

# **A NEW FRONT AGAINST CHINA REVIEW OF AFGHANISTAN POLICY OF INDIA**

**A Dissertation submitted to the Panjab University,  
Chandigarh for the award of Master of Philosophy in Social  
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Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration  
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**By**

**Candidate Name: Brigadier Deepak Nandan Pandey**

**(Roll No. 4629)**

**Under the guidance of**

**Supervisor Name: Dr Manan Dwivedi**



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**NEW DELHI**

## **CERTIFICATE**

I have the pleasure to certify that **Brigadier Deepak Nandan Pandey** has pursued his Research work and prepared the present dissertation titled **“A New Front Against China : Review of Afghanistan Policy of India”** under my guidance and supervision. The dissertation is the result of his own research and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has earlier comprised any other monograph, dissertation or book. This is being submitted to the Panjab University, Chandigarh, for the purpose of Master of Philosophy in Social Sciences in Partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi

I recommended that the dissertation of **Brigadier Deepak Nandan Pandey** is worthy of consideration for the award of M.Phil degree of Panjab University, Chandigarh.



**(Dr Manan Dwivedi)**

Indian Institute of Public Administration  
I.P. Estate, Ring Road,  
New Delhi-110002

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## Table of Content

Ser No	Chapter	Title	Page No
1.	Contents		iv
2.	List of Appendices		v
3.	List of abbreviations		vi
4.	Executive Summary		vii-x
5.	Chapter I	Introduction	1-16
6.	Chapter II	Relations of Afghanistan with India	17-23
7.	Chapter III	China and its regional interests. Areas of conflict with India.	24-41
8.	Chapter IV	Pakistan's Quandry	42-51
9.	Chapter V	Players in the Game	52-61
10.	Chapter VI	Indian developmental policy advantages and its relevance post 2020	62-67
11.	Chapter VII	Recommendations and Conclusion	68-78
12.	Chapter VIII	Research methodology, methods of data collection and data analysis.	79-89
13.	Appendices		89-98
14.	Bibliography		99-108

## LIST OF APPENDICES

SL NO	APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGES	
			FROM	TO
1.	A	Developmental Aid projects & Contributions in Afghanistan By India	89	93
2.	B	Resolute Support Mission– Troop Contributing Nations	94	94
3.	C	Descriptive Questionnaire for Subject Matter Experts	95	96
3.	D	Afghanistan Maps : Political and Ethnic Profile	97	97
4.	E	Afghanistan Factbook	98	98

## ABBREVIATIONS

1. ISAF - International Security Assistance Force.
2. ANDSF - Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.
3. NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
4. CAR - Central Asian Region.
5. SCO Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
6. IS-K Islamic State - Khorasan
7. ETIM East Turkistan Islamic Movement
8. UNAMA - United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
9. FATA - Federally Administered Tribal Areas.
10. ISI - Inter Services Intelligence Wing.
11. PRT - Provincial Reconstruction Teams.
12. UNSC - United Nations Security Council.
13. TTP - Tehreek - e - Taliban Pakistan.
14. IATT - Indian Army Training Team.
15. SPA - Strategic Partnership Alliance.
16. EU - European Union.
17. GIRoA - Govt of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
19. IDSA - Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis.
20. NWFP - North West Frontier Province.
21. USIP - United States Institute of Peace.
22. RAW - Research and Analysis Wing.
23. PDPA - Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The drawdown of Resolute Support Mission (US led NATO deployment) from Afghanistan has caused a great number of nations and intelligentsia to analyse and realign their policy outlook through the lens of *National Interest*. This initiates the fourth cycle of the great game in the region, two cycles being played by the British and the Russians, the third by the US led ISAF and finally now, when the draw down commences. (Details of Resolute Support Mission are given at Appendix B.)

Southern Afghanistan with its contiguous *Pushto* speaking provinces share a common language and culture with Pakistan. This to a great extent has given the leverage to Pakistan to sway opinions of the *Jirgas* of the region through its decades long ISI led association. Our Western neighbour therefore, believes in its rightful role in contributing towards 'regime formation' in Kabul. The clamour for strategic space bears very strongly on its mind, lest it finds itself sandwiched between an inimical Afghanistan and growing India.

China on the other hand, has interest in the mineral rich region not only from economical point but also to deny its Uyghur population any ideological support base. It has economic heft and considerable leverage over Pakistan and therefore Taliban (including its overt and covert alliances, Al-Qaeda?). China also sees this region from the point of view of CPEC connectivity extending towards CAR. While in the past it has refused to participate in extending Military support and was seen as 'free riding' Western security presence in 'nailing' mining and oil exploration contracts, its cozying up to Taliban in the past does not give a clear indication of the aims she wishes to pursue. Only two things emerge very clearly, first it wants US-NATO Resolute Support Mission out and secondly it wants to undermine Indian role and therefore Indian developmental presence. India has contributed over \$ 2 Billion in various developmental projects across all provinces of Afghanistan. An investment made to garner goodwill and genuine development of a war-ravaged nation. During the Taliban regime, New Delhi had shut its embassy and was marginalized. A loss not only of international standing but also of allowing sovereign state of Afghanistan to be used by terrorists against the Indian heartland. The cost is too heavy to be paid again.

## **Justification**

Afghanistan with its mineral resources, its proximity to energy rich Central Asian Republics and Iran has emerged at the strategic cross-roads linking energy rich nations with energy deficient expanding economies. Asian nations now have a lot at stake in stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan in the changing dynamics.

India traditionally has shared historical and cultural linkages with Afghanistan, and has been a major role player in re-constructional developments in the country since the fall of Taliban. American led ISAF operations has to a great extent reduced the influence of Taliban. The linkage between Taliban and Arab dominated Al-Qaeda has been considerably damaged thereby severing the Slafi Arabic influence over it. However, in the emerging horizon US has started engaging Taliban as a stake holder in a stabilising and governing role in Afghanistan.

India's developmental policies have garnered goodwill in the general Afghan population and Govt. As Afghanistan prepares itself for three simultaneous political, security and economic transitions in 2021, India has sought to allay fears about the future by making a long term commitment to the security and development of Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the two sides, inter alia, provides for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance to re-build indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas, encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources. Bilaterally, India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. India's extensive developmental assistance programme, which now stands at over US \$2 billion, is a strong signal of its abiding commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan during this critical period of security and governance transition. This makes India one of the leading donor nations to Afghanistan, and by far the largest from among the regional countries. India believes that sustainable development of requires long-term investment in Afghanistan that can help it utilise it's natural resource wealth. India is, thus, at the forefront of the promotion of investment in Afghanistan, a consortium of public and private Indian companies have been selected to make one of the biggest investments in the country's mining sector in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

The Afghan nation state has still a long way to go before it reaches a stable democratic equilibrium, far and near regional influences will be at play for times to come. There is therefore, the need to re-examine India's Afghan policy through the prism of National Interest especially the emerging scenario of Sino-Pak collusive policies and players like Taliban looming to play a role in governance of Afghanistan. The question therefore



remains, should the massive investment in developing the war torn country be left at the mercy of inimical alliances or there is a need for stronger Indian engagement in Afghanistan?

## **The Problem**

The extent of engagement built up by India to play a constructive role in Afghanistan's future would depend upon its continued developmental foreign policy and bringing in regional and trans-regional investment. This needs to be analysed qualitatively and assessed against the present threats emerging post the drawdown of US led NATO forces. Threats that undermine India are the growing collusive policy intermingling between China and Pakistan including their proxies.

## **Methodology**

**Research Strategy** – Qualitative Approach. The study will be mainly analytical, Evaluation of existing policy in the emerging context will be carried out.

**Research Design** – Descriptive and Exploratory in nature. Review of secondary data and interviews/ discussions with people of knowledge and expertise on the subject. Method involved critical review of secondary literature. Information collected from the secondary source was interpreted and analysed for a perspective on logical flow of thought to arrive at specific facets of the problem.

**Data** – The primary means of data collection was from publications, books and journals, available in the library of IIPA on the subject. Most of the information was drawn from open source internet sites of reputed organisations. Valuable inputs from the strategic subject matter experts formed the basis of the strategic vision, direction and intentions of the two neighbours. Questionnaire developed for the purpose was forwarded to subject matter experts for obtaining primary data, these included intelligentsia dealing with the subject including some Afghan Nationals.

- 1) **Secondary data** available in public domain i.e. reports released by Govt of India, Peoples Republic of China, Govt of Pakistan and Govt of Afghanistan and other related countries. Secondary data also available in periodicals, national & international journals, published articles in newspapers & magazines, internet sites.

- 2) **Primary data** - Discussion with policy makers, Subject matter experts & Afghan officials/ citizens in India.

## **Conclusion**

Proactive engagement in multilateral talks by India is the right approach to the emerging situation in Afghanistan. Russia an old-time ally and a defence procurement partner, has influential engagements both, with the Taliban and the Afghan Govt. She is a major source of supply of equipment to India. Continued good relations with Russia are bound to pay dividends. US will remain the powerbroker in the region irrespective of its withdrawal. Going forward with large Indian diaspora in decision making role must be taken advantage of to play a positive influence in support of Indian policies for the region. Iran has an important role to play with deep insight in functioning of Taliban. Alliance and goodwill with Tehran needs to be gained in the time of pandemic with vaccine diplomacy to garner intelligence support in the future. While Pakistan will always see Indian presence in Afghanistan as detrimental to its existence, it needs to be engaged through track II channels to be conveyed any Indian asset targeted in Afghanistan or elsewhere will have a debilitating repercussion. China has its vulnerabilities to Uyghur militancy and drug trafficking. Post Ladakh incident there is a trust deficit. She has considerable influence over Pakistan and therefore over the proxies, it needs to be seen how it engages and uses these influences with its deep pockets. Using Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS as fora to engage with China need to be kept open. These volatile and changing relations will continuously morph and evolve. India needs one constant and that is to train, develop and strengthen Afghan National Defence and Security Force. Simultaneously develop and deploy an evolved intelligence regional setup to wield overt and covert ascendancy on the non-state actors. Diplomacy is the third leg of the triad, winning manoeuvres in bilateral and multilateral engagements will be a very an important facet and therefore an agile and forward thinking Diplomatic corps.



## CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

On July 17 2013, the Afghan and US governments announced that Afghanistan had become the first country in the world to have seventy percent of its territory mapped using “an advanced remote sensing technique known as hyperspectral imaging.” The purpose of the imaging – overseen by the US Geological Survey (USGS) and funded by the Defense Department Task Force on Business and Stability Operations– was to map Afghanistan’s multitude of mineral deposits. The potential value of these deposits – touted to top one trillion dollars — and their importance for Afghanistan’s economic growth have been the topic of much public debate — heralded by some but questioned by others.

Afghanistan is awash in natural resources. The challenge, however, is how to make their extraction commercially viable given the various risk factors present in Afghanistan. Converting the country’s lithium, copper, rare earth elements, and hydrocarbons into much-needed government revenue is a long-term and complicated effort. Electricity, roads, rail-lines, pipelines, and processing facilities are crucial to the success of Afghanistan’s mining efforts, but lacking at present. And building capacity within the Afghan Ministry of Mines to manage multibillion dollar projects is a slow process, too<sup>1</sup>. Afghanistan with its sub-surface wealth has become a lucrative investment destination for expanding economies provided it can be exploited. Therefore, it’s safe to assume the pressures is weighing heavy on strings to get stable dispensation to power.

Afghanistan a major non-NATO ally and a long-term US strategic partner. The dynamics of the region will undergo serious change after the drawdown in 2021. There is a clear understanding in the minds of international community that for the common good, a stable and prosperous Afghanistan needs to emerge from the ashes of four decades of conflict.

India traditionally has shared historical and cultural linkages with Afghanistan, and has been a major role player in re-constructional developments in the country since the fall of Taliban. American led ISAF operations has to a great extent reduced the influence

of Taliban. The linkage between Taliban and Arab dominated Al-Qaeda has been considerably damaged thereby severing the Slafi Arabic influence over it. However, in the emerging horizon US has started engaging Taliban as a stake holder in a stabilising and governing role in Afghanistan. Taliban has its roots in the Pashtun tribes straddled across the Durand line, this places Pakistan in a considerable advantage to get anti-India stance on the negotiating table.

China has just over a year before Afghanistan fades from the West's radar and Western attention toward the country shrinks substantially. However, it is not clear that Beijing has properly considered what it is going to do once NATO forces leave and pass the responsibility for Afghan stability and security to local forces. And more crucially, it is not clear that China has thought about what it can do with the significant economic leverage it wields in the region. Afghanistan offers China the opportunity to show the world it is a responsible global leader that is not wholly reliant on others to assure its regional interests. Traditionally, Chinese thinkers have considered Afghanistan the "graveyard of empires." They chuckle at the ill-advised American-led NATO effort and point to British and Soviet experiences fighting wars in Afghanistan. But in reality, the presence of NATO forces provided China with a sense of stability and concern at the same time. Beijing correctly assumed that NATO's presence in Afghanistan would mean regional terrorist networks would remain focused on attacking Alliance forces rather than stirring up trouble in neighbouring countries like China. NATO's targeting of Islamist groups also had the effect of striking anti-Chinese Uighur groups that had sought refuge in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban or al-Qaeda. These Uighur groups would otherwise have focused their attention on targeting China. Yet as the date of American withdrawal from Afghanistan approaches, this security dynamic is changing. While China does worry about the threat of Islamist Uighur groups striking from their Afghan bases, this concern is relatively marginal. The bigger problem is the potentially negative repercussions for the rising number of investments from China's private sector in Afghanistan and its surrounding region. These investments are part of a broader push into Central Asia that flows from an effort to develop China's historically underdeveloped province of Xinjiang, which borders Afghanistan. The prospect of an Afghanistan returning to chaos is, therefore, not appealing to policymakers and business people in Beijing. This scenario would bring instability directly to China's doorstep, and this instability could potentially expand northward into Central Asia or southward into Pakistan. China would suffer from further chaos in either direction <sup>2</sup>.

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations on the other hand are a tumultuous sequence of crests and troughs. There is no denying ethnic and cultural affinity between the two neighbours which binds their destiny. Pakistan's craving for a strategic space results in Afghanistan being viewed as its own backyard. China and Pak also have a long standing and steady relationship which is time tested. Afghanistan therefore is a pie which can be collusively shared. Certain emerging scenarios which have been picked from the pages of history when Obama Administration declared its decision of US-NATO drawdown in 2014 are enumerated in succeeding paragraphs of the Introduction Chapter.

#### **A. Indian Perspective Afghan Scenario of 2014**

Dr Shanthie Mariet D'Souza an Afghanistan expert and a visiting research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. She is also a visiting expert at IDSA New Delhi. Dr Shanthie had enumerated four scenarios with the Indian perspective suggesting, India will have to organise a range of diplomatic, military, and economic tools and set clear policy markers to sustain the democratic order and deny the space for the return of the extremists. The near to medium-term projects could include training of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), particularly its officer corps, the police, paramilitary, and the air force, and also helping to build the justice sector. In the long term, security sector reform and building sound civil-military relations would remain critical in preventing the disintegration or loss of civil control of the army<sup>3</sup>. The scenarios which can now be envisioned:-

- 1) **Scenario 1.** Afghan political process stabilises and matures through a relatively free and fair election processes over time. The Afghan security forces, with continuing assistance from the residual US forces on Afghan soil, subdue the Taliban insurgency. Violence would continue, but would not destabilise the government. This optimal scenario would mean business as usual for India. However, to ensure this, New Delhi and regional states would need to work with the present coalition government and other political groups to ensure free and fair elections. It will also have to play a more proactive role in building the capabilities of the Afghan security sector. This scenario appears partially emerging with the Taliban sitting in the negotiating table.

2) **Scenario 2.** The election processes following successful Doha negotiations, do not mature and are marred by widespread malpractices and fraud, thereby undermining the role and power of Afghan President. Such scenario would require dependence of convening a Loya Jirgah frequently, leading the opposition political groups as well as the influential warlords and power brokers to call for regime change and possible civil unrest. Afghan society could fracture along ethnic and tribal lines with regional powers supporting their proxies. With Afghanistan divided into various spheres of influence, India would be constrained to choose sides not just among the present regime and other political groups, but also among the warlords and regional commanders. This would be a case of high-risk involvement with diminishing returns, with little guarantee of securing India's interest in the long term.

3) **Scenario 3.** Following a negotiated political settlement, the Taliban (Quetta Shura Taliban) could return to Afghanistan under a power-sharing arrangement, allowing it to administer key provinces as well as retaining significant influence in the national government. This would gradually lead to instability and fragmentation, with anti-Taliban political forces, women and civil society groups opposing such deals, leading the country to a 1990s-type civil war situation. In case of the precipitous withdrawal of international forces, the danger of a substantial region under Taliban influence is also highly probable. This is possibly the worst case scenario. India will have little option but to strengthen its presence, bolster its homeland security measures and increase vigilance along the India-Pakistan border.

4) **Scenario 4.** A political dispensation backed by Pakistan or headed by a pro-Pakistan personality like Muhammad Umar Daudzai, the once Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad, or a protégé of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from the Hezb-e-Islami, assumes power. This could also lead to a surge of influence and area domination by the Peshawar Shura of the Taliban in the South and East or the ceding of territory (Paktia, Paktika, Khost) to the Haqqani network. New Delhi will have to recalibrate its mode of engagement by extending support and building linkages among tribal networks, refugees, and nomadic groups in the bordering areas of Afghanistan-Pakistan and build on the Kabul Shura as an effective counterforce. This scenario appears an least probable.

## **B. US Perspective<sup>3</sup>**

The scenario reproduced below are described by Dr Marvin G Weinbaum, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who served as analyst for Pakistan and Afghanistan in the US Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research from 1999 to 2003. Presently a scholar-in-residence at the Middle East Institute in Washington DC.

### **1) Scenario 1: Transition Exceeds Expectations; US Maintains a Strong Engagement.**

Strong progress made against militancy. The Afghan security forces are able to operate with considerable independence. Re-integration process shows steady progress. A strategic partnership with the US is reached. Even with the contradiction in overall American military spending, there is a full US commitment to support Afghan security forces. US development funding stops but not drastically but is made up from other donors. Governance reforms are undertaken, gains made against corruption and quality of justice improves. Neighbours respond favourably to development in Afghanistan, economic cooperation grows. Pakistan is reined in by US to act forcibly against the Afghan insurgents. Agriculture grows, alternate forms of employment increase which results in decline in poppy cultivation.

### **2) Scenario 2 : The Transition is Good Enough; US makes a Gradual Phased Withdrawal.**

The insurgency is kept from making major gains. Security improves but continues to be fragile and reversible. An improving ANA that is still not self-reliant but strong takes shape. Political and economic reforms are few. Most of the security sector reforms, including the dismantling of illegal armed groups and appointments on merit to police and Army not realized. The patronage based power structure remains intact. The international community finances elections, which are highly contentious, however, differences get resolved and the President and the Parliament gain legitimacy. Afghanistan's neighbours continue their hedging strategy and continue to retain the potential to meddle. But none make concerted effort to destabilize the country. Pakistan retains its protectorate on Quetta Shura and Haqqani Network. Drug cultivation is not high on government or international priority and levels of production remain largely unchanged.



3) **Scenario 3 :The Transition Breaks Down; US Accelerates Disengagement.**

American and NATO troops are pulled out hastily. No strategic agreement is reached between Taliban, Afghanistan and West. Political and economic pressures in the US force economic assistance to be slashed and programs on security sector support, development and governance are sharply curtailed or terminated. Afghan security force fall short of their goal and insurgency regains earlier momentum. The US adopts over the horizon counter terrorism strategy relying largely on drone and air attacks.

- a. Drug production spreads to nearly all provinces and level rises.
- b. Lacking adequate financing, it becomes difficult to hold nationwide elections and the government's legitimacy is placed in doubt. Struggle for Parliamentary system of constitution is revived.
- c. Ethnic and sectarian rivalries strengthen and the army fractures. Regional power broker meddling starts. Afghan-Pak relation become tenser and military border co-ordination largely ceases.

4) **Scenario 4 : The Transition is Overtaken by Various events; US loses its options.**

- a. Assassination of President Karzai and/or growing political discord among factions derail the transition process.
- b. Major setbacks in fighting the insurgency upset most of the transition plans as focus turns mainly to security issues. Emergency rule is enforced.
- c. Relations between US and Pakistan and/or between Afghanistan and Pakistan rupture and American lawmakers force a rapid disengagement.
- d. A negotiated political settlement with the insurgents is reached that allows power sharing and constitutional changes. A new coalition govt sets terms for foreign participation in the security and reconstruction that are unacceptable to the US and western countries and the transition process is effectively terminated.
- e. Ethnic groups in the North reject a reconciliation agreement and the country progresses towards civil war. A de-facto division of the country occurs. Millions Afghans flee to Pakistan and Iran. Foreign aid workers depart.

### C. EU Perspective

The initial intervention in Afghanistan came after the first ever invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and was strongly supported by individual European states. However, Europeans objected to what they saw as the overly militarized nature of US strategy in OEF. Europeans have felt that the threat is better addressed by the security services and law enforcement authorities, coupled with enhanced development assistance and other support to the Afghan government. Differences with the Bush administration over the initiation and conduct of the Iraq War further strained relations. Washington convinced hesitant European governments to agree to a NATO takeover of ISAF and expansion of the mission with assurances that the insurgency was largely defeated and that this would be a challenging peacekeeping mission. As the Taliban regained strength and mounted widespread attacks after 2006, many European governments and publics grew uncomfortable with the mission and mounting pressures from the US and other allies to adopt more aggressive rules of engagement and counterinsurgency tactics. Few accepted that Europe's security needed to be defended at the Hindu Kush<sup>5</sup>.

Most European governments are reticent to employ their military forces overseas other than in UN mandated peacekeeping or humanitarian operations. Erstwhile US Defense Secretary Gates has publicly lamented the "demilitarization of Europe." In many EU countries the debate over whether or not to label the Afghan conflict a "war" still rages. Erstwhile French President Sarkozy and others heralded the NATO strategy embraced in April 2009 as a triumph of the European vision with more focus on "building Afghan capabilities than on killing the Taliban." Most European leaders still do not share the depth of the US conviction that the ongoing counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan are essential to preventing future terrorist strikes on the West.

Scenarios with EU perspective were carried out in May 2013 by Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, for the purpose of policy decisions for Netherlands as an EU member in Afghanistan. These scenarios are quoted in the succeeding paragraphs<sup>6</sup>.

*1) Scenario 1 : North-South Conflict. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is dominated by the former Northern Alliance which faces a primarily Pashtun rebellion in the south of the country. The West and the majority of the international community support GIROA. The Taliban, who stick to a radical interpretation of Islam and rely partly on international jihadists and Pakistani support, are united and in control of southern Afghanistan.*

- 2) **Scenario 2: GIRoA Fights.** *After the departure of ISAF the conflict in Afghanistan continues in a similar way to the recent past. However, GIRoA has less international support. It dominates the major cities in the country, but it is unable to pacify particularly the rural areas. GIRoA also struggles in northern Afghanistan.*
- 3) **Scenario 3: Fragmentation2 (square).** *Afghanistan still has the façade of a government in Kabul, but in practice the country has splintered into many small fiefdoms controlled by local warlords. In comparison to the warlords' period before the Taliban, fragmentation is much greater because, in addition to the old warlords, many new power brokers have entered the scene. This results in a highly anarchic, conflict-ridden and violent environment.*
- 4) **Scenario 4 : Emirate.** *In cooperation with a number of disgruntled former members of the Northern Alliance who feel marginalized by GIRoA, the Taliban have taken over the government in Kabul. This time the emirate is much more benevolent, because the Taliban needed to tone down its more radical views to get the other actors on board. In spite of this moderation and the Taliban distancing itself from international jihadism, the international community is not supporting the new regime directly. Women's rights and the position of the Shia population are of particular international concern. Ethnic contradictions remain present, but tensions are of low intensity.*
- 5) **Scenario 5 :Reconciliation.** *After a negotiations process a peace agreement is signed and Taliban members join GIRoA. However, in order to get them on board, a number of compromises had to be made, particularly with regard to women's and religious rights. The resulting government is relatively autocratic, but is able to reap the fruits of peace, in particular economic growth. Western influence in Afghanistan has diminished, as China is the major investor in the country. Only some disgruntled Islamist extremists continue to contest Kabul, and in most parts of the country the situation remains fragile as most local conflicts remain unresolved and occasionally flare up.*
- 6) **Scenario 6 : Regionalisation.** *After a bloody civil war the situation has settled down. None of the groups gained the upper hand and the war resulted in a balance of power between different more or less ethnically and factionally homogeneous regional zones. In the status quo, informal adhoc deals have been made, and slowly economic interests have gained the upper hand. The regions each focus on their ethnic kin and*

*regional partners across the border. In western Afghanistan the focus is on Iran, in the south on Pakistan and in the north on the Central Asian republics. The level of economic growth, rule of law and human rights differs according to region.*

#### **D. The findings of the scenarios<sup>7</sup>.**

It is very likely that violence and armed conflict will continue in Afghanistan. Even in the most optimistic scenarios, violence, although at a lower level, will continue to be part of the Afghan future. In fact, in a number of scenarios the present situation will deteriorate. In all scenarios prominence of Taliban as a key player in propagating violence as means of policy implementation emerges clearly. International aid for future stability and reconciliation will need to continue. A bifurcation of society has occurred, one with civil, democratic and human rights values including placing importance of women in society, the other with Islamist hardline fundamentalist view. Two clearly opposing and incongruent beliefs.

Those scenarios that see less violence tend to see more human rights violations because a Taliban-style or other relatively autocratic regime is in power that cares less about freedom and rights.

In spite of international actors' hopes that they have the capability to direct the situation, the Afghans themselves primarily determine the future of their country. It is clear that most of the factors determining the different scenarios are in fact primarily in the hands of the Afghans. This means that international room to determine the Afghan future and steer towards a particular scenario through peace negotiations with Taliban, or international NATO and EU missions, is limited.

#### **Justification for the Study**

Afghanistan with its mineral resources, its proximity to energy rich Central Asian Republics and Iran has emerged at the strategic cross-roads linking energy rich nations with energy deficient expanding economies. Asian nations now have a lot at stake in stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan in the changing dynamics.

