn into a civil war.

As India and Karzai has observed the more chances of US withdrawal, so RAW and Khad have adopted grimy tricks to find foreign forces long engagement in Afghanistan. They are using the so-called Muslims who are managing attacks against NATO forces that acts mean to stimulate US blame game over Pakistan. US top military officer Mike Mullen accused that Pakistan is waging a 'proxy war' in Afghanistan and ISI was behind an assault on the US embassy in Kabul. Some other US high officials issued severe warnings about Islamabad reluctance to hold operation against Haqqani network (a militant group). Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, following the way of Mike Mullen's blame game on ISI, stated that there was growing awareness of the groups involved in terrorist activities that was indirect finger on Pakistan. However, Islamabad has rejected all these allegations (Shaukat, 2011).

Indian intelligence services hint that anti-India terrorist groups operate in Pakistan. After the incident of Mumbai attacks in November, 2008 India blamed that Pakistan sponsored terrorists are behind these attacks that claimed the lives of 166 people. This incident break down the India-Pakistan peace process dialogue. India demanded a firm action against those who are responsible for those attacks. Pakistan responded by demanding the authentic evidence against those who managed these attacks. Pakistan demanded the Indian investigation over 2007 Samjhauta express bombing by Hindu terrorists, where dozens of its citizens were forced to burn alive. So, both side grievances and trust deficit contributing to antagonism and rival attitude. There is atmosphere of fear and insecurity leading the both states to fight proxy in Afghanistan keeping in view their strategic concerns, while eliminating each other presence (Khan, 2012). Although there had been talks on the issues at secretary and foreign minister level, but with no comprehensive results, as the two states have strong reservations and mistrust particularly over the issue of terrorism. India believe that Pakistan is not serious to take action against terrorists rather she is supporting the terrorists against India. The two states are much serious about their security apprehensions which is the driving force to determine their nature of relations.

United States Role and Implications for India and Pakistan

If US have convergence of interests with India on the other side it acknowledges that Pakistan is inevitable to attain success in Afghanistan. However, US often blames that Pakistan is not serious to hold operation against certain terrorists group (Like Haqqani Group). On the other hand, Pakistan is conscious about the Indo-US secret strategic games to destabilize Pakistan and whole of the Asia. It is well recognized fact that Pakistan nuclear program is highly secure but US often express reservations. Pakistan has to satisfy the US that its program don't manifest any aggressive agendas expect maintaining minimum deterrence as per India. For the last few years, Pakistan perceived threats of India's new style war strategy known as 'Cold Start Doctrine'.

The two states must resolve their outstanding bi-lateral conflicting issues particularly, the Kashmir conflict. In this respect, composite dialogue is necessary as well the mediation by a third party. In this regard, US can play a role to force India to acknowledge the resolutions passed by United Nations regarding the plebiscite and the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. But it is unexpected while analyzing the statement of US National Security Adviser James Jones, who told the press that US did not to be involved in the Kashmir issue but intended to minimize the trust deficit between India and Pakistan, so that situation may not escalate into worst, and Pakistan put its whole energy to deal with issues on its western border (Kashyap, 2009).

American journalist Robert D. Kaplan, expressed his views on America's war on terror in Slate Magazine, January 2002. India actually wants a weak as well as radical government in Pakistan, as internally weak government would put the country at stake. In other words on the track of failed state, and radically oriented might damage its credibility at international level. Pakistan is striving for a regime which is suited to its interests. He further added that US will have to play the role to defuse India-Pak rivalry in Afghanistan. (Sengupta, 2010)

According to regional complex theory security is clustered in geographical entanglement in which state is located. Afghanistan's location is complex because of its close proximity with Pakistan, Iran, China, and Central Asian states. However, the case of Pakistan and Central Asia is rigorous because the militants of these countries have strong links with Afghan Taliban. Fazal Ullah the leader of one faction of Taliban is staying in Afghanistan; his associated militants are involved in suicide bombing in Pakistan. Pakistan various times demanded that Afghanistan must take action against those who are involved in cross-border terrorism. Whoever, the President Karzai never showed any commitment to devise any policy and action to address the Pakistan's security concerns, rather he frequently blamed Pakistan that she is troubling Afghanistan, while sending terrorist to their country. Pakistan tried its best to satisfy the President Karzai regarding its blame game so that she could ensure due its positive role and India may not be dominant in Afghanistan (Schweers, 2008).

Conclusion

A peaceful and stable political scenario is only possible if conflicting interests are settled down with consolidated efforts of the stakeholders. Particularly if India and Pakistan, are convinced to move forward beyond the rhetoric of the "new great game". Afghanistan could offer considerable advantages and opportunities to them Regional states level of trade with Afghanistan would be increased on the basis of bilateral trade partnerships. However it would be possible through sustainable dialogue process between India and Pakistan.

