

AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN FACTOR IN PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

Pakistan and Afghanistan—being neighbours with a long, porous, and not effectively managed border—influence each other strongly due to their common history, culture, and religion. Their relations have been mostly hostile rather than friendly due to political and territorial issues and, more significantly, because of a trust deficit between them. This state of affairs has been galvanised because of the Indian factor, which, in turn, has greatly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy in general and towards Afghanistan in particular. The Indian factor is considered to be mainly responsible for the strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's adoption of the policy of 'strategic depth' was a move in that direction. Both Pakistan and India are busy in achieving maximum political gains in Afghanistan. The main interests of Pakistan and India are to circumvent the installation of a pro-India and pro-Pakistan government, respectively, in Afghanistan. The main objective of this paper is to show how and to what extent India influences Pak-Afghan relations. It briefly explores the main stages of the Pak-Afghan relations and also looks into the Indian interests in Afghanistan and the means New Delhi has employed to realise them.

Introduction

Afghanistan, a landlocked country that heavily depends on neighbouring Pakistan for trade with the outside world, shares a 2,250 km-long porous border with it. The two states also influence each other strongly due to their common history, culture, and religion. Their

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relations, however, have a chequered history due to political issues, especially a longstanding trust-deficit. When Pakistan attained independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, Afghanistan took a tough stance on the Durand Line, which Sir Mortimer Durand had demarcated in 1893 as the border between Afghanistan and British India, and which also divided the Pashtun community between the two. Afghanistan, thus, did not recognise Pakistan as an independent state at the UN at its birth in 1947. Afghanistan still refuses to accept the present international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It claims that since this agreement was imposed by the British, the then Afghan government was compelled to accept it under duress.¹ Pakistan's position is that it is a settled issue and that the Durand Line Agreement was signed by the ruler of Afghanistan with the understanding of the British government and the subsequent governments of Afghanistan ratified it in 1905, 1919, 1921, and 1930.² Half a century afterwards, each and every Afghan ruler reaffirmed the validity of the Durand Line as an agreed frontier between Afghanistan and India.³ On the Pashtunistan issue, the stance of the Afghan government is that the Pashtuns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan have the right to form their own independent state under the name of Pashtunistan as the Pashtuns of these areas are not adequately represented in Pakistan's government.⁴ Pakistan considers this an act of interference in its internal affairs and believes that the people of KP and Balochistan have exercised their right to live in Pakistan according to the Indian Independence Act of 1947. Nevertheless, these two issues have often proved to be serious stumbling blocks in the way of brotherly relations between the two countries.

Pakistan tried its best in the beginning to maintain good neighbourly relations with its western neighbour.⁵ The main reason for this approach was Pakistan's strained and hostile relations with India, which compelled Pakistan to avoid another unfriendly neighbour. Pakistan, throughout its history, strived to establish cordial relations with Afghanistan due to the fear of being encircled by India and Afghanistan. Pakistan's fear continues to this day, with Islamabad's constant struggle to install a pro-Pakistan—if not an anti-India—government in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan has always shown its readiness to play along with the Indians for its own benefit. In order to press

Afghanistan, Pakistan has exploited the landlocked location of Afghanistan and on a number of occasions has stopped the supply of goods to Afghanistan from the port of Karachi.⁶ Besides exploiting the Durand Line and Pashtunistan issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, India has consistently tried to become a friend of Afghanistan by cultivating warm relations with all governments of Afghanistan, except the Taliban. These developments have exacerbated the worries of Pakistan vis-à-vis India regarding its security, territorial integrity, foreign policy, and economic wellbeing.

The Indian factor has greatly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy in general and towards Afghanistan in particular. It is greatly responsible for the strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The adoption of the policy of 'strategic depth' is a move in that direction. Both Pakistan and India are busy in achieving maximum political gains in Afghanistan, which has resulted in a cold war between them regarding Afghanistan. The main interest of Pakistan in Afghanistan is to circumvent the installation of a pro-India government in Afghanistan—a state in the grip of civil wars, militancy, and extremism since 1979. The main objective of this paper is to show how and to what extent India influences Pak-Afghan relations.

