



### Indian involvement in Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan

Mehvish Noor ul Islam<sup>a\*</sup>, Sayed Jafar<sup>b</sup>, Rukhsana Yasmine<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Research Associate Department of Pakistan Studies Hazara University Mansehra. <sup>b</sup>Subject Specialist, GHSS Shalozan District Kurram M.Phil/ M.Ed. <sup>c</sup>Research Associate Department of English Hazara University Mansehra

\*Email: mehwishnoorulislam@gmail.com

---

**Abstract:** Over the past few decades, India has significantly intensified its engagement with Afghanistan through various avenues including economic assistance, infrastructural development, capacity-building initiatives, and diplomatic relations. This paper examines the strategic motivations behind India's involvement in Afghanistan, analyzes the historical relationship between India and Afghanistan and Role of India in development of Afghanistan. Further Pakistan apprehension has been evolute and role of Indian in Afghanistan development and its impacts on Pakistan has been examined. To find out answer to the question this paper provides a brief qualitative and descriptive analysis. Through a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, it has been found that India's considerable involvement in Afghanistan's development projects, despite being a distant neighbor, raises significant concerns for Pakistan. Various international and regional stakeholders support India's presence in Afghanistan to advance their own interests. It is recommended that concerted efforts toward regional stability and peace are essential. Pakistan and India must actively contribute positively to Afghanistan, prioritizing the resolution of their bilateral concerns and conflicts.

**Keywords:** India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Regional Stability

---

#### 1. Introduction

India and Afghanistan have historically shared profound historical and cultural ties that date back to antiquity. The visit of Afghan Prime Minister Daud to New Delhi in 1959 elicited sentiments from Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru, underscoring the enduring nature of the relationship between the two nations despite the partition of India. Nehru expressed that while the physical demarcation of boundaries altered direct contact, it failed to diminish the deep-rooted bonds of shared interests and longstanding friendship. Following India's independence, the rapport between the two nations strengthened owing to various factors. Nehru emphasized the enduring significance of historical memory, which facilitated the revitalization of relations once circumstances permitted. Furthermore, he highlighted the compelling force of mutual interest as a pivotal factor driving closer bilateral ties.

After the events of September 11, 2001, the International Security Assistance Force initiated air strikes against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban's confrontation proved futile, leading to their eventual defeat. Following this, Professor Burhan-ud-din Rabbani facilitated the transition of power to the provisional régime led by Hamid Karzai on December 22, 2001, subsequent to the Taliban's ousting.

The composition of the new cabinet primarily comprised non-Pashtun individuals who were aligned with the Northern Alliance. India had cultivated a close and amicable relations with the Northern Alliance during the Taliban's reign. Consequently, the shift in power dynamics in Kabul was met with approval from India. This

sentiment was underscored by the visit of India's Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Kabul, and the reopening of the Indian Embassy in the Afghan capital (Trivedi, 2008).

Additionally, India took steps to reopen its embassies in Kandahar and Jalalabad while establishing novel embassies in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat (PANT, 2012, April 5). India extended its sustenance to the anew formed provisional government, reflecting its commitment to fostering diplomatic ties and contributing to the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan (Lasiram, 2011). Following his inauguration as President, Hamid Karzai undertook an official visit to India from February 26th to 27th, 2002 (Mahindra, 2005). Indian PM Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee reaffirmed India's commitment to extending humanitarian relief, as well as providing support for reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan (Sarwat Sultana Sami, (Winter 2018) Vol. III, No. I).

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, India intensified its focus on developmental initiatives and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. This shift towards fostering friendly relations resulted in an unprecedented level of engagement, exemplified by President Karzai's numerous visits to Delhi during his tenure as Afghanistan's President. Throughout this period, India remained steadfast in its support for Afghanistan's socio-economic development and played an active role in assisting the country's reconstruction efforts (Chand, 2013). On the contrary, Indian PM Manmohan Singh made two official visits to Afghanistan during his tenure. These visits carried significant political implications rather than being mere ceremonial excursions. Thus, it is evident that India's engagement with Afghanistan is motivated by a confluence of domestic, regional, and international interests. These interests can be categorized into three primary dimensions: political, economic, and social. Given the multifaceted nature of India's involvement in Afghanistan, it is pertinent to examine Indian initiatives in the country within each of these dimensions. Through a systematic analysis, scholar can gain insights into India's strategic objectives, economic engagements, and socio-cultural endeavors in Afghanistan, thereby elucidating the comprehensive nature of India's interests and contributions in Afghanistan Development.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study encompasses both descriptive and qualitative method to examine Indian involvement in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan. This method provides a comprehensive narrative of historical, political, and socio-economic dynamics. Drawing upon a range of secondary sources including books, research articles, research papers, and web sources ensures a thorough understanding of the subject matter.