US and international community efforts to maintain peace in Afghanistan could only be succeed by addressing the reservation of the stakeholder engaged in Afghanistan. Pakistan and India have rising security concerns pulling the two states to fight proxy war and having greater influence in Afghanistan. US has different kind of bi-lateral relations with Pakistan and India. Although she acknowledges that Pakistan's role is inevitable on war against terror, but she cannot ignore India as a strategic ally as well as dynamic regional player in South Asia. US efforts may not be regarded comprehensive to address the conflicting interests of both India and Pakistan.

Moreover, the president Karzai could not play his due role to mitigate the proxy war between the two states. Throughout his tenure, he blamed Pakistan that she is intervening in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Despite recognizing the fact, that India is using Afghanistan's soil against Pakistan, as well as, the alleged role of India's consulates in Afghanistan. Pakistan will continue to play its cards until and unless her security concerns are not acknowledged by India and Afghanistan. In this respect the three states (Pakistan, India and Afghanistan) must engage themselves in confidence building measures to settle down their reservations and disputes. Pakistan and India have to acknowledge the fact that Peace, prosperity and stability cannot be achieved through proxy war, rather through positive engagement. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India have signed the TAPI agreement to meet their energy needs. Such type interconnections are necessary for complex interdependence, which would enhance cooperation and mutual benefits.

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Received: April 20th, 2015
Revisions Received: March 7th, 2016

Withdrawal of US led-troops from Afghanistan: implications for Pakistan

Muhammad Ayaz Khan and Sajid Hussain

Hazara University Mansehra

Withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan is a question mark on its peace and security. There is conflict of perception about ground realities between Afghan resistant groups and US-led coalition as both are claiming their victory. America wants a docile government after its withdrawal and would retain a certain number of soldiers to represent its presence in Afghanistan. The resistant groups are looking for complete withdrawal of foreign troops and pledge to continue their struggle till the last external soldier. Whereas Karzai's government was not in a position to decide the future of America-led forces due to the expiry of term in 2014, as the new government under Ashraf Ghani in 2014 wanted a complete departure of foreign troops. But due to limited capacity of ANSF his government signed a (BSA) with America that permitted US to keep its military till 2014. The number of these forces is very low and Afghan national security forces don't have the capability to restore peace and maintain law and order after the withdrawal of foreign troops and it is definite that the civil war will have domino effect for Pakistan. In such state of affairs Pakistan is in search of sustainable peace in Afghanistan for which there is a need of paradigm shift and that is to link the peace process with economic integration among regional powers i.e China, Russia, Iran and India.

Key Words: NATO, Pakistan, Afghanistan, America, Taliban, Militancy, security

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long history of mistrust and both are blaming each other for involvement in the internal affairs of one and other. Afghanistan opposed Pakistan's membership at the UN and always has a tilt towards India. Afghanistan is continuously claiming Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, the western province of Pakistan as part of its territory and negating the international border i.e Durind line, Pakistan declared the same as international border and even America accepted it's claim. Their mutual relationship remains hot and cold through ages. The best phase of their relations happened at the time of Soviet withdrawal and emergence of Taliban. Prior and after Taliban era their relations are based on mutual distrust and India exercised more influence than that of Pakistan.

The incident of 9/11 and the subsequent over-throw of Taliban regime in Afghanistan transformed regional geo-politics. The US-led war against terror was partially succeeded when President Obama announces withdrawal of ISAF troops from Afghanistan in instalments and complete security matters of the country would be given to them by 2014. Despite serious financial constraints America want to bring a responsible end to this war. This war caused lost of billions of dollars and hundreds of lives to America. The New York Time (2011) American policy maker coined a new term for two nations fighting war against terror they call AfPak to Afghanistan and Pakistan. This region is worst affected by terrorism, still present and moving on with fluctuating intensity.

After the American withdrawal, what will be the future of Afghanistan? The world community and especially the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan are worried about it. There are questions like what will be the domestic situation? What will be the role of regional powers? And what will be the outcome of this situation on security of West? Answers of these questions are not easy and mapping future of Afghanistan is indeed a tough task. There are many factors like interests of regional and extra-regional players and cohesive vision of domestic political leaders that make prediction of future scenario difficult.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the capacity of Afghan national security forces who will assume the responsibility of Afghanistan after 2014, the future role of America and Pakistan. It will also argue that the latter

will ultimately play the decisive role to support the sustainability of existing Afghan institutions, including the ANSF, or to obstruct the external factors. Further it will examine the potential impact of these variables in the post-2014 era and would conclude that Afghanistan is likely to remain a significant security concern for Pakistan in future.

Afghanistan after Soviet Withdrawal

Mikhail Gorbachev the then leader of Soviet Union was a signatory to a United Nation's led accord (Geneva Accord) on 14th April 1988. According to this agreement Soviet Union has to pull-out its troops from Afghanistan at a target date of Feb 15, 1989. The USA and Soviet Union both wanted a political settlement of Afghan imbroglio. This desire speeded up the dismemberment of Soviet Union in 1991 that weakened Moscow's influence in Afghanistan. Washington and Moscow reduced their military aid by September 13, 1991. (Congressional Research Service: 2012) The state department of USA declared that from 1980 to 1989, the end of USSR's occupation, a grant of \$ 3 billion in total was provided to Afghanistan as economic and covert military assistance. According to press reports the covert military aid enhance from \$ 20 million per annum in 1980 to \$ 300 million per year during 1986 to 1990. (Country Fact Sheet, 1994) Soviet withdrawal was projected as decisive American victory which caused sizeable reduction in all covert funding. Unlike its claims there was no major support to rebuild socio-economic structure of Afghanistan even she close her Kabul's embassy in the month of January 1989 as Russia pull-out which remain close till downfall of Taliban in 2001.