The paper analyses the interests of Pakistan and India in Afghanistan, as well as the means employed by the two countries to realise them. The first section of the paper shows that Pakistan and Afghanistan are politico-strategically important for each other and their good relations are not only vital for them but also for the whole region. In this section, the military concept of strategic depth is also explained. In order to fully understand the Pak-Afghan psyche, section two of the paper gives a brief timeline of Pak-Afghan relations. The section shows that their relations have experienced major ups and downs during the course of history. Section three explores the importance of Indian factor in Pak-Afghan relations and the all-out efforts of India to install an anti-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. The section shows that the main foreign policy concern of India with regard to Afghanistan is to resist the installation of a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. Section four concludes the paper.

Islamabad and Kabul need each other

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan and Afghanistan have religious-cultural and linguistic commonalities, besides sharing a long porous border. The Durand Line and Pashtunistan issues⁷ are the bones of contention between them. However, their progress, development, and stability (both economic and political) lie in having good fraternal relations. They need each other. Afghanistan is a landlocked state and heavily depends on Pakistan for trade with other states. It is one of the reasons India is constructing the port of Chabahar in Iran to ease Afghanistan's dependency on Pakistan. Good relations provide good opportunities for Afghanistan to benefit more from Pakistani routes. Again, being a neighbour, Pakistan can play a very constructive role in bringing stability to this war-torn country. Similarly, a stable Afghanistan will prove to be a boom for Pakistan. Only a stable Afghanistan can guarantee Pakistan access to the natural resources and energy from the Central Asian Republics. A stable and pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan can relieve Pakistan of Indian hostile designs and entanglement.

Pakistan has followed a policy of 'strategic depth' towards Afghanistan. Khalid Masood Khan explains the concept of 'Strategic depth' as follows:

The internal distance within a state...the distance from the frontline to its centre of gravity or Heartland, its core population areas or important cities or industrial installations. It refers to the consideration relating to the vulnerability of the centre of gravity of a country to the enemy's onslaught in case of war as against the capability provided by the space available within the territory to halt enemy's advance, counter attack and restore the balance. Militarily, a country having more strategic depth is considered to be at a greater advantage as compared to the one having lesser space. Strategic depth...naturally strengthens the defence capability of a country and...places great challenges on the aggressor; it reinforces the natural capacity to absorb a military aggression from the defender's point of view... Thus the strategic depth of a country is directly proportional to its national security, especially in case of hostile neighbours.⁸

Strategic depth, in politico-diplomatic terms, is the capability of a state to decrease threats by a number of strategies like improving relations with neighbours and bringing the likelihood of an armed conflict to zero, thus, creating additional space for economic growth, development, and soft power projection.⁹ Strategic depth, as a security concept, is believed to be essential for Pakistan because our country is a bit narrow at its middle and could be forcefully bifurcated by an Indian attack. It is also believed that strategic depth will give respite to our military by withdrawing into Afghanistan, regroup there, and mount counter-attacks on Indian armed forces in Pakistan. Islamabad is also thinking that the greater the strategic depth it develops towards its north and west, the more emboldened and strengthened it becomes vis-à-vis India. A pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan is thought to be necessary to give Islamabad the much needed strategic depth for launching a counter-offensive from Afghan territory. Pakistan's search for energy, market, and natural resources is also linked with deepening its strategic depth towards its north and west. These are the broad considerations under which the concept of strategic depth evolved.

It is believed that in a broader perspective, Pakistan takes strategic depth more comprehensively than gaining military depth exclusively and is more related to Pakistan's extension of influence towards Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics.¹⁰ Pakistan followed active policies towards Afghanistan for not only securing a friendly government there and acquiring military depth against India but also for expanding its influence into the resource-rich Central Asian Republics to acquire economic and political depth against India. Economic depth is thought to allow Islamabad to access to natural resources from the Central Asian Republics at the expense of India, while the political depth is thought to allow Islamabad access to political support against India and to raise its international standing among the Muslim world.¹¹

However, the notion of strategic depth is thought to be lacking a sound military appraisal of the real situation. Afghanistan has always remained too unstable, quasi-hostile, and tribal for any sane leader to consider putting the country's strategic assets there. General Aslam Beg, a former Pakistani army chief who is considered the originator of the term, clarified the term in a statement at a conference in Tehran:

The need for strategic depth—a strategic partnership between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan—was misunderstood as an imperative only for geographical space ... to say that the strategic depth concept was developed to gain territorial space in case of war with India has no military logic, nor does it conform to the operational policy of Pakistan, which is to defend its borders and defeat the enemy if he attempts to violate Pakistan's territory."¹²

Through its security prism, Pakistan news India as following a policy to manipulate events in Afghanistan and Iran to instigate anti-Pakistan feelings, which may cause political and security problems for Pakistan. So installing a friendly government in Afghanistan has been the main objective of Pakistan. Feroz Hassan Khan mentions two misunderstandings about Pakistan's security objectives in Afghanistan. The first one is that Pakistan will use Afghanistan as 'strategic depth' in case of an Indian attack on Pakistan and Pakistan would utilise this 'depth' as a 'safety deposit' for strategic assets and arsenals that may be susceptible to Indian strikes. However, Feroz Hassan argues that military strategy in the present nuclear context has altered the concepts of fighting. Pakistan may, at best, find a friendly Kabul providing a 'strategic relief zone' for restricted logistic sustenance and support in a future war with India.¹³ The second misunderstanding is that Pakistan has an ideological agenda: that Pakistan seeks a forward policy with the purpose of "recreating a Sunni Muslim space between infidel 'Hindustan', heretic Iran and Christian Russia."¹⁴ But this forward policy has not remained part of its stated policy objectives and directives. This policy was not even proclaimed by Zia, the man to whom this policy is mainly attributed. Zia was mainly concerned about security threats from India in addition to some serious domestic challenges and it seems quite unlikely that his regime would have seriously considered a 'Sunni space' towards central Asia.¹⁵ After the disintegration of the USSR, Pakistan saw Afghanistan as an essential channel for Central Asia's natural resources.

Pak-Afghan relations: a review

Pak-Afghan relations have witnessed various troughs and crests since 1947, which are briefly presented below.

The cool start era (1947-1963)

This era witnessed the start of relations in a haphazard manner. In fact, the era marks the beginning of tensions rather than normal relations. The first serious incident occurred on 30 September 1947 at the UN, where Afghanistan was the only Muslim country in the world opposing the membership of Pakistan in the UN. The Afghan delegate, Husain Aziz said, "We cannot recognize the NWFP [the present KP] as part of Pakistan so long as the people of NWFP have not been given an opportunity free from any kind of influence and I repeat, free from any kind of influence, to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or to become a part of Pakistan."¹⁶ However, despite the aforementioned fact, the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1948.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Afghanistan's state-controlled radio continued the claim of Afghanistan on Pakistan's territory from the Durand Line up to River Indus. The most serious event in Pak-Afghan relations occurred when Afghanistan's parliament rejected the Durand Line Agreement in July 1949.¹⁸ The situation further worsened in 1950, when an Afghan official made anti-Pakistan speeches in a large gathering in Kabul with Pashtunistan flag hoisted and anti-Pakistan leaflets dropped by the Afghan Air Force.¹⁹

The introduction of One Unit scheme²⁰ in Pakistan in 1955 further destabilised the already fragile relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan Embassy in Kabul was attacked and Pakistani flag was put on fire after the introduction of One Unit in the then West Pakistan.²¹ In retaliation, Afghanistan's consulate in Peshawar was also attacked and Afghan transit trade was stopped for all practical purposes.²² However, with the use of the good offices of the Shah of Iran, trade activities were resumed.²³ Relations between the two countries began to improve when they signed an Air Services Agreement on 23 June 1957 in Kabul and the subsequent high-level exchange of visits by the officials of both the countries.²⁴ However, the U-2 incident on 1 May 1960²⁵ altered the situation and the USSR joined hands with India and Afghanistan against Pakistan on international issues, which naturally worsened Pak-Afghan relations. The USSR started to support Afghanistan on Pashtunistan issue because of the incident. In these circumstances, a number of raids were conducted from Afghanistan into

the Pakistani territory. In response, Pakistan terminated diplomatic relation with Afghanistan, followed by suspension of trade.²⁶