India traditionally has shared historical and cultural linkages with Afghanistan, and has been a major role player in re-constructional developments in the country since the fall of Taliban.

American led ISAF and Resolute Support Mission operations has to a great extent reduced the influence of Taliban. The linkage between Taliban and Arab dominated Al-Qaeda has been considerably damaged thereby severing the Slafi Arabic influence over it. However, in the emerging horizon US has started engaging Taliban as a stake holder in a stabilising and governing role in Afghanistan.

India's developmental policies have garnered goodwill in the general Afghan population and Govt. As Afghanistan prepares itself for three simultaneous political, security and economic transitions in 2019, India has sought to allay fears about the future by making a long term commitment to the security and development of Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the two sides, inter alia, provides for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance to re-build indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas, encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources. Bilaterally, India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. India's extensive developmental assistance programme, which now stands at around US \$2 billion, is a strong signal of its abiding commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan during this critical period of security and governance transition. This makes India one of the leading donor nations to Afghanistan, and by far the largest from among the regional countries. India believes that sustainable development of Afghanistan requires long-term investment in Afghanistan that can help it exploit its wealth of natural resource. India is, thus, at the forefront of the promotion of investment in Afghanistan and a consortium of public and private Indian companies has been selected to make one of the biggest investments in the country's mining sector in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

The Afghan nation state has still a long way to go before it reaches a stable democratic equilibrium, far and near regional influences will be at play for times to come. There is therefore, the need to re-examine India's Afghan policy through the prism of National Interest especially the emerging scenario of Sino-Pak collusive policies and players like Taliban looming to play a role in governance of Afghanistan. Should the massive investment in developing the war torn country be left at the mercy of inimical alliances or there is a need for stronger Indian engagement in Afghanistan.

### **Research Objectives**

The research aims to achieve the objective of analysing the current economic development oriented policy with the following backdrop:-

- 1) Identify long term interests of China in Afghanistan. The geographic and cultural affiliations shared between Afghans and Uyghur people of Xinjian (the restive autonomous region of China) having common Turkic ancestry is deep. China worries of Uyghur fighters often in care of Al-Qaeda, would remain focused on devising attacks targeting China in particular, like the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) or East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which seek to establish an Islamic State of East Turkestan in Xinjian. In terms of security Afghanistan sits on the flank of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan reside in these areas, a population which has been oppressed by Pakistan. For CPEC to be secure and successful, Afghanistan is important, further, the geography of Afghanistan permits expansion of CPEC northwards through its territory. Exploring fault lines between China and Islam which would present opportunities for India, especially Pashtuns and Uyghurs can be favourably engaged.
- 2) Analyze policy options available to China including the current trajectory of engaging with Taliban leadership.
- 3) The economics of exploiting mineral resources in Afghanistan holds great prospects for China. Wakhan corridor provides a direct link with Xinjian which is a developed road and rail head.
- 4) It is important to identify vulnerabilities in the Policy options available to China and review India's policy for Afghanistan to align them towards exploiting Chinese vulnerabilities. India is well respected in its relations with Afghan population incl their leaders, Afghan National Defence & Security Force (ANDSF), National Directorate of Security (NDS), and Taliban factions open for negotiations with India. Uyghur groups and their readiness to explore common goals with India.
- 5) Collusive partnership between China, Pakistan and Taliban in countering Indian Interests in Afghanistan.

## **Research Questions**

Research questions framed based on the research objectives set out are:-

- 1) What are main Security and Economic interests of China in Afghanistan which will

drive their policy? Who are the key Afghan players China will engage with to further its agenda at the cost of India? What relations does India have with these key players including Taliban and Uyghur rebel leadership which can prove advantageous?

2) Stable but subservient Afghanistan Govt is favourable for China, will it therefore be prudent as a policy for India to keep the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations in a state of disagreement for perpetuity?

3) What is the level of control exerted by Pakistan on Taliban? What is the level of cooperative control will China wield over Pakistan in Afghanistan?

## **Literature Review**

1) “Has the Sino-Indian Dialogue on Afghanistan Been Put on the Backburner?” By Vinod Anand, a Royal United Services Institute paper of 2013 vintage, explores the common grounds on which Sino-Indian cooperation existed while engaging for resolution of conflict in Afghanistan. It brings out many areas of cooperation while also highlighting areas of conflict. Article also explores the history of relations of the two countries.

2) “Understanding China’s Afghanistan Policy: From Calculated Indifference to Strategic Engagement” by Shubhangi Pandey(2019) an ORF research scholar brings out the importance of Afghanistan to China. The paper brings out various stages of engagements China has had with Afghanistan. A clear trend gets noticed in the article of growing relationship with Taliban.

3) “Afghanistan: Peace talks must prioritise inclusivity and compromise”,y Shubhangi Pandey(2019) is an article published by ORF which focuses on importance of inclusive involvement in peace talks. US has been directly engaging with Taliban a benefactor of Al-Qaeda without the elected representatives of the people. This trend has sounded alarm bells with regards to the rights and freedoms of women and minorities, especially in light of hardline Islamic Sharia laws which Taliban propagates.

4) “Afghanistan Drawdown & Impact on India” Rakesh Sharma (2020), CLAWS, the paper examines the American led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) withdrawal and impact on India. The author highlights a deep and binding relationship built over decades of developmental engagement, and argues that this relationship is

enduring and will weather all seasonal changes in Govt. He propagates to continue with the existing policy, however, issues of Taliban and growing involvement of China have not been adequately covered.

5) “Al Qaeda’s Franchise Reboot” Asfandyar Mir, Colin P Clarke (2020) argue that Taliban which has been a benevolent protector of Al-Qaeda, once in governing role will give tacit support resulting in rise of the latter again. Taliban ideology believes in establishing Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, a hardline group of believers will have an adverse effect on the society and neighbourhood at large.

6) “Can America Trust the Taliban to Prevent Another 9/11? A Dangerous Asymmetry Lies at the Heart of the Afghan Peace Deal” David Petraeus, Vance Serchuk (2020). The paper written for Foreign Policy Journal, highlights a dangerous precedent in allowing Taliban in the Peace talks and as part of the peace talks. Authors highlight lack of oversight and verifiable intelligence in ascertaining that Taliban are holding part of their deal. Al-Qaeda and Taliban congruence of ideology will not allow peace to return in the region. The article does not bring out the influence China will leverage on Taliban through ISI and ramifications thereof.

7) Kapur, Ashok India's geo-strategic environment, (1999). India has a complex geo-strategic environment; China-Tibet-India, China-US-Pakistan-India. India’s foreign policy towards Afghanistan is constrained by the interdependent relations amongst neighbouring nations. It is apparent that the Taliban is just an extension of the state of Pakistan.

8) Feigenbaum, Evan A. India's Rise, America's Interest: The Fate of the U.S.-Indian Partnership (2010),. Author talks about the US-India partnership and how India’s rise is in the interest of US in particular and for the global stability in general, it is agreed that one area where the interests of Global power-US and the regional power – India could converge is the afghan theater, the only expectation is that US should respect India’s security concerns which it can demonstrate by showing seriousness through its policies on Afghanistan and Pakistan. When Pakistan brought cold war competition in to South Asia by openly allying with US with a hidden motivation to corner its big eastern neighbour, India acted responsibly befitting of a matured regional power. Even though US has abandoned India and chose Pakistan for a partnership in the name of countering communism, Pakistan never considered such a goal as it’s priority and despite being abandoned by US, India has grown.



9) Chishti, Naheed Anjum *The US's Withdrawal from Afghanistan and Its Impact on Indo-Pak Relations*.(2013). Economic growth achieved by India post liberalization in the era following 1990 period and a gradual reconciliation of US with India has given a leveraged position to India. While there is a heavy competition between India and Pakistan for a role in Afghanistan, Pakistan is driven by the paranoia that a regime in Kabul which is pro-India is detrimental towards Pakistan's interests. Pakistan need to get out of this collective siege mentality for a meaningful development in Afghanistan.

10) Wirsing, Robert G, *In India's Lengthening Shadow: The U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Alliance and the War in Afghanistan* (2007). US-Pakistan strategic alliance has a bearing on India's policies in Afghanistan. When it comes to India, US & Pakistan hardly have any positions that converge, to the contrary to the much dislike of Pakistan it is actually the interests of US and India that are converging in Afghanistan (Wirsing 2007).

11) Menon, Shivshankar *Hostile Relations: India's Pakistan Dilemma* (2009). The reality of India – Pakistan relations is a complicated, unfinished structural changes and failed institutions in Pakistan's polity, which is the least integrated neighbourhood in the world, is the cause of instability owing to unviable ambitions. Understanding India-Pakistan relations are central to India's relations with Afghanistan and the goal of bringing stability to Afghanistan – Pakistan region.

12) Riencourt, Amaury, *India and Pakistan in the Shadow of Afghanistan*(1982). The two nation theory of Hindustan & Pakistan has been the source of perpetual tension between two countries and has an impact on the security scenario in South Asia. Stability in Afghanistan is possible only through a rapprochement between India and Pakistan (Riencourt 1982), this was not only relevant when soviets invaded Afghanistan but also in the current times.

13) Brandt, Jessica and Hanna Siegel, *After the Drawdown: The United States, India, and the Challenge of Afghanistan*.(2013). Authors argue about the threats to the stability of Afghanistan and the challenges which are classified in to three heads, security, economic and political and how India is already partner in contributing to the stability of Afghanistan. It is rightfully mentioned that Indian engagement in Afghanistan offers promising contributions to stability. Indo-Pak rivalry threatens to adversely affect developments in Afghanistan. This only re-affirms the point that India-Afghanistan

bilateral relations are not entirely independent but dependent on many factors that are external.

14) Hanauer, Larry & Peter Chal, India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan.(2012). Authors list out India's objectives in Afghanistan as Prevent Anti-India Terrorism, Undermine Taliban Influence in Afghanistan and Project Soft power. All these are in complete contrast to that of Pakistan's objectives in Afghanistan. The problem all the while has been that Pakistan was never willing to forego its strategic depth concept against India in Afghanistan.

### **Chapterisation Scheme**

The dissertation is proposed to be documented under the following chapters:-

- (a) Chapter I - Introduction.
- (b) Chapter II –Relations of Afghanistan with India.
- (c) Chapter III – China and its regional interests. Areas of conflict with India.
- (d) Chapter IV – Pakistan's Quandary.
- (e) Chapter V - Players in the Game.
- (f) Chapter VI –Indian developmental policy advantages and its relevance post 2020.
- (g) Chapter VII - Recommendations and Conclusion.
- (h) Chapter VII - Research methodology, methods of data collection and data analysis.

## ENDNOTES CHAPTER I

1. [The Diplomat, Afghanistan's coming Energy Boom, \(http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/afghanistans-coming-energy-boom/\)](http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/afghanistans-coming-energy-boom/). Also James Risen, "U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan," New York Times, June 13, 2010; and Alissa J. Rubin, "Afghan Officials Elated by Minerals Report," New York Times, June 14, 2010.  
[http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/14/say\\_what\\_afghanistan\\_has\\_1\\_trillion\\_in\\_untapped\\_mineral\\_resources](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/14/say_what_afghanistan_has_1_trillion_in_untapped_mineral_resources)
2. <http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/chinas-afghanistan-challenge/> (accessed on 23 Sep 20).
3. Eurasia News and Analysis (<http://www.eurasiareview.com/04072013-a-guide-to-afghanistan-in-four-scenarios-analysis/>) (accessed on 21 Oct 20).
4. US Perspective in Afghan Transition Process by Dr Marvin G Weinbaum.
5. [http://csis.org/files/publication/110501\\_Flanagan\\_EUUSSecurity\\_Issue%204.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/110501_Flanagan_EUUSSecurity_Issue%204.pdf).
6. <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/afghanistan-post-2014-groping-dark>.
7. *ibid*

## CHAPTER II

### INDIA, AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

Afghanistan, landlocked multiethnic country located in the heart of south-central Asia. Lying along important trade routes connecting southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East. The country's forbidding landscape of deserts and mountains has laid many imperial ambitions to rest, as has the tireless resistance of its fiercely independent peoples—so independent that the country has failed to form into a nation but has instead long endured as a patchwork of contending ethnic factions and ever-shifting alliances (details of Afghanistan Political and Demography is given at appendix D & E). It is bordered by Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, it has a short border in the Wakhan Corridor with Xinjiang, an autonomous region of China. Afghanistan had been the hub of trade and transit, the Silk Road appeared during the first century BCE, and Afghanistan flourished with trade, with routes to China and India in the East, Persia in the South and North to the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara Uzbekistan. During the first century BCE, the Parthian Empire subjugated the region but lost it to their Indo-Parthian rulers. In the mid-to-late first century CE the vast Kushan Empire, based in Afghanistan, became great patrons of Buddhist culture, making Buddhism flourish throughout the region. The region's Buddhist and Hindu culture was very colourfully highlighted by Ambassador of Afghanistan to US, Ambassador Roya Rahmani, in her talk to Hudson Institute in Nov 2019. **Where she states<sup>1</sup>**

*“Our historical and cultural ties date back much further, to the Indus Valley Civilization during the Bronze Age. Afghanistan was deeply influenced by Buddhist, Hindu, and Zoroastrian cultures and influences which can still be observed in the timeless Buddhist symbols of Aynak and Bamyán in Afghanistan.”*

India and Afghanistan share a long history of cultural and societal ties. Partnership with Afghanistan dates back decades earlier and was built on centuries of common history prior to India's 1947 independence. During much of the reign of King Zahir Shah (1933-1973), barring a brief interlude during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani conflict, India had enjoyed excellent relations with Afghanistan. Even after his overthrow, India managed to maintain good relations with a succession of Communist regimes including those that were foisted on the country following the Soviet invasion. Both countries already had a close relationship during the independence movement in India under Mahatma Gandhi and a similar nationalist Frontier Congress movement in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan under Abdul Ghaffar Khan, or “Frontier Gandhi.” Afghanistan-Pakistan territorial disputes, in particular involving Pashtunistan and the Durand Line, brought New Delhi and Kabul closer. India's independence and partition

meant that India no longer shared a boundary but good relations continued up to the 1979 Soviet invasion. Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul built in 1966, the only hospital of its kind in the country at the time. By the 1970s Afghanistan had become India's largest development partner within India's aid program, known at that time as the Indian **Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program**<sup>2</sup>. A pause was seen in the relationship during the Soviet Invasion followed by Taliban rule. Relations with Afghanistan have grown manifold since 2001. From the Indian perspective, the most important factor in its Afghan ties is Pakistan, which frames any kind of Indian engagement in Afghanistan as a threat. India's special partnership with the Soviet Union and the logic of Cold War politics led India to take a neutral position on Soviet intervention, which adversely affected India's image among the Afghans and the West. With the end of the Cold War in 1991 and lasted till the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. India had troubled ties with Afghanistan in this phase marked by civil war, Islamic extremism and jihadist terrorism. India's influence oscillated, declining with the ouster of the Najibullah and temporarily rising when Burhunuddin Rabbani's ruled in the early to mid 1990s. However, with the coming to power of the Pakistan-supported Taliban regime in 1996, New Delhi's influence in Afghanistan was obscured by Pakistan. This period also witnessed India providing support to the Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban resistance under Ahmad Shah Massoud. Russia and Iran had also supported the Northern Alliance. The space vacated by India on both the occasions was manipulated by Pakistan's security establishment to implement its policy of "strategic depth" – a concept that has led Islamabad to treat Afghanistan as its backyard. During this period, India faced increased challenges from Pakistan's ISI in Jammu & Kashmir as well. As **underlined by Ayesha Jalal**<sup>3</sup>,

*"The tactic of pushing battle-hardened militants from Afghanistan across LOC to wage a low-intensity war against Indian security forces in Kashmir was designed to keep the subcontinent's most contentious dispute in the international gaze."*

The era post the fall of Taliban has seen India rebuilding its bilateral ties with and regaining influence in Afghanistan. India has emerged as the most important regional power, investing in institution building in Afghanistan. Since 2001, New Delhi has provided \$2 billion in economic aid and has pledged another \$1 billion over the next few years for Kabul. As Afghanistan's stability is considered important for India's own security, New Delhi has been supportive of the spread of democratic institutions in Afghanistan, which is battered by decades of conflict and instability.

President Ghani came to India in April 2015 on his first official visit, which after his visits to China (October 2014), Pakistan (November 2014), and then United States (March 2015). This led to speculate that the delay not only indicated a reprioritization in Afghanistan's foreign policy calculus towards India, but also marked a sharp contrast to warmth that Karzai

displayed towards India. However, Rakesh Sood, India's earlier ambassador to Afghanistan, wrote that India should not be unduly concerned over President Ghani's Pakistan-China bonhomie, as it could not diminish the goodwill India had gained in Afghanistan over the past one decade. He was of the opinion that the Indian Govt should speed up construction of Chabahar port as an alternative route to Afghanistan and **Central Asian countries**.<sup>4</sup> During Ghani's interactions with the Indian ministerial heads, the discussion on further expanding the developmental projects to various sectors. Both sides "expressed determination to work together, along with the international community, to combat and defeat the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They called on the international community to severely deal with the safe havens for terrorists that continue to threaten regional and **global security**."<sup>5</sup> India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an unannounced visit to Kabul in December 2015. This was his first visit to Afghanistan after becoming Prime Minister. During his visit, Modi unveiled two of India's most important initiatives in Afghanistan: the inauguration of the Afghan parliament building and the handing over ceremony for four Mi-25 attack helicopters. Supply of helicopters denoted a shift in India's position on supplying offensive military equipment. Under Modi's leadership, India began to shed its earlier hesitation on only giving non-lethal assistance like transport vehicles and training to Afghanistan<sup>6</sup>. According to the joint statement, it was "agreed that groups and individuals that perpetrate violence on the people of Afghanistan and challenge by use of violence and terror against the Government of Afghanistan cannot be allowed to exercise control or wield influence over any part of Afghanistan's territory in any manner whatsoever." It was also decided to conduct the first Strategic Partnership Council meeting headed by the Foreign Ministers in early 2016 along with four joint working group meetings. Prime Minister Modi visited Herat on 4 June 2016 in western Afghanistan where he, along with President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan H.E Ashraf Ghani jointly inaugurated the Afghan-India Friendship Dam, earlier known as Salma Dam. The completion of the dam project represents culmination of years of hard work by about 1,500 Indian and Afghan engineers and other professionals in very difficult conditions. It also highlights India's continued commitment to Afghanistan's **reconstruction and development**<sup>7</sup>. Prime Minister on 22 August 2016 jointly inaugurated through video conferencing, the restored Stor Palace in Kabul with President Ghani. During his his address at the inauguration Prime Minister reiterated India's commitment that the 1.25 billion Indian people will "always" stand with Afghanistan in ensuring peace and prosperity. Prime Minister along with a high level delegation paid a visit on 25 December 2016 to Afghanistan. During his visit, he called on President Ashraf Ghani; met Chief Executive, Dr Abdullah Abdullah and former President Hamid Karzai. During his visit, he inaugurated the newly built Afghan Parliament with approx INR 970 crore; announced new 500 scholarships for the children of the martyrs of Afghan

Security Forces and gifted four Mi-25 Attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force. During the visit, it was also decided to conduct the second Strategic Partnership Council meeting headed by the Foreign Ministers of the both countries in the first quarter of 2017 along with four joint working group meetings. Supply of helicopters denoted a shift in India's position on supplying „offensive“ military equipment. Under Modi's leadership, India began to shed its earlier hesitation on only giving non-lethal assistance like transport vehicles and training to Afghanistan.

### **Doha Onwards**

On 29 February 2020, the United States reached an agreement with the Taliban, and also signed a declaration with the government of Afghanistan to encourage the start to an **intra-Afghan peace process**<sup>8</sup>. These agreements were necessary and important first steps to intra-Afghan negotiations—and therefore to achieving peace in Afghanistan—but they do not guarantee that intra-Afghan negotiations will be successful. Negotiations were on for past 18 months as an important electoral dimension of President Trump's second bid at presidency. U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban's Political Deputy and Head of the Political Office Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar signed the agreement. As part of the agreement, the United States agreed to draw down its forces from 13,000 to 8,600 within 135 days (with proportionate decreases in allied force levels) and to withdraw all of its forces within 14 months by April 2021. Other U.S. commitments included working to facilitate a prisoner exchange between the Taliban and the Afghan government and removing U.S. sanctions on Taliban members. In exchange, the Taliban committed to not allow its members or other groups, including Al Qaeda and the local Islamic State affiliate, to use Afghan soil to threaten the U.S. or its allies, including by preventing recruiting, training, and fundraising. This changed dimensions in India's immediate neighbourhood. The dynamics between Pakistan and some of the key Taliban members are also important. The Pakistan Army and ISI played key roles in facilitating the US-Taliban agreement. Mullah Baradar, who was released from ISI captivity under pressure from the US in 2018 to take part in the talks with Khalilzad, and is a signatory to the US-Taliban agreement, does not find mention in the list, though he is expected to play a role. Abbas Stanekzai, a hardliner close to the Pakistani security establishment, was earlier projected as lead negotiator is part of the team. The Haqqani Network (HN) is represented by Anas Haqqani. Brother of HN leader Sirajuddin Haqqani, he and two other militants were released from prison in November 2019 in exchange for an **American and an Australian hostages**<sup>9</sup>. Pakistan will continue to be a key influencer in Afghanistan owing to its intricate relations with Taliban and tribal shura affiliations. When Secretary of State Tillerson landed in New Delhi in the last week of October 2017, President Ghani was also hosted by the

Modi government. It demonstrated a remarkable diplomatic coordination between India, US and Afghanistan as it sent a clear message to Pakistan that **regional equations were shifting**<sup>10</sup>.

India has been a key stakeholder in the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. India had sent two former diplomats in “non-official” capacity to a conference on Afghan peace process in Moscow in November 2018. The conference organised by Russia was attended by a high-level Taliban delegation, representatives of Afghanistan as well as from several other countries, including the U.S., Pakistan and China. Major powers such as the U.S., Russia and Iran have been reaching out to the Taliban as part of efforts to push the stalled Afghan peace process. India has been supporting a national peace and reconciliation process which is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan controlled. India has also been maintaining that care should be taken to ensure that any such process does not lead to any “ungoverned spaces” where terrorists and their proxies can relocate. Ahead of peace deal, India has conveyed to the U.S. that pressure on Pakistan to crack down on terror networks operating from its soil must be kept up though Islamabad’s cooperation for peace in Afghanistan is crucial.

India attended the start of the intra-Afghan talks in Doha on 12 Sep 20, where a senior official participated in-person and External Affairs minister S Jaishankar joined-in virtually. During the address, Jaishankar said that the peace process must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. “Addressed the conference on Afghan peace negotiations at Doha today. Conveyed that the peace process must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled, respect national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, promote human rights and democracy, ensure interest of minorities, women and the vulnerable, effectively address violence across the country,” Jaishankar tweeted. “The friendship of our peoples is a testimony to our history with Afghanistan. No part of Afghanistan is untouched by our 400-plus development projects. Confident that this civilizational relationship will continue to grow,” he added. Decades long developmental and cultural ties has endeared local Afghan to India and after the US draw down the vacuum cannot be allowed to be filled with anti-India powers which would limit diplomatic space for India. All stakeholders of Afghan peace talks now need to be engaged, Taliban factions particularly with whom India had so far had no direct communication channels open. Many Pashtun factions view Indian **contribution favourably**<sup>11</sup>.

India’s immediate concerns are purely security-based; its investments in Afghanistan, as well as the life and integrity of Indians working on various developmental or civilian projects in Afghanistan. In the past, Indian workers including embassy personnel have been brutally targeted by insurgent groups, **allegedly supported by Pakistan**<sup>12</sup> Moreover, India is immensely concerned about Afghanistan becoming a safe haven for terrorist organisations,



which have designs against India, particularly in Kashmir. India can contemplate its strategic interests in Afghanistan only in the long-term perspective, due to the fact that articulation of such interests would instantly raise Pakistan's security concerns against its policy of Strategic Depth. For now, India's Afghanistan strategy, will have to be satisfied by its access to Iran, which can serve as a 'gateway to Central Asia' via Chabahar port in Gulf of Oman. Although Afghanistan's stability and security is indelibly linked to India's national security, it will remain a security hotspot for India and continue to be a very important facet of its national security.

## ENDNOTES CHAPTER II

- 1 <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Ambassador%20Roya%20Rahmani.pdf>. (Accessed on 22 Oct 20).
- 2 Ghosh, Anwesha. *A Leap Forward: Capacity Building, Education and India-Afghanistan Cooperation*. New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2013.
- 3 Jalal, Ayesha, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 298.
- 4 Sood, Rakesh, Changed variables, same equation, *The Hindu*, April 27, 2015.
- 5 Joint Statement during the State Visit of President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, April 28, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25137/>  
Joint+Statement+during+the+State+Visit+of+President+of+Islamic+Republic+of  
+Afghanistan+to+India+April+28+2015. (Accessed on 22 Oct 20).
- 6 Haidar, Suhasini, Modi reaches Kabul, *The Hindu*, December 25, 2015.
- 7 <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/narendra-modi-afghanistan-salma-dam-inauguration-ashraf-ghani-2834106/>. (Accessed on 22 Oct 20).
- 8 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf>. (Accessed on 24 Oct 20).
- 9 <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/afghanistan-taliban-talks-explained-6591535/>. (Accessed on 24 Oct 20).
- 10 <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/10/26/560224471/tillerson-visit-highlights-indias-evolving-relationship-with-u-s>. (Accessed on 24 Oct 20).
- 11 Survey conducted for ABC News, the BBC and ARD by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR) based in Kabul, a D3 Systems Inc. subsidiary. Interviews were conducted in person by (ACSOR), in Dari and Pashto, among a random national sample of 1,534 Afghan adults from 11-23 December, 2009.
- 12 <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/explosion-near-indian-embassy-in-kabul-all-officials-safe-sources-1705993>. (Accessed on 24 Oct 20).

