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Historical perspective of indo-Afghan relations

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Abstract

Afghanistan is geo-politically and geo- strategically very important state. Afghanistan is the gate way to “Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia”. History witnesses that the world powers for increasing influence in this region tried to increase sphere of influence in Afghanistan yet remained unsuccessful. Afghanistan has been proven as the graveyard for the invaders. India tried its level best to establish its influence in Afghanistan. The Indian government had provided support to soviet backed democratic set up in Afghanistan. The friendship history of Indo- Afghan relations is old. At times Afghanistan was documented as a center of Indian civilization. Additionally, Buddha had also come to Afghanistan; this was a busy area of Hinduism and Buddhism, nonetheless, in the contemporary world the footsteps of these two religions are very scarce in Afghanistan. India had supported Afghanistan and still supporting, after 9,112001 the relation of both the countries got boost.

Keywords: Indo-Afghan relations, Indian Aid to Afghanistan, Paradigm shift of Indian and Afghanistan

1. Introduction

The history of Indo- Afghan relations is too earliest. Afghanistan was recognized as a center of Indian civilization. Additionally, Buddha had also come to Afghanistan; this was a busy area of Hinduism and Buddhism, however, in the modern world the footsteps of these two beliefs are limited in Afghanistan. Seventh century AD witnessed a strong and common resistance of Islam to Buddhism and Hinduism in Afghanistan & India respectively. The Arab armies dominated Persia in 643 AD, they had attacked Kabul as well in 650 AD with these attacks Arab armies weighed down Siesta. The Arab army had swept the soil of Afghanistan and reached at Oxus River. (A border attached with Central Asia)

The Arab army after establishing their footholds in this region, they also introduced a new religion Islam in this region. However, the king of Kabul had fought a devastating war with Arab armies that continued till two centuries. The dynasties of Shah's ruled some portions of Kabul and even the old province of Gandhara. They resisted against Islam till 11 centuries. The Indo- Afghan relations have long historical and cultural connections. This relation is not limited to government of both the countries but it had deep historical linkage with people to people contacts. Historically, Afghanistan from its west side has been a bridge to link India with Afghanistan. Both the countries have similarity in history. Furthermore, despite the geo-strategic and geo- political planning of all the States in the region, the Indo- Afghan relations remained pleasant. The only breakdown in the Indo- Afghan relations has seen. When India recognized Soviet government in Afghanistan. Moreover, during civil war of Afghanistan, the government of India extended its financial help to Afghanistan. The Indian government had provided Afghanistan a huge amount of US dollars via United Nations in 1990. It is ostensibly clear that India had tried its level best to increase influence in Afghanistan but incident of 9/11, 2001 had provided an opportunity to the Indian government to established its influence in Afghanistan. When Taliban had defeated by the US and NATO forces that provided India a window of opportunity to start its new era of relations with the government of Afghanistan. In this connection India has started diplomatic relations as well as India offered intelligence support to the government of Afghanistan. “The Indian Prime Minister declared Indo- Afghan ties as an open book. He further added that we both have similarity in civilization and India would stand with the people of Afghanistan. After withdraw of international forces India would lead the government of Afghanistan.” India also facilitated the coalition government in Afghanistan. In 2005, India offered SAARC membership to Afghanistan and finally Afghanistan became the member of SAARC in 2007.

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Moreover, the importance of Afghanistan in this region cannot be kept a side. India wants access to Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia. India has assured Afghan government that India would continue its financial support to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is totally dependent on Indian and US for its financial needs. The government of Afghanistan is convinced that in this situation Afghanistan does not need Pakistan financial support. In the heart of Asia conference at Amritsar India, President Ashraf Ghani refused to take financial support offered by Pakistan. He advised Pakistan to spend that money on stopping cross border terrorism. In this conference Prime Minister Nerandra Modi also supported this statement in his speech. India was worried that anti-Indian elements backed by the government Pakistan would not allow the government of India to establish its position in Afghanistan. India on one hand has broken Pak- Afghan relations and on other hand India has established its friendship with the government of Afghanistan. In some occasions Afghanistan considered this friendship as an "Open Book". Indian believed that anti-Indian elements are trained in Afghanistan that's why it was the top most priority of the Indian government to overcome Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. Addition to it India also wanted to tackle the planning of Pakistan to bring Pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. In this Indian succeeded they not only limited Pakistan influence in Afghanistan, even India brought pro- Indian government in Afghanistan. In fact, it was the Indo-Afghan nexus which trained and financed anti-Pakistan elements inside Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan joined hands against the so called Islamic militants. "Hamid Karzai visited in 2006 to India where three memorandum of understanding (MOUS) signed between India and Afghanistan in the domain of education, rural development and standardization between the Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) and Afghan national standardization authority (ANSA)."