The era of rapprochement

With the political change in Afghanistan, relations between the two countries started to improve due to the intervention of the Shah of Iran, who invited both the countries for talks in Tehran on 23 May 1963. As a result, diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored, the frontiers were reopened after a closure of 22 months, and trade was resumed.²⁷ Afghanistan remained neutral during the Indo-Pak war in 1965, even though India and the Soviet Union provoked the Afghan government to attack Pakistan during the war. President Ayub Khan of Pakistan went to Kabul after the war and thanked Zahir Shah, the then King of Afghanistan, for keeping neutrality during the war.²⁸ In response to Ayub Khan's visit, Afghan king was also warmly received in Pakistan during his visit to Islamabad in 1968.²⁹ The next step towards normalisation of relations was the abolition of One Unit scheme by Pakistan and the reconstitution of the old provinces in 1970. During the 1971 Pak-India war, Afghanistan once again remained neutral and did not create problems for Pakistan on its western border.³⁰

The end of the honeymoon

Pak-Afghan relations took a new turn for the worse when Sardar Daoud took over as the president of Afghanistan in 1973. He took a staunch stance on Pashtunistan and Durand Line issues and, from the very beginning, showed a very aggressive attitude towards Pakistan. He once said, "Pakistan is the only country with which we still have political differences. On the question of Pashtunistan our constant efforts to find a solution will continue."³¹ The elements that brought Daoud to power were all leftist, ideologically close to the USSR and India, which was a matter of great concern for Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan decided to resort to a forward policy in dealing with Afghanistan. Pakistan, in response to Afghan government's support to Baloch and Pashtun nationalists, invited Afghan Islamists who were struggling against Daoud's government.³² The idea was to support the radical Islamist movement in Afghanistan to neutralise Afghanistan's propaganda about the Durand Line and Pashtunistan issues. Pakistan started establishing good relations with Islamist leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani,

Ahmad Shah Massoud, etc. in 1975.³³ The first uprising against the Afghan government was organised in the Panjshir Valley but failed.³⁴ These developments created serious tensions between the communist and Islamist elements in Afghanistan for which Pakistan was constantly accused.

The situation further aggravated by the then prime minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's decision to launch a military operation in Balochistan in 1973. Due to the military operation, some elements went to Afghanistan where they were warmly received.³⁵ In retaliation, Pakistan also extended support to Afghan Islamists harboured by the Pakistani establishment and, according to one estimate, at least 80,000 Afghans were properly trained and equipped to start a resistance movement in Afghanistan.³⁶ These elements were able to pose a challenge to the Afghan government, especially in the Panjshir Valley. On the other hand, Afghans provided support to Baloch dissidents for raids in Balochistan.³⁷ These reciprocal activities in one another's internal affairs worsened relations between the two countries. However, Iran and the Secretary-General of OIC intervened and put things back on track.³⁸ Pakistan provided help to the victims of the 1976 earthquake in Afghanistan. That was when President Daoud realised the importance of normal relations with Pakistan and invited Bhutto to visit Afghanistan. Bhutto readily accepted the invitation and visited Afghanistan on 7 June 1976, where he was received cordially.³⁹ But the change of governments both in Pakistan and Afghanistan marked another era of Pak-Afghan relations.

The era of Afghan Jihad

After the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, Pakistan decided to openly support Afghan Islamists against the communist government of Afghanistan and the USSR with the help, primarily, of the US and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰ Pakistan became the frontline state against the USSR. Islamist militants, the so-called Afghan Mujahideen, were gathered, trained, and equipped by Pakistan, the US, and Saudi Arabia.⁴¹ The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and KP witnessed the training camps of these Afghan jihadists.⁴² A proxy war between the USSR and the US on the one hand and India and Pakistan on the other started in Afghanistan.