## CHAPTER III

### CHINA'S REGIONAL INTEREST: AFGHANISTAN

Traditionally, Afghanistan has been a low diplomatic priority for China, and China did not have strong influence. One could argue that in history, Afghanistan had been invaded by many big powers and imperial rulers (Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, English, and Soviets), but China was not among them and had little influence on this country. As a consequence of negotiations between the United Kingdom and Imperial Russia in the late nineteenth century as part of the 'Great Game', China acquired a land border with Afghanistan in the form of the Wakhan corridor, a narrow strip of land on the northern edge of the Hindu Kush running between Tajikistan and Pakistan. But the border, located in a remote and inhospitable region with a sparse population, has been closed for the past many decades and direct communication between Afghanistan and China has been non-existent during that period, as has **Chinese interest in Afghanistan**<sup>1</sup>.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the then Kingdom of Afghanistan announced its recognition of the Chinese government in January 1950, and the two countries formally established diplomatic relations in January 1955. In the 1950s and 1960s, the two countries followed the peaceful coexistence of five basic principles and lived in harmony and equal treatment. However, up until 2001, political and economic cooperation between the two countries remained inconsequential. During the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s, China took advantage of the situation to sell large quantities of arms including assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade-launchers and even Type 59 tanks to the Afghan mujahedeen via the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). But China never sought direct engagement with the Afghan mujahedeen, preferring always to work **through either U.S. or Pakistani proxies**<sup>2</sup>.

The bilateral relations between China and Afghanistan recovered and developed greatly since the Afghan provisional government was formed at the end of 2001. Since then, China and Afghanistan have maintained normal high-level official contacts and friendly relations. President Karzai paid his first visit to China in January 2002; his first state visit to China was made in 2006, followed by his second state visit to China in 2010.

## Marching Westwards

Since President Xi Jinping came into office, China has been actively pivoting to the vast expanses of Eurasia, particularly reflected in the strengthening of Beijing's engagement with its neighbours on its western frontier. In 2012, Wang Jisi articulated the idea of "Marching Westwards" (西进), as a rebalancing act of China's geo-strategy. As the United States has pivoted towards the Asia Pacific, Wang urged Chinese policymakers not to limit their interests to the Asia-Pacific region, but rather to develop a plan to advance relations with China's western-frontier neighbors, including Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East and, furthermore, to form a Eurasian cooperation framework from London to Shanghai. This would not only facilitate economic and cultural relations with the countries to the west of China, but also domestically, "it would accelerate the 'Grand Western Development,' a national strategy launched in 2000 to promote the growth of China's western provinces in light of its unbalanced development **compared to the eastern coastal provinces.**"<sup>3</sup> The idea of revitalizing the Silk Road was first announced by Xi on September 7, 2013, during his "Grand Tour of Central Asia."<sup>4</sup> He proposed that the Eurasian countries apply a new model of cooperation and together form the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), noting "the area of the new Silk Road, the local regional market, is inhabited by 3 billion **people and is unprecedented in its scope and potential.**"<sup>5</sup> The SREB forms a key component of China's Eurasian pivot, and Central Asia is assuming new strategic importance in China's overall foreign policy chessboard. In contrast to Western Europe or East Asia, the Central Asian region is "free from a US-dominated regional order or a **pre-existing economic integration mechanism.**"<sup>6</sup> In Wang's view, so far, there is no working mechanism coordinating the efforts of major powers, no generally accepted rules of competition and cooperation in the region, and the spheres of influence of major powers in the traditional sense constantly intersect with each other and tend to change. Central Asia occupies a special place within the SREB and China's Eurasia pivot in general. It acts as a gateway either to the Middle East or to Europe. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the sudden emergence of newly independent states in Central Asia located in close proximity to China presented the Chinese leadership with a completely new and fluid geopolitical scenario on its western border. These events led to a geopolitical vacuum and turned this region into a hotbed of competition among various external forces. Given the outbreak of civil war in bordering Tajikistan and instability in neighbouring Afghanistan, the security situation in Central Asia became a constant factor weighing on Chinese policymakers. In the early 1990s, Beijing was not ready for any grand strategy in Central Asia. Basically, it distanced itself from the internal problems of Central Asian countries and focused on issues, such as the establishment of diplomatic ties, the settlement of complex issues inherited from the Sino-Soviet period, and the

development of common approaches to the problem of Uighur separatism. Having lost some interest in Central Asia during the 1990s, China resumed its activity after the year 2000 through the “Western Development” program, which focused on the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and other western provinces. After 9/11, Central Asia’s importance increased significantly as a result of more explicit competition among great powers for influence in this region. Moreover, in order to meet a growing need for raw materials, Beijing saw it as an important national interest to guarantee access to Central Asia’s raw materials, particularly oil and gas, and potentially use its transit capabilities. According to policymakers’ plans, along with Central Asia, the capital of Xinjiang Urumqi stands as a centerpiece of the “Marching Westwards” as well as a transportation hub that connects China, Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe. The government hopes to prevent destabilization and provide a safe environment along the entire border of XUAR. Xinjiang is China’s core area on the SREB since the current and future transport corridors pass through Urumqi. This is the restive region adjoining the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan. The vast expanse of the Chinese province of Xinjiang, which is inhabited by the Uyghur Muslim minority, poses a security predicament for China. Since the Uyghurs have strong religious and ethnic traditional links with the natives of Afghanistan and the neighboring Central Asian Republics (CARs), China is very keen that the militant Islamic ideology of extremist elements such as the Taliban be prevented from spilling over into Xinjiang. Additionally, the presence of sizeable Western military forces in Afghanistan is also a source of major concern for China.

### **Rule of Limited involvement**

Central Asia has historically been an important passageway between Asia and the West. In more recent times Afghanistan has figured even more prominently in the continuing clashes and confrontation between world civilization and Islamic fundamentalism. With the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the subsequent backing by the U.S. of the Afghan Mujahideen, Afghanistan played a crucial role in the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States. After the Soviet defeat in the late 1980s Afghanistan went into civil war. In September 1996 Taliban soldiers seized control of Kabul, sending President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his interim government fleeing into exile. To most of the world the Taliban seemed to represent the most extreme and the most violent fundamentalist faction the Islamic world had yet produced.

With the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. and its European allies entered Afghanistan in a massive way and took the role of political supervisor and military guarantor in Afghanistan. In this process China is regarded as keeping the lowest profile on Afghanistan among all the big powers. Although Beijing once offered to share intelligence with Washington

and provided limited logistics to U.S. air forces via its Yunnan province, China cautiously restricted itself from military involvement: it did not send troops to join the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and did not respond to American demarche to open the Wakhan Corridor as a transit route for **supplying NATO troops in Afghanistan**<sup>7</sup>

There are several reasons for China's low-profile policy and limited contributions to Afghanistan. Traditionally, Afghanistan has been a low diplomatic priority for China. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Afghanistan had been in the former Soviet sphere of influence. It was under Soviet occupation from 1979 until 1989 when the Soviet Union withdrew its troops and civil war ended. In 1996 the Taliban took national power. China did not recognize the Taliban regime. When the Afghan war broke out, the U.S. and its allies entered the country and had the overall dominant influence on Afghanistan issues, ranging from political and military build-up to economic reconstruction.

Domestically, there were different views on China's role and participation in the Afghanistan issue. Many in China believed that if China increased its military involvement that would be more in line with the Obama administration's strategy rather than with China's core interest in Afghanistan. Some Chinese analysts argued that the U.S. wants China to open the Wakhan Corridor in the name of counter-terrorism, but the real intention was to take the opportunity to spy on strategic areas of western China. They also treated the U.S. presence in Pakistan with suspicion and warned that the U.S. activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan might threaten China's border security and weaken the strategic relationship between China and Pakistan<sup>8</sup>. Therefore there was no reason for China to succumb to the will of the U.S. to the detriment of **the interests of its own safety**<sup>9</sup>. Chinese memory still heavily was hurt by the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. Chinese military officers did not prefer direct contact with the NATO. China was also unwilling to become directly involved in a controversial war and has refrained from actively supporting American efforts in Afghanistan out of concern that this support might create a perception in the broader Islamic world that China is part of an alliance against Islam and encourage separatists in China's Xinjiang Province. With the One Belt One Road (OBOR) and BRI initiative, China with NATO presence in Afghanistan often assumed it to have a possibility of chocking its energy pipelines through CAR. While US combat troops were engaged in fighting the jihadists – the common enemy of the US and China, this of course being to China's advantage – Beijing also feared that the Americans, having arrived in Afghanistan, would stay there forever. More specifically, China was worried that the USA would establish permanent military bases just beyond China's western border and thus in practice encircle China with its allies and troops. For this reason, China did not involve itself in the war in Afghanistan and in particular abstained from helping the US establish itself

successfully there.

### **Turnaround In Afghanistan**

Past few years have found that as China's economic and strategic interests in Afghanistan greatly increase, Chinese policymakers have changed their stance on Afghanistan from cultivated disinterest to growing engagement. China once believed that the U.S. is not purely motivated by counterterrorism concerns, but has instead a geopolitical objective: to exert control over the region's energy routes and strategic **chokepoints and to "encircle" China**<sup>10</sup>. This perception has been changing as China has seen the American military withdraw not only from Iraq, but also from Afghanistan. China has gained the most from its increasing economic expansion there as it has become the largest investor in Afghanistan. The other factor that prompted China to review its Afghan policy was owing to the Obama administrations sustained efforts to engage China on regional policy and draw Beijing into an active role in the various multilateral groupings that deal with Afghanistan. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke's early initiatives included visiting Beijing in March 2009 and attending the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in **Washington in July 2009**<sup>11</sup>. 2012 became an important year in China Afghanistan engagement. In February, Beijing hosted the first China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral dialogue where some security issues and trilateral cooperation were discussed. Then in June 2012, as China during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Beijing, President Hu Jintao signed a bilateral "strategic partnership" agreement with President Karzai. Karzai was welcomed by China to become an official SCO observer. During the summit, Beijing focused heavily on persuading Russia and Central Asian member states to contribute toward Afghanistan. In September the same year, Zhou Yongkang, China's then security chief and member of the Communist Party Politburo Standing Committee, became the first senior leader since 1966 to visit Afghanistan. There he signed an agreement on increased security and economic cooperation between China and Afghanistan. The US now appears to be finally withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, five years since the start of the drawdown. China clearly is aware of the potential deterioration of Afghan security, and is increasingly concerned about the possible threat and challenge to its national interests.

### **Strategic considerations – ETIM, Taliban , Uighur Pakistan & Drugs**

In recent years, China has experienced a fairly good security situation and Chinese policymakers expect the country's neighbourhood **to remain generally peaceful**<sup>12</sup>. While Beijing has never experienced such a level of stability in its neighbourhood, the Chinese leadership do feel vulnerable. The CPC is of the opinion that its fate is linked to national unity and is therefore

extremely interested in addressing insecurity. According to Beijing, relative stability in the neighbourhood is an opportunity to address internal threats the country still faces. For China, maintaining social order in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is probably the most significant internal problem related to Afghanistan. The Uyghur unrest is not the most burning internal issue but with the expansion of Turkic nationalism and religious fundamentalism, Beijing is watchful. Fighting separatism in the XUAR has even become a national core interest (Hexinliyi), i.e. part of the “non-negotiable bottom-line” of **Xi Jinping’s policy**<sup>13</sup>. The progressively deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, and the potential risks that it could pose to Beijing’s long-term economic endeavours, is an unsettling prospect for China. However, the first and perhaps most compelling motivation for China in pursuing greater engagement with Afghanistan is its unease regarding the geographical proximity between Afghanistan, and Muslim-dominated XUAR. Afghanistan is home to the Taliban and a number of other transnational terrorist outfits, and the restive Xinjiang region is claimed by Chinese authorities to be the breeding ground for the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism, plaguing their country. Beijing is pursuing a “carrot and stick approach” – which involves uncompromising policies against separatism as well as efforts to promote economic development in the region. The “Go-West” campaign launched in the 2000s has had results but has not prevented ethnic unrest in the XUAR from escalating. For example, the 2009 Urumqi riots in which 156 citizens died and 1700 were injured, mostly ethnic Han. It was one of the bloodiest incidents since the **CPC assumed power in the country**<sup>14</sup>. The CPC leaders’ have since made every endeavour that East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and Turkmenistan Islamic Movement (TIM) separatists do not gain support. Moreover, there exists the dangerous possibility of radical elements hailing from foreign lands, using Afghanistan as a launch pad to establish links with the already vulnerable Uighur-inhabited areas of China. There is also the fear that the ideological influence of pan-Islamic groups operating in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan could spill over into China, **exacerbating separatism in Xinjiang**<sup>15</sup>. That the Uyghur diaspora **is well-established**<sup>16</sup> in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) adds to China’s worries. However, although Beijing tends to club all forms of separatism in the same category as terrorist acts, the Uyghur issue cannot be categorised under violent action alone. Adding to the growing apprehension among CPC leaders, is that many of the exiled Uighur fighters are said to have found sanctuary in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the southern and eastern **provinces of Afghanistan**<sup>17</sup>. Many of those fighters are believed to have become affiliated with other transnational outfits, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which itself factionalised into two groups: one pledging allegiance to the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda, and another remaining committed to the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). Still, many Uighur fighters remain focused on



devising attacks targeting China in particular, like the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) or East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which seek to establish an **Islamic state of East Turkestan in Xinjiang**<sup>18</sup>. In other words, the first motivation behind stepping up activity in and around Afghanistan is China's domestic security concern regarding the restive Xinjiang province. The route to Central Asia begins in Xinjiang and continues through Pakistan and to a certain extent Afghanistan. All three areas are underdeveloped and suffer from conflicts related to transnational jihadism and insurgencies. In June 2019 Chinese Govt hosted the delegation — led by the Taliban's political deputy chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Lu Kang, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told reporters that the two sides exchanged views “on Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation process, counter-terrorism and other issues of mutual interest.” China has expressed support for intensified negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan — raging since October 2001. Kang further noted: “We support intra-Afghan dialogue and broad, inclusive peace and reconciliation that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. The Chinese side exchanged views with Mr. Baradar based on our consistent position, which is part of our efforts in promoting peace and facilitating talks between relevant parties. Both sides agree to stay in communication and cooperation for the political settlement of the Afghan issue and counter-terrorism. For the early realization of peace, reconciliation, stability, and development in Afghanistan, China will continue to conduct talks and coordination with relevant **parties through various means**”<sup>19</sup>.

In the eyes of China's leaders, Afghanistan has become the epicentre of Islamic fundamentalism for several decades. They believe militant groups have supported the ETIM and fear that Afghan instability and radicalism could encourage unrest in its own western provinces. Furthermore, the Afghan security situation is significantly worrisome for Beijing, especially because several Afghan militant groups pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). China perceives its neighbourhood, including Afghanistan, as a crucial asset in preventing internal threats from expanding. Therefore, China's leaders have sought to ensure that the ETIM separatists receive the smallest possible external support. Towards which they have even thought of engaging Taliban as a party of Afghan reconciliation. Chinese embassy Kabul website states “In November 2020, at the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), President Xi Jinping once again stressed the importance of Afghanistan to regional security and stability and reaffirmed the Chinese commitment to help Afghanistan to achieve peace and reconstruction. Over the years, China has strengthened its counter-terrorism and security cooperation with Afghanistan through bilateral channels, reaffirmed at the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogues its determination to combat terrorism. China supports Afghanistan in its counter-terrorism efforts through the SCO and the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination

Mechanism in counter-terrorism by the armed forces of China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, actively participates in the international multilateral mechanisms on the Afghan question, supports the various decisions made by Afghanistan, oppose any intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by any external force under any pretext, call for an orderly and responsible withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, and support the realization of **lasting peace in Afghanistan.**”<sup>20</sup> Tajikistan is becoming the most striking indicator of China’s increased role in Central Asia. Several ethnic ties and outside influences complicate Tajikistan’s national identity to a greater extent than in other Central Asian republics. The Tajik people share close kinship and their language with a much larger population of the same nationality living in northeastern Afghanistan, whose population also includes a large proportion speaking Dari, a dialect of Persian intelligible to Tajiks. Tajikistan, smallest country in the region with a population of 9 million is one of the first in Central Asia to feel the full consequences of becoming heavily dependent on China. China today is a major trading partner for Tajikistan, a key source of investment and loans, and also a major exporter. Tajikistan borders Afghanistan Pyandzh River, dividing the residents of the local Badakhshan region politically but not culturally, they often intermingle with families residing on both sides. But perhaps most concerning is China’s involvement in Tajikistan’s security arrangements as well as its construction of airbases nearby, in the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous District, which borders on both Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Beijing has helped Dushanbe construct three military commissariats, three new military units, four headquarter facilities, and a training base for Tajikistani soldiers in the Pamir region (Gorno-Badakhshan) adjoining Afghanistan—all in the name of what it says is an effort to block the expansion of Islamist groups from Afghanistan into Tajikistan. A clear indication of Chinese apprehensions of spread of radical or hardline Islam especially through porous borders of CAR and Afghanistan<sup>21</sup>. There have been reports that China is building a military base in the Wakhan corridor and helping Afghanistan to train a mountain brigade<sup>22</sup> China however, denied it and officially only confirmed that it is going to train Afghan soldiers in China in an effort to counter ISIS and al-Qaeda militants attempting to infiltrate Xinjiang.

The other major security related issue for China is its Proximity to the Golden Crescent a major drug producing region. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan & Iran are the source of production of these drugs. Drug money has been primary source of funds for many Islamist factions. Southern region of Helmand and Kandahar provinces, on the border with Pakistan, which are the highest-volume areas for drug transactions. Faizabad, in Badakhshan Province, which has borders with Tajikistan, Pakistan, and China are known for **smuggling of Opium and Opiates**<sup>23</sup>. June 2013 report of China.org.cn Stated

*“The number of drug-related cases courts in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region have dealt with has increased significantly since 2010, a spokesman for the region’s high court said on Thursday. Several foreign suspects have been tried on drug trafficking charges, he added. The number of drug-related cases we handled between January and May increased by 18 percent compared with the same period last year, Yu Huitang, a spokesman for Xinjiang High People’s Court, said during a briefing in Urumqi. The incidence of drug crimes in Xinjiang remains high because of its special geographic environment. Xinjiang borders the Golden Crescent, one of the two principal areas in Asia for illicit opium production, which overlaps Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Besides Afghanistan and Pakistan, the autonomous region shares borders with another six countries, and international drug organizations view it as an ideal hub for transporting drugs to other cities in **China as well as Central and South Asia**”<sup>24</sup>*

Another Global Times report states

*“Khunjerab port, the only land route between Pakistan and China, is called the **Golden Channel** by drug smugglers because of its high altitude and proximity to the Golden Crescent, “Since drug detection equipment doesn’t work properly on the plateau, we have to manually check all goods from Pakistan,” said a border control officer at the Khunjerab frontier inspection station, which is 5,100 meters above sea level. For those working at the Khunjerab Pass border inspection station, every traveler could be a criminal trying to smuggle drugs or guns into the country. Besides Pakistan, Khunjerab Pass is also near Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In 2014, 37 civilians were killed and another 13 were injured in an attack in Kashgar”<sup>25</sup> .*

Networks of thousands— probably tens of thousands—of Xinjiang citizens are playing an increasing role in trafficking Golden Crescent drugs throughout China. Taliban uses the drug money to fund its operations, where most of the drugs are routed through Iran, **China and Russia**<sup>26</sup>.

### **Development of Intelligence Network**

**In a recent report in the Diplomat** The accusation of Chinese nationals building ties with the Haqqani Network was brought to light the amid the ongoing peace negotiations. The network, which has been responsible for conducting the most violent attacks in Kabul and other urban areas, has been designated a terrorist group by the U.S. government. A group of Chinese operated as conduit of funds and network to establish contact with the **Taliban commanders**

**and Haqqani Network to target US and NATO troops as they withdraw**<sup>27</sup>. The intelligence was shared by Indian R&AW with the Afghani National Department of Security (NDS) which led to arrest and deportation of Chinese nationals. The Indian and Afghan intelligence community has a strength in their dealings owing to past developmental work the Indian Govt undertook. On 06 Feb 21 report appeared in the Sunday Guardian Live of Pakistan- China Nexus in the cyber and social media domain, the partnership is being evolved to **tarnish the image India has built**<sup>28</sup>. The future of India in Afghanistan will depend on a lot what India can do to protect its interest, on its own and with alliances built over time.

### **Dichotomy of Economics of Engagement**

China assured their support to the new Afghan government immediately after the fall of the Taliban from power in 2001. They offered, along with the international community, humanitarian aid for reconstruction and built infrastructure like the Jamhuriat hospital in Kabul. However, this aid has been described as limited. China's economic aid was estimated to roughly US\$250 million between 2001 and 2013, a measly amount compared to what the others contributed. The change came since 2001, when China began exploring commercial opportunities in resource-rich Afghanistan. Besides aid, Beijing began investing massively in Afghanistan's mining and oil **exploration sectors**<sup>29</sup>. Beginning from 2006, China has given Kabul tax exemptions on imports on over two hundred items and has furthered their economic relationship. China anticipates growing opportunities for resource extraction in Afghanistan and deeper economic integration within South Asia. Western security experts tend to eye China's approach with suspicion and resentment. China supposedly contracting mineral resources in Afghanistan at the expense of other world firms. In an influential op-ed in *New York Times* in 2009, Robert D. Kaplan took issue with the scenario in Afghanistan, claiming that, 'while America is sacrificing its blood and treasure, the Chinese will reap the benefits.' The reference was to China's bid for the Aynak copper mine out bidding other top conglomerates. The deal was mired in corruption and bribery, and its further progress depended on security owing to presence of ISAF, that has received neither Chinese troops nor Chinese Yuan. A term widely describing **China to be free-riding**<sup>30</sup>.

### **Root Cause Model**

China believes in amelioration of economic hardship and better pecuniary prospects as reasons for alleviation ethnic tensions and social unrest, a model which it calls "**the Root cause model**". Root Cause model draws on China's experience of successfully lifting more than 600 million of its own citizens out of poverty due to the reform policy that changed China rapidly over the past decades, especially in the big cities in eastern China. It has tried to replicate the

same model in Xinjiang by bringing in exorbitant development and extreme suppression as a means of integrating Xinjiang with rest of country. Similarly, China believes that the root problem of Afghanistan's instability lies in its low level of social economic development, and that only development can **fundamentally lead to peace**<sup>31</sup>. Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have invested in two major mining projects in Afghanistan namely the Mes Aynak copper mine in Logar province, run by the Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC) and the Jiangxi Copper Corporation (JCCL); and the Amu Darya oil blocks in northwest Afghanistan, run by China National Petro Company (CNPC) and an Afghan partner, **Watan Oil & Gas**<sup>32</sup>. In line with its root cause model, President Xi on 18 Nov 20 in the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) stated "SCO is required to carry forward the Shanghai Spirit and for the first time raised the important initiative on "four communities". First, we need to step up anti-epidemic cooperation and build a community of health for us all. The virus is spreading globally and constantly resurging, and only by putting the people's interests, especially people's lives first and maintaining solidarity in the battle against COVID-19 can the international community effectively protect people's safety and health in each country. Xi pointed out that to fight the virus that respects no borders, we must take up the most powerful weapon of solidarity and cooperation, and rise up to the most imperative task of saving people's lives. He proposed that countries need to strengthen joint response to COVID-19, hotline contacts be created between SCO members' centers for disease control (CDCs) and countries continue to hold the SCO Forum on Traditional Medicine. He also promised that China will actively consider SCO countries' need for vaccines. Second, we need to safeguard security and stability and build a community of security for us all. Xi pointed out that security and stability are the number one precondition for a country's development, and thus concern the core interests of all countries. All countries need to act on the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, address all forms of threats and challenges effectively, forestall terrorist, separatist and extremist attempts to exploit the pandemic for disruption, and foster a sound security environment in the region. He also stressed that the situation in Afghanistan involves the security and stability in the wider region and we need to make good use of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group to help the country realize peace and reconstruction. Third, we need to deepen practical cooperation and build a community of development for us all. Xi pointed out that true development is development for all and good development is sustainable. Countries need to be guided by the vision of innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development and open up more opportunities for practical cooperation to facilitate economic recovery and betterment of people's lives. We need to forge greater synergy of the Belt and Road Initiative with national development strategies as well as region-wide cooperation initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union,

enhance connectivity, facilitate reopening of economic activities and expand mutual investment among us. China supports setting up an SCO joint working group on poverty reduction and stands ready to share our good experience with other parties. Fourth, we need to nourish people-to-people amity and build a community of cultural exchanges for us all. Xi said that each civilization is distinct and none is superior to others. We need to promote mutual learning between our civilizations and enhance good-neighborliness and friendship **between our countries.**”<sup>33</sup> Thus clearly outlining development as a panacea. Many scholars are sceptical of China’s economic contributions in Afghanistan, since many a projects invested by Chinese SOEs have yet to commence operations and are of the view that China is unlikely to be a game changer. The reasons are manifold.