## **3. Tracing Indo-Afghan Relations through Time**

Afghanistan, renowned for its nomadic culture and history of conflict, has historically been a focal point of geopolitical competition, particularly during the era of the Great Game due to its strategic location. The 19th century saw Afghanistan emerge as a battleground for supremacy between major powers such as the USSR and UK, both striving for influence in Central Asia (Muhammad Karim, 2017). This rivalry manifested in the form of the Anglo-Afghan wars, as the British perceived Russian expansionism as a threat to their dominance, given their colonial interests in India.

Post-independence, India and Afghanistan forged bilateral ties, solidifying their relationship through the Friendship Treaty of 1950 (Fair, 2014). This agreement facilitated the establishment of trade agencies in each other's capitals, fostering trade and diplomatic relations. Subsequent state visits from both nations further reinforced mutual cooperation. The historical interventions by Anglo-Indian powers in Afghanistan were driven by the strategic imperative of securing access to India, as all land routes to India traverse Afghan territory. Russia, prior to its direct involvement in Afghanistan, sought to establish a pro-Russian regime in the country. Meanwhile, India cultivated bilateral relations with Moscow, leading to a convergence of Indo-Russian interests in Afghanistan. This alignment of interests underscored the significance of Afghanistan within the broader geopolitical environment of South Asia. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, India extended significant cooperation to Afghanistan, making substantial investments in development projects and providing humanitarian aid. The conflict in Afghanistan proved to be analogous to the Vietnam War for the USSR, as it engaged in a protracted guerrilla warfare against the Mujahideen, extensively supported by the US and its allies (Blum, 2003). This conflict inflicted profound repercussions on the Soviet Union, ultimately contributing to its disintegration. The ensuing power vacuum enabled the Mujahideen to overthrow Najibullah's pro-Soviet government in 1992. The ascendancy of the Mujahideen posed challenges to Indian interests (Khalil, December 16, 2016).

However, the rise to power of Burhanuddin Rabbani, a non-Pashtun leader, alleviated New Delhi's concerns, as it ended India's diplomatic isolation (Jabeen, 2010). Despite the unfavorable circumstances during the Afghan war

period, India adeptly capitalized on the situation to cultivate deep economic relations with Afghanistan while simultaneously supporting the rebuilding efforts and development projects in the country (Hauner, 1981).. India refrained from openly criticizing the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, preferring instead to strengthen economic ties with successive Soviet-backed governments.

India's stance during this period underscored its pragmatic approach, prioritizing economic interests over ideological alignments. While Pakistan supported Islamist Afghan Mujahideen groups with the backing of the US, India maintained investments in various development sectors in Afghanistan, including industry, irrigation, hydro-electricity, and communication (Paliwal, June 2017). Following the demise of the USSR, India sought to engage with pro-Soviet and anti-Pakistan factions in Afghanistan to safeguard its strategic benefits. Though, Indian impact in Afghanistan waned due to several factors, including the Afghan Mujahideen's rebellion against Soviet followers, the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the establishment of a Mujahideen-led administration in Afghanistan. Pakistan's influence over the Mujahideen government posed a significant challenge for India, further diminishing its sway in the region.

India's support for the Northern Alliance and its leader Ahmed Shah Massoud stemmed from its animosity towards the Taliban, who enjoyed backing from Pakistan, a country with which India had strained relations. Additionally, India's aversion towards the Taliban was fueled by their unwavering support for Kashmiri separatist movements (Howenstein, 2010). Consequently, India distanced itself from the Taliban government following the end of the Rabbani administration and the Taliban's rise to power in 1996 (Rahman, 2010). India not only refrained from engaging in developmental initiatives but also severed diplomatic relations by closing its embassy in Kabul. These actions highlighted India's frustration with the Taliban government's unequivocal alignment with Pakistan.

The rise of the Taliban dealt a severe blow to Indian interests in Afghanistan, resulting in a significant reduction of Indian presence in the country to minimal levels. The post-9/11 era, however, presented India with a remarkable opportunity. Despite not making substantial sacrifices, India emerged as one of the primary beneficiaries of the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. These events, coupled with the subsequent global war against terrorism, afforded India the chance to advance the objectives of its foreign policy and assert itself as both a regional and global power (Howenstein N. a., 2010).