In 2008 the Indian embassy was attacked resulted in 58 killed and 141 got injuries, in this regard "the Afghan government replied that India and Afghanistan are brother states and no one can harm these relations". Many of the Indian people came under attacks in Afghanistan. People believed that these attacks could affect the Indo- Afghan relations. Despite these terrorist's attack on Indians in Afghanistan. In 2011, India further enhanced its financial support to Afghan government. Moreover, the financial support of India to Afghanistan has reached to 2 billion dollars. After providing this support to Afghan government India has become the fifth largest financial help provider to Afghanistan. Addition to it the year of 2011 was considered as the era of big boost in the relationship between India and Afghanistan. When both the states signed strategic pact, Karzai stated "that Pakistan is our twin brother and India is our great friend.

2. Indian Strategy of Soft Power in Afghanistan

India wanted to fill the power vacuum in Afghanistan after US withdraw. Therefore, India increased its relationship with Afghanistan by investing in different projects. These projects have divided into following points.

- India is the largest humanitarian support provider in Afghanistan.
- She allocated 2 billion dollars for different projects in Afghanistan.
- She is involved in various reconstruction works,

rebuilding roads and air lines.

- She spread he cooperation in health, and woman empowerment.
- She did provide training to Afghan police, diplomats and civil servants of Afghanistan.

In the year of 2009 the Indian Army made a key road in the country side of Afghanistan in the Nimroz region. This links Delaram to Zaranj.

India did make a Dam, which is called Salma power project. Moreover, India has invested over 100 million dollars to Link Afghanistan with Iran through Chabahar port for trade. It will bypass Pakistan and the three states India, Iran and Afghanistan would do their trade. Further India provided 710 INR crores to the government of Afghanistan for construction of new Parliament. India has been trying to enhance the capability of Afghan Television for this purpose, she handed over 400 buses to the government of Afghanistan. This time US promised Pakistan that Afghanistan would not be left alone without reconstruction. That's why the US has been supporting India to establish its influence in Afghanistan. Indian Prime Minister said that India would be supporting Afghanistan to build its capacity of economic development as well as to strengthen its security.

3. Indian Strategic Interest in Afghanistan

After the incident of 9/11, the US and NATO invaded Afghanistan. This invasion had altered the political situation at Afghanistan, due to the invasion of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan the government of Taliban had no option but to run away. The US took control of Afghanistan. Moreover, achievement of US to defeat the government of Taliban in Afghanistan provided an opening to the government of India to establish its influence in Afghanistan. The government of India, during Taliban regime had no chance to increase its influence in Afghanistan. India has planned to help Afghanistan in different projects, like reconstructions projects and economic development. Furthermore, breakdown in the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan has led to friendly relations of India and Afghanistan. blame game between Pakistan and Afghanistan is in full swing, this behavior has greatly affected the Pak- Afghan relations. the government of India also wants to create distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan. When the government Taliban was overthrown by the US and NATO forces. This change of power in Afghanistan had provided an opportunity to the Indian government for enhancing its influence in Afghanistan, because during Taliban regime India had difficulty to enter into Afghanistan. India suddenly started diplomatic affairs with Afghanistan and Afghanistan was offered military as well intelligence prop up. the Prime Minister of India said that the relations between India and Afghanistan are like "an open book". "He further added that the two States are having same civilization, the government of India would support the people of Afghanistan and would stand with them in any kind of situation." In the year of 2005, India facilitated had the coalition government in Afghanistan. Moreover, the US also asked India to help Afghanistan. Further, India needs energy sources for its country, for this purpose India established its footprints in Afghanistan. India has well managed to have three countries nexus like Iran, Afghanistan and India to have access to Middle east, South

Asia and Central Asia. Afghanistan is the gate way to these areas. Pakistan raised voice against the increasing relations of India and Afghanistan. Even Islamabad asked them not to harm the stability of Pakistan. Afghanistan rejected Pakistan worries and replied, it would not affect Pakistan peace.