Lars Erslev Andersen and Yang Jiang in their paper *China’s Engagement in Pakistan, Afghanistan And Xinjiang* a 2018 paper for Danish Institute of International Studies state,

*“In developing transportation routes to Central Asia, expanding economic activities westward and stabilizing the troubled region comprising the tribal Pakistani areas, Xinjiang and Afghanistan, Pakistan is the obvious partner for China. **For decades, Pakistan has been the chosen partner** for China in countering India as a regional rival and ally of the USA. Beijing considers Pakistan as the key to building stability in the region and fighting jihadism and terrorism. The presence of transnational jihadists in Pakistan and the increasing risk of the ‘Islamization’ of Pakistan that involves the risk of serious internal conflicts and fragmentation, with the consequence of further destabilization in the region, also makes it extremely important for China to assist Pakistan in countering jihadism. Besides coordinating their counterterrorism strategies, investing in development in Pakistan is therefore crucial for China”.*

Another Security Analyst Hugo Chene in his paper for Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies titled ‘China In Afghanistan: Balancing Power Projection And Minimal Intervention’ is of the opinion

*“Afghan government has overestimated the capacity of Chinese officials in facilitating a political settlement and that President Ghani’s expectations are likely to remain underachieved. This is because firstly, Pakistan, and not Afghanistan, is China’s crucial partner in South Asia. Therefore, Beijing would assuredly favour its relations with Islamabad and not Kabul. Chinese officials are unlikely to let go of Pakistan, even if it behaves recklessly. They perceive Islamabad’s policies with violent non-state actors negatively, but they believe the abandonment of their ally would be a greater threat. China appears eager to maintain the Pakistani government in power at high costs and*

*has pledged massive economic support especially via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. However, the reality is more nuanced. Pakistan has never completely controlled the Taliban and is unlikely to run the risk of losing its clout over the Taliban. Drawing the Taliban into peace talks was, in itself, a costly operation in terms of political capital for the ISI. The Pakistani-led approach demonstrates its own limits: the Murree talks were a first step, but a trusted political settlement cannot be reached under duress. Pakistan, conscious of this hazard, could seek to maintain its leverage over the Taliban and turn down Kabul's requests. This deadlocked situation could be an opportunity for Chinese leaders to demonstrate that they care about Afghanistan. Indeed, Beijing appeared as the most credible stakeholder to help Kabul and Islamabad in finding a common ground. That is in fact the key reason Ghani sought Beijing's mediation. However, China will never publicly direct Pakistan – especially given the importance of the Beijing-Islamabad bilateral, and Pakistan's stance that Beijing should not genuinely pressure **Pakistan**."*

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani believed he has the optimal solution: "The problem, fundamentally, is not about peace with Taliban...The problem is fundamentally about peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan." He decided to bank on Islamabad to bring peace in Afghanistan. Given the long-standing Pakistani interference in Kabul's affairs, and Islamabad's was reluctant to truthfully support. But Ghani reached out to China, in order to guarantee Islamabad's dedication to the peace process. An endeavour which has given mixed results. Therefore, China without direct leverage over Taliban, the major trouble creator, is unlikely to be at the head of the table when negotiations are required. There are many other players and splinter groups than the two negotiating parties with whom neither Pakistan nor China hold sway, these are likely to follow their independent strategic and allegiance trajectories. Afghan Govt on the other hand works on the over seventy percent of its budget based on International grants, post withdrawal of US led NATO Forces, China will have to take the mantle of primary grant donor to Afghanistan besides developing industries and infrastructure.

Elizabeth Wishnick in her 2012 paper "There Goes the Neighborhood: Afghanistan's Challenges to China's Regional Security Goals" states:

*"There is a practical side to this non-interference policy, namely Chinas effort to avoid being a terrorist target. However, this has proven less successful in recent years. In May 2012, Afghan forces foiled an attack on the Aynak mine in Afghanistan thanks to a tip from an informant about a nearby weapons cache. Violent incidents targeting the 10,000 Chinese nationals working in Pakistan have escalated. China has put increasing*

*pressure on Pakistani leaders to stop these attacks and prevent Uyghur militants from using the country as a base. The increasing violence against the Chinese also demonstrates that militants in Pakistan now see an advantage to driving a wedge between China and Pakistan”.*

She further states that the financial aid/ investment China delivers to Afghanistan is way to less compared to what it invests in development and trade with Central Asian Region Countries.

*“Chinese experts highlight the economic emphasis of Chinas role in Afghanistan. In addition to the Aynak and CNPC projects, Chinese companies built hospitals in Kabul and Kandahar, assisted with the Parawan irrigation project, and invested in the telecom sector. Indeed, thanks to the Aynak project, China is now the leading foreign investor in Afghanistan. However, the Chinese government has not provided much bilateral aid to the country—approximately \$205 million since 2002 with just \$58 million disbursed so far). After signing the strategic partnership agreement in June 2012, China pledged another \$23 million, but this is a paltry sum, especially compared to the \$1 billion pledged to Tajikistan on the same day. By comparison, India provides 10 times the reconstruction aid that China does (\$1.2 billion), placing India in the top 10 donors to Afghanistan, while China ranks eighteenth. India, one of Chinas key rivals for influence in post-2014 Afghanistan, has devoted considerable resources to building its soft power in and developing a multifaceted long-term relationship with the country, while China has pursued more limited goals, focusing on mining and infrastructure development. For China, Afghanistan is important mostly because of its potential economic and security impact on key partners in Central and South Asia, as well as on Xinjiang.”*

According to the The Eurasian Development Bank, Center for Integration Research, by 2015 out of \$ 27 billion in Chinese direct investment accumulated by major CIS economies, Kazakhstan accounted for 23.6 billion dollars. In Iran alone, China has announced a hefty amount of US\$400 billion investment for the next 25 years. A wide variation when compared to Afghanistan.

In March 2012, Nur Bekri, the top Chinese government official representing Xinjiang, spoke to China’s highest-ranking legislative body, the National People’s Congress, the deep connections between some Uyghur and Pakistani militants, though he affirmed that the Pakistani government was Chinas **“all-weather friend”**<sup>34</sup>. While peace negotiations between the Afghan Taliban and the government in Kabul are still underway since Sep 2020, Pakistan’s leading Taliban group: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has started to reunify with three formerly



estranged factions – a move that analysts say could pose a security risk to projects linked to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (**CPEC**) **in northwestern Pakistan**<sup>35</sup>. TTP, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Farooq Group of al-Qaida in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and Hizb-ulAhrar (HuA) are the splinter groups that are beyond the Pakistan’s control and often target Chinese investments and citizens working in Pakistan and Afghanistan. China has yet to find a way for weaning away their and Talibani support to ETIM and TIP.

### ENDNOTES CHAPTER III

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## CHAPTER IV

### PAKISTAN'S QUANDARY

#### Historical Perspective

After gaining independence, Pakistan's two major strategic goals involving Afghanistan were, establishing friendly relations with Afghanistan and preventing a Kabul–Delhi alliance. However, on the other hand Afghanistan's leadership had reservations about Pakistan. Foremost, many leaders in the regime doubted that Pakistan would be able to survive as a sovereign nation-state, given its complex dynamics. Afghanistan had reason to resist friendly relations with Pakistan since a failed Pakistani state would allow Afghanistan to seize some of Pakistan's territory, additionally, the Afghan monarchy worried that if Pakistan became a fully functional democratic country, its democratic image would generate internal separatist fervour in the Afghan population, awakening their desire for freedom from **monarchical rule**<sup>1</sup>. In an attempt to take advantage of a young Pakistani state, the Afghans sought to exploit the newly formed government by renouncing the Durand Line, a British-drawn Pakistani– Afghan border agreement, and pursuing the creation of an independent **Pashtun nation**<sup>2</sup>. Pakistan and Afghanistan share about 2600-km long, contested border. The border dubbed as the Durand Line was marked in 1893 between Sir Mortimer Durand, secretary of the British India and the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman Khan. Subsequent Afghan authorities claimed that the Durand Line was unfairly drawn, it divided Pashtuns on two sides of the border permanently and was imposed by the British. Despite attempts to erase the Durand Line, the Afghans had no legitimate claim to reverse the international agreement, and the boundary still exists. Pakistan as an independent nation in August 1947, Afghanistan proved the lone opponent to Pakistan's membership in the UN. Since then, the unresolved status of the Duran Line has marred their bilateral relationship while no Afghan government accepted it as an international border. Even Pakistan-friendly regime of Taliban (1996–2001) refused to acknowledge it (Jamal & Bangash,2016). The border dispute lay at the center of Pakistan–Afghanistan relations and created a number of complicated issues. Afghanistan's desire for an independent “Pashtunistan” with territory largely from the Pakistan's side of the border bearing Pashtun population. This was the start of bitter sweet relationship between these two neighbours.

#### The Pashtuns.

An estimated 42 million Pashtuns geographically straddle the international boundaries between Afghanistan and Pakistan and make up the largest Islamic tribe **in the world**.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 13 million Pashtuns live in Afghanistan and represent 42 percent of the total

population, making up Afghanistan's ethnic majority. In Pakistan, 29 million Pashtuns, heavily concentrated in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), represent only 15 percent of the total population of Pakistan. This disproportionate split of the Pashtun tribe dates back to the enactment of the Durand Line in 1893. However, the border is extremely porous and the Durand Line has done little to physically prevent the daily cross-border activities of the Pashtun people. Pashtuns are Afghanistan's traditionally ascendant ethnic group. They have dominated its politics so completely that for much of the country's history the term Afghan was more or less synonymous with Pashtun. Pashtuns are found throughout Afghanistan but are mainly concentrated in Afghanistan's south, including those provinces in the southeast that border on Pakistan. They identify with their tribal lineage and adhere to a code "Pashtunwali" of behavior that encompasses tribal, customary, and religious law. Over the period of armed conflict that began in 1978, Pashtuns made up the great majority of those Afghans who escaped to Pakistan where, in their refugee camps, religious seminaries, and mosques, many were introduced to highly doctrinaire and puritanical Deobandi Islamic thought. It was from this exposure that the Taliban movement emerged in 1994. The anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s and the civil turmoil of the 1990s upset traditional lines of authority throughout Afghanistan. The decades brought a new political consciousness among Afghanistan's smaller ethnic groups and demands for a larger share of power and development resources. Ethnic Tajiks, whose militias carried the resistance to the Taliban, have most strongly challenged Pashtun claims to national leadership. Although initially disadvantaged in their share of key ministerial posts, Pashtuns have reasserted their preeminence in the central government following the approval of a constitution and subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections. Afghan Pashtun leaders have long championed the cause of an ethnic state that would be carved out of the northwest region of Pakistan. Pashtunistan was prompted by the British-drawn Durand Line in 1893. The idea of Pashtunistan has remained a sore point in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan since the latter's creation in 1947. By raising the issue, Kabul governments have championed Pashtun sentiment domestically and provoked fears within Pakistan of aggravating provincial/ethnic tensions

Throughout the centuries, the Pashtun people, as an entity, have not been subjugated to central rule of governance, instead, governments have had to build loose alliances with the Pashtun clans to keep them loyal to the ruling authority. This historical perspective directly influences today's relationship between the Pashtuns and the Pakistani government. Before the NATO invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent influx of Taliban members in Pakistan, there existed unwritten policy that the central government would not interfere with the Pashtun local governance in the FATA and NWFP. This informal agreement, which lasted from 1947

through 2002, insinuated that the Pashtuns would become a centralized, semi-autonomous state over which the Pakistani **government and army would exercise little control**.<sup>4</sup> Over the past century, Afghan and Pakistani Pashtuns have wanted their own country—and the unwritten agreement was intended to pacify this desire. Afghan Pashtuns believe they are the rightful rulers of Afghanistan because they are the majority. Pakistani Pashtuns question the legitimacy of the central Pakistani **government's rule over them, since they were forcibly partitioned into the country in 1947**.<sup>5</sup> Even though the Pashtuns are separated into two countries, they generally have a sense of inter-tribal Pashtun nationalism that allows them to support one another during times of need.

Post 9/11 US pressure on Pakistan to conduct military operations against Afghan and Pakistani Taliban members has prompted Pashtun tribal leaders to claim that the Pakistani government is breaking their supposed agreement. The start of Pakistani military operations in the Pashtun region broke the informal agreement and provoked deeper tensions. The continued operations resulted in increase in home-grown terrorist organisations to turn anti-government. However, the clandestine ISI led deep ties with elder generation of Pashtuns gives Pakistan a controlling hand in the future of Afghanistan.

### **Impact of Indian Engagements in Afghanistan on Pakistani External Security**

India and Pakistan share chequered history since the partition in 1947. Over the past seven decades, the two nuclear nations have had uneasy foreign relations. This has led to three major wars and continuous strained relations over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Speculations that both countries are executing a proxy war in Afghanistan in order to gain strategic advantage **over the other are prevalent**. As Ahmed Rashid, author of *Descent into Chaos*, explains, “Kabul had suddenly become the new Kashmir—the new battleground for **the India–Pakistan rivalry**.”<sup>6</sup> This proxy war in Afghanistan is producing an external security threat to Pakistan and has the potential to lead to greater regional destabilization or, worst case, a Pakistani–Indian war.

The two nation's strategic alliance with Afghanistan and intent to deny the other country geographic access supports the contention that a proxy war exists in Afghanistan. Except during the Taliban's reign, India has historically supported all Afghan governments. The friendly Indian–Afghan alliance has heightened Pakistan's paranoia that India hopes to use Afghanistan to reacquire the subcontinent land mass that **was formerly part of its nation**.<sup>7</sup> The idea Pakistan believes is not new; in outlining his theory of foreign policy, the ancient Indian military philosopher Kautilya noted that “immediate neighbours are considered as enemies, but any state on the other side of a neighbouring state is regarded as an ally or the **enemy of my**

**enemy is my friend.**”<sup>8</sup> By following Kautilya’s theory, India would deny Pakistan a healthy relationship with Afghanistan, which would ultimately allow India to contain Pakistan both militarily and economically. Adding to the friction between Pakistan and India have been terrorist attacks against Indian aid workers in Afghanistan— attacks that have been linked to Pakistani-sponsored militant **groups and ISI operatives within Afghanistan.**<sup>9</sup> According to Ambassador Gopalaswami Parthasarathy, former Indian envoy to Pakistan, “there has been a consistent policy of targeting Indians and Indian projects in Afghanistan. It’s no doubt a decision taken by the Taliban, **Pakistan is directly or indirectly complicit in the attack.**”<sup>10</sup> As the withdrawal or reduction of NATO forces in Afghanistan draws near, India fears that anticipation of this change may set the conditions for a reconciliation agreement between the US/Afghan government and the Taliban, thereby harming its current relationship with Afghanistan. India is also concerned that the withdrawal or reduction of troops could facilitate a Taliban–Pashtun political movement that would then evict India from Afghanistan; worse, NATO’S plan could set the conditions for a Pashtun violent or nonviolent takeover of the Afghan government, which would likely turn Afghanistan anti-Indian and pro-Pakistani.

General Stanley McChrystal, former commander, US and International forces in Afghanistan, stated in his 2009 Commander’s Initial Assessment that “the current Afghanistan government is perceived by Islamabad as pro-Indian. While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional **tension and Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India.**”<sup>11</sup> Pakistan’s precarious relationship with Afghanistan prompted it to back the Taliban in hopes of seeing a pro-Pakistani government in Kabul. An Afghan government sympathetic to Pakistan would give Pakistan an increased geographical area to manoeuvre and strategically delay an Indian invasion until an international intervention could preclude an Indian annexation of their nation”. J. Alexander the, director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace (USIP), commented about the regional dynamics: “Pakistan has existential concerns about Indian involvement in Afghanistan, as they see it as a form of encirclement aimed at the weakening or dismemberment of Pakistan. Pakistan relies on Afghanistan for ‘strategic depth’—it would support Pakistan in the event of another war with India, including providing a retreat area for **overwhelmed conventional forces.**”<sup>12</sup> For Pakistan, India’s intervention in Afghan affairs poses a real and catastrophically dangerous threat to its existence. The claim is not without historical justification as Pakistan has been dismembered before by India in 1971.

Pakistan believes that India is employing “soft power” tactics in Afghanistan to preclude a pro-Pakistani Afghan government and policy from taking shape. Pakistanis see this pursuit by India as a means to gain strategic advantage in a potential future conflict. If successful, this strategy



would facilitate the conditions India needs to secure a victory in case of war with Pakistan. Adding to Pakistan's concerns is the fact that India has opened six consulates throughout the country and an embassy in Kabul since the beginning of NATO operations in Afghanistan. India is also currently the fifth largest international donor in **Afghanistan, India had donated upwards of US \$1.2 billion.**<sup>13</sup> Additionally, India's employment of more than 4,000 Indian citizens in Afghanistan to work on development and reconstruction projects and deployment of protection forces, perpetuates Pakistani suspicions of India's intent. Pakistan assumes that these projects serve India's strategic goals of developing a pro-Indian Kabul. These large soft-power projects include initiatives such as the construction of a major highway that runs from the Iranian seaport in Chabahar into Afghanistan and the joint electrical and oil pipeline projects that bring resources into Afghanistan. These pipeline projects offer the hope that continuing overland links will eventually bring these resources directly into India. The Chabahar seaport will provide India, along with other nations, the capability to deliver goods to Afghanistan without going overland through Pakistan, further economically depriving Pakistani goods access to Afghan markets. Another charge by Pakistan against India is its funneling supplies from Afghanistan into Pakistan in support of the Balochistani insurgents' armed struggle against the government.

Pakistan believes that India's research and analysis Wing (RAW) has intelligence operatives in Afghanistan to prevent Pakistani influence and to collect intelligence against Pakistan across the Pakistani–Afghan border. Pakistan also accuses RAW of training **Balochistani militant organizations in Afghanistan.**<sup>14</sup> Other possible evidence of Indian strategic encirclement includes rumours that it counterfeits Pakistani rupees and injects them into Pakistan to reduce their value and that it channels support for the Northern Alliance through **the Indian airbase at Ayni, Farkhor, Tajikistan.**<sup>15</sup>

Pakistan firmly believes that it deserves the right to be a partner with Afghanistan while India does not deserve the same right. In 1988 the popular Pakistani military President, General Zia, said, “We have earned the right to have in Kabul a power which is very friendly to us. We have taken risks as a frontline state, and we will not permit a return to the pre-war situation, marked by large Indian and Soviet influence in Afghan claims on our own territory.”<sup>16</sup> More than 70 years later, this quote still defines how Pakistan views its relationship with Afghanistan. It sees India's current initiatives in Afghanistan as violating its own access and right to Afghanistan, thus posing a significant external threat to Pakistan.

## Key Interests

Historical experiences shaped Pakistan's Afghan policy which strived for three objectives: Firstly get recognition of the Durand Line as an international border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. This would foreclose the 'Pashtunistan' equation, depriving it of legitimacy. Since Pakistan's independence, Afghanistan pushed for a review of the border and when the Britishers refused, Afghanistan called for an independent Pashtunistan to be carved out of Pakistan. Pakistan has always considered Afghanistan's support for Pashtunistan as a threat to its national security. Secondly, from security perspective, the Pakistan–Afghanistan tension provided India an opportunity to expand its sphere of influence in Afghanistan, something that could enlarged the theatre of Indo-Pakistan conflict to Pakistan's western borders. Therefore, Pakistan sought 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan in case of a conflict with India. To have the strategic depth it becomes important to prevent 'anti-Pakistan' elements from operating on Afghan soil. Thus importance of a favourable dispensation in Kabul. Islamabad's policy thought is "Any anti-India policy is pro Pakistan", consequently, Indian footprint has to be reduced in Afghanistan. Lastly to utilise the BRI to connect with the CARs over land as a trade and transit route. Port at Gwadar and Karachi provide access to markets across the world to landlocked CAR group of countries. Trade, transit and handling fees would bring in much need capital. To achieve these objectives, Pakistani 'Deep State' endeavoured for friendly governments to be installed in Kabul at all costs. Islamabad's support to the Taliban and the Haqqani Network was a part of this policy.

## China-Pakistan Collusion

Ghulam Ali, Associate Professor at the School of Marxism, Department of Political Science, Sichuan, very succinctly puts it in his article: **China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies, Nov 2020, The Pacific Review 17.**

*"Afghanistan is on the cusp once again. The USA is packing after two-decades of war, while China seems ready to enter this quagmire. China's cautious yet well-considered move is driven by its economic and geopolitical interests. The extremism emanating from Afghanistan affects Xinjiang as well as the development of the BRI. In addition, Afghanistan's strategic location at the juncture of Central and South Asia, the Gulf and its abundant natural resources get China's attention. As China decided to replace its historic hands-off approach with active engagement in Afghan affairs about a decade ago, it found Pakistan the most relevant and willing ally to promote its interests. Pakistan's geographic proximity to Afghanistan, ethnoreligious bonds, a large size of Pashtun population and high stakes in the final settlement together make*

*it an indispensable player. Pakistan is fully conscious of the fact that supporting China's role in Afghanistan complements to its own interests more than the footprint of any other power. The main reason behind the success of China–Pakistan collaboration on Afghanistan is that it operated under the umbrella of their decades-old strategic partnership. Therefore, both the countries supported to each other's interests. Pakistan facilitated China's contacts with the Taliban and addressed Beijing's concerns regarding the activities of Uyghur separatists and other militant groups. With Pakistan's support, China was able to develop a rapport with the Taliban to an extent that in the future, if the Taliban were to gain power or become part of the political dispensation, China's interests would remain intact. China's direct contacts with the Taliban did not side line Pakistan given latter's deep-rooted links with the group. The reconciliation of their divergent policies – Pakistan's support to Taliban and China's disdain for extremist groups – was a hallmark of their mutual understanding. In reciprocity, China defended Pakistan's Afghan policies especially against US pressures and used its good offices to break diplomatic stalemate between Islamabad and Kabul authorities. Apparently, China is silent on India's role in Afghanistan which is Pakistan's chief security concern. But looking from a larger Sino-Indo-Pakistan rivalry standpoint, their perceptions are not much different from each other. The June 2020 deadly brawls between China and India at Ladakh and their subsequent measures against each other reminds their deep-rooted animosity. Therefore, the curtailment of Indian influence in Afghanistan remains a covert goal of Sino-Pakistan collaboration. For better results, China and Pakistan backed their diplomacy with economic assistance, investments in infrastructure development and extended the CPEC and the BRI to Afghanistan. These measures are likely to create a positive impact on Afghan economy and help in creating employment opportunities which are essential to divert people's attention away from violence. Along with these developments Islamabad assumes that an increased economic interdependence with Afghanistan and the launch of the projects cutting across the border might blur the disputed status of the Durand Line. To sum up, Afghanistan has emerged as a new chapter of Sino-Pakistan relationship where both have found each as the most important partner of other. Amidst challenges, both have thus far navigated their collaboration smoothly. How this cooperation progresses in future is yet to be seen.”*

It therefore, emerges Pakistan and China will covertly and overtly, undermine Indian interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan the global hub of terrorism has always maintained close links with Taliban a benefactor of Al-Qaeda. Integrating Chinese policy of engaging Taliban by the

influence Pakistani deep state ISI is a worrying factor. Islamic radicalism of Afghan National Defence Force and larger afghan population would be endeavoured by ISI, an evidence of which can be seen across the Pakistani society. Mullahs from Seminaries dictate public opinion and political outcomes. Women's and minorities' rights are non-existent. China on the other hand believes on three evils of Extremism, Radicalism and Separatism, these do not augur well with the Taliban's radical and extreme philosophy. Thus far West was the common enemy of Islam, Al-Quaeda and ISIS had patronage in the lawless FATA-KPK region. Taliban with no western enemy to target will have more freedom to direct violence, abduction for ransom of Chinese workforce has also proved a lucrative business. On the other hand China with deep pockets and leverage over Pakistan can control the levers of violence which can be directed across the world using terrorism as state craft with plausible deniability. Similar control over opium networks can also be exercised to control and direct the flow at chosen destinations. Last few decades of history have shown when a country with a small stature like Pakistan could not be forced to part with terrorism as state policy. Question remains in country like China if covertly adopts such a policy, what could the world body do?

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## CHAPTER V

### PLAYERS IN THE GAME

#### **Background.**

After the announcement of the 2021 withdrawal of international troops from a combat role in Afghanistan there has been much speculation about the number of troops that will be deployed by the United States (US) to deal with future contingencies. The capacity of the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) to deal with the Taliban has also come under greater scrutiny. Given the security situation and geopolitics of the region, many analysts argue that the US may be contemplating a long-term presence in Afghanistan. The question is whether continued US presence, opposed by prominent countries in the region such as Iran, Pakistan, China and Russia, will lead to a new Great Game affecting Afghanistan's future adversely? While the training and deployment of armed forces is important, regional dynamics are also significant for the future stability of Afghanistan. Hopes for greater stability are generated by the efforts of countries like India, with which Afghanistan has signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), and initiatives taken by other regional countries to stay engaged, including a proposed new Silk Route that would help Afghanistan emerge as a hub of trade and transit. On the other hand, the continuation of violence and inability to conclude a deal with the Taliban on an effective power-sharing arrangement will raise concerns about the viability of the on-going democratic experiment.

The success of the US strategy relies heavily on Pakistan. This can be attributed to the historical reluctance of regional countries to play a dominant role in economic reconstruction and their unwillingness to make a joint effort to ensure stability even post-2014 during Obama administration's decision to withdraw troops. Due to its strong linkages with the Taliban, Pakistan will continue to play a central role. It has positioned itself as a country that is of critical importance, with the potential to shape the course of events in Afghanistan. As for the other regional countries, at one side of the political spectrum there is the Iranian opposition to the US military presence, amidst accusations of facilitating the Taliban to mount attacks on the US. At the other side there is the Indian view of the US presence as a pre-requisite for a stable Afghanistan. Russia, which at one point asked the US to give a timeline for its exit, is now apprehensive of the deteriorating security situation. While fearing the regional repercussions of a civil war in Afghanistan, Russia is also constrained by past misadventure and is unable to provide military help. The Chinese remain ambivalent and have not unveiled any strategy clearly but are equally anxious about any deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan. Nor is Pakistan comfortable with a long-term US presence in Afghanistan, as

that would prevent it from pursuing its strategic objectives. There is also a suspicion that post-2021, the American dependence on Pakistan will decline and the continued US presence in Afghanistan will reduce its relevance in the US strategic calculus. Garnering regional consensus on Afghanistan has therefore become an immediate prerequisite for establishing peace. The international community tried to engage the countries of the region by convening an international conference under the auspices of the UN and the Afghan government in 2009 in The Hague. This was followed by the London, Kabul, and Istanbul conferences to seek regional cooperation on Afghanistan.

### **Value of Regional Approach**

As per Mr Haroun Mir an Afghan expert, Afghan national objectives include achieving internal stability, maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring and regional countries, and acting as a trade and transit hub linking South and Central Asia as well as China with Iran and the rest of the Middle East.

Afghanistan is a poor, landlocked country, and thus it believes that a regional approach will help it achieve its national objectives. Afghanistan is economically dependent on its neighbours, as the bulk of its trade is with neighbouring and regional countries. In addition, over the past decades, Pakistan and Iran have become home to millions of Afghan refugees, and the return of these Afghans from exile will pose enormous economic, social, and security challenges for the Afghan government. Meanwhile, a number of young Afghans educated in these regional countries can play an important role in the reconstruction and development of their homeland. Indeed, without the cooperation of Afghanistan's neighbours, the prospect of peace and stability in the country seems remote. Afghan people are fully aware of the destructive capacity of Afghanistan's neighbours, which was proven over the past few decades. Thus, they believe that a regional agreement on Afghanistan is the key solution for the ongoing conflict in the country. Given the challenging situation in the country, Afghanistan's efforts to achieve security and stability through consultations with regional countries will doubtless face countless obstacles. Nevertheless, a stable Afghanistan must be in the interest of the region as it can play an indispensable role when it comes to achieving regional prosperity through increased trade and transit.