#### **4. India's Afghan Strategy: Geopolitical Imperatives**

India and Afghanistan share a longstanding relationship dating back over 2000 years, with India consistently striving to maintain influence in Afghanistan since its independence in 1947. Notably, India was the only South Asian state to recognize the Communist Afghanistan and maintain diplomatic ties with the Soviet-backed regime during the Soviet invasion from 1979 to 1989. Throughout this period, India providing philanthropical support to the Najibullah administration, which continued even after Najibullah's rule ended in 1992. This concise historical overview underscores India's enduring commitment to fostering diplomatic and humanitarian relations with Afghanistan, even during periods of geopolitical upheaval (Crossette, 1989).

The deterioration in the connection between India and Afghanistan occurred with the incidence of civil war in Afghanistan and the subsequent rise to power of the Taliban. India faced several security terrorizations in this period, including the devastation of the Bamiyan Buddha monuments, the hijacking of an Indian airlines flight in 1999, and the production of Afghan militants in Kashmir. The situation worsened following the US-led NATO attacks post-9/11 (Balachandar, 2012). Afghanistan, grappling with foreign interventions and civil strife for three decades, desires for peace, stability, economic development, and human security. In the aftermath of the Taliban's ousting, India actively contributed to Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. Afghanistan's close alliance and strengthened bonds with India stem from Afghanistan's strained relationships with Pakistan, which is accused of backup and harboring Taliban groups. After the fall of the Taliban and the US attack in 2001, India established diplomatic relationships with Afghanistan and as long as intelligence support. This concise overview highlights India's proactive role in Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction and its evolving diplomatic relations with the country amidst regional dynamics. The Indian PM expressed that India's cooperation with Afghanistan is well-documented, citing deep-rooted civilizational ties between the two nations. He affirmed India's commitment to stand by the Afghan people as they transition towards assuming responsibility for governance and security, particularly in anticipation of the withdrawal of international forces. This statement underlines India's enduring support for Afghanistan's stability and development, rooted in shared historical and cultural connections (Tisdall, 2012).

India pledged to continue supporting the governance and security efforts in Afghanistan following the extraction of

US forces. India also extended support to the coalition government in Afghanistan. Notably, in 2005, India offered Afghanistan membership in the SAARC, making Afghanistan the eighth member of the organization. Both nations enhanced their strategic and armed cooperation contrary to Islamic militants. During Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to India in 2006, three memorandums of understanding were signed to strengthen collaboration in education, rural progress, and standardization amid the Bureau of Indian Standards and the Afghan National Standardization Authority. Additionally, a contract worth \$50 million was signed to boost bilateral business ties, and India augmented its aid to Afghanistan from \$150 million to \$750 million. Indian President Manmohan Singh pledged further assistance for ongoing and future projects. This brief summary highlights India's multifaceted support for Afghanistan's development and security objectives, underlining the deepening bilateral ties between the two nations.

In 2008, a bombing at the Indian embassy in Kabul resulted in the loss of 58 lives and injuries to 141 individuals. The Afghan Foreign Ministry described India as a "brother country" and emphasized the unbreakable nature of the relationship between the two nations, asserting that no external adversary could disrupt it (Dr. Umbreen Javaid, 2016). In 2009, the Indian embassy in Kabul faced another attack, resulting in the deaths of at least 17 individuals. Additionally, a separate attack targeted the guesthouse where Indian doctors were residing, leading to the deaths of 18 individuals. Despite these challenges, by May 2011, Indian aid to Afghanistan had risen significantly, reaching an entire of US\$ 2 billion, making India the major regional assistance provider in the country.

