

Afghanistan's Role in Regional Stability a Game Changer

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Abstract

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in the heart of Asia, but it is a roundabout and a land bridge between South and the North, rich in terms of natural resources. The geopolitical rivalries has victimised Afghanistan for so long, but now it's paving its way towards progress and stability. Various regional and sub-regional connectivity initiatives, which is going to overcome the geopolitical challenges in the region. Afghanistan is a perfect platform for cooperation which is in the best long term interest of every country in the region. South Asia remains the least economic integrated region on earth, and unless South Asia cooperate regionally, the capital will flow to East, and West Asia. The advantage of Afghanistan is its location and its natural resources, in the next fifteen years it will become the largest producer of copper in the world, one of the largest producer of Iron in the world, and one of the largest player of Gold in the world market. Thirty three percent of Afghanistan natural resources has been mapped, the estimated worth is from one trillion dollars to three trillion dollars, so the regional and extra regional stakeholders can benefit enormously from this opportunity.

Afghanistan: A key Player in connecting South-Asia with Central Asia

Introduction

Afghanistan has been a part of the ancient Silk Road, and a crossroad of trade historically. Afghanistan is close to the Middle East, it borders Iran and Turkmenistan, countries with the second and third largest natural gas reserves in the world.

Decades of war and insecurity have made Afghanistan to the world's most unfriendly place for any type of business. Before the US led invasion in 2001, the situation of the country was disastrous—both politically, and economically. The devastated situation could infrequently gave a hope of a certain future. With the arrival of US, and coalition forces in Afghanistan which ousted the extremists Taliban regime. A new transitional government led by former President Karzai was formed under the Bonn agreement to pave the way for elections. In 2004 the elections took place, large number of people participated all around the country forgetting the fear, and came up with courage. President Karzai won the half of the votes and became as President elect of the country. He won the election in 2009 too and remained in power till 2014.

During last sixteen years the significance of Afghanistan's role in regional stability has been closely observed by regional, and extra regional powers. The untapped resources, and the strategic location of the country are the major factors for the global and regional powers to remain engage in Afghanistan. Though during the past sixteen years there was large scale of corruption in every institution of Afghan government,

but the country has made significance progress in Education, sports, communication network, women rights and others.

The President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani during a speech at the Indian Council for world Affairs said “In the next twenty years Asia is very likely to be transformed from a geopolitical notion to a continental economy. This profound implication for the way subsequent centuries are going to be formed, and shaped. But two trends compete, the challenges and opportunities. The challenges that we are dealing with a new ecology of terror, it is becoming a system, morally it is apprehensible sociologically, it must be comprehended as a system. Within this ecology of terror, Afghanistan, both from a perspective of narrative and a perspective of operation, Afghanistan is seen as a single theatre”. He further emphasise “Today, due to a series of convergent of phenomena various groups threatening stability in South Asia. The main threat is not from the ecology of terror, but from lack of coordination between the states. The first advantage of Afghanistan in the next twenty five years is the location of the country, during eighteenth century the location of Afghanistan was a key advantage, we were roundabout as a place where all ideas, peoples and goods come to and go out of. This ecology was disrupted by the European imperialism, and Afghanistan got marginalised. In the next twenty five years our location is a key connector, all roads between Central Asia and South Asia have to leave through Afghanistan” He said (Ghani, 2015. It is crystal clear for the regional countries that without coordination the existence of every state will be put into question, because the change in global environment is indicating that co-existence can only be achieved through regional cooperation.

In the next pages, I will highlight the importance of regional connectivity and will intricate the role of Afghanistan in regional connectivity.

Afghanistan’s Potential for regional connectivity

Few thinkers has shown to be as capable as Barry Buzan of continuously impacting the direction of debates in IR theory. He r answers to a question asked during an interview “A threat—such as terrorism—needs an audience to accept the securitizing move as such. What happens if, as for instance the ‘terror thermometer’ of the US, a threat gets discursively sustained yet the threat- or securitization-level normalizes and people get used to it? Is that desecuritization? In other words: what’s the current status of the terrorism-securitization?