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 the government of Najibullah became weak as the financial and advisory aid from Soviet Union stopped in January 1, 1992. He announced on March 18, 1992 that he will step down with the formation of interim government. This announcement made different Tajik and Uzbek militants came together, particularly Abdul Rashid Dostam who joined the camp of Ahmad Shah Masoud to prevent Soviet forces to conquer his base in Panjshir Valley. With the fall of Najibullah in April 18, 1992, the new era of Mujahidin began (Tzemach, 2010).

Washington started negotiations with Taliban when they captured Qandahar in 1994 but failed to moderate their policies which led there relations to the worst ebb. Washington didn't recognize any faction of Taliban as reasonable Afghan government. On the grounds of gender discrimination Clinton administration closed the embassy of Afghanistan in Washington in August 1997. United Nations under its resolutions No 1193 passed on 28th August 1998 and No.1214, 8th of December 1998 demanded Taliban government to abolish its gender discrimination. American Senate under its resolution S.Res no 68 called President not to recognize Taliban government because of its gender discrimination.

Presence of Al-Qaeda's leadership in Afghanistan further deteriorated US-Afghan relation and became a pivotal point of US foreign policy. US strongly demanded to handover Al-Qaeda when its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania was blown by them in August 1998. (Risen, James, 2010) It also imposed sanctions on Taliban controlled Afghanistan and even succeeded to put sanctions from UN side as well. When US fired cruise missiles on training camps of Al-Qaeda in eastern Afghanistan on August 20, 1998 (Michael Phillips, 2012) some observers are of the opinion that she missed several opportunities to hit Usama, as he was sighted through a predator drone at Tarnak Farm in 2000 (NBC News, 2004).

After September 11 Attacks

America has declared Al Qaeda its major concern in Afghanistan after 9/11. Pakistan and Afghanistan have been destabilized by war on terror for the last more than ten years. The US think tanks consider destabilized South Asia as a safe haven for terrorists groups. To control such an alarming situation Taliban government was replaced by Karzai's regime in 2001. President Karzai has visited America on the invitation of Obama from 8 to 11 January 2013. (Council for Foreign relations, 2013) Both leaders discussed the post 2014 scenario of Afghanistan and reconfirmed "the US-Afghan Enduring Strategic Partnership" which was signed in May 2012. Council for Foreign relations (2013) they also reviewed the security, economy, elections preparations

and evolving threats perceptions in Afghanistan. They further expressed their commitment to achieve the following US-Afghan strategic goals.

- ❖ Promotion of peace and security
- ❖ Reconciliation
- ❖ Cooperation in region
- ❖ Consolidation of Afghanistan's local institutions
- ❖ Assisting long-term economic and social development of Afghanistan.

The US lauds Afghan National Security Forces for their services in Afghanistan and their growing capabilities would exceed beyond the initial expectations. ANSF took the operational charge by July 2012 and soon reached to conduct 80 % of total operations. The NATO summit held at Chicago 21-22 May 2012 decided to shift ISAF mission from combat to support. (The Chicago Summit 2012) ANSF took the operational charge from ISAF which pushing it to an advisory status and support role, subject to final approval of NATO and Afghan authorities. (Council for Foreign relations, 2013) They further intended to end the most unilateral US combat operations and the withdrawal of US forces patrolling in the villages of Afghanistan to improve ANSF capacities. Tribune (2012) in 2012 there was a significant progress regarding transfer of responsibilities to Afghan government, prisoner's detention and to keep dangerous fighters out of battlefield. These steps were applauded by President Karzai and pronounced it as steps to regain full sovereignty over his country. He further opined that such steps will enable him to materialize Obama's wish to extend US military stay in Afghanistan with exemption of Afghan laws beyond 2014. Both of them have agreed to ensure proper security of Afghan, US and coalition forces (tribune, 2012).

The President of United States expressed that it doesn't seek permanent presence in Afghanistan and desire to bring a responsible end to the on-going war. (The Afghan War's Last Chapter, 2013) He further said that US military would quit at a "steady pace" but he didn't give details of it. Officials of American forces declared that General Allen has a significant military strength till 2013. (The Afghan War's Last Chapter, 2013) NATO and U.S. planners are working on all options to decide the number of forces to remain in Afghanistan. One of the options is the presence of about 10,000 US troops and many thousands NATO forces having special branch of 1000 anti-terrorism troops to render support to ANSF.