The assassination of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani in 2011 prompted condemnation from Indian External Affairs Minister, Krishna, who lamented the silencing of another influential advocate for peace in Afghanistan, denouncing the act as a heinous display of terrorism and hatred (Powerful Voice of Peace Silenced: India on Burhanuddin Rabbani Killing , 2011). India reiterated its unwavering support for Afghanistan's pursuit of peace and democracy. In 2011, bilateral relations between Afghanistan and India received a significant boost with the signing of a strategic partnership agreement, marking Afghanistan's first such pact with India since the Soviet raid of 1979. This agreement, encompassing socioeconomic support and the training of Afghan security personnel, was emphasized by President Karzai during his visit to India as a means of bolstering Afghanistan's stability and development. Karzai emphasized that the strategic partnership was not aimed at any specific country and reiterated Afghanistan's fraternal relations with Pakistan and its friendship with India. He expressed disappointment over the lack of desired results in engagements with Islamabad, highlighting the establishment of a Partnership Council to oversee the implementation of the Strategic Partnership Pact in May 2012 (Dhar, 2011). In May 2014, three insurgents armed with AK-47s, RPGs, hand grenades, and suicide vests targeted the Indian consulate in Herat. Indian Ambassador to Kabul, Amar Sinha, acknowledged that the consulate had been repeatedly attacked by individuals opposed to India's developmental efforts in Afghanistan. Despite the attack, Sinha affirmed India's unwavering commitment to its progress aid and contributions to the restoration and rebuilding of Afghanistan (Gazette, 2014).

India is suspicious of the potential consequences of a complete drawdown of US military forces in Afghanistan, fearing that it could generate a space that allows extremists to reorganize. According to Indian scholars, the conflict in Afghanistan holds significant implications for Indian national security. Should the US withdraw and jihadists perceive a sense of triumph, India may face an escalating wave of terrorism. This succinctly captures India's concerns regarding the security ramifications of a US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Despite Indian negation, it is widely acknowledged that one underlying objective behind India's involvement in Afghanistan is to limit and undermine Pakistan's influence in the region. India perceives any developments favorable to Pakistan as detrimental to its own interests. Pakistan has consistently accused India of supporting separatist movements in the Balochistan province and training militants to carry out terrorist events in various regions, including Sind, Balochistan, and KPK provinces. Consequently, Pakistan views India as its primary national security threat, particularly as interior uncertainty within Pakistan raises concerns about the potential collapse of the state. This concisely summarizes the dynamics of rivalry and suspicion between India and Pakistan, with Afghanistan serving as a geopolitical battleground for their strategic interests (Hanauer, 2012).

Indian concerns also stem from the possibility of attacks by Pakistani-backed extremists within its territory. Additionally, longstanding unresolved issues between India and Pakistan have hindered efforts to foster peaceful coexistence and collaboration. Consequently, India has pursued a strategy of strengthening alliances with countries like Afghanistan to bolster its regional power status and contain its archrival, Pakistan, while also addressing the challenge posed by the growing fiscal power of China. India is ready to assume an important soft power role in Afghanistan and is prepared to antagonize the substantial challenges expected following the withdrawal of foreign

troops, which is anticipated to occur by the end of 2016. This briefly outlines India's strategic objectives and approach towards Afghanistan in the context of regional dynamics and security concerns.

### **5. Empowering Afghanistan: India's Developmental Endeavors**

India is actively involved in constructing a network of roads in Afghanistan, totaling over 700 kilometers in length. These highway projects serve both strategic and economic interests for India. While primarily focused on infrastructure reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, they also serve broader, multidimensional objectives (Thottam, Jyoti, and Gurgaon, 2011).

One such project is the Zaranj-Delaram, also known as Route 606, completed by India within three years at a cost of approximately \$110 million and handed over to Afghanistan in 2009 (Keck, 2013). Additionally, India has undertaken smaller road construction projects in the vicinity. The Zaranj-Delaram project holds significant economic importance for India, facilitating the transportation of goods from India through Chahbahar to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. India has also invested \$88 million in the construction of the Gardez-Khost road and reconstructed the Kabul-Kandahar Road as a goodwill gesture toward Afghanistan (Johar, 2010). Furthermore, India is involved in laying down a railway link between Afghanistan and Iran, connecting the mineral-rich Hajigak region to Iran's Chahbahar port. This railway link aims to access Afghanistan's iron ore reserves and establish an alternative trade route to Pakistan's Gawadar port, aligning with India's strategic interests (Fazil, 2016).

In addition to this, as part of its rebuilding and progress assistance program in Afghanistan, the Indian administration allocated \$300 million towards the Salma Dam development, started in 2006. Initially built in 1976 on the Harirod river basin in Herat province, the dam sustained damage during the early stages of Afghanistan's civil war. The Salma Dam project, situated in the Chiste Sharif district of Herat province, aims to harness hydroelectric and irrigation capabilities along the Hari Rud River. The project targets the generation of 42 MW of power and the enhancement of irrigation facilities across 80,000 hectares of land (Sarwat Sultana, 2018). Located as a glacier and run-off river scheme in West Afghanistan's Western Himalayas, the Salma Dam stands at 107 meters high, located 176 kilometers upstream of Herat province on the Harirud River (Innovative Construction Practice and Quality Control Measure for Earth and Rockfil Salma Dam Project Afghanistan - A Case Study, 2011). Upon completion, the dam is anticipated to facilitate irrigation across 75,000 acres of land in Herat and contribute an estimated 45 MW of electricity to the region (News, 2013).