I think the current status of the terrorism securitization is indeed somewhat declining. I think I got it right in 2006 when I wrote will the Global War on Terror be the new Cold War? (International Affairs, 2006): the war on terror is not going to be a new Cold War in terms of a global dominant macro-securitization which the US can use to structure alliances and frame itself in a good position in global security concerns. Even in the US, nowadays, the term ‘war on terror’ hardly appears at all: in that sense, it is becoming desecuritized, partly because many people are simply not coming on board with a continuous high securitization of the war on terror.(Schouten, P, 2009-8).

His main theme of discussion shows that the element of security could lead to greater connectivity. Hostilities and violence are not going to help nations to come together but peace can, so for greater integration, and cooperation is prerequisite, and the role of Afghanistan is quite essential to transform the region into a crossroad of trade and economic opportunities.

In 2007, Richard Boucher, US assistant secretary of state, said: “one of our goal is to stabilize Afghanistan, “and link South and central Asia “so that that the energy can flow to the south (Foster, 2009).

Oil and gas has motivated US involvement in the Middle East for decades. The three multi billions dollars project of TAPI, CASA 1000, and Chabahar are the major projects which are seen as mammoth projects that could bring the regional countries in South Asia, and Central Asia closer . All the projects has the potential to satisfy the growing energy urge of South Asian region, and it’s only possible when there is peace and stability in the region. Afghanistan is the key player in brining all these opportunities totheregion. Anyone who control’s Afghanistan control’s the land route between the Indian subcontinent, Iran and the mineral rich central Asia. So naturally every major power wants a slice of this region, Iran on the west, Pakistan on the south and central Asian states in the north, and a small stretch borders china. Maintaining good relations with Afghanistan is like a gateway to the oil, and mineral rich central Asian countries.

The growing population in south Asia needs energy resources to placate their need. South Asia was estimated in 2014 of having a collective GDP of 2.6\$ trillion dollars, and a population of 1.8 billion people (Ahmad, 2015).The problem of energy crisis in south Asia is almost sharedone. In 2012 India witnessed two major power breakdown sand, and meanwhile the annual energy demand in India rose to 4%. Similarly Pakistan has been facing power shortages since 2007, and it is estimated that the power need of Pakistan is estimated to reach 50,000 MW in 2030. India can import its hydro –electric needs from Bhutan, and Nepal but due to its larger size it cannot afford to supply it to its provinces, which is bordering Pakistan, the best resort is the transit route via Pakistan and then Afghanistan to be able to enter the Central Asian energy rich market. The following discussion will be about the projects which consider to be bridging the breach between South and Central Asia.

CASA

All these growing demands of electricity can only be overcome by supporting the regional cooperation initiatives. The recently signed CASA 1000 electricity transmission line between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan is symbol of regional cooperation.

CASA will export available summer electricity surpluses from Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The main financial contributors to the project are the World Bank, Islamic development Bank, European Investment Bank, and the USAID (Muddaber, 2016). The Central Asian Countries are having excess amount resources, and it can supply it to the South Asian region in good quantity.

This project proves ground-breaking cooperation among the Central Asian states and South Asian states. The modern transmission line will help transform the region, and will connect the region through energy (CASA, 2017). Energy flow is the best way forward towards regional integration. When countries are connected through trade then, cooperation overcome conflict.

The project worth of 2.1\$ billion dollars was signed with two Indian companies are expected to begin with the installation of transmission lines within the framework of CASA-1000. The Afghan government is expected to invest 235\$ million dollars in the implementation of the project and the Indian companies will implement the project

inside Afghanistan in three phases. And it will cross seven Afghan provinces and then entering into Pakistan's north western province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The CASA-1000 project will start from Kyrgyzstan and it will reach through Tajikistan to Afghanistan and then onwards to Pakistan. The total length of the project is 562Km (Omaid, 2017). With the implementation of the project, 1300 megawatt electricity of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will arrive in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan will receive 300 megawatts of power and the remaining one thousand megawatts will be transited to Pakistan via Afghanistan territory.

TAPI

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani hailed the launch of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India pipeline project as "historic" saying that it has helped Asian nations in overcoming a history of doubts and scepticism.

"Today we are witnessing a truly historic event. Why is it historic? First, because we are overcoming the history of doubts and scepticism. For decades there has been talks of this project, today we are showing that we are determined to make our vision reality"

"Secondly, it shows that Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India will be renewing ties that will bound us together for several millennia but due the advent of Soviet Union were ruptured, he added".