### **Relevant Regional Players**

**Pakistan.** Of all the countries in the region, only Pakistan has had a major and contentious territorial dispute with Afghanistan. In fact, the long border between Afghanistan and Pakistan has never been officially ratified by the two countries. This open question is at the root of



Pakistan's destabilization of Afghanistan. In addition, Pakistani authorities believe their country is squeezed between two hostile neighbors: India and Afghanistan. The growing enmity between Pakistan and India, and consecutive wars fought between the two countries created paranoia among Pakistan's military and civilian leadership over an Afghan–Indian alliance against Pakistan. After losing the largest chunk of their territory to a separate Bengali state in 1971 (Bangladesh), Pakistani leaders fear a similar dismembering with the Balochs in the West and Pashtuns in the Northwest Frontier Province. Nevertheless, Pakistan has a great stake in a stable Afghanistan, as stability would enable Pakistan's goods to reach Central Asian markets. Pakistan could also benefit from the considerable sources of energy and electricity. However, terrorism as a state policy gives it a leverage to control vast swaths of Afghanistan through Taliban. This leverage it never surrendered to the US pressures even at the cost of distrustfully being called “running with hares and hunting with the hounds.” *“Pakistan appears to be playing a double game of astonishing magnitude”*- Excerpt from the report presented by Matt Waldman, a fellow at Harvard University. Pakistan will continue its deep rooted engagement with Taliban and other terrorist organisations to remain relevant to the Chinese, in a manner similar to the US led coalition where it proved itself indispensable.

**India.** Afghanistan and India have always enjoyed fruitful and constructive relations. History has seen India's sustained support of the Afghan government during challenging circumstances. The only time India opposed the regime in Kabul was during the Taliban era, when that regime adopted a hostile policy toward New Delhi. Pakistan is not the only country that would benefit from a secure Afghanistan. India has a shared interest in a peaceful Afghanistan, as it also seeks increased access for its goods to Central Asian markets. India can further benefit from access to electricity and energy supply from the CAR through Chabahar.

**Iran.** Bordering Afghanistan from the West, Iran is another regional country that has historically enjoyed political and economic leverage over Afghanistan. Iran has a long history of cultural and political ties, of Afghanistan. Iran's Afghan policy over the decades has been founded on its geostrategic interest, and a key objective of this policy is the expansion of Iranian influence in the region through an increased Shia role in Afghanistan. US found common ground with Iranian counterparts during the campaign to oust the Taliban from Kabul and support a more representative government there. Iranian officials were actively engaged in the campaign to remove the Taliban from power, and **supported the US approach**<sup>1</sup>. Strategic thinkers in Iran are well aware that chaos and instability or the return of a revisionist Taliban government in Kabul are conclusions that it would not like to see at its borders. These would be truly harmful to Iran's interests. The key areas of interest for Iran is to have a stable and moderate Govt. It shares over 500 miles of border but, unlike Pakistan, Iran does not have any

territorial disputes with Afghanistan. Though, the concern remains of porosity of the border and illicit trade of drugs and goods that takes place through it. The economic, social and political cost of such transactions are being borne by the Iranian population. Another problem area for Iran is a large Afghan refugee population which had escaped various regimes and conflicts, these need to be repatriated at an opportune time. Growing Baluch insurgency in South-West Iran bordering Pakistan is often blamed on US, one of the reasons Iran wishes to see US out of Afghanistan. The unresolved dispute over access to water from Afghanistan could prove to be a source of tension and cause for future conflict between the two countries, Iran is the lower riparian state and dependent on water from the rivers flowing from Afghanistan. Any endeavour to dam or divert could cause serious animosity. Iran is Afghanistan's only neighbor fearful of US military dominance in the region and openly expresses its opposition to the US presence in Afghanistan. In the same vein, Iran has real concerns over any return to power by a radical Sunni movement such as the Taliban. Iran also shares ethnic, linguistic and religious links with millions of Afghan Shia. This is particularly true with Afghanistan's Shia-minority Hazara community, which resides in the central and northern regions of the country. Iran has interests in protecting the rights of the Hazaras, a Shia group numbering 3–4 million, who have strong cultural and religious ties to Iran. Iran also has ethnic and linguistic ties to other Afghan minorities (the Persian/Dari speaking Tajiks, Ismailis, and other smaller groups). Despite existing cordial Afghanistan–Iran relations, the government of Iran sees Afghanistan as a viable collaborator in serving as the Central Asian countries' bridge to the rest of the world. Iran will benefit greatly from a stable and secure Afghanistan in terms of trade and cultural ties. Iran will in all likelihood continue to openly support the Afghan government while encouraging intra-Afghan talks and maintaining its ties to the Taliban to keep its options open as the United States prepares to withdraw. Ultimately, Tehran would prefer that Afghanistan maintain its status as a republic as it limits the influence that other states including Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Iran's regional rivals. Saurav Sarkar in his article "Iran's Balancing act in Afghanistan" dated July 2020 on the Stimson website writes<sup>2</sup> :

*"Both Ghani and Abdullah have been careful in navigating their relationship with Tehran. After the death of Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq in January both leaders expressed condolences and condemnations over his death while also acknowledging the United States as an important partner. Afghanistan also wants to avoid becoming a ground for proxy warfare between the United States and Iran as there are already allegations of Iran arming certain factions of the Taliban against U.S. forces in Afghanistan. There is also an alternative threat of proxy fighting between Iran and Saudi Arabia—particularly if Afghanistan were to*

*experience renewed civil war and instability. Iran can also potentially command and/or redeploy a large number of Afghan Shia fighters in Afghanistan that have been returning from Syria, which formed its 10,000 to 20,000 strong Liwa Fatemiyoun militia. While Iran is unlikely to undertake such actions at the moment given its increasing outreach to the Afghan government, if Afghanistan becomes a ground for future proxy conflicts Iran's involvement could lead to sectarian tensions between the predominantly Shia Hazaras and the majority Sunni Pashtuns."*

**Central Asian Republics** Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian Republics have had a common interest in Afghanistan: preventing the rise of militancy and extremism, and the cross-border infiltration of such groups into their territories. Stability in Afghanistan would quell the serious threat these radical groups pose. The presence of US military bases in Central Asia, as well as NATO's recent decision to use Russia and the Central Asian Republics as a supply route, offers the Central Asian Republics important financial and economic incentives. Since the Central Asian Republics are all landlocked and depend on Russia for access to world markets, a stable Afghanistan could serve as an alternative, cost efficient point of access via Pakistan or Iran. The unresolved issue of water sharing between Afghanistan and a number of these countries might become a potential source of tension, as climate change and frequent droughts are making water scarcer in the region. Another factor is the role of Russia, which is unwilling to abandon its influence over the Central Asian states for various economic and strategic reasons. Therefore, the fulfillment of Central Asian states' objectives in Afghanistan is contingent upon Russia's desire for regional influence.

**Saudi Arabia.** Since the end of the Cold War and withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan, Saudi policy in Afghanistan has shifted from defeating communist ideology to containing Iranian influence in South Asia and the newly liberated Central Asian Republics. In Afghanistan Iranian clients such as ISA leaders Rabbani and Massoud were the targets. Believing radical Sunni Islam to be a natural obstacle to the propagation of a revolutionary Shia doctrine in the region, the Saudis invested heavily in radical madrassas in Pakistan, where a considerable number of Afghan and Pakistani youths sought religious education. Once Pakistan was involved in its support of emerging Taliban movement in late 1994, Saudi aid increasingly followed. Saudi Arabia was a major financial supporter of the Taliban between the defeat of Hizb-i Wahdat a Shia Hazara Mujahedeen group and Hizb-i Islami forces (under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) by the Taliban in Kabul in 1996, and the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya by a group of persons who were suspected of being Al-

Quaeda followers of the Saudi expatriate Osama bin Laden. The Taliban's providing shelter to Bin Laden led to U.S. pressure on Saudi Arabia to terminate its support of the Taliban. Official Saudi aid reportedly stopped, but Saudi money and support has continued to find its way to the Taliban in the form of private contributions. Due to lack of knowledge and physical presence in Afghanistan, the Saudis relied mainly on the Pakistani military for the delivery of aid to a select number of Afghan radical groups. The Saudis believed these groups could play an influential role in countering Shia Iranian's influence in Afghanistan, and have continued covertly offering financial support to extremist groups in Afghanistan and the region. Saudi Arabia along with Pakistan was among three countries that officially recognized the Taliban regime in 1996. Saudi Arabia's role in Afghanistan's reconstruction seems nonexistent when compared to that of other countries. The people of Afghanistan expected the Saudi government to make enormous financial contributions toward enhancing social and economic development in the country. The same goes for the Organization of the Islamic Conference, whose mission is to consolidate relations among Islamic countries and find viable solutions for challenges facing the Islamic world.

**Russia.** Demographically Islam is the second largest religion in Russia, with ten to fifteen percent of the population practicing. Russia and Afghanistan also share sizeable Turkic ethnic minorities, such as the Uzbeks and Turkmen. Religious fundamentalism, separatism and Islamism transgressing its borders was the major reason for Russians to start paying attention to developments in Afghanistan during the rise of Taliban. Moscow therefore, decided to lend its support to the Northern Alliance as Russia did not want to see a fundamentalist state emerge in Afghanistan. Apprehension for Russia was that the Taliban and their al-Qaeda allies were providing training and sanctuary to Chechen rebels, Central Asian militants, and others whom Moscow considered as threat. Russia did not take part in the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, but Moscow shared intelligence and allowed the U.S.-led coalition to send logistical and military supplies through Russian territory, besides being a major supplying arms to the Afghan government. In 2009, with Russian offer, the Northern Distribution Network was activated, allowing the US military to transport supplies and troops through Russian airspace to bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the way to Afghanistan<sup>3</sup>.

Russia on the basis of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) formed within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1994, considers itself to be the sole protector of Central Asian Republics against foreign threats comprising radical Islamist movements, including al-Qaeda. Moscow has also used its participation in America's "War on Terror" as an opportunity for heavy-handedness in its crackdown on Islamist and separatist movements in Chechnya and elsewhere. Outside its borders, Russia is concerned about the growth of

Islamism and terrorism in its traditional sphere of influence or the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Many militants from these areas have significant ties to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, or other groups in Afghanistan, and therefore Russia does not prefer a Taliban comeback in Kabul or a civil war emerge in Afghanistan.

Since the onset of NATO's Resolute Support Mission in 2014 succeeding ISAF Operation Enduring Freedom, Russia has politically engaged both the Taliban and the Afghan government, viewing the country through a security prism and the containment of ISIS as the highest priority. Openly, it provided arms only to the government. 2014 was a watershed year with the drawdown announcement by Obama administration. Engagement with Taliban and other related parties was started by Russia as a hedging strategy for an outcome involving Taliban in the power sharing. In 2016 Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, stated that "Taliban interests objectively coincide with ours." In the threat the Islamic State (ISIS) and its local branch (Islamic State-Khorasan Province, or ISKP) pose to Russia and the region. Russia's domestic anti-terrorism operations and intervention in Syria have attracted new security threats with regard to ISIS and transnational actors. Afghanistan with its unregulated borders at the periphery of CIS poses serious transnational Islamist threat to hierarchy at Moscow<sup>4</sup>.

The second threat is even more worrying for Russia: drug trafficking from Afghanistan. Recently, Russia has stopped being a drug transit country and has become a major consumer of Afghan heroin and opiates. According to the UN, Russia consumes only slightly less heroin each year than the rest of Europe combined. Out of drug addicts dying each year worldwide, between 30 to 40 percent are Russians.

Russia's geopolitical rivalry with the United States causes the presence of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan as a serious concern to the Russian government, as it nullifies its influence in the region. Though pragmatic Russian leaders felt NATO was doing their job for them.

**Taliban.** A small clerical movement emerged to protect residents from the lawlessness and extortion that had become routine post the fall of Najibullah regime in Afghanistan. These vigilantes in western Kandahar called themselves the Taliban, Pashto for "seekers of knowledge." Their ranks were soon reinforced by thousands of other, Pashtuns groomed in Deobandi madrassas, or seminaries, along Pakistan's western frontier. These madrassas proliferated under President Zia-ul-Haq (1977–88) and served some of the millions of Afghan refugees who had been displaced by more than a decade of unrest into the Pashtun tribal areas and FATA. They were sponsored by the religious party Jamiat Ulema-e-

Islami (JUI), which mobilized its students to take up arms with the Taliban. The Taliban's promise - in Pashtun areas straddling Pakistan and Afghanistan - was to restore peace and security and enforce their own austere version of Sharia, or Islamic law, once in power. The most powerful agency within the emirate was the Ministry of Enforcement of Virtue and Suppression of Vice (al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahi 'an al-Munkir), which is responsible for the enforcement of all Taliban decrees regarding moral behavior. In most of the areas it controls, the Taliban administration operates as a repressive police state. They introduced and supported Islamic Laws "The Sharia" and punishments - such as public executions became common. The Taliban were welcomed initially by a war-shattered public as it expanded out from Kandahar. The movement established order of Hanafi Islamic belief with influence of Pashtun custom, which merged well with the rural population of southern Afghanistan. Pakistan is the architect of the Taliban enterprise as many Afghans who initially joined the movement were educated in madrassas in Pakistan. Pakistan was also one of only three countries, along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which recognised the Taliban when they were in power in Afghanistan from the mid-1990s until 2001. The main aim of Taliban remains convert the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Taliban exists under the state policy and protection of Pakistan. The existence of Taliban has also become a necessity for Pakistan owing to domestic compulsions of a radicalized general population. Masjid, Mullah and Madarsa has replaced Allah, America and the Army in general population's clarion call. Pakistan ranks very low in the Human development Index with poor education and health infrastructure, the void in education is effectively filled by radicalism spewing Madarsas: fertile grounds for recruitment for extremist and terrorist organizations. If history repeats and by any unfortunate circumstances we find Taliban at the helm, it cannot be rule out that they would try to expand their region of influence as in 1994. The reverberations were felt as far as the Twin Towers in USA and Metro underground in London. European Foundation for South Asian Studies in its report 'Pakistan Army and Terrorism; an unholy alliance' states<sup>5</sup>:

*"Pakistan has been known for its perennial support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and other terrorist organizations in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir. The dramatic events of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers in the United States (US) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 also referred to as 9/11, shook the tectonic plates of world politics, pushing Pakistan into being a focal point of global politics. Pakistan became the key strategic partner of United States' War on Terror; post the terrorist attacks, taking a complete U-turn in her traditional foreign policies towards Afghanistan and Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, albeit temporarily under international pressure for heavy monetary gains. The country, in which sectarian groups targeting minority*

*communities (Shias, Sufis, Ahmadis etc.) and Kashmir-focused groups confined their operations to Indian Administered Kashmir and the rest of India, has become a victim of its own holy war as a consequence of the 'unholy alliance' between the Inter- Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency, military and self-styled religious scholars. This historic alliance has resulted in colossal rise of radical Islam being a factor in the country's proclivity to Islamic fundamentalism. A 2012 NATO study based on 27,000 interrogations of 4,000 captured Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters concluded that the ISI provided safe havens to the Taliban, monitored their movements, manipulated their fighters, and arrested those thought to be uncooperative. Al Qaeda is widely believed to still maintain camps in western Pakistan where foreign extremists receive training in terrorist operations. Former Pakistani Army Chief General Ziauddin Butt (a.k.a. General Ziauddin Khawaja) revealed at a conference on Pakistani-U.S relations in October 2011 that according to his knowledge the then former Director-General of Intelligence Bureau of Pakistan (2004-2008), Brigadier Ijaz Shah (retd.), had kept Osama bin Laden in an Intelligence Bureau safe house in Abbottabad, Pakistan. General Ziauddin Butt said Bin Laden had been hidden in Abbottabad 'with the full knowledge' of Pervez Musharraf. Later, Butt denied making any such statement. Post 9/11 attacks U.S commandos killed Osama bin Laden while he was living in Abbottabad, Pakistan."*

**China.** Has been discussed in detail at Chapter III.

## ENDNOTES CHAPTER V

- 1 Dobbins, James, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan*, Potomac Books, 2008 authoritative account of US engagement with Iran in 2001-2003.
- 2 <https://www.stimson.org/2020/irans-afghanistan-balancing-act/#:~:text=Iran%20is%20an%20important%20trade,trade%20and%20connectivity%20with%20Iran.&text=Going%20forward%20Iran%20will%20likely,U.S.%20Iran%20relationship%20deteriorates%20further.> (accessed – 25 Nov 20).
- 3 <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/russian-aims-in-afghanistan>. (accessed – 25 Nov 20).
- 4 ‘Afghanistan A View From Moscow’ Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko, 2010 ([https://carnegieendowment.org/files/trenin\\_afghan\\_final.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/trenin_afghan_final.pdf)). (accessed – 25 Nov 20).
- 5 <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/pakistan-army-and-terrorism:-an-unholy-alliance/> (accessed – 25 Nov 20).



## CHAPTER VI

### INDIAN DEVELOPMENTAL POLICY ADVANTAGES AND ITS RELEVANCE POST 2021

#### **Developmental Commitment by India in Afghanistan**

India has strengthened its ties with Afghanistan since 2001. Following the U.S. ouster of the Taliban, India was able to build on its established links with the Northern Alliance which became part of the new government in Kabul, this assisted engagement between the two Govts politically through development assistance. The relationship was driven by domestic and regional security reasons. India wanted a democratic, secular government in Afghanistan and prevent the rise of a fundamentalist revisionist Islamic power, since Taliban contributed towards insecurity within India and the region during the 1990s. Indian assistance to rebuilding a stable Afghanistan was key to safeguarding Indian security and economic growth. India with its growing economy and an expanding development assistance capability, is establishing itself as a regional power with global ambitions. Therefore, as a responsible economic powerhouse, it seemed the right thing to enhance its image. A crucial facet of the Indo-Afghan bilateral relationship has been India's extensive initiatives directed towards the restructuring and rehabilitation of war-torn Afghanistan. Ministry of External Affairs states, *"The principal focus of India's development assistance has been to build capacities and capabilities of Afghan nationals and its institutions for governance and delivery of public service, develop socio-economic infrastructure, secure lives and promote livelihood."* The 2011 strategic partnership agreement between the two countries committed India to supporting the democratic Afghan government. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated after the signing of the agreement<sup>1</sup>. *"India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume the responsibility for their governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014,"*. Economic relation between Afghanistan and India is increasing significantly over the years and moving to upward trajectory. The bilateral trade between India-Afghanistan in 2016-17 stood at \$590.1 million with India's exports to Afghanistan being \$377.2 million and imports from Afghanistan worth \$212.9 million. Recent statement on the Indian Embassy, Kabul website reflects<sup>2</sup>: *"Bilateral trade has crossed US\$1.5 billion mark in the previous financial year (2019-2020). India's exports to Afghanistan almost touched US\$ 1 billion (US\$ 997.58 million) and India's import from Afghanistan around US\$530 million. The growth in trade value has consistently improved over the last five years. As a comparison, Indian exports to Afghanistan witnessed a growth of over 89% between 2015-16 and 2019-20. Similarly, India's imports also grew by*

72% during the same period. In 2019-20, the export value increased by 39% and imports over 21% compared to 2018-19". A marked improvement in the trade relationship.

Indian development support continues to play a pivotal role in Afghanistan's overall socio-economic development through infrastructural, institutional, as well as human resource capacity building. Today, India is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan. By 2010 it had become the fifth largest development assistance provider to the country and by far the largest regional donor. India has committed US\$2 billion to development in Afghanistan. Many sectors in Afghanistan were provided developmental assistance power generation, education, infrastructure development, transport, health, defense and diplomacy<sup>3</sup>. In a virtual address on Afghan peace negotiations at Doha Peace talks, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar said in his tweet "The friendship of our peoples is a testimony to our history with Afghanistan. No part of Afghanistan is untouched by our 400-plus development projects. Confident that this civilizational relationship will continue to grow,"<sup>4</sup>.

Among the numerous development assistance programs to Afghanistan, the program that will likely have the longest lasting impact is the ITEC program, created in 1964. This program most importantly provides training and education Afghan government officials and students. India provides Afghans with easy to obtain visas for accessing education and health care services, which have enabled many government and privately funded Afghans to study in India. The ITEC program has trained thousands of Afghan bureaucrats, provided hundreds of vocational education programs, and provided educational scholarships to hundreds of Afghan students. Among them former Afghanistan President Karzai, who benefited from an education visa while studying for his masters at the Himachal Pradesh University. In Mar 2021 India signed 11 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth a total of \$9.5 million with Afghanistan. The ceremony was Presided over by the CEO of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the MoUs were signed by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar and various Afghan ministries The projects include constructing classrooms, orphanages and canal protection walls, as well as enhancing economic opportunities for women. The Indian Embassy said. "Since 2005 the Indian government has committed \$200 million to support over 550 projects throughout Afghanistan under SDP". Rani D Mullen in her 2017 report "**India in Afghanistan: Understanding Development Assistance by Emerging Donors to Conflict-Affected Countries**" brings out the following

*"Not only in Indian development assistance to Afghanistan today large and significant, particularly in PPP terms. It is also fully grant-based and targets a variety of sectors. India's humanitarian assistance includes the feeding of vitamin-fortified biscuits to two*

*million Afghan school children daily and the free provision of medicines and medical services monthly to over 30,000 Afghans within the country, in addition to expedited visas for Afghans seeking medical treatment in India. Indian assistance to the Afghan infrastructure sector has included the building and equipping of the Afghan parliament building for USD 90 million and financing the construction of the Delaram-Zaranj Highway at a cost of USD 135 million. This highway connects the Iranian border with Afghanistan's ring road. On the Iranian side of the border it then links to the Iranian Chabahar port being expanded with Indian development assistance, and thereby provides India with a route for exporting to and importing from Afghanistan which does not rely on Pakistan. India has also continued to fund the upgrading of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health hospital and provision of some equipment and medical services and it has built a 400-km power transmission line, which carried electricity to Kabul. Moreover, Indian development assistance to Afghanistan has included low-cost, unconventional projects that have provided Afghanistan a lot of value, while India in turn has built significant good will in the country. For example, in 2014 as a symbol of their friendship India presented Afghanistan a gift of a supersized 97 by 65 feet Afghan flag, which required a specially constructed 200 feet high flagpole. This flag, which was presented by the Indian foreign minister and co-financed by an Indian billionaire, reportedly cost less than USD 7,000. Political analysts noted the symbolism of India gifting Afghanistan a flag at a time when American troops were drawing down and Afghan leaders, including President Karzai, were vocally questioning Pakistan's support for a democratic and stable Afghanistan. In another example of an Indian project that has generated much good will towards India, starting in 2015 India provided a "home" cricket field for the Afghan national cricket team in India and has hosted the Afghan national cricket team's matches. Cricket has become a popular sport in Afghanistan and the Afghan national cricket team has had a meteoric rise, joining in June 2017 the elite ranks of the dozen country teams that are members of the International Cricket Council. Though India has not released any estimates of the value of providing a home cricket field to Afghanistan, the good will that this development cooperation has generated within Afghanistan is a tribute to India's ability to leverage its development assistance into significant soft power."*

In 2005 during the 13<sup>th</sup> Summit Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), India recommended Afghanistan's membership to the SAARC. During the historic 14<sup>th</sup> Summit of the SAARC in New Delhi on April 4 2007, Afghanistan attended along with among the heads of state and government for the first time as a regular member. India and Afghanistan have also formed strategic and military partnerships to combat regional militants.

With regards to humanitarian assistance and education initiatives in Afghanistan, India has played a significant role. Every year, about 1,000 Afghan students study in Indian universities on scholarships, and Afghan civil servants have access to Indian training institutions <sup>5</sup>. The Indian government also runs a program that provides lunch meals to around 2 million Afghan school children. In addition, India has also constructed numerous field clinics and a children's hospital.

Many Indian State owned and private firms have worked and are working in developmental projects in Afghanistan. One such firm C&C Constructions has been actively involved in the infrastructure sector in Afghanistan. It has built roads exceeding the length of 700 km in total which cost around US \$250 million. The crown jewel of C&C's worked on the bronze-domed Afghan parliament building, costing \$125 million and funded by the Indian government. Other projects include a 400-km power line, and a hydro-electricity plant. India is developing the Chabahar port on the Makaran coast as an alternative to Karachi: which is often denied. A photo tweet showing the parliament building as India's gift and another photo showing the destroyed Dar-ul-Aman palace in Kabul as Pakistan's gift went viral in the Afghan social media. Detailed Developmental Assistance provided by India quoted from **Shakti Sinha's, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delh, "Rising Powers And Peacebuilding: India's Role In Afghanistan"** article is as **Appendix A**

India has agreed to assist Afghanistan in whatever way possible, including training ANSDF forces. The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh under similar circumstances in 2011-12 stated *"Our co-operation with Afghanistan is an open book. We have civilizational links, and we are both here to stay ... India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume responsibility for governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014."*<sup>6</sup> . The present PM has very clearly articulated *"Our ties are as ancient as history. Over the mighty Hindu Kush and through the forbidding 'Khyber pass, monk', merchants and monarchs have linked us through knowledge, culture, religion, commerce and kingdoms."*, reassuring Afghanistan that in times to come India will stand by it's friend. Afghan Ambassador to US in Nov 2019 in a talk to Hudson Institute put soft power of India on a pedestal by remarking<sup>7</sup> :

*"Our shared history is so rich and encompasses so many facets of connection that I've managed to get this far in my remarks without yet mentioning the two most critical elements. Let's face it, no government initiative could ever be more effective in bringing our people closer than the two real stars of this relationship. And no, I am not referring to any particular political leader. The truth is that no discussion about Indian-Afghan*

*relationships would be complete without a mention of Bollywood and cricket. I myself grew up anxiously awaiting Thursday nights, when the only TV channel available in Kabul would air an Indian movie. I know I was not the only one eagerly awaiting Thursday nights! During the dark days of Taliban rule, these joyful films were sometimes the only colorful things we had to look forward to. These films provided a glimpse into a different world and gave us hope when little else could. Today, every Afghan I know speaks a little Hindi because of these films. As for cricket, now a national pastime, last year, India declared the Greater Noida Stadium as the Afghan team's official training facility, as they currently don't have one in Afghanistan. The Indian government has also provided coaching and technical facilities, as well as funding for a stadium in Kandahar."*

### **Future Ahead.**

Polls and surveys find that Afghans generally have a positive view of India, whereas Pakistan is seen as meddlesome, causing instability in the country. When the Taliban regime fell, Bollywood music blared in the streets of Afghanistan. Today, Indian soap operas and films are still incredibly popular across the country. At the diplomatic level, India and Afghanistan have generally had cordial relations. India has opened an embassy in Kabul along with four consulates in Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Mazar-e-Sharif. The only other country to host as many is Pakistan, whose consulates are also located in these cities. The scenarios emerging in the recent past bring out clearly that violence is an inseparable part of Afghan future. The development initiative appears to be bearing fruit in 'soft power' application at grass root level. The power has is diffusing down to the electorate level to exert meaningful pressure, this however, will continue to gain strength once democratic process matures. Despite India's inclination for a closer tie with Afghanistan, to realistically sustain interests without physical presence of 'might' is going to be difficult once the US led NATO umbrella is no longer available.