Military Withdrawal

Washington is considering about 3000 to 9000 soldiers to continue to remain in Afghanistan after 2014; the figure too low than the proposed Pentagon i.e 15000 to 20000. Intentions behind military presence are to train Afghan army and to target remaining of Al Qaeda. The post 2014 stay of US troops was already made clear by the deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes before the visit of Karzai to Washington. McChrystal (2013) he argued that the presence of these troops would destroy the safe haven of Al Qaeda and further enhance the capacity of Afghan security forces to protect its nation.

President Karzai's intention was to seek the support of 15000 US troops in his country which seemed difficult to be materialized, as Obama could opt for "Zero option" as was applied in Iraq in 2011. Spetalnick and Phil Stewart (2013) The US-Afghan negotiations remained uncertain till the office of the president was assumed by Ashraf Ghani on September 29, 2014. (Department of defence United States of America, 2014) America extended its military presence beyond 2015 but eagerly looking for immunity status for its soldiers in Afghanistan; and this unsettled question deliberated the most during Obama-Karzai summit. "As we know from our Iraq experience, if there are no authorities granted by the sovereign state, then there's no room for a follow-on US military mission," (Spetalnick and Stewart, 2013) said Douglas Lute, Special assistant to the US President for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Douglas Lute has expressed that "As the American are aware from the experience they got in Iraq, if authorities are not granted by the sovereign state, then there will be no space left for a follow-on American military mission". Spetalnick and Phil Stewart (2013) Nevertheless, it is broadly guessed that the zero-option was floated as a bargaining chip during the visit of President Karzai (Spetalnick and Stewart, 2013).

America has strong and stable surveillance, intelligence and strike capability though some of them are in need regional basis but it is not Afghanistan which would be the only option. The deep friendly contacts of Pak-Afghan are the outcome of eleven years extensive intelligence efforts which will remain long after 2014. The post 2014 situation of Pak-Afghan border area may led to prolong intelligence war, with huge investment of capital and operative services to prevent any future terrorist activities in the area. Spetalnick and Stewart (2013) If America opts for Zero Option it will led Afghanistan back to civil war. At the same time presence of American troops is very much essential for discouraging any activity of resisting groups in Afghanistan.

The Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) is a legally binding executive agreement between the United States and Afghanistan signed on May 01, 2012(Whitehouse, 2012) It took two years to negotiate the future of Afghanistan and to conclude framework of complete drawdown of its troops and future bilateral relations.

The new afghan setup under Ashraf Ghani as president and Abdullah Abdullah as chief executive signed a bilateral security agreement on 30th September 2014. It was the first executive order of the government. The BSA came into force on January 1, 2015 and will remain in force until 2024. This agreement can be terminated with a 2 years prior notice. According to the agreement America has to maintain about 9800 military personal in Afghanistan in 2015 and will be reduce farther in 2016. President Ashraf Ghani has appreciated Obama's commitment to abolish terrorism. (Daily Mashriq, 2015) American troops will be sided by about 2000 NATO forces to train the Afghan soldiers to prevent the resurgence of Taliban and to counter terrorism (MFA, 2014).

Implications For Pakistan

America didn't win the war against terror in Afghanistan but it succeeded at a greater extent to launch spontaneous operations and to hit the hideouts of terrorists in Pakistan (The Express Tribune, 2013). Both Afghanistan and America consider Pakistan as unreliable partner to bring stability in Afghanistan. Qureshi (1966) Pakistani intelligence agency is blamed for patronage to Afghan insurgents (Tanner, Stephen, 2002). They also hold Pakistan responsible for all politico-military failures and follies of Afghanistan and America.

Due to Pakistan's nuclear capacity America hesitate to involve in any direct confrontation but there is a list of blunt expeditions like Drone attacks, Salala and Abbottabad operations and special missions etc.(*The Nation* Islamabad, 2012). The main purpose of the indirect strategy is to weaken the various institutions of Pakistan so is to hand over all its nuclear weapons. In order to promote India's hegemony in the region and to make Pakistan weak the indirect strategies of rivals created everlasting feelings of insecurity in masses.(Pakistan observer, 2012) Following is the summery of indirect strategies of rivals and rivals-like allies of Pakistan.

- a) The challenging situation of FATA will remain the same for next few years. The number of terrorist attacks in KPK increased.
- b) The overall situation of Baluchistan is deteriorated followed by the presence of Taliban, ethnic, sectarian and nationalistic insurgency, target killing and attacks on educational and religious institutes.
- c) The metropolitan city of Pakistan, Karachi is been disrupted by the violence and insecurity which derail economic activities.
- d) Different militant groups like TTP and Al Qaeda came together to give tough time to Pakistan's law enforcement agencies. This nexus boost sectarianism and extremism in neglected sectors of the society.
- e) To shift the entire load of war on terror from Afghanistan to Pakistan.
- f) The patriotic people of north-western belt has to turned into restive.
- g) The western border became unsecure because of US-NATO cross border attacks
- h) Baluchistan became a hot bowl of ethno-racial activities and anti-Pakistani feeling are going high
- i) The growing influence of India which was curtailed during Taliban regime and American wish to make India a regional power after its departure became a permanent threat to Pakistan.