Ghani also lauded Turkmenistan's 'neutrality policy', saying that it created the conditions for good neighbourly relations. He said that the TAPI project will have a positive impact on the environment.

"It's historic because the Paris agreement on climate has just concluded and this project will insure that Afghanistan, Pakistan and India will all have a positive carbon footprint (Shankar, 2015). The 10.1\$ billion dollars TAPI project has the potential, and it could be a shifting agent in bringing the energy flow from central Asia to the demanding South Asian region.

The Turkmenistan- Afghanistan- Pakistan- India pipeline also known as Trans-Afghanistan pipeline is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Asian development bank on the 13th of December, 2016. Nearly 200km pipeline will pass through the territory of Turkmenistan, 735km through Afghanistan, 800km through Pakistan and then it will reach Fazilka in India. The pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and, India over 30 years (Singh, 2016). Experts believe that the conflictual relations between Pakistan and India are among the main problem in implementing the TAPI project, however both countries are facing energy crisis and the project seems to be quite reasonable and technologically feasible.

Research officer at the institute of peace and conflict studies Rommana Hukil argues that "the TAPI gas pipeline is anticipated to help stabilise Afghanistan and can supplement the reconstruction process by creating job opportunities whilst guaranteeing income from transit charges. Secondly there is a question of tenuous India -Pakistan relations affecting the progress of the project. Assuredly, the project will test both India and Pakistan's determination and capability to resolve outstanding issues and normalising trade procedure (Hukil, 2014).The two countries are facing many hurdles in its bilateral relations, but trade can bring nations together and the TAPI project could be a game changer.

Chabahar

The Chabahar port is another project with full potential which will decrease Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan and will enable Afghanistan to access Sea. India and Iran in 2003 had agreed to develop the port of Chabahar, but no substantial progress was made due to the sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States and international community. Later Afghanistan was also included in the Project. India has constructed the Nimroz- Dillaram road by spending more than 100\$ million US dollars. On the completion of this project, the network will provide easy access to four major Afghan cities Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Mazar-e Sharif. India is also planning to develop a 900Km railway line that will connect Chabahar port to the mineral rich Hajigak region of Bamiyan province of Afghanistan (2thepoint, 2017). And the port is more significant for India because the port is the only gateway way to central Asia market for Indian goods.

Aagam G Shah a Political observer writes on Chabahar port "The reason for Indian geopolitical involvement with Iran is to counter the influence of china string of pearl strategy. India is heavily dependent on sea routes to import its lion's share of oil needs. Now the major part of it comes from the Strait of Malacca, where 40% of worlds and more than 80% of China's oil imports pass through. And China is keen to explore more options to alternate trade ways. The Chinese plan to use Pakistan's Gawadar as the transit hub for its energy and other imported resources (Shah, 2016). India, and Iran are the biggest stakeholders in chabahar project and Afghanistan is the beneficiary. International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) connects South Asia and Central Asia to North Europe via Russia.

Indian Ocean region may be dominated by China as it's doing it in South China Sea so to keep eye on military activities of Pakistan and China on Gawadar port and outside, it has a strategic Importance for India. The port is situated in Arabian Sea's Makran coast in Sistan and Baluchistan province of Iran. The port offer access to Indian Ocean, for India Chabahar port is the closest port to Indian Ocean providing direct access to Middle East and Central Asia (rajasacademy, 2017).

The first consignment of 1.1 million ton of wheat was shipped from the strategic port of Chabahar to Afghanistan. The consignment was sent off by external affairs Minister SushmaSwaraj and her Afghan counterpart Salah UddinRabbani through a joint video conference. In a statement in relation to the event, M.S Swaraj called it as a landmark. "The shipment of Wheat is a landmark moment as it will pave the way for operationalization of Chabahar port as an alternative, reliable and robust connectivity for Afghanistan" (Jaffery, 2017). Pakistan and China are closely observing the moves made by Iran and India because the Gwadar port is just 72km away from Chabahar port, the military establishment in Pakistan sees Chabahar port as a strategic encirclement against them. During a recent visit of Pakistani Chief of Army Staff to Kabul has offered the President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani the renewal of Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement which lapsed during 2015. The visit came after the inauguration of Chabahar port.