After the overthrow of Daoud, a communist government under Nur Muhammad Taraki was installed in Kabul. The radical changes brought about by the new government faced stiff resistance from Islamists and other conservative sections of the society.⁴³ Moreover, there was no unity among the ruling junta. Soon, Taraki was overthrown by Hafiz Ullah Amin. But the situation was going from bad to worse. In order to control things in Kabul, the USSR entered Afghanistan on 27 December 1979. Amin was deposed while Babrak Karmal was installed as the Afghan president. These developments were of grave concern for Pakistan because the USSR, a friend of India, was on its western border with its long-cherished dream to reach the warm waters of the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. The US offered Pakistan with the idea of jointly supporting Afghan Islamists for countering the situation to which Islamabad agreed. Thus, Pakistan became the frontline state against the USSR and provided active military and political support to Afghan Mujahideen and accommodated over than 3.7 million Afghan refugees along with their 2.5 million of livestock.⁴⁴ They settled in 386 camps situated mostly in rural areas of KP and Balochistan, the provinces with which Afghans have religio-cultural and linguistic affinities. These refugees posed a number of socio-economic, political, environmental, and security problems for Pakistan. The drug trade and Kalashnikov culture are the outcomes of this refugee policy.⁴⁵ Most of the refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002 but still there are 1.6 million refugees in Pakistan.⁴⁶

Afghanistan consistently complained against Pakistan's anti-state activities in Afghanistan, while Pakistan charged Afghanistan of its violation of Pakistan's airspace and cross-border shelling.⁴⁷ At last, through the Geneva Accords, the USSR decided to withdraw from Afghanistan. However, the Accords did not provide for a strong government in Kabul and left a power vacuum, which resulted in a civil war among Mujahideen factions and the USSR-backed government in Kabul under Mohammad Najibullah.

During the rule of Najibullah, Pak-Afghan relations were at the lowest ebb. Afghanistan was not happy with Pakistan's support to Afghan Mujahideen and its interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. After the overthrow of Najibullah, Pakistan-backed Mujahideen entered into Kabul but only to start a new civil war in Afghanistan. Pakistan,

however, was fed up of Afghan Mujahideen's infighting and lust for power. Hence, Pakistan decided to support another group of Islamic militants in order to bring peace and install a friendly government in Kabul. That group emerged with the name of the Taliban on Afghanistan's political horizon.

The era of the Taliban

The long civil war in Afghanistan and the cruelties of Mujahideen groups gave rise to the militant force of the Taliban.⁴⁸ The Taliban were organised by a cleric and Afghan jihadist leader Mullah Mohammed Omar in Kandahar, Afghanistan. They were the students of *madrassas*, religious schools, who were warmly welcomed by the Afghan people as a third option. The Taliban emerged from Kandahar and swept over all the territory up to Kabul within no time. Pakistan established cordial relations with this force and fully supported it, while India was quick to choose and help the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance of Afghanistan.⁴⁹ A proxy war again started between India and Pakistan to control Kabul. Taliban were able to control 90 percent of Afghan territory,⁵⁰ which was a great source of annoyance for India. Pakistan supported the Taliban because it wanted to end the civil war in Afghanistan and an early repatriation of Afghan refugees to their homeland. On 26 September 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul and imposed the strictest Islamic system. All women were banned from work, girls' schools and colleges were closed down, and a strict dress code of head-to-toe veils for women was imposed.⁵¹ As the Taliban were considered pro-Pakistan, India wasted no time in challenging Pakistan's supremacy in Kabul. India and Iran actively supported the Northern Alliance headed by Ahmad Shah Massoud, a one-time friend of Pakistan.⁵²

The era of 'war on terror'

Things dramatically changed when on 11 September 2001 the twin towers in New York were razed to the ground in a terrorist attack that left over 3,000 people dead and caused \$10 billion worth of property damages, besides engulfing the US in a state of terror. The US declared Osama bin Laden, then settled in Afghanistan, responsible for these terrorist attacks and demanded his extradition to the US. Upon the refusal of the Taliban, the US decided to attack Afghanistan.