- j) Different intelligence agencies like CIA, FBI, MI-6 got access to different non-governmental organizations and governmental departments. Strong networks are being installed by RAW and Black-water in all insurgent areas of Pakistan.
- k) Large number of military and paramilitary forces and police are involved in a full pledge war against its own people which make them confused and mentally disturbed.
- l) The resources of Pakistan military is wasting in a useless war against terror while on the other hand India is busy in upgrading its nuclear and conventional capacity.
- m) Pro-American elements have very strong influence in Pakistan and International Non-governmental Organizations which are being used as tool to achieve its objectives.
- n) Some of the reputed media in Pakistan backed by USA to promote Indo-US agenda and defame Pakistan and its Institutions.

There are so many facts which show that USA is supporting India in Afghanistan. Economic development is one of the best reasons. The undefined objective behind this nexus is de-stability of Pakistan. Though India doesn't have capacity and capability to replace American forces in Afghanistan but she is expert enough to build pressure on Pakistan through its covert support to Pakistan's ethno-national elements in bordering area of Afghanistan (The Express Tribune, 2012).

Pakistan has very low influence on America's policy to Afghanistan. Its relation with Taliban officials devastated by mistrust and the question that whether it could use its influence to bring them on table. Due to its proximity with Afghanistan Pakistan faces serious crisis and in war on terror it lost about 10,000 military and 350 ISI personal which is more than the loses of CIA's entire history. In such a murky circumstances, where there is no clear option for resolution of Afghan issue Pakistan need to follow a cautious approach. It already has made extraordinary sacrifices and efforts for elimination of terrorism and restoration of peace in the region. As a nation it pay heavy price in war against terror, which includes the los about 40000 precious lives and about \$70-80 billion economic lost.

Though Pakistan always remain untrustworthy for both America and Afghanistan but it remain committed to resolve Afghan conflict politically. The afghan political elites accept the fact that without Pakistan's help peace in Afghanistan is impossible. That's why they want it to bring Taliban on negotiation table. Salahudin Rabbani the head of high peace council, who was in Pakistan from 12-14 Nov, joined the proceedings of trilateral summit in Ankara for reconciliation process. (The Express Tribune, 2012) Pakistan is going to facilitate the integration process in Afghanistan especially providing security to those Taliban who left militancy, facilitate them in economics and prevent them from re-joining insurgency (Mojumdar,2010).

During his visit the Afghan president Ashraf Ghani in Nov 2014 discussed border management and cooperation in training which resulted the training of small number of ANSF officer in Pakistan. (Department of defence United States of America, 2014) Though Pak-Afghan relations are moving in a positive direction but still Pakistan is eager to curtail India's influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has concerns about India's embassy and conciliates that they are recruiting anti Pakistan elements in Afghanistan and use huge amount of funds to get their objectives in Pakistan. Pakistan claimed in a meeting at Britain in Feb 2013 that Afghanistan has scaled back its relations with India and concluded strategic agreement with Pakistan including training of ANSF. According to defence secretary in January 2014, that Pakistan will never accept India's role as international forces in Afghanistan after the departure of ISAF forces (Department of defence United States of America, 2014).

Pakistan always considers India as permanent threat to its stability and Afghanistan as strategic depth in case of any attack from India on its eastern border. (Mezzera, Aftab, 2009) Both Afghanistan and USA are aware of Pakistan's concerns about India. Pakistan's stakeholders are of the opinion that Indian involvement in Afghanistan is not for its development but to destabilize Pakistan. Pakistan believes that any pro-Indian government in Kabul is very dangerous to its security while Afghani's are afraid of re-emergence of Taliban. To address conflict deficit between the India and Pakistan is demand of the day.

Conclusion

The United States of America invaded Afghanistan with the approval of United Nations to root out Taliban and to restore real democracy in Afghanistan. But the ground realities of present Afghanistan scenario are completely different. Where the American supported government is in power unemployment, poverty, insecurity, emergent insurgency, criminal market economy and war-lord-ism is of great concern (Jalalzai, Khan, 2012).

Both major players, Islamabad and Kabul don't want any rapid drawdown of US led troops; both think that it would definitely enhance the problems of Afghanistan. They further believe that sudden withdrawal will encourage Taliban to become source of problem for all countries of the region in future. In his discourse to joint conference of political and Security Council and E.U committee of military in Brussels in Dec 30, 2012, former commander of Pakistan military General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani had given the view point of Pakistan on the implication of Afghanistan's endgame for peace and security of the region. According to him Afghanistan's initiated peace process is the only solution to the long costly war in Afghanistan. We have seen a factual change in the game-plan formulated by them at each level. Everybody who is involved is eager to get something from the game (The Express Tribune, 2012).

His speech makes it clear that Pakistan just wants to facilitate the peace process not to lead and it don't want any external interference in Afghanistan. It was also a reminder that Pakistan will support peace process if it not harms its interests. Pakistan is very keen in insurance of no security vacuum after US withdrawal.