Further India and Afghanistan had made nexus against Islamic militants. "Hamid Karzai visited India in 2006; both the States signed three memorandum of understanding (MOUS) these (MOUS) were in terms of education, rural development and (BIS) and Afghan national (ANSA)." In 2008 the Indian embassy came under attack in which 58 people killed and almost 141 got injured, after this attack "the government of Afghanistan reacted that Afghanistan and government of India are just like brothers and through these kind of attacks, brotherly relations cannot be broken" Many of the Indian people have been died in terrorist's activities in Afghanistan. People supposed that due to the attacks on Indian nationals in Afghanistan, would lead to breakdown of Indo- Afghan relations, but despite all these targeted attacks on Indian nationals in Afghanistan. India has increased its financial support to Afghanistan. Moreover, India has invested 2.5 billion dollars in Afghanistan because of a huge investment in Afghanistan; India has become the fifth large investor in Afghanistan.

When strategic pact was signed between India and Afghanistan, Pakistan showed its worries regarding strategic pact. Karzai replied to Pakistan "that this agreement would not harm Pakistan. He further added that Pakistan is our brother while India is our friend." Pakistan policy makers are well aware of the fact that the friendship of Indo-Afghan would topple. the government of India wants to have a key position in Afghanistan, after the withdraw of International forces from Afghanistan; the government of India would influence Afghan policy, that's why India has been using its concept of soft power in Afghanistan to win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan. The strong position of India in Afghanistan would topple Pakistan influence in Afghanistan. After the incident of 9/11, United States and NATO invaded Afghanistan, which brought sudden changes in the political status of Afghanistan, after Taliban government overthrown by the US. India has got an opportunity to enhance its influence in Afghanistan. India has started to play her proactive role in the reconstructions and economic development of Afghanistan. Indian friendly relations with Afghanistan are due to the breakdown in the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan

4. United States Factor and Indo- Afghan relations

According to US congressional report, India wants to overcome the strategic depth of Pakistan in Afghanistan. According to congressional report Pak - US relations have hampered by Abbott Abad attack in 2011. this report showed that India wants to stop terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. The report also put light on the Indian worries about the terrorist groups fighting under the umbrella of Al Qaeda. They are considered the main threats to Indian interests. India believes that these groups have linkage with the groups, which have been fighting in Kashmir. India believed that these groups attacked on Mumbai in November 2008 and in July 2011.

In the report they further added that Afghanistan wants access to Indian markets. Afghanistan wants to get advantages of Indian fast nourishing economy. The reports

further added that former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai signed an agreement with India in New Delhi. Following this agreement India would train 600 Afghan army men every year. In 2013, the border skirmishes between Pakistan and Afghanistan had annoyed the government of Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai took it gravely and went to India to buy Air craft's and other Military appliances to defend with full power. India at that time rejected the request of Afghanistan. India had not wanted to directly take part in the war, latter on Ashraf Ghani took all the desired military appliances and India is now directly involved in Afghanistan and wants to counter Pakistan through Afghanistan.

The US uprooted the government of Taliban. This is beneficial for India, because in the presence of Taliban India could not stabilize its footprint in Afghanistan. In the whole process of India to establish its footprints in Afghanistan, she had backed by the US. In this connection India has been using its soft power in Afghanistan with the help of US and international community. This also created fears in the mind of military establishment of Pakistan. The US has been supporting India in Afghanistan. This is a matter of great concern for the policy makers of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan was front line state in the war against terror. This put Pakistan on the top of Taliban hit list. Many of the attacks took place in Pakistan which resulted in many people death and hundreds of people injured. These attacks were not only limited to civilians even Pakistan law enforcement agencies faced many of the suicide attacks, which resulted in huge loses. On other hand US had supported Pakistan financially to some extent. The US still have not been satisfied from Pakistan. US have been blaming Pakistan for not taking enough action against terrorists. Pakistan started internal military operations in FATA. This also resulted in huge internal displacement. In these military operations, Pakistan Army pushed Taliban into Afghanistan. The US and Afghan forces are still silent and they do not cooperate with Pakistan in this regard. On other hand US still demanding that Pakistan should take serious action against terrorist's groups operating inside Pakistan. US is totally supporting India in Afghanistan and still blaming Pakistan for supporting Taliban. This mistrust between Pakistan and US has brought instability in Pak- US relations. This compelled Pakistan to search for new friends like China and Russia as there has been mistrust between Pak- US friendships.

5. Conclusion

According to Gallup poll of 2010, In this one thousand People were interviewed. 50% adults had approved the performance of India's management and 44% had disapproved and 6% had refused to take part. It was the maximum approval score of India by any other state in the region of Asia. According to the study, Afghan adults like likely India's leadership than other states like Chinese or U.S. leadership. Both countries are on the road of friendship. This is in great interest of both the states.

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