China on the other hand is hailing the chabahar port project, but without having a rivalry with the Gwadar port of Pakistan. The Chinese foreign ministry Spokesman GengShuang was asked how China views the launch of the project, considering that China is investing heavily in Gwadar port as part of the 50\$ billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

“As per the Chabaharport, I want to give you a principled answer. We welcome the development of friendly relations between the regional countries and conduct mutual beneficial cooperation, he said”.

“We have that relevant cooperation can be conducive to maintaining regional peace and promoting regional stability and prosperity, he said” (Times, 2017). China needs a stable Afghanistan for their long run interests, firstly they do not want the extremist groups to reach their borders. The Xinxiang province of China is having large number of Muslim population which is more a threat for China. Secondly, China wants the untapped mineral resources of Afghanistan, Which can easily connect China to its new silk road. The next part of discussion deals with Afghanistan role in regional stability, and how its neighbour can support Afghanistan towards the progress of peace and stability.

Stability in Afghanistan is key to stability in the region

Afghanistan has always been a contested territory, if we look at the 19th century, it was a playground for the British Empire in India and the Czarist Empire which was expanding into central Asia. Afghanistan was this buffer between the two great Empires, later it became the part of cold war. It was wooed both by the Americans and Russian eventually it was left isolated. The horrendous civil war during 1990s divided the country on ethnic basis then a vacuum was created which gave Taliban a leverage to take power. In 2011 the Afghan elites came with a national consensus to rebuild Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai was elected as the interim President of Afghanistan at Bonn Conference in Germany. The real reason why Afghanistan is more significant in global politics is probably its geographic location. Afghanistan borders with Iran, and china and neighbours with Middle Asia. Afghanistan has moved progressively during last 15 years, the three transitions of Governance, Security and the economy. A great deal of progress has been made in all three, but the security always becoming a setback for them each year with Taliban and the ISIS launching attacks on major Afghan cities targeting the military garrisons. In Governance Afghanistan for the first time having a hybrid arrangement of a President and the Chief Executive officer. It is said that a secure and peaceful Afghanistan will be a source of a strength for all Asia, if not Asia certainly Central Asia and South Asia. And a stable Afghanistan is important for the economy growth of the region.

Afghanistan has paid a significance price because of its geography. But today that contested geography is gaining enormous attention from regional and extra regional powers. Its stability matters for regional powers.

Afghanistan is significant for Russia, China and India which are not the contagious neighbours but their interests are. Russia for instance do not want the extremists group to have its presence in the Central Asian region. The Chinese on the other hand wants Afghanistan to be the part on belt one road initiative which can enable China to dominate the trade in the region. Lastly India, which is a historic friend of Afghanistan is able to place a good footprint in Afghanistan by supporting the Afghan people and the government since 2001. India is a key emerging global power it needs the Central Asian rich energy market in order to accomplish its energy needs. Iran is incredibly important for Afghanistan, it naturally gives Afghanistan an alternative way for trade since it's a landlocked country so it does need neighbours like Iran which has access to Seas, and it is also a global trade route too.

The international community has now realized that a stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of regional countries and the globe as a whole. Secretary Generals of the United Nations have hailed Afghanistan's stability. In 2016, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon at his arrival for a Donors Conference on Afghanistan told the reporters. "Keep Afghanistan needs to be kept on towards stability, accountability and greater self-reliance" (UN Radio, 2016).

On June 14th, 2017 the new UN Secretary General made a surprise visit to Afghanistan. He tweeted "The UN stands with Afghanistan at a time of violence and sufferings" (Telegraph online, 2017). He met with the officials of the Government and also went to see people in the tents in Kabul's slum area. I will emphasis on the role of regional countries being played in the stability of Afghanistan in the next portion of the paper.

Pakistan's Factor

Afghanistan is sharing 2500km border with Pakistan in the South, South east and in the Eastern part of the country. The cross border tensions has always been a turning point in Pak-Afghan relations. Most of the terrorist organizations operating form this area, launching attacks on Afghan forces, coalition forces, and civilians. The Taliban and their families are living in Pakistan, even the leader of Taliban Mullah Mohammad Omer was died in a Karachi hospital the coastal city of Pakistan and an economic hub of the country. His Successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour was killed in a US drone attack near the city of Quetta, the city is home to notorious Taliban leaders.