There are four major actors in the area i.e. United States of America, Pakistan, Afghan government (mainly dominate by Northren Alliance) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Afghanistan. But unfortunately all of them have no clear-cut policy toward peaceful settlement of Afghan crisis. Each of them wants to resolve this crisis through peaceful means and to preserve it interest as well. Pakistan follows wait and see policy and consider itself indispensable for any future settlement in Afghanistan. Still America has to draw a clear plan of action about Afghan crisis. The peace process of Afghanistan is linked with economic integration of the region. In this regard Pakistan is required to seek the support of regional powers i.e China, Iran, Russia and India to reach out a peaceful settlement of Afghanistan.

The withdrawal of US troops and economic activities among the regional countries would pave way to bring lasting peace in Afghanistan which will consequently accelerate the industrialization, enhances the agricultural productions, boost up import and export in the region and this free movement of goods will reduce poverty, unemployment and political unrest in the region in general and in Pakistan in particular.

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Received: April 20th, 2015
Revisions Received: March 9th, 2016

China's Strategic and Economic Interests in Post-2014 Afghanistan

Jehangir Khan

Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

China, one of the major powers and close neighbor of Afghanistan, has both economic and strategic interests in Afghanistan in the post 2014 Afghanistan after US/NATO drawdown from the latter. Though China has never been directly involved in Afghanistan for decades its internal security concerns and the major shift in the geostrategic and geopolitical situation in the region has forced China to depart from its old posture and engage its neighbor. However much depends upon the future scenario that arises in Afghanistan and the nature of cooperation among different stakeholders and the role of neighboring countries of Afghanistan. This paper aims at studying the future prospects of China's interests in Afghanistan from different perspectives. An effort has also been made to suggest remedies to the challenges.

Key words: China, Afghanistan, economic, security, Pakistan, Central Asia

No doubt, the US and NATO drawdown from Afghanistan till the end of 2014 will give rise to a number of challenges beside opportunities for all major players but the security dilemma created in the aftermath of this great strategic shift will be of great concern for all the neighboring countries. All the state and non-state actors with divergent interests and conflicting strategies will enter into the New Great Game. Their mutual cooperation may lead them to a win-win situation for all while their defection will take them to a no-win situation like the partners of the prisoner's dilemma in the game theory. But, ironically their varied and sometimes conflicting motivations mean that the strategic competition is a far more likely outcome than cooperation. Besides US, Russia, Pakistan and Iran, India and China will be the major players that take part in this great strategic competition. The question is how developments in and around Afghanistan will bring major shifts in the balance of power in Asia, and how the US concerns about the nature and goals of an authoritarian and increasingly assertive China can be deterred by other competitors.

Hypothesis

In case of China-Pakistan cooperation to bring the Taliban and the Afghan government and the success of these talks will give a strong leverage to China to play a key role in the economy and polity of Afghanistan. On the other hand, if Moscow and New Delhi win the support of Afghan setup at Kabul and they thwart out the Taliban, then China would find it difficult to take advantage of Afghan minerals and strategic position.

Economic Interests

The rising economic power of the East – China is energy deficient and is badly in need of raw materials and energy, which is unable to satisfy solely through exploitation of domestic reserves. Its insatiable hunger for natural resources has triggered a global search, prompting Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to carve out China as an emerging economic giant. To achieve that end, its leadership is struggling to enhance its influence in the region and needs to have access to the energy-rich Central Asian Republics (CARs) that can provide it not only with hydrocarbons but also vast potentials of trade and investment. Recently China's trade with Central Asia has risen to \$40 billion in 2012 that was \$527 million in 1992. In Kazakhstan, the President of China Xi Jinping