The incidents of 9/11 turned the tables against Pakistan and in favour of India. Pakistan's position was very awkward because the force it had raised and supported during the past years had to be abandoned. Due to enormous US and international pressure, Pakistan decided to desert the Taliban and join the US in the war against the Taliban, the so-called 'war on terror'. The US-led NATO/ISAF forces started military operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan under the name of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' on 7 October 2001 and, as a result, thousands of Afghan and other Islamist militants escaped to Pakistan and settled in different parts of Pakistan.⁵³ This policy shift of Pakistan annoyed the Pakistani militants and they decided to stand with their comrades, the Afghan Taliban. The war on terror resulted in an increased militancy and radicalism in Pakistan, especially in FATA. Pakistani Islamic militants, with the working support of the Afghan Taliban, formed a militant organisation named the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has adopted terrorism as a strategy to achieve its objectives. Pakistan army was called into FATA for the first time in its history as a policy shift. The TTP, along with other militant organisations, declared a war of vengeance against Pakistan and its state institutions. These developments have brought Pakistan into a whirlpool of militancy and extremism with a deteriorated law and order situation in the country in general and KP in particular. The TTP has turned out to be a nationwide terrorist organisation operating across Pakistan and has very close relations with the Afghan Taliban, as they share the same overall ideology.

The war against terrorism has created an atmosphere of mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan has toughened its stance on the two main issues—Durand Line and Pashtunistan. When Kabul fell to the US-sponsored United Front Forces of the Northern Alliance on 12 November 2001, it was a very serious situation for Pakistan because it had supported the Taliban against the Northern Alliance headed by a Durrani Pashtun, Hamid Karzai, educated in Simla, India, and considered a good friend of India.⁵⁴ Pakistan tried its best to minimise the control of the Northern Alliance in Kabul.⁵⁵ The entry of the Northern Alliance into Kabul was perceived by many in Islamabad as the failure of Pakistan's diplomacy and a victory for India.⁵⁶ Musharraf welcomed the Bonn Agreement.⁵⁷ However, Islamabad was deeply

concerned over the under-representation of Pashtuns and overrepresentation of the Northern Alliance in the new political setup in Kabul.⁵⁸ The post-Bonn administration in Kabul was not sympathetic to Pakistan because of the long-standing rivalry between the groups that controlled Kabul and the Taliban. That is the reason relations between the two countries are not friendly and there exists some mutual suspicion, mistrust, and even hatred.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are both partners in the war against terrorism but due to their mutual mistrust, their roles seem to be of rivals rather than allies. Both the countries are not on the same page the way it ought to be. Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of cross-border movement of militants and support to the Afghan Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan, who are led by top Taliban leaders allegedly having offices in Quetta known as the 'Quetta Shura'.⁵⁹ Pakistan is also accused of supporting the Haqqani Network and Taliban militants for the insurgency in Afghanistan. Kabul believes that Pakistan is actively involved in its internal affairs through its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).⁶⁰ Pakistan rejects the allegations and instead accuses Kabul of providing sanctuaries to Pakistani outlaws in Kunar and Nuristan provinces. Islamabad believes that Kabul has provided active support to TTP's Emir of Mohmand Agency, Abdul Wali, better known as Umer Khalid, Emir of Bajaur Agency, Maulvi Faqir Muhammad, and Emir of Swat Mullah Fazlullah.⁶¹ Since June 2010, 223 attacks have been carried out in Pakistan from across the border in Afghanistan, including 14 major ones in which up to 200 militants were involved. Dozens of security personnel have lost their lives in such attacks. The attacks are believed to have originated from Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan from 18 to 20 camps run by militants Mullah Fazlullah and Abdul Wali.⁶² Pakistan also accuses Afghanistan of abetting the Baloch insurgents and accuses the Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Herat, and Qandahar of supporting militants conducting sabotage activities in Pakistan.⁶³ Pakistan also believes that India is going to encircle it in Afghanistan. Pakistan has continuously pointed out the negative role of Indian consulates along its border area.

Indian factor in Pak-Afghan relations

The relations between Pakistan and India have remained strained since their independence in 1947. The two countries have fought three wars. Tensions between them have influenced their relations with other countries as well, which is manifested in their relations with Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan have enjoyed cordial relations, except for a brief interlude during Mujahideen and Taliban eras. Both the countries have supported each other on many issues on international forums and, in fact, are still sharing each other's point of view.⁶⁴ This India-Afghan nexus has always affected Pakistan's Afghan policy. In recent times, this annoyance has turned serious and the security establishment in Pakistan has perceived the Indian presence in Afghanistan as a serious threat to its national interest and foreign policy objectives. Keeping in view this development, Islamabad has started efforts to attain maximum influence in Afghanistan.⁶⁵ Pakistan has been actively engaged in Afghanistan to have a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul and ultimately to reduce the Indian influence in Afghanistan.