Relations between the two countries has never been easy. The Afghan Government has repeatedly accused Pakistan for not only sheltering Taliban but also giving assistance to them in order to maintain their influence on the Afghan territory (Grare, 2006). The Afghan government accusations are often dealt with retaliatory responses by the Pakistan side, accusing Afghanistan for giving a free hand to India in Afghanistan, which is seen by Pakistan as against their national security interests, and their integrity, because Pakistan India are the historic arch rivals in the region. India's growing relations and influence in Afghanistan challenges the Pakistan military establishment's long term goals, which were underestimated by them. Now it cannot bear India to its next door and they solely supported the Taliban, Haqqani Network, and the Al Qaeda.

Pakistan has never attempted to cooperate on a regional front to support the peace process in Afghanistan. It has always blamed Kabul for its relations with India claiming that the country has 34 consulates in Afghanistan whereas there are only 6 consulates, and Pakistan has more number of consulates comparing it with India. The former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, and a critic of Pakistan's government and its establishment Husain Haqqani in his article which appeared in the New York times stating that "to win Afghanistan , get though on Pakistan" (Haqqani, 2107). He further argues that the US President Donald Trump new policy should involve adopting a tougher approach to Pakistan. Reading Pakistan correctly has not always easy for American officials. Pakistan has received more than 30\$ billion US dollars in aid from America in the on-going war on terrorism but the money has been spent on weapons, and other military purposes not on the network of terrorists.

In one other speech at the John Hopkins University said that "the Pakistani Army is the arsonist in Afghanistan which also want be the part of Fire Bridge". He added that

Pakistan was an allyconnivance during cold war, but Pakistan's main objective was to compete with India has never been an American objective.

Haqqani said "Another objectives gets undermine as well, and that is America, at some points wants to leave that region, and it wants to handover authority to a strong and stable Afghan Government, which is not constantly confronted by the Taliban by daily basis" (Haqqani, 2017).

Bruce Riedel the famous American Author writes "if the difference between the American and the Soviet Union is significant, there is also at least one major similarity: the role played by Pakistan. In 1980s Pakistan was the base for the Saudi-American alliance behind the mujahedeen. Today Pakistan, is the safe haven of the Taliban insurgency its logistical supply line" (Riedel, 2010). The role of Pakistan is crucial in the region because they are equally involved in the war against terror from the last 17 years, and they have suffered too because of the wrong policies. They are openly giving assistance to the extremist groups, and the groups waging attacks in Afghanistan creating a fear among the people of Afghanistan.

India's role

India has longstanding historical, cultural and civilizational linkages with Afghanistan. Historically close ties are today being determined frontward by many common interests. After 2001 India has become an all-weather friend of Afghanistan, its role in the socio-economic development of the country is commendable. India has already invested billions of dollars in Afghanistan, and it's the 5th largest bilateral donor after the US, UK, Germany and Japan.

The below figure is about India's contribution to the development of Afghanistan (Price, 2013).

- Food assistance to school children and construction, rehabilitation of schools (321\$ million disbursed)
- Supply of 250,000 tons of wheat
- Construction of power line form Pul-I Khumri to Kabul (120\$ million)
- Construction of Salma Dam Power Project (130\$ million)
- Construction of Parliament building (27\$ million disbursed, budget 178\$ million)
- Rehabilitation of Delaram-Zaranj road (150\$ million)

India is the part of Istanbul process on Afghanistan. The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process was founded on November 2nd, 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey. The Heart of Asia process provides a platform for genuine and result oriented regional cooperation by placing Afghanistan at its centre (Hoa, 2016).

India recognizes that the social and economic development in Afghanistan is vital for regional security. In 2011, President Hamid Karzai visited New Delhi and signed Strategic Partnership Agreement that formalized a structure for cooperation in the areas of: Political and security cooperation, trade and economic cooperation, capacity development and education, and social, cultural, civil society and people to relations (Price, 2013). The two countries has been developing and expanding the relations and cooperation more effectively. Year 2016, 2017 was a good year of engagements. The sixth multilateral summit of Herat of Asia was held in the City of Amritsar, Indian and delegates from 40 countries attended the ministerial conference. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi inaugurated the conference. “It is an honour to speak at the inaugural session of the 6th-Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process on Afghanistan, and it is a particular pleasure to jointly inaugurate this conference with our friend and partner, President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan”. He told the conference. PM Modi during his speech said that “since the turn of this century, the international community has extensively engaged in Afghanistan. Major Powers, regional countries and concerned nations from around the world has cooperated through multiple programmes of political, social, military, economic and developmental support. Our gathering today re-affirms the commitment of the international community to durable peace and lasting political stability in Afghanistan. Our words and actions remain focused at advancing a critical and unfinished mission of our time.” (Modi, 2016). India announced a 1.25\$ billion in assistance to Afghanistan reaffirming its commitments to the stabilization of Afghanistan. The aid assistance was announced by Prime Minister Modi at a press conference with President Ashraf Ghani in, 2016. President Ghani appreciated the Indian government and the People especially by donating one dollar each for the development of Afghanistan.