recently declared the construction of a “Silk Road economic belt” linking Central Asia and China. China’s trade, loans, and investments in the region have turned this dream into a reality, far eclipsing Central Asian ties to Afghanistan and South Asia as well as north to Russia and west to the European Union. Chinese investment comes without any short-term security risks and devoid of rhetoric about political and economic reforms (Ying, 2013). But, any access to strategically significant, energy-rich and economically potent Central Asia is not viable without a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Though so much importance was not given to this rigid land of Afghans by China and it was seen not more than a threat to regional security by Chinese leadership in the latter half of the 20th Century. Now, it is considered as a source of influence in the region and an easy outlet to the hydrocarbon-rich Central Asia. Even Afghanistan itself presents greater potential for long term Chinese investment as it contains largest hidden reserve of many minerals. However, despite direct involvement in the affairs of Afghanistan, China adopted a four-prong strategy to help Kabul government; safeguard the security and stability inside Afghanistan; develop Afghan economy; political reconciliation at domestic level without any foreign intervention; and enhance international cooperation. Since 2002 to 2010 China provided \$205.3 million in aid to Kabul in order to build economy of Afghanistan (Huasheng & Kuchins, March 2012). A stable and prosperous Afghanistan may prove helpful in converting this region into an economic bloc and China has the potential and political will to invest in the mining industry of Afghanistan. Afghanistan also offers opportunities as it has an estimated natural deposit of mineral wealth worth \$3 trillion. It includes copper, iron ore, silver, gold, coal, gems and minor metals such as chromite. Little has been exploited because there is no infrastructure and war wages on. China is also active in oil production in the north of Afghanistan. According to survey reports, Afghanistan has the world largest Lithium resources while copper and some other rare metals are also abundant there (Huasheng & Kuchins, March 2012). The U.S. Geological Survey has found that Afghanistan possesses 1.6 billion barrels of crude oil, 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 500 million barrels of natural gas liquids (Gartenstein-Ross, Trombly, & Barr, October 2014). China took the initiative to expand its ambit of economic influence. In 2009, the Aynak, a Chinese firm leased the rights to copper deposit for 3.5 billion dollars which is the single largest foreign investment in mining sector in Afghanistan (Barno, Exum, & Irvine, Beyond Afghanistan A Regional Security Strategy for South and Central Asia, June 2011). China’s total investment in Afghanistan reaches 10 billion dollars. By granting exploit rights of mineral reserves, Afghanistan can earn 808 billion dollars and annually while 60 million dollars from taxes over it for 30 years (Huasheng & Kuchins, March 2012). In 2011, China National Petroleum Corporation signed another contract with Kabul to procure the oil fields of the northeastern provinces of Sar-i-Pul and Faryab. A huge investment is required for both these Chinese projects. When they are made operational, the minerals, oil and gas produced will need to be exported that will need further investment to construct roads, railway networks and pipelines. Keeping in view these considerations, in September 2013, the President Xi Jinping proposed a vision to build a “Silk Road economic zone,” which proves China’s vision to develop its western provinces that are located at the crossroads of Central, South, and West Asia, Afghanistan also has a very vital role in this plan ((President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries, 2013). These encouraging projects are of great hope for China as they would boost the economic resources needed to sustain its high economic growth. They would also contribute to the reconstruction and development of Afghan economy as it would provide capital, technology, and employment opportunities to the Afghan people. According to the World Bank Report, economic growth of Afghanistan is declining and seen falling to 1.5 percent this year while it had reached 3.7 percent in 2013, down from 9.4 percent the year before. (New Afghan president to head to China, 2014). In the backdrop of this economic plight, Chinese investment is a ray hope for Afghanistan. But, along with an increase in Chinese investment in Afghanistan, both Chinese and Afghan leadership must focus on finding ways and means to protect their economic interests from terrorist activities. Political instability and security issues may not let the process to bear

fruit as the Chinese state-run consortium MCC pulled out its workers last year after they came under Taliban fire. Chinese investors in Afghanistan are powerless in the face of political, social, and religious conflicts in that country and the Chinese government has to work in close collaboration with Afghan government to solve political and security issues. But only the Afghan government's efforts will not be sufficient. Therefore, to effectively cope with these challenges, Chinese investors and leaders must work with the international community to stabilize Afghanistan and establish good relations among all the country's factions and clans. China must specially focus on the areas in which Chinese companies are investing.

Taking cognizance of the vitality of China's role in the development of post 2014 Afghanistan, the newly elected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, accompanied by a number of business men, made his first ever foreign visit to China to attract more Chinese investors to lessen the dependence of his country on international military and economic aid largess. His visit was also with an objective to take part in the multilateral Istanbul Ministerial Process to discuss regional security, economic and political issues which are the prerequisites of economic development. Looking at the mutual economic and security interests, both countries are giving more importance to each other. But the growing ties between them also face some grave challenges both on bilateral and multilateral level. In June 2012, China entered into a strategic partnership with Afghanistan that manifested the highest degree of importance that the former attaches to the latter. As international public opinion is very pessimistic regarding the future of Afghanistan after 2014, this Chinese move came as a source of firm support for the Afghan government.

The success or failure of political and economic transformation will directly affect the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as Afghanistan is an observer of the said organization. China is on its way to strengthen strategic, political and cooperation with Afghanistan within the framework of the SCO and also wants the organization to play a greater role in bringing stability to this crises-ridden country. To support Afghanistan on multilateral forums, China hosted the fourth Foreign Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan in Tianjin in 2014. To find a local solution to terrorism and bring normalcy to the Afghan soil, China kept in touch with other neighboring countries especially Pakistan.

Pakistan, the most influential player in Afghanistan, has cordial relations and deep strategic ties with China. On the one hand, security-prone and energy-deficient Pakistan is in need of establishing energy, trade, and transportation networks between its ports and China and Central Asia through Afghanistan and also desires to materialize its deeply held conviction of the need to build "strategic depth" vis-à-vis India. China provides Pakistan with every technical and economic support to establish these networks and has already helped Pakistan in developing a state-of-the-art deep sea port at Gwadar in Pakistan that offers the shortest possible outlet to the landlocked CARs (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). On the other hand, taking advantage of Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, China can achieve these ends at a comparatively lower cost. The compatibility of their interests has brought both Islamabad and Beijing closer to each other. Moreover, China can utilize its relationship with Pakistan as an important bellwether for its economic and trade relations with CARs and the rest of the Muslim world. It also uses it as a hedge against the growing influence of India and Russia in the region. (Barno, Irvine, & Matthew, *Beyond Afghanistan A Regional Security Strategy for South and Central Asia*, June 2011). The newly signed agreement to construct China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would benefit Afghanistan, too. This corridor would also benefit Afghanistan but it would lessen Pak-China dependence on Afghanistan (The Express Tribune, 2015).