Furthermore, the 218-kilometer corridor links Zaranj, situated at the Iran-Afghanistan border, to Delaram, located along the Kandahar-Heart highway within Heart province. Facilitating Afghanistan's connectivity to the Iranian port of Chahbahar (Bashir, 2023, Vol. 4, No. 3). This route was constructed by the Border Road Organization of the Indian Army (Ashraf, 2007). Moreover, during the prolonged Afghan conflict spanning three decades, the electric supply infrastructure in Afghanistan suffered severe damage. In Kabul, the capital city with a population of four million, inhabitants were subjected to only three hours of power supply every other day. Consequently, to address this pressing need, Afghanistan entered into an electric supply agreement with Uzbekistan. The agreement entailed the construction of a 462-kilometer power line from the Uzbek border to Kabul, with an estimated project cost of US\$ 250 million, partially financed by the Asian Development Bank (Energy is Life: Bringing Power to Afghanistan). The completion of this 150-megawatt project involved the construction of the final 202 kilometers of the power line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul, accompanied by the establishment of a substation, by India's Power Grid Corporation. The contract for this endeavor was formalized between the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Government on August 12, 2005 (Times, 2010). Additionally, the agreement encompassed the building of a colony for staffs and the training of personnel from the Afghan electrical energy department (Basar).

Moreover, India has made significant investments in infrastructure and offered technical support to Afghanistan. To enhance the mass transport system, India has donated 40 buses and 200 minibuses to Afghan authorities. Additionally, approximately 105 utility vehicles, including garbage dumpers and water tankers, have been provided to municipalities. In support of the Afghan National Army, India has facilitated the acquisition of 300 military conveyance automobiles. Furthermore, Afghan International Airline Arianna has received three Airbus aircraft, together with spare parts and access to technical training facilities, through Indian assistance. These comprehensive investments by India in Afghanistan garnered appreciation from the local populace, reflecting a commitment to long-term development and stability in the region.

### **6. Pakistan's Concerns: Perceptions of Indian Influence Expansion**

India's presence in Afghanistan, primarily focused on developmental efforts, continues to evoke apprehension within Pakistan, particularly among its influential military establishment. To comprehend, if not endorse, Pakistan's viewpoint on this matter, it is imperative to probe into some political context. Following Pakistan's significant military loss in the 1971 war with India, its military device became preoccupied with the concept of "strategic depth" in Afghanistan. Essentially, this entailed the pursuit of a compliant Afghan government that Pakistan could rely on to offer military reservation in the event of a substantial Indian intrusion into Pakistani land in an impending war. This succinctly outlines Pakistan's historical motivations and strategic imperatives regarding its approach towards Afghanistan, shedding light on the underlying tensions and dynamics in the region.

The argument regarding "strategic depth" held some validity until the late 1980s. Though, with Pakistan's acquisition of an emerging nuclear deterrent, the concept lost much of its substance. The emerging nuclear weapons capabilities of Pakistan effectively dissuaded India from mounting a serious conventional offensive against it. In scenarios marked by an aggressive Indian offensive leading to substantial territorial breaches across the international border, Pakistan may consider employing the first use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent measure. Information available in the public domain proposes that Pakistan adheres to both declaratory and operational doctrines endorsing the preemptive use of nuclear arms in a conflict with India, especially in situations involving significant territorial loss. This highlights the shift in Pakistan's strategic calculus following its acquisition of nuclear capabilities, underscoring the evolving dynamics of regional security and deterrence (Narang, 2009).