Although Kabul has pretended to have balanced relations with both India and Pakistan, the rivalries between Pakistan and India are so deep-rooted that Afghanistan has no choice but to face a Pak-Indian proxy war for most of the time. While signing a strategic agreement with India on 4 October 2011, former Afghan president Hamid Karzai said,

This strategic partnership is not directed against any country. Pakistan is our twin brother India is a great friend. The agreement we signed with our friend will not affect our brother.⁶⁶

However, this surety hardly removes the suspicion of Islamabad as it has always seen the India-Afghanistan nexus as a threat to its national interests. Increasing control of Northern Alliance over Kabul under former Afghan president Hamid Karzai was a matter of great satisfaction for India but of annoyance for Pakistan. Pakistan's choices were limited at the beginning of the war on terror, i.e., either to support the Taliban and face the wrath of the US or to abandon the Taliban and stay with the US. Pakistan chose the latter option—a position often termed as a U-turn of Pakistan's Afghan policy. Although Pakistan tried its best to have good relations with the Karzai government, relations

between the two countries were far from friendly. Afghanistan believed that Pakistan supported the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and the Taliban leadership continued enjoying the protection of Pakistan in Quetta.⁶⁷

Pakistan's Afghan policy must be viewed in light of Pak-India relations as both the countries have a long history of a struggle for influence in Afghanistan. The conflict of interest is multidimensional and extends to various fields and subjects. There are many areas in which the national interests of both the countries clash with each other. Although their mutual interests far outweigh their mistrust quotient, each country is struggling against the other to achieve and safeguard its national interests in Kabul at the expense of the other. In order to understand this competition, a detailed description of the areas of conflict is given below.

Political rivalry

The rivalry between Pakistan and India started right from the independence of the two countries in 1947 over various issues arising as a result of the partition of colonial India into two states. This aspect can also be found in relation to Afghanistan since 1947. India, though not a neighbour of Afghanistan, is an important regional power and enjoys warm relations with Afghanistan since 1947, except for a brief period when the Taliban were in control of Kabul. Both countries are supporting each other on many issues on various international forums. India has fully supported the Afghan government politically and materially. India even supported the unjustified invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR due to its good relations with the anti-Pakistan government in Kabul.⁶⁸

Both Pakistan and India have tried to establish warm and cordial relations with Afghanistan with the exclusion of the other. In this respect, India has the upper hand because—in comparison with Pakistan, which has the issues of Durand Line and Pashtunistan with Afghanistan—India has no dispute or issue with it. Afghanistan's negative vote against Pakistan's membership in the UN has also deteriorated relations between the two countries. This situation has provided an opportunity to New Delhi to have cordial relations with Kabul.

Afghanistan, being a land-locked country, has used Pakistani ports for trade with the outside world. Pakistan has used this strategic

asset to influence the Afghan governments and serve Islamabad's interests from time to time. This policy has, however, increased mistrust and suspicion of Afghanistan towards Pakistan. Pakistan and India, which are always seeking political influence in Kabul, view each other's efforts of friendship with the Afghan government with suspicion.

The capture of Kabul by the Taliban was a great setback for India because the Taliban were friendly towards Pakistan. India was compelled to close its embassy at Kabul during the Taliban rule, while India fully supported anti-Taliban Northern Alliance politically and materially.⁶⁹ The injured commander of the Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Massoud died in an Indian hospital in Tajikistan. This hospital was established for the support of Northern Alliance forces by India.⁷⁰ After the US attack on Afghanistan and with the defeat of the Taliban, India entered into Kabul with the support of the Northern Alliance, the force it had supported against the Taliban.⁷¹ India welcomed Hamid Karzai's presidency who had very good personal relations with India and naturally had sympathies for its cause in Afghanistan. Moreover, his father was killed by the Taliban in Pakistan in 1999,⁷² which placed Pakistan in his bad books right from the beginning. India, through its 'soft power' approach, spent nearly \$4 billion on the reconstruction of Afghanistan and initiated projects for the uplift of the Afghan society.