## ENDNOTES CHAPTER VI

- 1 Gupta, Arvind. "Strategic Partnership with Afghanistan: India Showcases its Soft Power," Institute for Defense Analysis, IDSA Strategic Comments, October 10, 2011. [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/StrategicPartnershipwithAfghanistanIndiaShowcasesitsSoftPower\\_agupta\\_101011](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/StrategicPartnershipwithAfghanistanIndiaShowcasesitsSoftPower_agupta_101011). (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 2 Indian Embassy Website <https://eoi.gov.in/kabul/?11360?000>. (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 3 *ibid* (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 4 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/s-jaishankar-attends-meeting-on-afghan-peace-process/articleshow/78075781.cms?from=mdr>. (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 5 Malhotra, Jyoti. *In Afghanistan, Indians are praised simply for being Indian; Q&A: Jayant Prasad, Indian ambassador to Afghanistan*. Business Standard, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009. (accessed on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020) <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/in-afghanistan-indianspraised-simply-for-being-indian/372716/> (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 6 Tisdall, Simon. *India may pay heavily in future for supporting the Karzai regime*. The Guardian, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012. (accessed on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/05/india-regret-supporting-karzai-afghanistan> (accessed – 2 Dec 20).
- 7 <https://www.afghanembassy.us/contents/2019/11/documents/Ambassador-Roya-Rahmani-Speech-Hudson-Institute-.pdf> (accessed – 2 Dec 20).

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **RECOMMENDED POLICY INITIATIVES AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Continuation of Development Driven Policy Objective**

Indian government activities India recognizes that social and economic development in Afghanistan is vital to ensure regional security. To that end the then President Karzai signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement during his visit to India in 2011 that formalized a framework for cooperation in the following areas: 'political & security cooperation; trade & economic cooperation; capacity development and education; and social, cultural, civil society & people-to-people relations'. Within this framework India has pledged just under \$2 billion to Afghanistan, and spent around \$1 billion, making it the fifth largest bilateral donor after the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany and the largest non-traditional donor. Most Indian assistance fits into three broad categories: humanitarian assistance (such as food aid), small & large infrastructure projects and capacity building. In terms of cost, six projects stand out:-

- (a) Food assistance to primary school children and construction and rehabilitation of schools.
- (b) Supply of 250,000 tonnes of wheat and more in the pipeline.
- (c) Construction of a power line from Pul-i-Khumri to Kabul.
- (d) Construction of the Salma Dam Power Project.
- (e) Construction of the parliament building.
- (f) Rehabilitation of Delaram-Zaranj road.

India has undertaken a range of small-scale development projects. These are in almost all provinces of Afghanistan, the projects are high impact low cost, these are continuing to be supported and further increase. Hitherto these projects have been concentrated in Pashtun border areas, upsetting Pakistan, which has accused Indian consulates of being fronts for espionage. India also plans to increase its capacity building for the Afghan government, broadening its engagement to issues such as education and health. Some of the smaller projects being undertaken by India are:-

- (g) Funding for the Afghan Ministry of Health to build and maintain medical clinics
- (h) The construction of cold storage food warehouses in Kandahar
- (i) Construction on the Habibia school
- (j) Renovation of the Indira Gandhi hospital
- (k) Establishing an agricultural university and a mining school
- (l) Restoring the Stor Palace

- (m) Training Afghan army officers and policemen
- (n) 1,300 annual college scholarships and training grants for civil servants (a further 200 scholarships for agricultural degrees were provided from 2010).
- (o) 20 Indian technical advisors in Afghan ministries under a trilateral agreement with the UNDP.
- (p) Capacity building for Afghan ministries.

The development aid policy has endeared India to the grass root level amongst majority of the Afghan population and the Govt. It has built faith and trust since 2001. The development aid amounting \$ 2 Billion is in the form of infrastructure which needs protecting. The Resolute Mission Force, the US led NATO organization provides that protective umbrella, which may soon be withdrawn. Shakti Sinha a UNDP consultant in his article “Rising Powers and Peacebuilding: India’s Role in Afghanistan” states

*“An issue of major disappointment among many Afghan respondents, and that was in India’s diffidence in supporting the Afghan national security forces (ANSF). A number of respondents expressed frustrations about India’s refusal to step in a big way in supporting ANSF beyond a few training slots, and supply of relative less defensive equipment. There was visible disappointment that ‘India’s response to our request for supply of arms and equipment has not been what we expected’ despite the fact that the 2011 India– Afghanistan Strategic Partnership does include security cooperation.’ As a result, Afghanistan was ‘forced to look elsewhere.’ A number of respondents were emphatic that ‘India must do much more in forcing Pakistan to curb down its terrorism ... India has a good dialogue with the United States and should use that opportunity to leverage the US to put pressure on Pakistan.’ Another respondent was clear in his prescription that ‘India should not look at Afghanistan through the prism of Pakistan.’”*

## **Changed Security Scenario : Security Hedge Policy**

### **A. Russia, China, Pakistan & Taliban**

In Dec 2016 Russia hosted China and Pakistan for a conference on future of Afghanistan, surprisingly neither Afghanistan Govt nor any other party was invited. As Afghanistan has moved closer to India, Pakistan is seeking to forge closer ties with China and Russia to counter New Delhi's growing influence in Kabul. India and Afghanistan have been extremely critical of Pakistan's destabilising role in Afghanistan. Russia on the other hand sees rise of IS-K as



threatening its regional interests, Russia has a large Muslim population and its CAR neighbours has had their brush with fundamentalist Islamic players. DW a German news agency in Jan 2017 reported *“Former Afghan diplomat Saidi believes that after Ukraine and Syria, another US-Russia conflict is being played out in Afghanistan”*<sup>1</sup>. A waning US-NATO can be pressured through alliances including with Taliban for a geopolitical gain in Syria. Indo-US growing bonhomie in the recent years especially with respect to China in the South China Sea is very concerting to Russia. India still is a major Russian defence importer. Alliance with China and Pakistan is seen as a weighing tactics towards India. Russia first established contacts with the Taliban leadership in 2007 to discuss the issue of drug trafficking through Central Asian countries that share borders with Afghanistan. Now there are reports that Moscow is again in contact with the Taliban. But this time the Moscow-Taliban contacts are not limited to talks on drug trafficking, according to analysts. There are reports of Russia supplying arms to Taliban, NY Times in June 2020 reported<sup>2</sup> *“American intelligence officials have concluded that a Russian military intelligence unit secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing coalition forces in Afghanistan — including targeting American troops — amid the peace talks to end the long-running war there, according to officials briefed on the matter.”* There are multiple issues at play as regards Russia.

China on the other hand has kept her card close to the chest. Beginning 2001, US GWOT was used as a pretext to tighten control in XAUR. A Uyghur militancy fueled by its own repression of Muslims in XAUR, allegedly perpetrated by TIP and ETIM. Fears of Al-Queda or Taliban support emerging in Afghanistan is one of the drivers for China engaging with Taliban and supporting its long time ally Pakistan. Drug smuggling is another reason for which it wants a say in Afghan affairs. The economic interests of extending the flagship CPEC through Afghanistan to CAR drives the trade cost lower and eases energy commodities transit. Abundant mineral and natural resources in Afghanistan which the SOE's of China has contracted suggests its outlook favouring a stable Afghanistan. Chain has hosted Taliban a few times and has abundant leverage over Pakistan, possibility therefore, clearly exists of China – Taliban nexus in the future. A conceivable role that Taliban could play is of a non-state actor to further Chinese policies in Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

Pakistan & Taliban are two sides of the same coin. The success achieved in ouster of USSR by a ‘thousand cuts’ has bolstered Pakistan’s confidence in using terrorism as a state policy to influence the region. ‘Deep state’ of Pakistan: the ISI, holds sway on all the terror networks

including Haqqani's operating on either side of Durand Line. She has also shown amazing dexterity in running with the hares and hunting with the hounds in dealing with American pressures. The unholy alliance is going to continue the symbiotic relationship, it endears both Pakistan and Taliban as to China, Russia, US and any one with interest in Afghanistan. Pakistan is going to continue to oppose Indian role in Afghanistan, Taliban as a proxy will be used as levers of violence to play out its policies. India will have to keep its friendly relations with Russia as a hedge, assurances and defence economic exchanges will need to continue. CSTO binds CAR to Russia, further nurturing relations with CAR would prove beneficial, Farkhor airbase needs to be revitalized with Tajikistan. Russia may remain a dominant military power in the CAR protectorate, with its continued joint military exercises a signal to US and China of its supremacy in the region has been regularly conducted. The fact that the Afghan Govt, post the February Peace agreement, is in direct contact and talks with the Taliban provides room for India to reposition and to talk to sections within the Taliban. In May 2020 US Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, called on India to open a political conversation with the Taliban, the group later signaled that it is eager for a productive relationship with India. Opening Track II negotiations with Taliban factions could prove beneficial to understand the internal power dynamics and leverages, for a future course of action. Rudra and Shreyas in their article 'Dealing With the Taliban: India's Strategy in Afghanistan After U.S. Withdrawal'<sup>3</sup>, state the reason to engage with Taliban as justified primarily due to factional fighting within the Afghan Govt ie between Ghani and Abdullah:

*“Afghan insiders like Khenjani, who have historically been well disposed toward India, argue that “New Delhi waited too long on the peace process” and that despite its “enormous leverage and capital” in Kabul, it consciously pushed itself to “irrelevance.” An attendee at the signing ceremony in Doha argues that India’s official position—that it will work only through the Ghani-led government and not “annoy” it—has “distanced” India from a process that is shaped only in part by Ghani. Ghani and Abdullah realize that the Afghan government has limited agency in seeing the deal through. That “Ghani has less leverage” now than before in this entire process and in the agreement is clear to experts and practitioners alike.*

*In short, it is becoming increasingly apparent with each passing day that the strategy of working through the Afghan government needs to be adapted. Senior Indian officials who have long followed the politics of Afghanistan suggest that if and when direct negotiations between the Taliban and the democratic government in Kabul begin, it*

*would be prudent for India to “visualize scenarios” that would require “spreading the net wide,” including “within parts of the Taliban” in the context of such a peace process.”*

In the Multilateral sphere, India became a full member of SCO in 2017, the organization established Afghanistan Contact Group to aid and assist rebuilding of the country. Contact Group has held three meetings to discuss the process of intra-Afghan peace talks. India participated in two of the meetings scheduled in 2018 and 2019. The forum gives India an opportunity to coordinate even with China on common grounds of religious extremism, separatism and terrorism, the key security challenges identified by both. Similar Summit forums of Russia-India-China enables deeper coordination with Russia. In January 2017, Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visited Moscow with the aim of securing a place for India in Russian-led discussions on Afghanistan. This led to India’s inclusion in what came to be known as the six-party talks, convened in February 2017, to discuss the future of Afghanistan. India can also utilise the age old friendship to use Russia-Taliban ties to its advantage.

## **B. Iran**

Rudra and Shreyas in their article sum up the importance of Iran very elaborately<sup>4</sup>:

*“Iran has served as India’s best bet for intelligence collection in southern and southwestern Afghanistan. Despite Iran’s bitter history with the Taliban, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif stated that “it would be impossible to have a future Afghanistan without any role for the Taliban.” Iran has in the recent past reportedly lent active support to Taliban factions, possibly with a view to ensuring that it has access to a future Afghan government with potential Taliban membership. It is, according to a senior Indian official, “politically the most important country in Afghanistan after the United States and Pakistan.” They “can’t be trusted,” argues this official, who has years of experience working with Iran, but their “contacts are extensive” and very useful to India.*

*Iran, argues another official, can “provide real-time intelligence on the Haqqanis and the Pakistanis.” Indeed, as Paliwal notes, Iran’s engagement with the Taliban since 2015 has played a key role in breaking the movement’s coherence. “Apart from U.S. airstrikes and ANDSF [Afghan National Defense and Security Forces] ops,” he*

*argues, “the biggest challenge Pakistan faced in its management of Afghanistan’s militant landscape was from Iran.” In the past, India has relied on Iran to “covertly reach out to select Taliban factions.”*

*However, to make the best of this relationship in the near future, India will need to strengthen its strategic ties with Iran. Consider, for instance, its response to Iran during the coronavirus pandemic. Among the world’s democracies, India has been a leader in providing supplies to different corners of the globe. Tellingly, and at the time of writing, Iran’s request for medical supplies is currently “under process.” India’s muted response can be attributed to a downturn in its ties with Iran.”*

US-India relations need to be weighed in while dealing with Iran. Both relationships have their importance, however as humanitarian aid Covid vaccines can be source of enormous goodwill which can be cashed in terms of hard intelligence support. Deeper covert intelligence ties and access to real time actionable information would prove their weight in gold in the coming future.

### **C. Hard Power Domain**

Pashtun population which is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan (including President Ghani) and FATA-NWFP, can be influenced through soft power garnered via the developmental endeavours. Many Pashtun areas have benefited by Indian projects. Taliban with its major base of Pashtuns can be influenced through tribal linkages, a good intelligence network is therefore the need of the hour. Reinforce intelligence and soft power developmental ties with the all other ethnic groups : Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajik. Reconciling the interests of multiple ethnic groups in, 27 per cent are Tajiks, 9 per cent each of Hazaras and Uzbeks is difficult and requires affiliations. Reengaging the Northern Alliance will also significantly address India’s apprehensions with regard to Pakistan. A lot of human capital development strategies were adopted which has benefited tens of thousands of students, bureaucrats and technocrats who were educated in India, are good ambassadors for India within Afghan tribal domains.

Pashtunistan equation is at a sweet spot to be rekindled. Taliban with its predominant Pashtun structure has never recognised the Durand line. In terms of population there are 35 million Pashtuns living in Pakistan side of border, compared to about 10-15 million in Afghanistan. Pashtunistan question has not been raised in the recent past, however, the atrocities heaped on

the Pashtun population by Pak Army in its quest to exercise control has made Pashtun Tahafuz Movement to raise human rights issues. These could hardly go unnoticed. Endeavour to manipulate Taliban for autonomy and finally independence of Pashtunistan appears a viable intelligence strategy<sup>5</sup>.

Balochistan to Control CEPC is an option worth considering as a pressure point on China. The independence seeking organisations within Pakistan, most predominantly Baloch Liberation Army, Baloch Liberation Front and Baloch Student Organisation are ideal partners for executing operations with intelligence support. Repressive and heavy handed approach to Balochi demands by the Pakistan Army including targeted killings, abductions and enforced disappearance has alienated the Baloch natives. The Baloch liberation is an old struggle and can be given diplomatic and political support. The Balochi nationalists have waged a guerrilla war against the governments of Pakistan and Iran in the Balochistan region. The Balochi nationalists maintain that Pakistan has exploited the natural resource but has done nothing for the development of the people and the region. Subramanyam Swamy the vocal BJP member of Parliament has stated in an interview to ANI in Sep 2018 after the surgical strike *“India should work towards breaking Pakistan in four parts. “I personally feel that India should break Pakistan into four. Balochis, Sindhis, and the Pashtuns don't want to be part of Pakistan then why should we not assist them to form their own country and turn Pakistan into a small speck on the global map?” “.*

It should actively support and invest in the National Directorate of Security, by sharing intelligence and improving tech assistance. Rudra Chaudhuri, Shreyas Shende<sup>6</sup> state the importance of both intelligence framework and reaching out to Taliban by stating,

*“According to Avinash Paliwal, the author of a book on India and Afghanistan, India has, in the last few years, reached out to the Taliban. Whether it is through Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) or on their own, Indian intelligence agencies have long had contacts with various factions within the Taliban. Turning these sporadic intelligence-led outreach operations into a sustainable diplomatic strategy will require administrative reorganization.”*

Pakistan on the other hand is unlikely to accept any role for India to play. It would consequently have to be convinced of any terror attacks on Indian assets in Afghanistan or elsewhere would

generate a swift and massive reciprocal response. Capabilities both overt and covert need to be expanded and strengthened, example of Israel and its operations within Iran and other Arab countries is a shining example.

Indian diaspora in the western world especially US, have gained clout, power and influence over the years. Many global Fortune 500 CEOs are Indians. It augurs well for Indian Diplomacy to use this as a tool to charter favourable policies. The environment couldn't be more advantageous as is in the US, this strength needs to be harnessed.

A key focus for Indian engagement is the security relationship. India will need to make its support to the ANDSF a priority. India needs to continue to provide much needed military support to Afghan forces including Hi-tech weapons and hardware. India began training Afghan troops in Indian in its training institutes since early 2000 and has since then trained thousands. It also offers courses for capacity building and professional upgradation. In late 2019, India provided basic weapons training and leadership skills to an all-women batch of the Afghan army and air force for the third year in a row. This has been an important outcome of strategic partnership agreement of October 2011. Large scale military training of the ANDSF through the establishment of an Indian Defence Training Team in Afghanistan is an idea whose time has come, training the special forces and military intelligence can be institutionalized within this training infrastructure. Given India's rich experience in handling insurgencies, such a training establishment will significantly bolster the capacity of the ANDSF to deal with internal challenges themselves. Afghanistan has frequently requested Indian Government for arms and equipment which is not easily forthcoming from elsewhere, the NDA Govt has been upcoming with its latest gift of attack helicopters. The dilemma also remains on the quantity and quality of military hardware the West is likely to leave and the degree of military aid forthcoming going forward. Boots on ground by India is unlikely to achieve tangible results and would be cost prohibitive. Logistics of maintaining a force with no direct land connectivity will be a nightmare. Many analysts feel such deployments unless supported by a strong UN mandate and supporting structure have snowballing effect, where more and more troops tend to get committed as operations mount. It is a better policy to let the fighting be done by strengthened ANSDF, support including intelligence can be the domain expertise populated with Indian intelligence community.

The dynamics of the trilateral relationship between Afghanistan, India and Pakistan are complex and overlap other geopolitical rivalries and tensions. Initially the United States was concerned about Indian involvement in Afghanistan, largely reflecting Pakistani concerns. Now it wants more active Indian involvement, although with the caveat that the US recognizes Pakistan's likely concern of an Indian military presence in Afghanistan. India is highly unlikely to commit troops to a security role following the withdrawal of most Western troops in 2021 and does not wish to take a unilateral security role in Afghanistan. This stems from long-standing memories of the ill-fated peace-keeping mission to Sri Lanka in 1987-90, and the recognition that it does not bode well in the cost benefit analysis. However, there is a requirement to upscale training for Afghan security forces.

India is aware that the situation in Afghanistan could deteriorate markedly. While we are investing heavily in measures to support the central government, our response to the worst-case scenario, 'the collapse of central government authority and return to full-scale conflict' –is relatively easy to gauge. There is need in taking steps to reinvigorate its relationship with Tajikistan based on the September 2012 agreement to the 'continuing expansion of defence cooperation' and to establish a 'friendship hospital'. Since 1990s India had negotiations with Tajikistan to use the Farkhor Airbase (two miles from the Afghan border) to transport supplies and military advisers to the Northern Alliance. A hospital was also established to treat injured Northern Alliance fighters. While Tajikistan has not yet agreed for India to reopen the overseas airbase, there is a requirement to re-invigorate relations with Tajiks so that in the event of civil war India would readopt its 1990s tactics of shoring up the Northern Alliance. Afghan Defence forces are not the same that were in early 2000, they have gained professional confidence and have been leading many operations against Taliban on their own, it would be ingenuous to assume given the support, Afghanistan would fall back into anarchy. Tolo Afghan News Channel in Aug 2020 reported "Acting Defense Minister Asadullah Khalid on said the Afghan National Security and Defense Forces, especially the Air Force, have become capable of fighting against terrorist groups and that he will not allow the elimination of the country's army at any cost. Khalid pledged that the Afghan forces can defend the country in the absence of financial and military support of NATO and US troops. "They have defended this country in the absence of NATO, Americans and financial and military support, and we will do it again. There is no problem," Khalid said."<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusion**

India's relationship with Afghanistan is multi-layered; there is clearly a military and security angle, under which India aspires for stability within Afghanistan and hanging over which is the shadow of its relationship with Pakistan-China collusive engagement in regime formation. While growing, the military relationship with Afghanistan is gaining favour, it has the potential to be significantly ramped up irrespective of developments in Afghanistan. More positively, there is a social and economic engagement, including investment by Indian firms and development projects undertaken by the Indian government. India's lead role under the Istanbul Process of regional engagement reflects its attempts to normalize Afghanistan in the eyes of the region. Clearly, this engagement is contingent on stability in Afghanistan. While India is assisting in facilitating Afghan trading links through Iran (intended to reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan), there is more to be done for connectivity and mutual benefits through CAR. Chabahar has the potential to further the geostrategic capabilities of India and needs to be developed at all cost.

And finally there are softer cultural links. Thousands of Afghan students study in India, and Afghanistan is the largest recipient of scholarships provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Though Indian military footprint as of now is not an option, Strong and capable intelligence to do India's bidding needs to further spread and proliferate. There is too much at stake for India not to be proactively engage and build its capabilities in Afghanistan.



## ENDNOTES CHAPTER VII

- 1 <https://www.dw.com/en/why-is-russia-so-interested-in-afghanistan-all-of-a-sudden/a-36989680> (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/politics/russia-afghanistan-bounties.html> (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 3 [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Chaudhuri\\_Shende\\_-\\_Afghanistan.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Chaudhuri_Shende_-_Afghanistan.pdf) (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 4 *ibid* (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 5 Rajamohan, C, As it ponders talks with Taliban, Delhi should focus on complex geopolitics of the Pashtun lands, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/afghanistan-taliban-ceasefire-peace-talks-ashraf-ghani-donald-trump-india-6427090/> (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 6 [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Chaudhuri\\_Shende\\_-\\_Afghanistan.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Chaudhuri_Shende_-_Afghanistan.pdf) (accessed – 24 Jan 21).
- 7 <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghan-forces-capable-fighting-terrorism-khalid> (accessed – 24 Jan 21).