A recent development in Afghanistan-India relations was the inauguration of air corridor between the two countries. India has been closely working with Afghanistan to create an alternate and steadfast access paths for the landlocked country. India-Afghanistan air corridor was started on the 15th of June, 2017. Flights take place from major Afghan cities like Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-e Sharif carrying Afghan goods to the Indian markets. According to a statement by the office of economic Advisor of the President of Afghanistan, based on terms of the MoU signed between Ariana Afghan Airlines and the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, the traders will only pay 0.20\$ per kg for exporting their goods to India. While the rest will be paid by the Government of Afghanistan as an incentive to promote Afghan exports to India (Kama Press, 2017). This program will facilitate much benefits traders. Their goods can reach the markets faster and reliable, before the start of the program the merchants in Afghanistan were complaining about the government negligence in providing basic export facilities, now many in Afghanistan are hopeful for this program to continue and, expand it to other major Indian cities. Currently, major exports from Afghanistan are filaments, articles of apparels and clotting accessories, pharmaceuticals products, cereals, man-made staple fibres, tobacco products, dairy and poultry products, coffee, meat, tea and spices. Major imports from Afghanistan to India are fresh fruits, dried fruits, nuts, raisins, vegetables, oil seeds, precious- semi precious stones (Indian Express, 2017).

China and Pakistan reacted to the initiative taken by Kabul, and Delhi. Chinese media cited in a statement that “Afghan Air Corridor shows India’s ‘Stubborn Geopolitical Thinking’”. The article said India “has always been pushing back against the Belt and Road initiative, so its intention to create its own connectivity network appears to be a strategy to counterbalance CPEC especially to bypass Pakistan (NDTV, 2017). This shows that Pakistan is not happy with the Indian role in Afghanistan, but India’s role in the war torn country has been appreciated and admired by the international community. With opposite to Pakistan’s role supporting the insurgency and providing safe shelters to the extremist groups is their policy failure in Afghanistan. Recently in an interview with a Pakistan television the Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Kabul, Rustom Shah Mohmand said that “The media approval rating of India is 74%, while

the Pakistani approval rating is just 6%”. This clearly indicates that the role being played by India in Afghanistan is hailed by the majority number of Afghan people.

China’s Interests

China has both commercial, and security interests in Afghanistan. The country’s vast mineral resources presenting enticing business opportunities for china. Afghanistan also pose a threat to china if it becomes a haven for the Uyghur Islamist separatists from China’s province of Xinjiang. The Chinese diplomacy is very active all around the world, and it is only natural Beijing pays special attention to countries at its borders, and particularly when a country like Afghanistan is so destabilized”. Paulo Casaca, founder and executive director of the Brussels- based South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), told DW (Shams, 2017).

Experts says that an effort to stabilise Afghanistan, it is significant to see the Chinese role because they are closer to Taliban and it can pressure Pakistan to bring Taliban on dialogues table. Afghanistan is trying to use china’s good offices to exercise positive influence on Pakistan, because there has been no terrorism or insurgency anywhere in the world that has been ended with help and support, and sustenance coming from the contiguity, so Pakistan poses a fundamental problem stabilization in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan is seeking to leverage its China connection to resolve this problem. China is already part of the Quadrilateral peace talks with the Taliban. Pakistan, China, USA, and Afghanistan are the parties to this talks. In the first meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group issued a joint statement and said “The group adopted a roadmap stipulating the stages and steps in the process. The Statement further said “The group will make joint efforts for scheduling a dialogue between representatives of Afghan government and Taliban before the end of the month” (Marwat, 2016). The process was going on not a bad direction but it was completely obstructed by the two countries diplomatic relations, due to the trust deficit among the neighbouring countries the talks were out of the scene for a year. But efforts were made by the Chinese government to convene the talks again with the Taliban and Afghan Government. In November, 2017, the 6th meeting of Quadrilateral group was held in Muscat, Oman but without the representation of Talban.