China is in need of energy resources to keep its growth rate intact. The hydrocarbon rich Central Asian Republics can better cater this Chinese need. To enhance influence as major power of the region, China wants to

establish close links with CARs and Afghanistan which can provide a safe corridor to the vast market of Central Asia. But, ironically, all these roadmaps to security and economic prosperity pass through the war ravaged Afghanistan where political instability is prevailing since decades that is not only hampering the security and stability at home but also have been threatening the security of the region as a whole.

Security Interests

China shares a 76 kilometers (47 miles) long border with Afghanistan that runs between the Wakhan Corridor and China's far western Xinjiang province and hence enjoys a lasting influence on its periphery. Xinjiang's population mostly contains Muslims who belong to a Turkic ethnic group – Uighur (New Afghan president to head to China, 2014). The Muslims of this province allege Beijing for discriminatory treatment and this sense of deprivation on the part of this community gave rise to militancy (Gartenstein-Ross, Trombly, & Barr, October 2014). Extremist tendencies crept into this part of China just after the collapse of Soviet Union. The militants of Uighurs have been blamed for attacks across China in recent years. Security issue is more important to China than economic engagement with Afghanistan and trade ties with Central Asian Republics. The major security threat that confronts China from within is the growing extremism and terrorism in its Xinjiang province which is, according to domino effect theory, much prone to the spillover of terrorism from Afghanistan. A chaotic Afghanistan can serve as a base camp.

Figure 1

Afghanistan Supply Routes: Northern Distribution Network and Pakistan Overland Routes



For the “East Turkistan” movement in Xinjiang that has close links with al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This movement has become a hard nut to crack for China and this challenge may remain there for a long time. In fact, Afghanistan is a critical external source of instability and militancy that seriously affects security in Xinjiang and the regions surrounding it from South to Central Asia. Militancy in Pakistan, Kashmir or anywhere in the region will encourage East Turkistan movement but extremism in Afghanistan will prove more detrimental to China's security concerns. Beijing fears that a security breakdown in Afghanistan may have far reaching implications for its domestic extremist uprising in Xinxiang. The global terrorist networks may further complicate the issue if government in Kabul is not cooperative with Beijing. Any escalation in the scale of militancy may affect the Chinese investment in Afghanistan and the business and trade ties of China with Central Asia (Huasheng & Kuchins, March 2012).

In this context, Pakistan, China's strategic and potentially reliable ally, can play a very vital and decisive role in mitigating militancy in Xinjiang as the former enjoys considerable influence in the Taliban circles in

Afghanistan. Pakistan depends much upon China for its defense vis-à-vis India. But Pakistan's interests are somewhat incompatible and sometimes conflicting with Chinese interest and this dilemma has caused some strain in Pak-China relationship.

Figure 2

Map of Xinjiang, Showing the Sites of Terrorist Attacks



Source: Google.com.pk/images

However, China can use Pakistan's good offices to mend fences with the Taliban in Afghanistan and militant outfits in Pakistan that provide military and strategic support to the Turkistan Movement in Xinjiang province of China (Gartenstein-Ross, Trombly, & Barr, October 2014). China is also trying to seek India's support, which is one of the largest investors in Afghanistan, on the issue of terrorism. But their interests are divergent if not contradictory to each other. China is likely to engage the militant outfits including the Taliban while India seems in no mood to have a soft corner for the militants (Gartenstein-Ross, Trombly, & Barr, October 2014).

Conclusion

Looking at the ambiguous future of Afghanistan in the wake of US/NATO drawdown in 2014, China has adopted a very cautious policy towards Afghanistan. Economic interests of China are very high in Afghanistan and CARs but the cost may surpass the benefits if its security interests are at stake. China's influence in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics depend upon the Kabul Peace Process but the possibility of comeback of the Taliban will endanger Chinese interests. However, now both China and Pakistan has offered its good offices to bring the Taliban to the table talks with the Afghan government that means that both these countries have good relations with the Taliban and if the peace process initiated by them ends in success the Kabul setup would show a soft corner for China. The Taliban would come to the mainstream politics of Afghanistan and thus the Chinese and Pakistani cooperation would enhance their influence in Afghan politics. There is no alternative for talks between the Taliban and Kabul government as the US and European interest in Afghanistan is diminishing day by day due to the deteriorated situation in the Middle East and changing strategic situation in the South East Asia after the direct negotiation between Taiwan and China.

China can build pressure over Pakistan to overcome security challenges by bringing China closer to the Taliban leadership and seeking guarantees for Chinese projects in Afghanistan besides providing safe corridors for trade and shipment to Central Asia.

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Received: April 22nd, 2015
Revisions Received: March 9th, 2016

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