## CHAPTER VIII

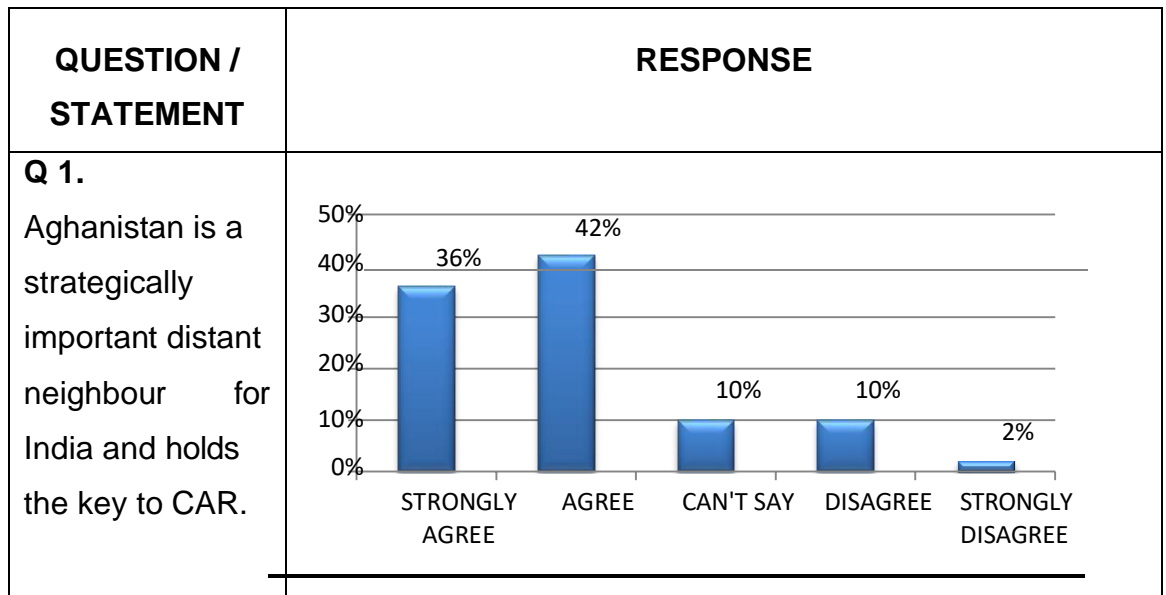
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

In order to arrive at realistic analysis, a questionnaire on the subject was prepared and circulated amongst Armed forces officers and Civil govt officials as per details below

- 1) **Population and Sample.** All aware residents of India.
- 2) **Target Sample Size.** All APPPA participants service bracket of 25 to 30 years. All officers who attended National Defence College Course 60 in the above mentioned service range. The sample was representative of the population.
  - (i) **Data Collection.** Based on the study of publications, articles and books on various aspects related to the Afghanistan and US drawdown, a questionnaire was framed on LIKERT scale. The questionnaire (given along with responses is enumerated in paras below) was administered to the sample population and it sought their opinions on fifteen statements pertaining to relations of India, China and Pakistan with Afghanistan and its strategic relevance.
- 3) **Response Rate.** Response rate was 40%
- 4) **Factor Analysis.** The questionnaire was designed to find opinion on the factors of Afghanistan's stability, importance to neighbours, collusive engagements of China and Pak: -
  - (ii) Importance of Afghanistan to India (geo strategic & security including energy): **Q1, Q2 & Q3.**
  - (iii) Interplay of Pakistan between & Afghanistan: **Q11.**
  - (iv) Importance of both India, China, CAR & Pakistan in the context of Afghanistan's Future: **Q9.**
  - (v) Importance of stability in Afghanistan post drawdown of ISAF :**Q5, Q6 & Q9.**
  - (vi) Cina – Pak collusivity: **Q 13.**
  - (vii) India's developmental importance in Afghanistan : **Q 14 & Q4.**
  - (viii) Relevance of India's military foot print in Afghanistan: **Q15 & Q10.**

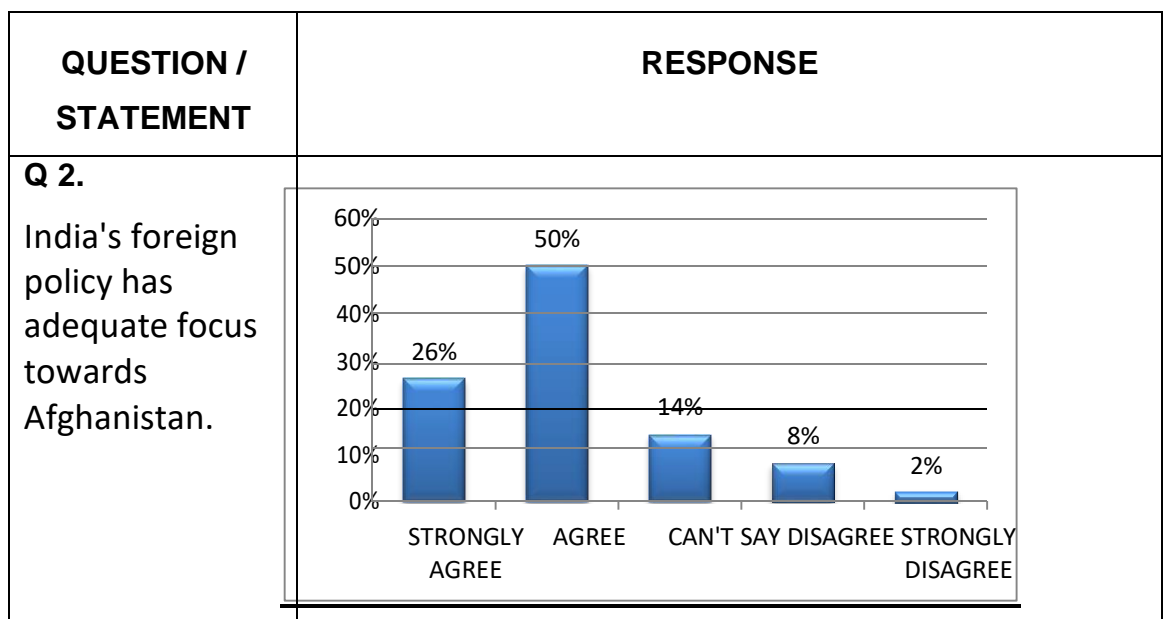
5) **Details of Findings.**

(a)



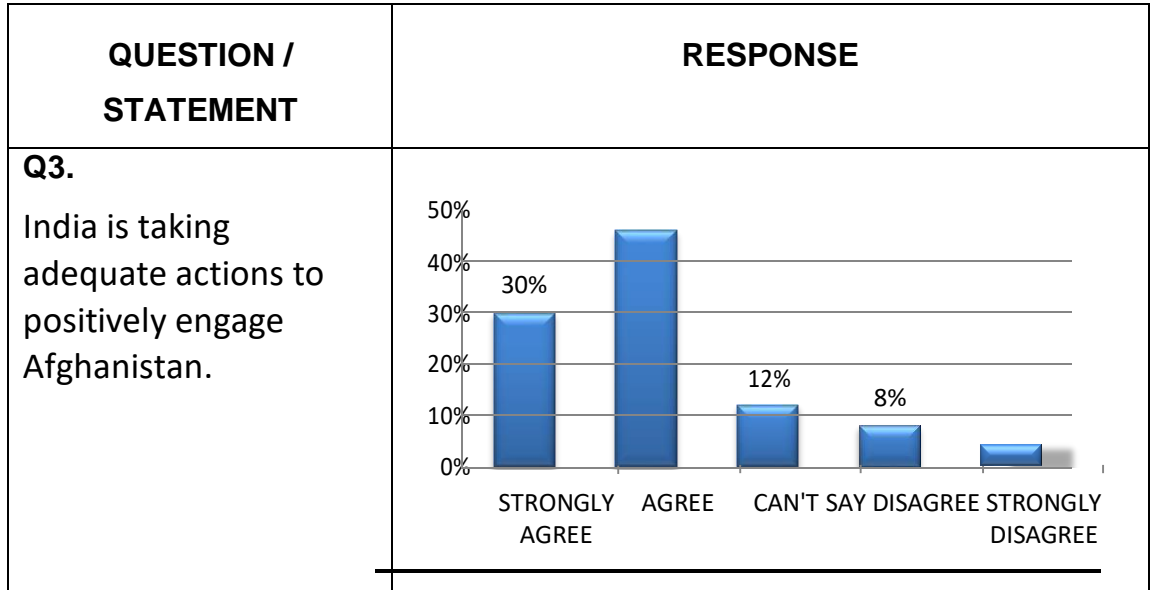
**78 %** of officers **agree** that geo strategic loc of Afghanistan holds the key to peace in India's western neighborhood and in future will connect India reach out to energy rich CAR.

(b)



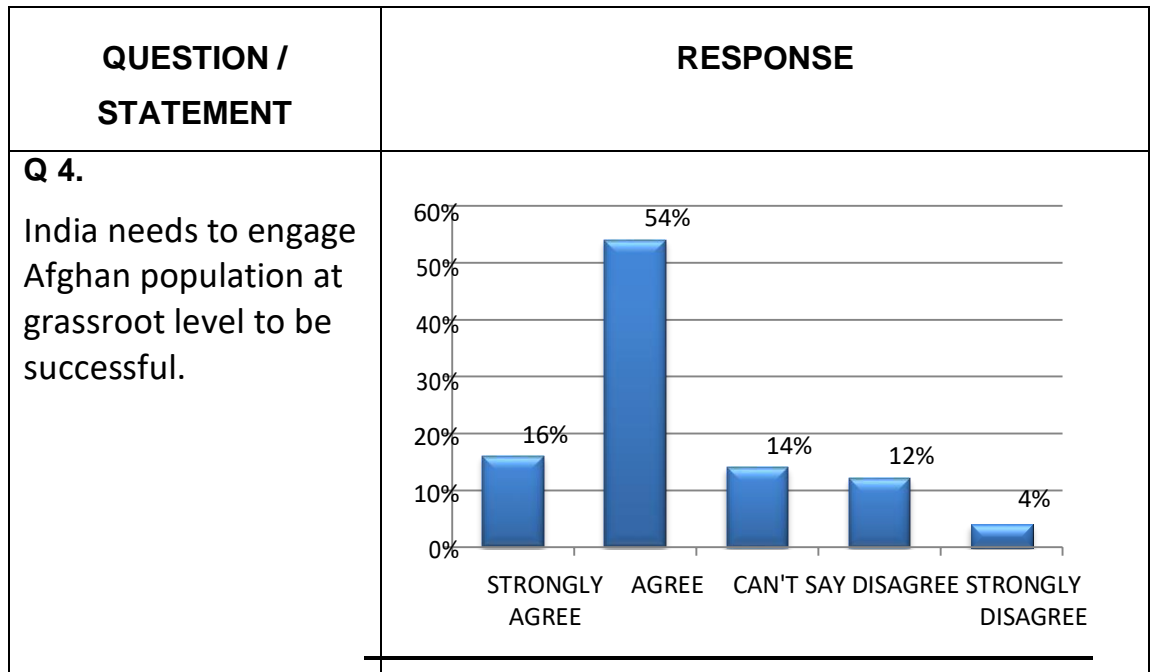
**76 %** of officers **agree** that any disturbance in Afghanistan will **directly/indirectly** affect India' security needs therefore India has adequate foreign policy focus towards Afghanistan.

(c)



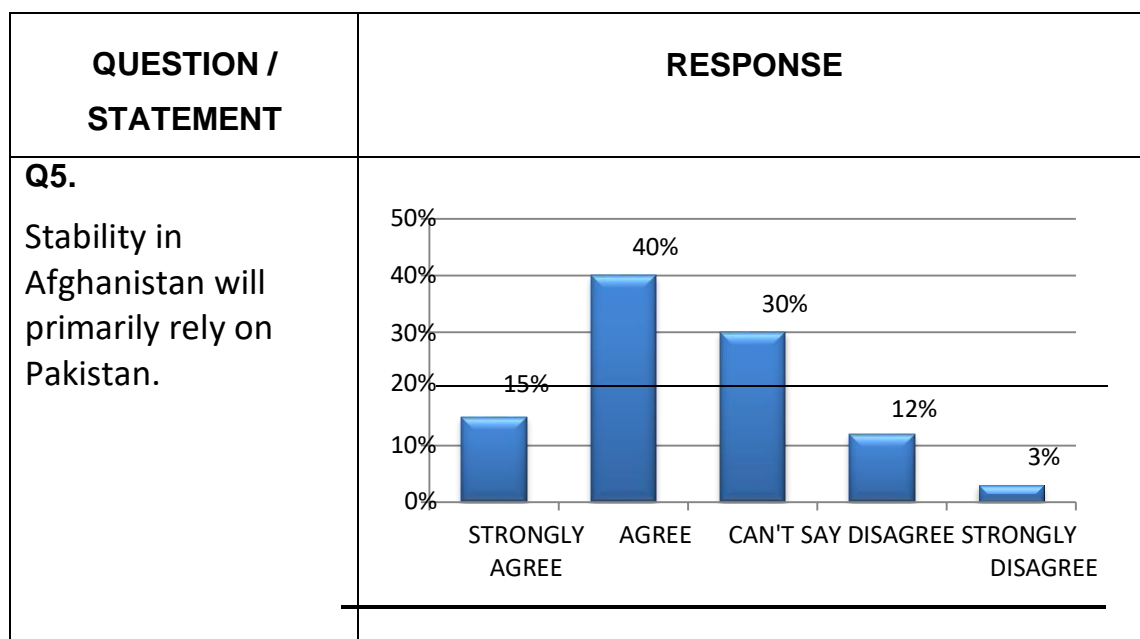
**76 %** of officers **agree that** a peaceful Afghanistan is imperative to India's energy Security needs and is being positively engaged by India.

(d)



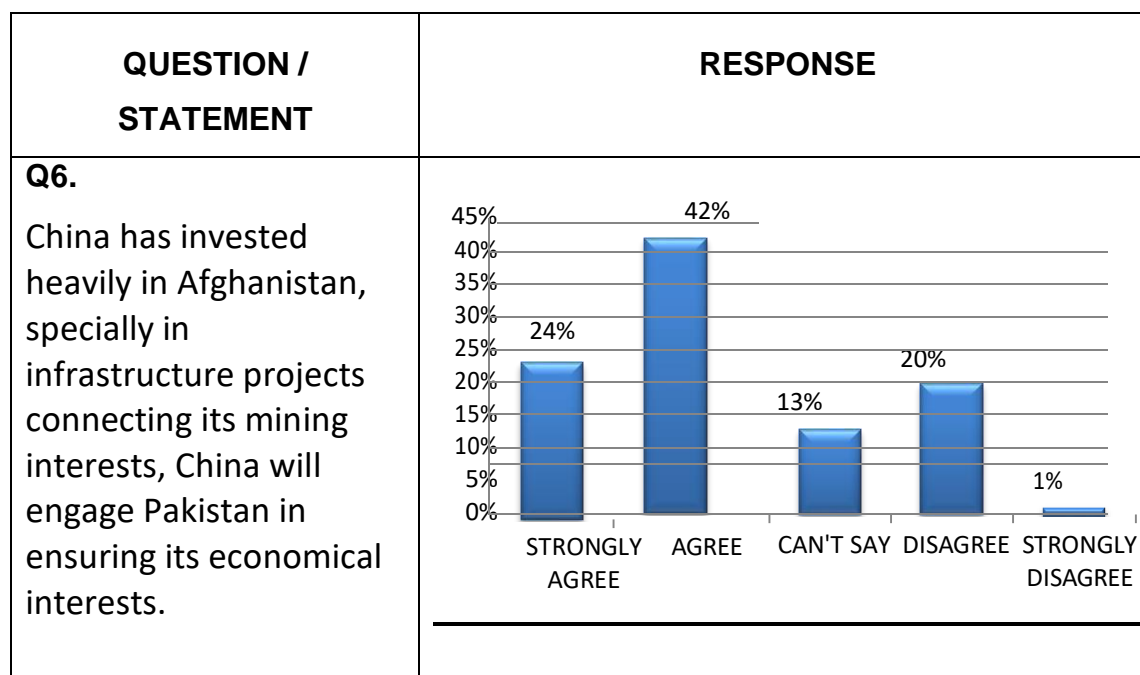
**70 %** of officers **agree that** any interference by India **should** engage in grassroot developmental projects.

(e)



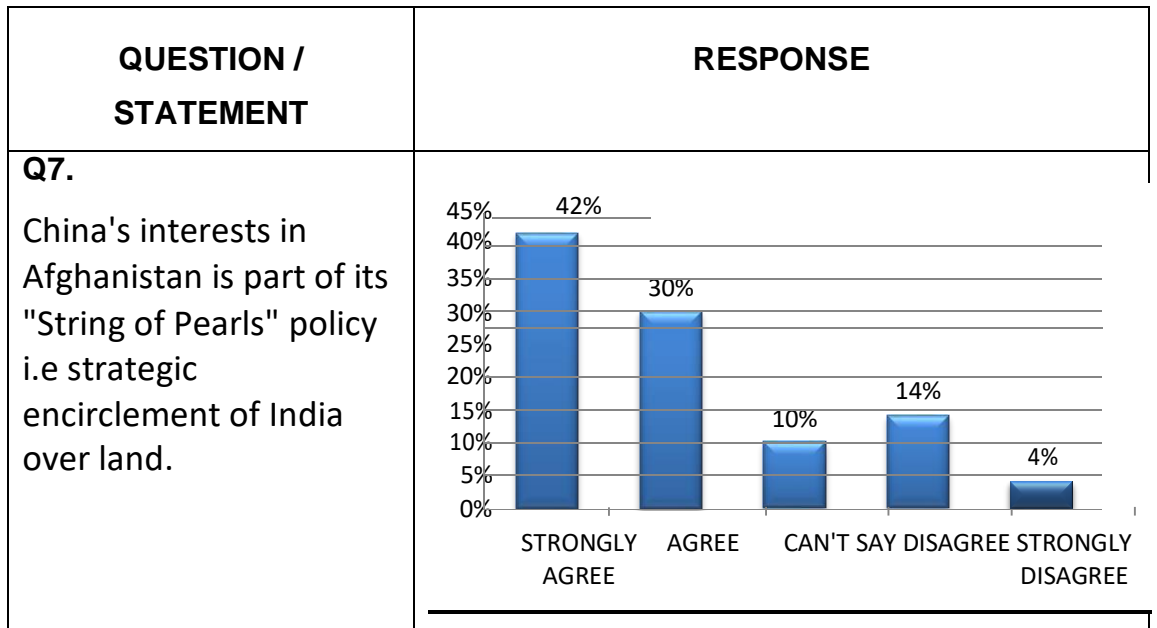
55 % of officers **agree that** Pakistan with its hold in Pashtun tribal belt in FATA holds key to stability in Afghanistan.

(f)



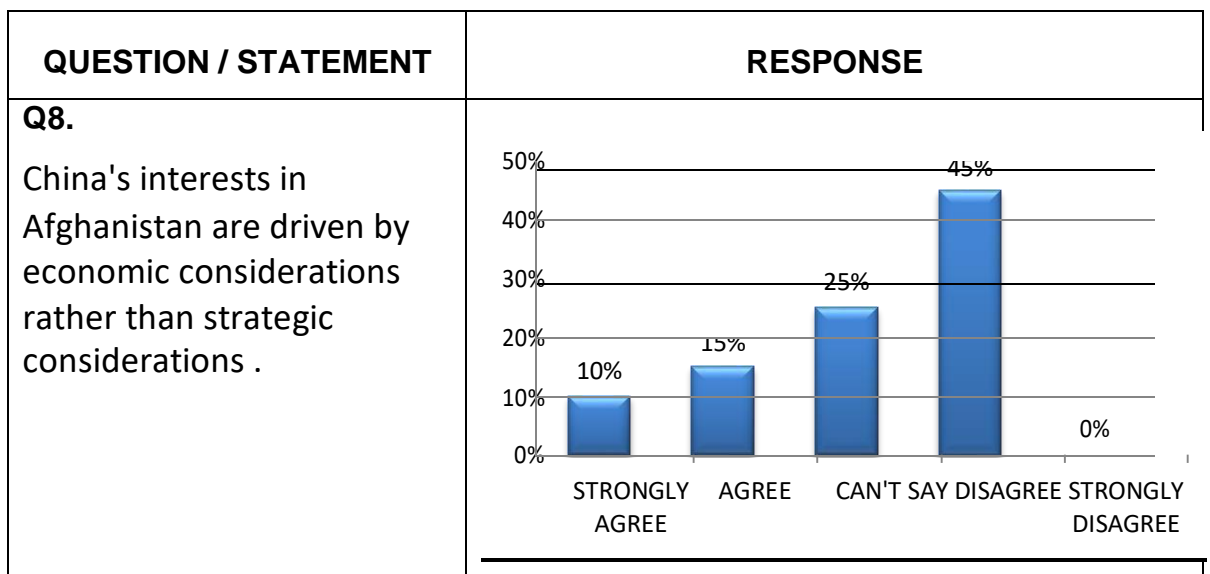
66 % of officers **agree that** China would leverage its position with Pakistan to ensure viability of its investments in Afghanistan.

(g)



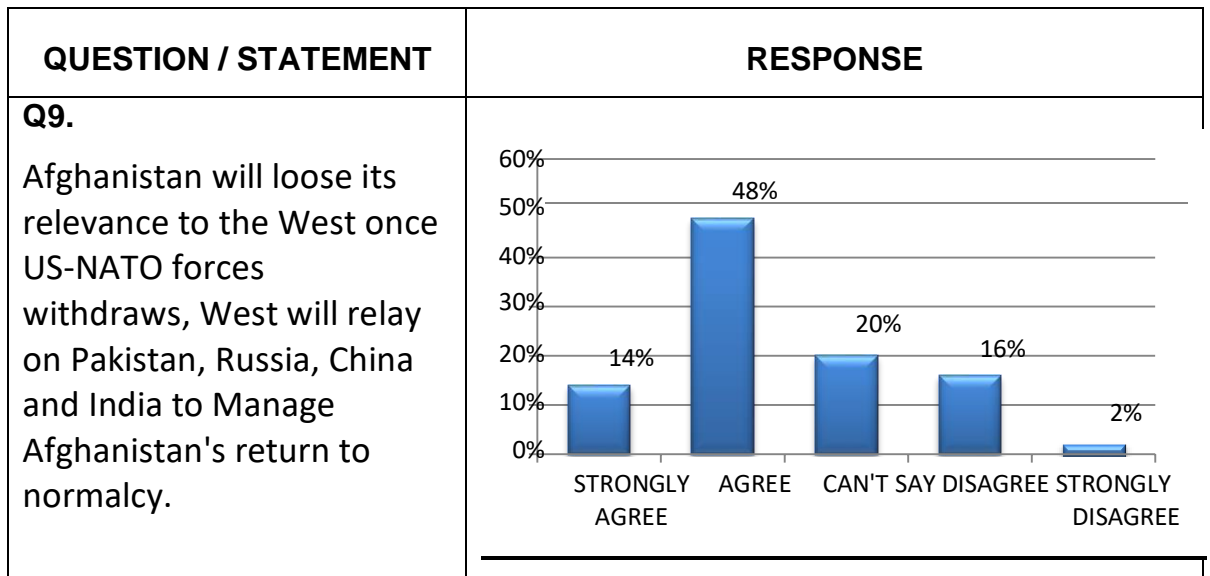
**72%** of officers **agree** that China has strategic interest in containing India in Afghanistan.

(h)



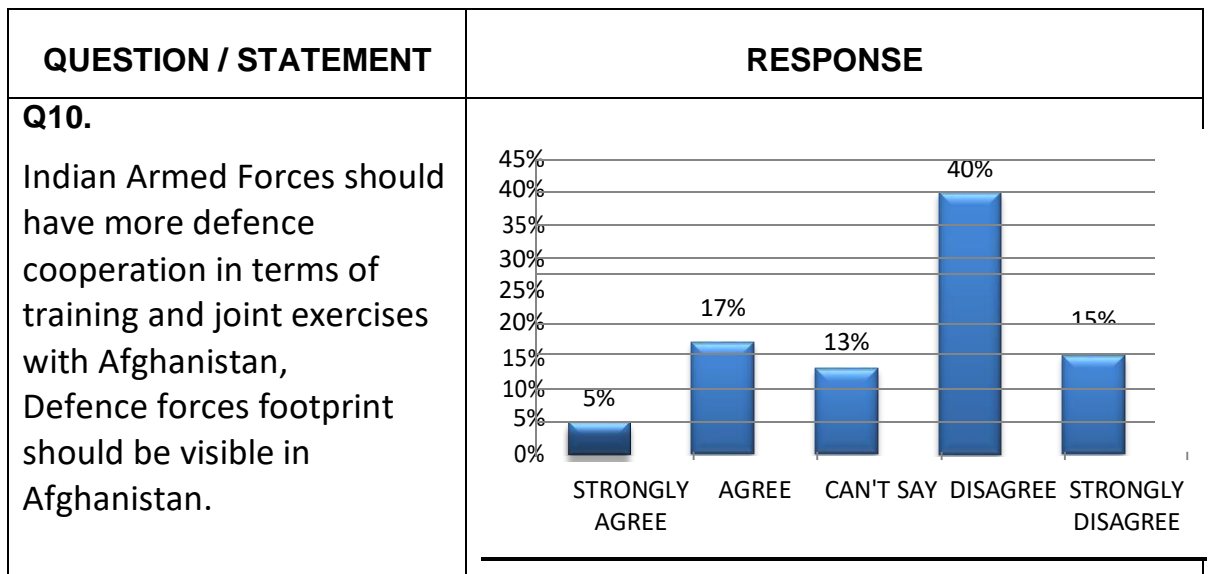
**45%** of officers **dis-agree** that China is only looking for economic benefit out of its relation with Afghanistan.

(j)



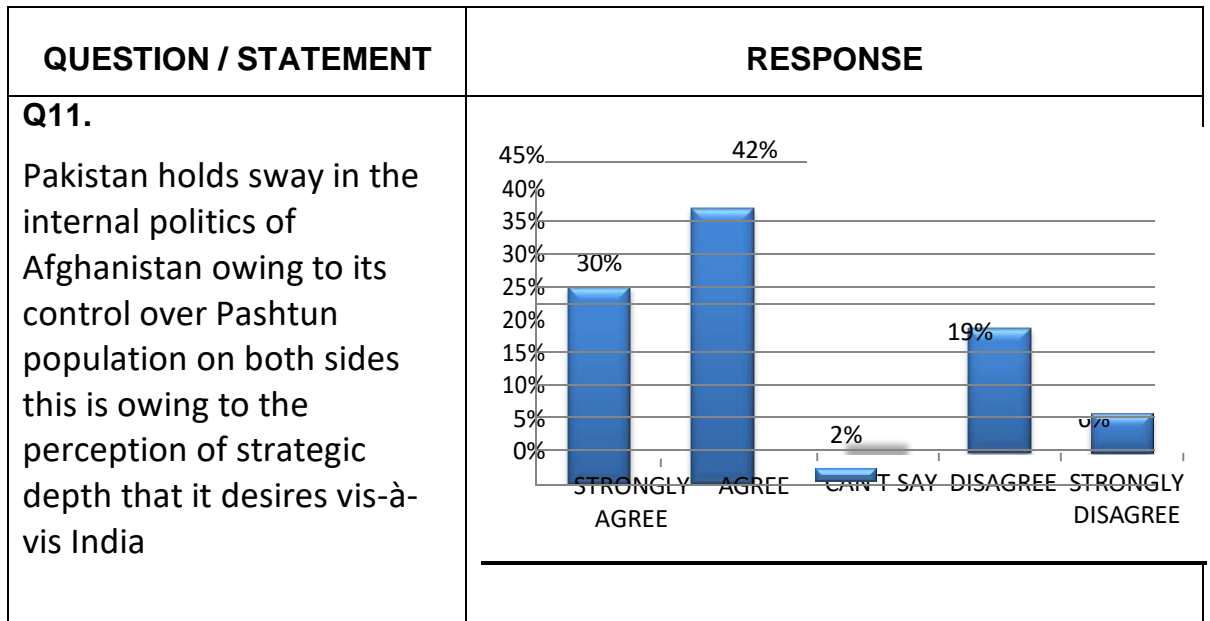
62% of officers **agree** that for long lasting peace in Afghanistan, there is a definite need for all its neighbours to work more closely with India.

(k)



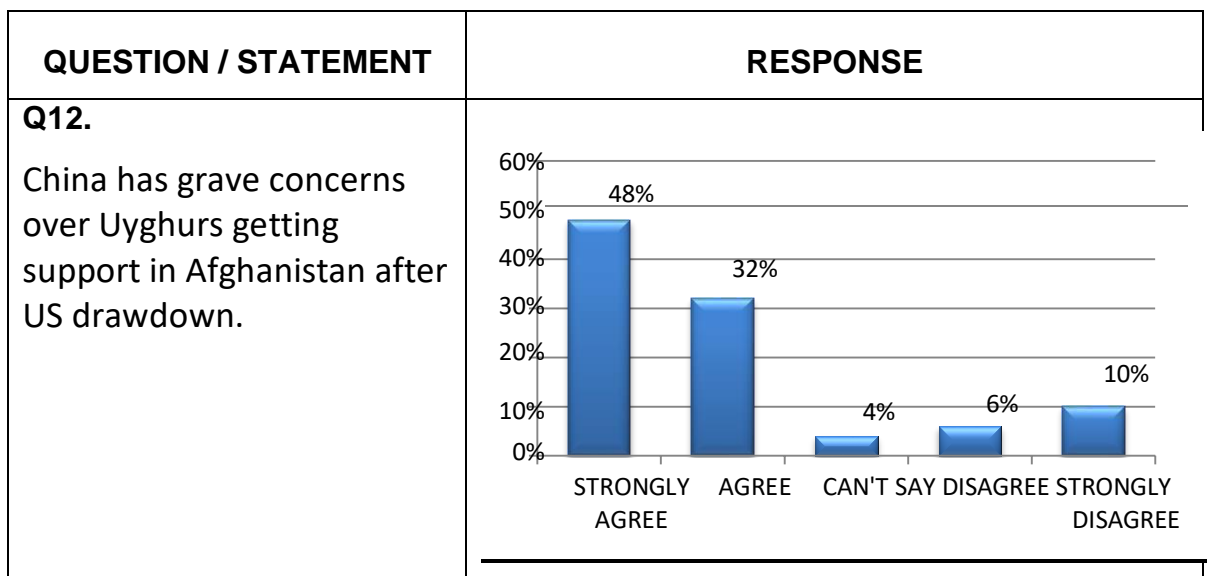
65% respondents disagreed to any involvement of Indian Armed forces in Afghanistan.