Thus, the concept of "strategic depth" primarily serves as a professed justification for pursuing another goal: limiting India's existence and impact in a post-US and post-ISAF Afghanistan. From the perspective of Pakistan's military, preventing India from establishing a position in Afghanistan serves numerous objectives. Firstly, it prevents India from gaining land contact to the resource-rich states of Central Asia. Secondly, it hampers India's ability to gather intelligence on Pakistan's western regions, particularly the restive province of Balochistan. Finally, it curtails India's potential to exercise military pressure in collaboration with an upcoming Afghan government aligned with Indian interests. This clearly elucidates Pakistan's strategic objectives and motivations behind its efforts to limit India's involvement in Afghanistan, highlighting the multifaceted dimensions of regional rivalry and security dynamics (Randolph, 2010). Furthermore, denying India a foothold in Afghanistan would facilitate Pakistan's ongoing strategy of utilizing Afghan region to shape and train numerous proxy terrorist forces. These forces are intended for use against India in general and particularly in the undecided state of Jammu and Kashmir. This emphasizes Pakistan's strategic calculus aimed at leveraging Afghanistan as a base for supporting proxy terrorist activities directed against India, particularly in the context of the Kashmir conflict (Kapur, 2010).

Given these strategic benefits, it is unsurprising that Pakistan has consistently worked to impede India from founding a safe position inside Afghanistan. Till late 2011, US policymakers generally aligned with Pakistan's viewpoint in efforts to address its apprehensions. In fact, main American policymakers had openly acknowledged that while India's growing contributions to Afghanistan were noteworthy, they also recognized the validity of Pakistani apprehensions and anxieties. This illustrates the convergence of interests between Pakistan and certain US policymakers regarding India's role in Afghanistan, highlighting the complexities of regional dynamics and geopolitical considerations (Reuters, 2010).

Though, after the worsening of the US-Pakistan relations following the killing of Osama bin Laden, there was a noticeable shift in the American stance toward this matter (Baker, 2011). Key American policymakers refrained from explicitly alleging Pakistani authorities' awareness of Osama bin Laden's location. Nevertheless, a noticeable change occurred in US attitudes towards Pakistan, marked by a hardening stance regarding its perceived reluctance to cooperate with the US in dismantling various terrorist networks operating within its borders. This shift led to a significant deterioration in the bilateral relationship, notably highlighted by remarks from Admiral Michael Mullen, the outgoing US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who openly testified before the Senate, describing the Haqqani network as a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's ISI Directorate (Bumiller, 2011).

Admiral Michael Mullen's forthright and public statements likely originated from intelligence reports linking the attack on the US Embassy and NATO Headquarters in Kabul in mid-September 2011 (Rubin, 2011). Following Admiral Michael Mullen's straightforward statement, both the White House and the State Department endeavored to mend the unavoidable strain in bonds with Pakistan. Notwithstanding these diplomatic efforts, it became evident that a divide had developed in the US-Pakistan relations (Fifield, 2011). However, despite this breakage, it is improbable that the US will completely relinquish its endeavors to solicit some degree of collaboration from Pakistan.

## 7. Implications for Pakistan

The economic development of Pakistan has been notably impeded by the ramifications of terrorism and the complex dynamics characterizing its relations with Afghanistan, Iran, and India. Given the quickly evolving regional and global dynamics, Pakistan faces complex challenges that, if not addressed prudently, could have serious implications. Particularly concerning is the emergence of the Indo-Iran-Afghan nexus, which poses a significant obstacle to improving ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan has encountered recurring difficulties in its bilateral relations with Iran, India, and Afghanistan, prompting a cautious approach towards any alliance between the three countries and anticipating potential future repercussions.

Meanwhile, India's assertive diplomacy in the area poses challenges for Pakistan, as the mounting Indo-Iran relationship appears aimed at isolating Pakistan and thwarting Islamabad's efforts to enhance relations with Iran. The involvement of India and Iran as new players in the regional dynamics, alongside Afghanistan's potential economic benefits from this nexus, presents Pakistan with new challenges. Failure to address these challenges adequately could lead to Pakistan's economic isolation, posing a threat to its stability and prosperity. The scenario if materialized will breed following: -

The escalating hostility between India and Pakistan raises the specter of a potential conventional conflict or even the use of nuclear arsenals. And the heightened bitterness and antagonism between Pakistan and Afghanistan contribute to the ongoing volatile situation in the region. More, the intensified competition among key regional players, including the US, China, Russia, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, to expand their respective spheres of influence stresses the complex geopolitical dynamics in the region. Along with this, the formulation of strategic alliances, such as the Indo-US alliance vis-à-vis China, the Pak-China alliance against India, and the Indo-Iran/Indo-Afghanistan alliance against Pakistan, highlights the intricate web of geopolitical relationships in the region. Additionally, alliances like Russo-China versus the USA further underscore the strategic maneuvering and competition among major global powers (Nawaz, 2009).