Chinese are looking at Afghanistan as a mineral resource rich, and energy rich country, and there is to use Afghanistan as a hub connecting Iran and Central Asia. China National Petroleum Corporation has received three licences in Amu Darya basin, 700\$ million worth of investment in the period of five years. MesAynak Copper Mine project is another grand project where China is going to invest 4\$ billion in next ten years. As long as the insurgency, and terrorism is there in Afghanistan the Chinese economic connect with Afghanistan will not work, so first and foremost the Chinese interest is stabilization of Afghanistan only the they can achieve their long run economic goals.

Iran’s rivalry

Iran’s approach towards Afghanistan is different from other countries like Pakistan, India and China. It has a multifaceted strategy, on one hand supporting regional cooperation initiatives, but on the other hand they are supporting Taliban militarily supplying them weapons and ammunition. Both Afghan military officials and Taliban leaders have revealed ties between Iran and Taliban, the leaders of Taliban have

admitted that Iran is supplying the group with weapons and money to carry out military operations in Afghanistan.

Afghan officials, and Senate members certified that “The Iranian government has extended its ties with the Taliban leadership and it’s harbouring Taliban in the cities of Iran, particularly the three western provinces, where Taliban has a stronghold which is bordering Iran (Massod, 2016).

Ahmad Majidiyar from the Middle East Institute argue that “Iran’s support for the Taliban is a marriage of convenience than s strategic alliance. Tehran does not want its dialogical foe to come to power in Afghanistan. However, because of perceived threats from the presence of American troops, and recently from the emergence of Islamic State in Afghanistan, it provides calculated support to the Taliban to expel the American forces and prevent the Islamic state from jeopardising Iranian security (Majidiyar, 2017).

There are clear evident reports that Iranians are fuelling the sectarian divide of Sunni and Shiites in the country. The historical cultural ties of Persian language giving vintage to the Iranians to have a cultural influence in Afghanistan. Al Mustafa International University of Iran has 40 seminary in Afghanistan. More than 15000 Afghan Shia clerics studying in different Iranian cities. Al Mustafa Educational Network with its Army of Afghan clerics is a good tool to generate gross root support for the Iranian regime. The Revolutionary guard of Quds force has considerable amount of Afghan recruits which are sent to Syria support the Bashar Al Assad regime. The United States have also denounced the Iranian military support to the Taliban.

Conclusion

The first of Plan A in Afghanistan for the last few years has been to support the transition, as the country progresses through the decades of transformation. Some experts say that the region is tyranny of geography, neighbours have exact strategies. So Afghanistan’s neighbours have all plan B to Z, which involves great range of optimism, risk aversion, incursion.

The kind of situations, challenges, and opportunities Afghanistan has right now is that there is a change taking place, and is the decade of transformation. The end of long drawn election process, the inauguration of National Unity Government followed by a signature of a Bilateral Security Agreement status of force agreement with NATO, and the United States, the inauguration of multibillion dollars projects of TAPI, CASA, and Chabahar have all created a sense of momentum, and as a new chapter opens in Afghanistan’s history.

The change in global environment in terms of the interests, countries like United States, European States, and without excluding the presence of Russia, China and Iran who are having variety of challenges in the coming years. The five central Asian states are now rewriting their economic, and military strategies because they are closely observing the situation in Afghanistan which could lead them to bring greater economic opportunities, with Afghanistan playing a role of a bridge. Afghanistan’s two South Asian neighbours Pakistan, and India links the stability of Afghanistan more nearer, when it comes to their own stability. Still tremendous mutual distrust and suspicions still needs to be overcome in the relations between Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The relations of Afghanistan and India is based on balanced pragmatic

approach, which is a sign of greater engagement, this also brings Pakistan's strategic rivalry with India in Afghanistan often blaming India for creating a chaos in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan.

Afghanistan problem needs concerted regional engagement, and it's a rough neighbourhood, so considerable should be put in backing the regional cooperation and other ways that the region can engage not just in support of security, but also in support of trade and economic issues. Afghanistan has a comparatively geographical advantage, it can link the energy starved South with energy rich North, it links the East and West.

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