(l)



72% agreed to the important role Pakistan has to play in the future of Afghanistan.

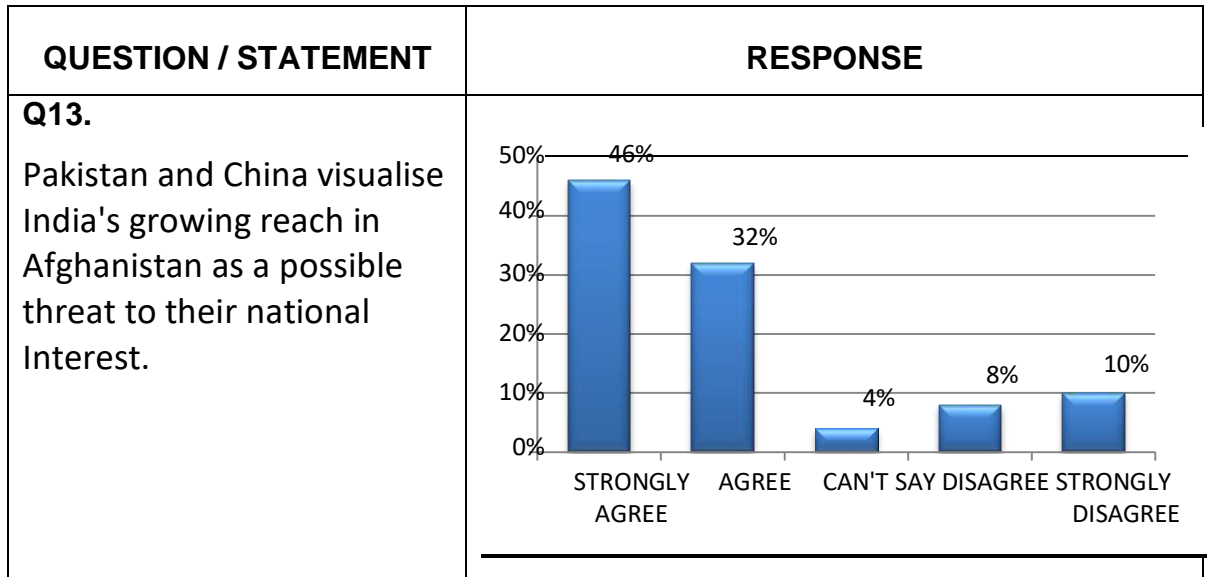
(m)



80% officers feel China's concern for Uighur insurgency is correct.

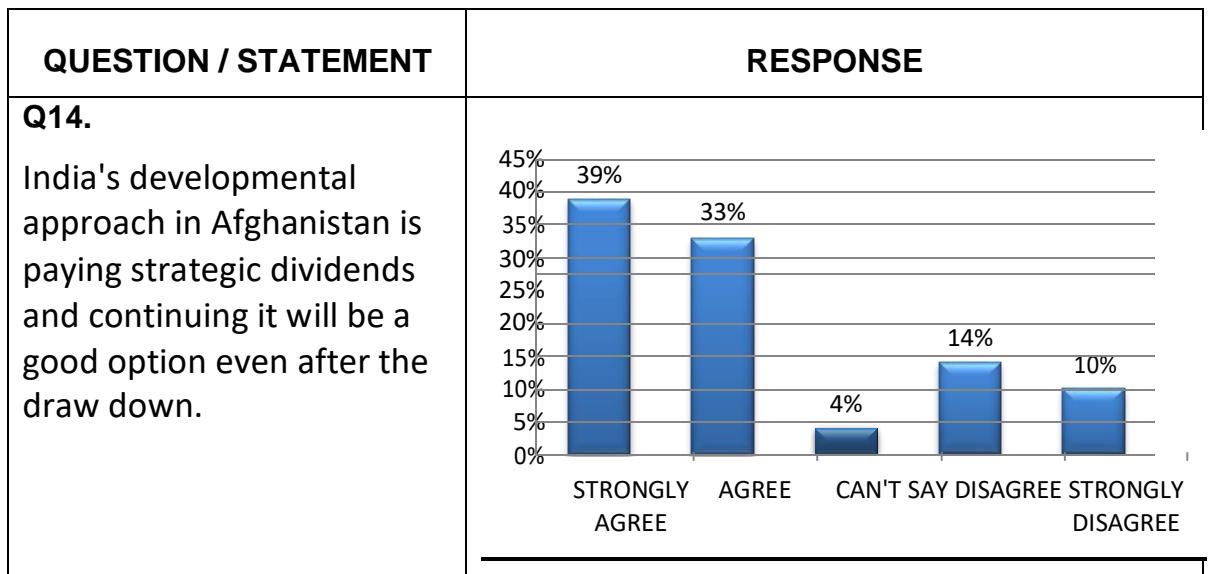


(n)



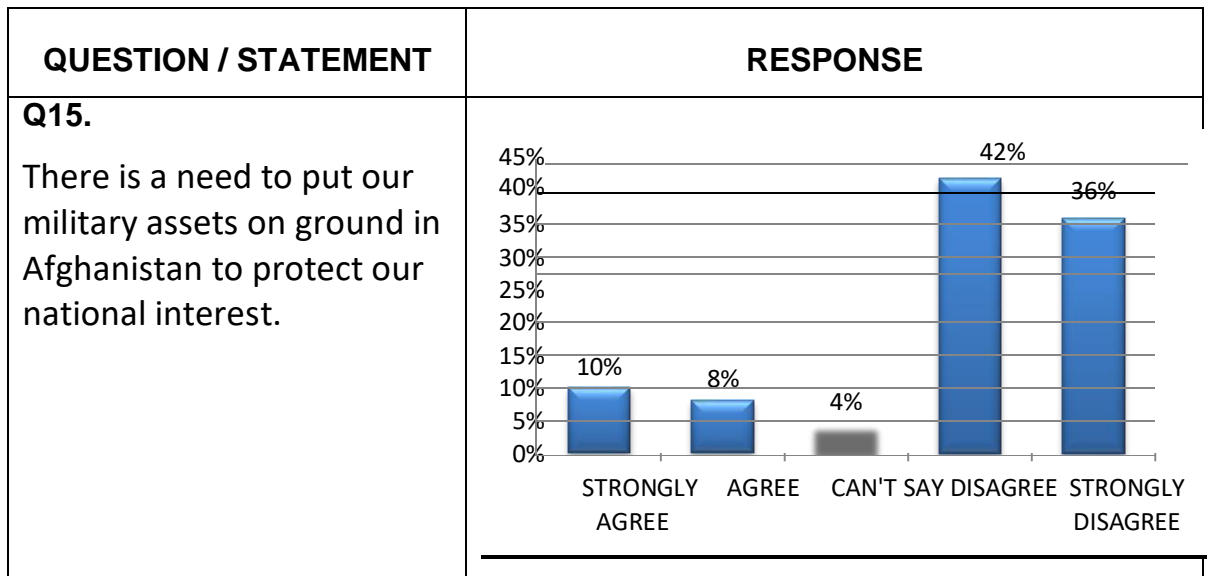
**78%** respondents feel India's presence in Afghanistan is viewed as a threat by both China and Pakistan.

(o)



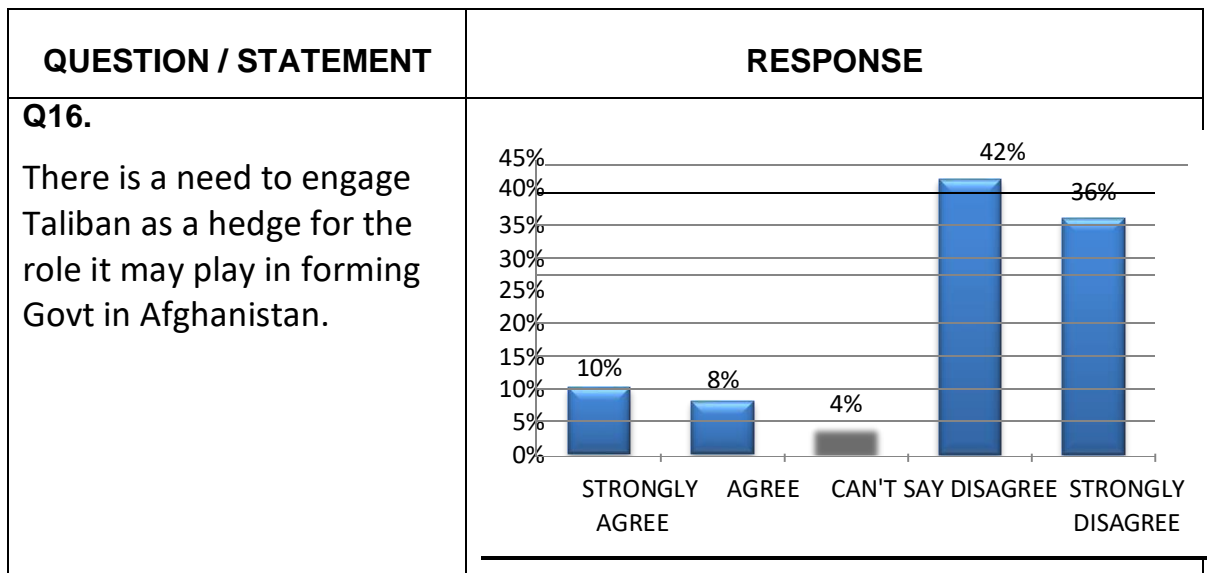
**72%** officers feel that developmental policy should continue in Afghanistan to maintain India's strategic interest.

(p)



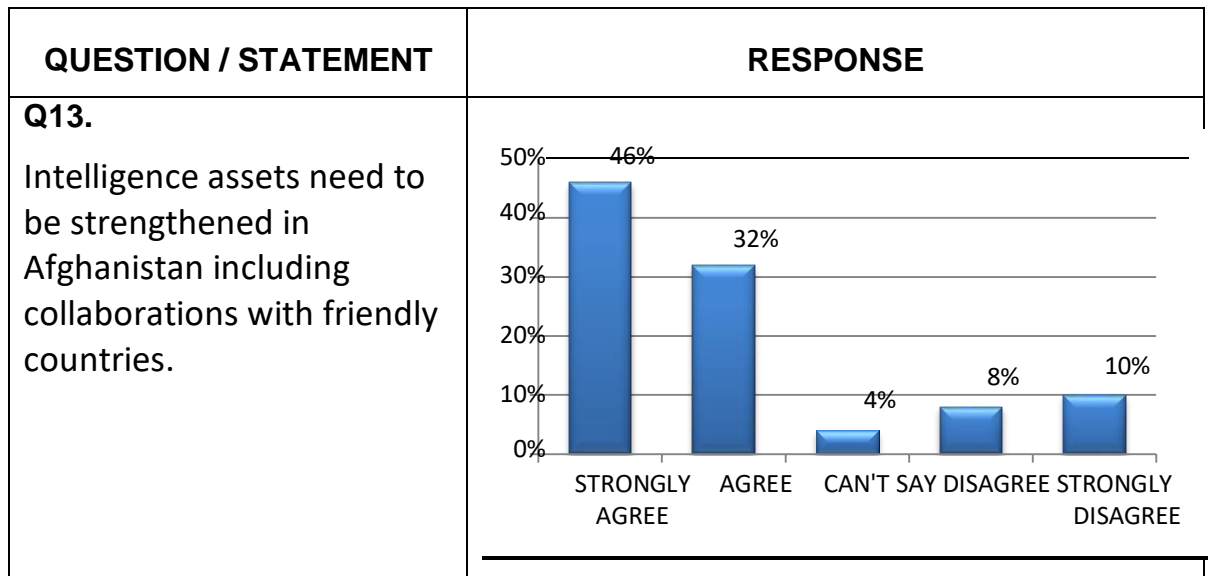
**78%** respondents dis-agree with India's military presence in Afghanistan which will be viewed as a major threat by both China and Pakistan.

(q)



**78%** respondents dis-agree on engaging with Taliban.

(r)



**78%** respondents feel India's intelligence presence in Afghanistan is to be further given teeth and collaborations widened.

- 6) The subject being qualitative a separate questionnaire for Subject matter experts was prepared and opinion of these experts were obtained. This questionnaire is attached as **Appendix C**. The opinions of the SMEs have been incorporated in the dissertation main body itself and was found to be in sync with the developmental approach to Afghanistan as the mainstay of securing India's national interest.

## **APPENDIX A : INDIAN DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN**

**(Refers to Chapter VI)**

India–Afghanistan Development Partnership (<http://eoi.gov.in/kabul/?0707?000>.) Cumulative level of Indian assistance in Afghanistan amounts to US\$2 billion—a very significant amount for a developing country, largest for any neighbouring country, and the fifth largest bilateral donor.

### **Four areas of support.**

- Large infrastructure projects
- Humanitarian assistance
- Capacity building initiatives, and
- ‘Small Development projects’

#### **a. Large and medium infrastructure projects:**

- Construction of a 218 km road from Zaranj to Delaram for facilitating movement of goods and services to the Iranian border (the project has been completed and handed over to Government of Afghanistan);
- Construction of 220 kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and a 220/110/20 kV sub-station at Chimtala, completed and handed over; two more sub-stations are being constructed at Doshi and Charikar for which material, brought by air from New Delhi is being transported to the project sites.
- Construction of Salma Dam in Herat province (ongoing project, following approval of the revised project cost by the Cabinet in January 2013, work has resumed gradually from March 15.
- Construction of Afghan Parliament building
- Setting up of five toilet-cum-public sanitation complexes in Kabul.

- Upgradation of telephone exchanges in 11 provinces (completed and handed over);
- Expansion of national TV network by providing an uplink from Kabul and downlinks in all 34 provincial capitals for greater integration of the country (completed and handed over). The above list is not exhaustive.

**b. Humanitarian Assistance, including the following:**

- provision of free medical services and medicines through Indian Medical Missions (IMMs) located in Kabul and other cities of Afghanistan.
- Provision of food assistance of 1 million MT of wheat in the form of HEB distributed to approximately 2 million school children across Afghanistan, daily under a ‘School Feeding Program’ administered by the WFP.
- Assistance of 2.5 lakh MT of wheat to Afghanistan.
- Reconstruction and renovation of Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (IGICH) Gifting of ten ambulances.

**c. Capacity Building initiatives like:**

- Reconstruction and renovation of the Habibia School in Kabul;
- Award of 500 ICCR long-term university scholarships (for undergraduate and post graduate degrees) and 500 short-term Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) vocational training slots for Afghan nationals annually from 2006 to 07 onwards (since 2009, both ICCR and ITEC slots were increased to 675 annually and it has been decided to grant 1000 scholarships for Afghan Nationals (administered by ICCR) during the period 2012–13 to 2020–21.);
- Up to 258 Special Discretionary ITEC slots have been offered to Afghan Ministry officials for training programmes in India—over five such training programmes have been organised and the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, the Ministry of Agriculture and so on. have already had their personnel trained in various disciplines under this new scheme;
- Deputation of 30 Indian civil servants under UNDP’s Capacity for Afghan Public Administration (CAP) programme; ongoing Indian contribution to UNDP’s National

Institution Building Program (NIBP) which finances attachment of Indian civil servants as Capacity Development Advisors (CDAs) in Afghan government institutions— there are ten Indian CDAs currently working in various important Ministries of the Afghan Government;

- Signing of ‘twinning agreements’ between related Indian and Afghan Ministries;
- Setting up of an India–Afghan Vocational training centre for training 3000 Afghans in carpentry, plumbing, welding, masonry and tailoring;
- Project by Indian NGO SEWA for setting up Women’s Vocational Training Centre in Bagh-e-Zanana (Kabul) for training 1000 women in garment making, nursery plantation, food processing and marketing.
- Agriculture scholarships (BSc, Msc and PhD) have been made available to Afghan students under an Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR)-administered scheme. Sixty Afghan agriculture students are presently studying in various Indian agriculture universities and more than 100 have been accepted for the academic year 2013–14.

#### **d. Small Development Projects:**

Community-based, in vulnerable border areas, in the fields of agriculture, rural development, education, health, vocational training and so on. that can have direct and visible impact on community life, and with focus on local ownership and management. The Small Development Projects were implemented in two phases—the first in July 2006 comprising projects worth US\$11,216,179 and the second in June 2008 comprising projects worth US\$8,579,537. Sixty-five per cent of the projects are reported to be 100% complete. Some of them are awaiting final clearances of concerned authorities for completion certificate. Seventy-six projects have been completed, 34 projects are ongoing, 6 projects await tender finalisation with Afghan line Ministries, while ten projects await MEA approval. Till date, US\$13.135 million has been released to our Mission under phases I and II of Small Development Projects. The implementation of the projects is done entirely by Afghan government agencies (with advisory inputs from Indian Embassy), which helps in building local capacity towards project management. A MoU for implementation of the third phase of the SDP scheme was signed during President Karzai’s visit in November 2012 with an additional provision of US\$100 million. Administrative and financial approvals for 60 projects, at an estimated cost of USD 14.223 million, under the third phase of the SDP

scheme have been received from MEA in June 2013. The MoUs (in English and Dari) for each of these 60 projects have been finalised and waits signing. The third phase of SDPs is to be completed by 2015–16. The future contours of the Indian assistance programme in Afghanistan were illuminated during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in May 2011. The PM had announced a further increase in India's aid commitment to Afghanistan by USD 500 million, thus raising the cumulative Indian commitment to US\$2 billion. New Schemes

- Donation of 1000 buses for the Kabul and other municipalities with provision for maintenance support, training and infrastructure. Afghanistan has selected Delhi Integrated Multi-modal Transit System (DIMTS) as the Consultant to manage the process of procuring the buses and creating the structures for their maintenance and running. DIMTS has submitted a revised proposal.
- Donation of 500 tractors for Afghan farmers; provision of seeds and other assistance for the agricultural sector.
- Medical package consisting of the treatment of Afghan patients in select hospitals in India over the next three years to be implemented through the Afghan Ministry of Public Health; • Rehabilitation and professional upgradation of the National Malaria and Leishmaniasis Centre of Afghanistan; and the
- Upgradation of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, including the neo-natal and maternal care unit.
- Setting up of a National Agricultural University.
- US\$50 million Buyers Credit Line to promote exports and attract Indian business to Afghanistan.
- Grant of US\$10 million for preservation and revival of Afghanistan's archaeological and cultural heritage and cultural exchanges.
- Grant of US\$4 million to the Government of Afghanistan for the restoration of the historic Stor Palace in Kabul.
- Assistance in setting up an Afghan National Institute of Mines. To begin with, the

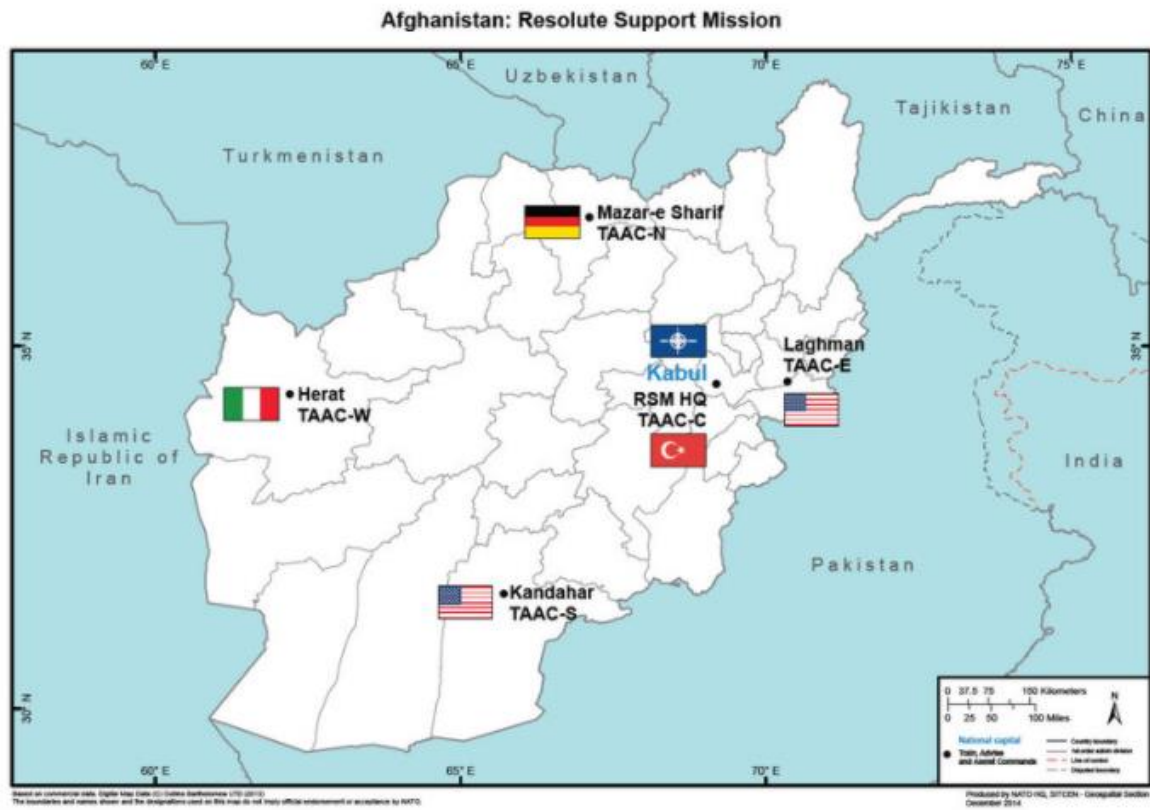
Government of India has offered training at ISM, Dhanbad, for up to 180 resource persons in the Ministry of Mines, Government of Afghanistan from April to December 2013. Training is to be imparted in 12 disciplines related to Mining for batches of 15 each. Five training modules (for  $15 \times 2 = 30$ ) resource persons have been completed.

- Assistance in setting up of a computer laboratory at Habibia School.
- Supporting the second phase of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Skills Development Program for providing vocational training to Afghan nationals.
- Establishment of a Jawaharlal Nehru Chair of Indian Studies at Kabul University In pursuance of the decision of Prime Minister of India and President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to support the ARCS to treat Afghan children suffering from Congenital Heart Disease, Government of India has decided to grant financial assistance of US\$5 million to Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) over a period of five years beginning 2015. Financial assistance provided by India will be utilised for the ongoing treatment by ARCS of Afghan Children at Artemis, Max and Fortis Hospitals in New Delhi. These hospitals have offered special concessional rates for treatment of these children. The first tranche of US\$1 million has already been disbursed to ARCS and additional disbursement would be made over the next four years.



**APPENDIX B : RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION FORCE (Refers to Para 1 of Executive Summary)**

**Resolute Support Mission**



## **APPENDIX C : DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE : AFGHANISTAN**

**(Refers to para 6 Chapter VIII)**

1. India has considerable stake in Afghanistan. The drawdown 2021 of US-NATO alliance has caused concerns raising doubts over the future of Afghanistan. What policy initiatives will keep India relevant in Afghanistan for the long term?
2. Agreement between President Karzai and Pakistan in 2011 enabled Pakistan Army to play a role in negotiations between Kabul and Taliban, and since then Taliban is also on the negotiating agenda of the US. With Taliban likely to play a role in Afghanistan's future, is there a need to put hard- power on ground by New Delhi to back its diplomatic effort?
3. India has shown strong support for President Ghani and his govt. With widespread corruption and mis-governance is being widely attributed to the present regime, How should India handle this situation, will it be prudent to engage across the political spectrum?
4. Have the developmental initiatives given the strategic advantage that India desired?
5. What areas of soft power need to be projected or strengthened as policy initiatives in Afghanistan by India with long term perspective in mind?
6. The current economic situation is likely to result in resource constraints for India to completely play out the developmental strategy being undertaken. What alternatives does India have?
7. Afghanistan shares boundaries with many countries, each having an equally important stake in its stability. Which countries are likely to influence the course in Afghanistan the most? Which are the countries India can bank on to play a collaborative role in Afghanistan's future stability?

8. Osama -bin- Laden being neutralised in Pakistan close to its military bases has resulted in a new low in US- Pak relations. This has, on the other hand warmed up Sino- Pak relations. This can cause a strategic collusive advantage to the two countries to keep India out of the equation in Afghanistan. What kind of collusive strategy can China and Pak play out in Afghanistan? China an energy deficient giant is likely to have key interest in Afghanistan.

9. Is there a scope for India to engage with Taliban

APPENDIX D : AFGHANISTAN DEMOGRAPHY ( Refers to Chapter II)

AFGHANISTAN: POLITICAL



AFGHANISTAN: ETHNICITY



**APPENDIX E : AFGHANISTAN FACT BOOK**  
**(Refers to Chapter II)**

1. Area - 652,230 Sq Km (41<sup>st</sup> in World)
2. Arable Land - 12.13 %
3. Border countries - China 76 km, Iran 936 km, Pakistan 2,430 km, Tajikistan 1,206 km, Turkmenistan 744 km, Uzbekistan 137 km
4. Ethnicity - Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%
5. Religion - Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, others 1% 6.
- Population - 30,419,928 (July 2012 est.)
7. Demography - 0-14 years: 43.2% (male 6,671,683/ female 6,460,034)  
  
15-64 years: 54.4% (male 8,414,716/ female 8,121,616)  
  
65 years and over: 2.5% (male 350,692/ female 401,187) (2012 est.)

**Source: CIA Fact Book (internet): Accessed Nov 2020**

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