The utilization of proxy warfare by various stakeholders to advance their strategic objectives and interests demonstrates a recurring tactic in contemporary geopolitics. So, the persistent use of terrorism as a tool by different actors to coerce or subdue their adversaries underscores the ongoing tactics employed in contemporary conflict dynamics. Further, the strategic exploitation of terrorist organizations by smugglers, drug traffickers, and criminal syndicates to further their agendas highlights a complex interplay of interests and tactics within illicit networks. Moreover, the pervasive instability in the region or specific areas within it poses a significant impediment to financial progress and growth. At last, but not the least the potential for the new "Great Game" to escalate into a large-scale skirmish including numerous stakeholders poses a significant risk of catastrophe at both regional and global levels.

## 8. Conclusion

India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan emerge as the predominant states shaping South Asian affairs. Before the 9/11 attack, nuclearization constituted a central theme in South Asian politics. The aftermath of 9/11 presented India with an opportunity to reassert its influence in Afghanistan. South Asia predominantly revolves around Indian-centric dynamics, as all neighboring states share physical borders with India, except Afghanistan, which lacks direct access to India. India's strategic focus centers on establishing access to Central Asia via Afghanistan. Notably, Pakistan stands as the sole South Asian state posing a challenge to India's pursuit of regional hegemony.

India's considerable involvement in Afghanistan's development projects, despite being a distant neighbor, raises significant concerns for Pakistan. Various international and regional stakeholders support India's presence in Afghanistan to advance their own interests. Despite the potential ramifications for Pakistan, India continues to expand its engagement and cooperation efforts. India's investments span across political, economic, and social spheres. Politically, India aims to showcase its status as the world's largest democracy by supporting democratic processes in Afghanistan. Economically, India seeks new markets for its goods and access to raw materials, motivating its investments in Afghanistan's economic sectors.

Furthermore, India aimed to prevent a pro-Pakistan government from emerging in Afghanistan. Pakistan's exclusion from the energy market and its security challenges from both eastern and western fronts provide India with advantages stemming from the Karzai government's antagonism toward Pakistan. Pakistan invested significant efforts in fostering friendly relations with Afghanistan to bolster border security and enhance its strategic posture. However, these efforts were hindered by adversarial relations with India and India's presence in Afghanistan. India prioritizes its economic interests in Afghanistan over its strategic goals of encircling Pakistan.

Pakistan ought to assume a proactive role in stabilizing Afghanistan and aiding its emergence from the current precarious situation. A stable Afghanistan holds significant benefits for Pakistan. To achieve this, Pakistan and Afghanistan must develop a comprehensive strategy addressing various issues such as trade, border incursions, and cross-border incidents. Both nations should commit to ensuring that their territories are never used against each other. Pakistan must prioritize addressing internal challenges, maintaining law and order, and fostering peace within its borders.

Along with this, concerted efforts towards regional stability and peace are imperative. Pakistan and India should actively contribute positively to Afghanistan, setting aside their bilateral concerns and conflicts. Engaging in trilateral dialogue can foster a peaceful regional environment. Additionally, transparency and confidence-building measures are essential among India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan for sustained cooperation in Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development.

## References

- Ashraf, F. (2007). India Afghanistan Relations: Post-9/11. *Strategic Studies*, 27(02), 90-102.
- Baker, P. C. (2011, May 1). Bin Laden is Dead. *The New York Times*.
- Balachandar, S. (2012). India's Role in Afghanistan: Past Relations and Future Prospects. *Foreign Policy Journal*.
- Basar, E. (n.d.). The Roles of India and Pakistan in Afghanistan's Development and Natural Resources. RAND National Security Research Division , 2.
- Bashir, T. M. ( 2023, Vol. 4, No. 3). Increasing Indian Influence in Afghanistan: Impacts on Pakistan. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 393-404.
- Blum, W. ( 2003). *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Common Courage Press.
- Bumiller, E. a. (2011, September 22). Pakistan's Spy Agency Is Tied to Attack on US Embassy. *The New York Times*.
- Chand, M. (2013, December 1). Hamid Karzai's 14th visit to Delhi: A 'new role' for India. Ministry of External Affairs.
- Crossette, B. (1989, 03 01). India to Provide Aid to Government in Afghanistan. *The New York Times*.
- Dhar, S. (2011, 10 05). Pakistan a twin brother, talks to go on: Karazai. PAJHWOK AFGHAN NEWS. <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/10/05/pakistan-twin-brother-talks-gokarzai>
- (n.d.). *Energy is Life: Bringing Power to Afghanistan*. Asia Development Bank.
- Fair, C. C. (2014). *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*. Oxford University Press.
- Fazil, M. D. (2016, June 9). Magazine.
- fifield, A. a. (2011, September 29). Kabul raid's secrets strain diplomatic stance. *The Financial Times*.
- Gazette, I. (2014). Indian Consulate in Afghanistan Attacked by Gunman.
- Hanauer, L. &. (2012). India and Pakistan Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region. *RAND Corporation*.
- Hauer, M. (1981). The Soviet Threat to Afghanistan and India 1938-1940. *Modern Asian Studies Vol. 15, No. 2,* 287-309.
- Howenstein, N. a. (2010). India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Affairs*.
- Howenstein, N. S. (2010). India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Affairs*.
- Innovative Construction Practice and Quality Control Measure for Earth and Rockfill Salma Dam Project Afghanistan - A Case Study. (2011, May). NBMCW.
- Jabeen, M. M. (2010). US Afghan Relations: A Historical Perspective of Events of 9/11. *South Asian Studies* 25, no. 1, 43-173.
- Johar, G. (2010, June 30). e-paper: Mining The Minefield.
- Kapur, S. G. (2010). The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Islamist Militancy in South Asia. *The Washington Quarterly*, 47-59.
- Keck, Z. (2013). India's Afghan Power Play, Via Iran. *The Diplomat*.
- Khalil, A. B. (December 16, 2016). Features: The Tangled History of the Afghanistan-India-Pakistan Triangle . *The Diplomat* .
- Lasiram, R. S. (2011, June 3). India's Afghan Policy: Beyond Bilateralism. Institute for Defence Studies And Analysis.
- Mahindra, V. (2005). *India and Neighbors*. New Delhi: CNF Publisher.



- Muhammad Karim. (2017). World Powers Rivalry in Afghanistan and Its Effects on Pakistan. *The Dialogue XII*, no. 3 .
- Narang, V. (2009). Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Posture and South Asian Stability. *International Security*, 38-78.
- Nawaz, S. (2009). FATA – A Most Dangerous Place. *Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies*, VI, no. 4 , 13–7.
- News, T. (2013, August 14). India's Vows to Complete Salma Dam Within a Year. TOLO News.
- Paliwal, A. (June 2017). New Alignments, Old Battlefield: Revisiting India's Role in Afghanistan. *Carnegie India*,
- PANT, H. V. (2012, April 5). *NDIA IN AFGHANISTAN: A RISING POWER OR A HESITANT POWER*. McGill University. [http://cepsi-cipss.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2012/06/Harsh\\_Pant\\_wkg\\_paper.pdf](http://cepsi-cipss.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2012/06/Harsh_Pant_wkg_paper.pdf)
- Powerful Voice of Peace Silenced: India on Burhanuddin Rabbani Killing . (2011). New Delhi: PTI.
- Prof. Dr. Umbreen Javaid, R. J. (2016). Indian Influence in Afghanistan and its Implications for Pakistan. *JRSP*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January-June, 2016, 1-12.
- Rahman, S. u. (2010). Indian presence in afghanistan: Dynamics of Regional Security Institute for strategic studies. *research & analysis (issra)*.
- Randolph, E. (2010, January 5). India's Afghanistan Dilemma. *The Guardian*.
- Reuters. (2010, June 1). US Seeks to Balance India's Afghanistan Stake. *The Express Tribune*.
- Rubin, A. J. (2011, September 13). US Embassy and NATO Headquarters Attacked in Kabul. *The New York Times*.
- Sarwat Sultana Sami, N. F. ( (Winter 2018) Vol. III, No. I). Development of Indo-Afghan Relations in Political Economic and Social Aspects Post 9/11 Scenario; Implication for Pakistan. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 411 – 433.
- Sarwat Sultana Sami, N. F. (Vol. III, No. I (Winter 2018)). Development of Indo-Afghan Relations in Political Economic and Social Aspects Post 9/11 Scenario; Implication for Pakistan. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 411 – 433.
- Thottam, Jyoti, and Gurgaon. (2011, April 11). *Magzine*.
- Times, T. E. (2010, March 20). Lighting up Kabul. *The Economic Times*.
- Tisdall, S. (2012). India may pay heavily in future for supporting the Karzai regime. *The Guardian*.
- Trivedi, R. (2008). *India's Relations with Her Neighbours*. Isha Books.