Soft power takes the utilisation of positive attraction and persuasion to realise foreign policy objectives instead the hard power of military and economic might, deployed in the shape of coercion, the threat of force, and economic sanctions. Soft power has been variously defined. For example, it is understood as the "non-material capabilities such as reputation, culture, and value appeal that can aid the attainment of a state's objectives."⁷³ Breslin says that "soft power is conceived as the idea that others will align themselves with you and your policy preferences because they are attracted to your political and social system, values and policies."⁷⁴ Soft power tries to gain influence by constructing networks, communicating persuasive and compelling narratives, and creating attraction. It has ideational and cultural attractiveness, which is intentionally or unintentionally employed by states in international relations for gaining strategic interests. Joseph Nye, to whom the concept is attributed, has mentioned political values, culture, and foreign policy as the three fundamental sources of soft

power. When other states are convinced that a state's values, ideals, or policies are legitimate and desirable, its 'soft power' is increased.⁷⁵

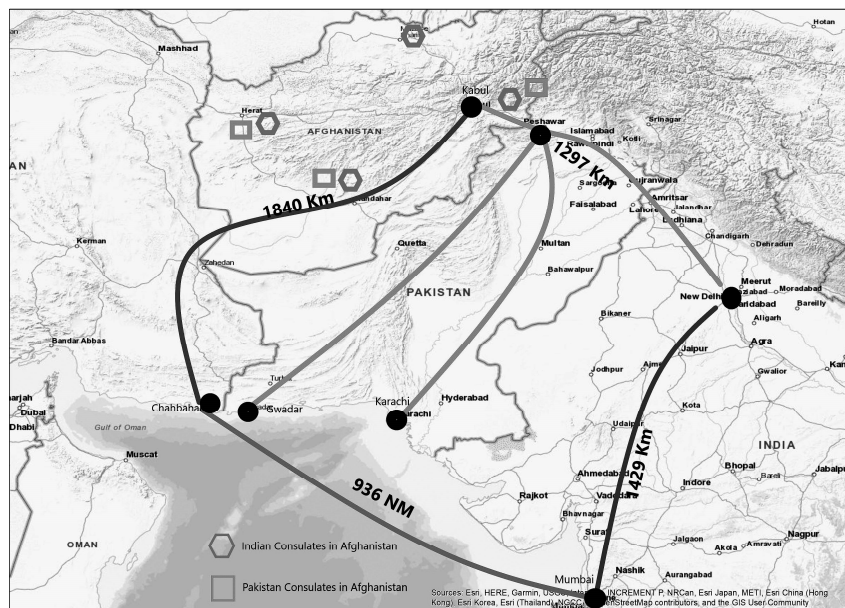
India did not send its military to Afghanistan for the US's 'Operation Enduring Freedom' against the Taliban and decided to use its 'soft power' to influence Afghan people and government. India initially provided \$1.3 billion in economic assistance to Afghanistan, which was increased to \$2 billion later on.⁷⁶ The use of soft power has brought very good results for the Indian government and today India is highly respected in the government circles as well as by the people of Afghanistan.⁷⁷ Most Afghans consider India a reliable and sincere friend of Afghanistan as compared to Pakistan. The construction of roads, free education to Afghan youth, efforts to improve agriculture, and monetary assistance of Afghan government gave India an important political clout in the present setup.

Indian media is busy in presenting an Afghan-friendly image of India as against Pakistan. This social construction has turned a great majority of Afghans into fans of India. On the other hand, Pakistan is portrayed as an aggressor responsible for all of Afghans' sufferings.⁷⁸ Despite the fact that Pakistan hosts millions of Afghan refugees, India, with its huge capability of financial investment, has earned a good name for itself in the government circles as well as among the general public.

Both India and Pakistan consider Afghanistan vital to their national interests. Each country considers the engagements of the other in Afghanistan against its national interests. Pakistan considers India-Afghanistan nexus as the encirclement policy of India. Similarly, Pakistan's active engagement is viewed by India as a threat to its national interest. Both countries want a strong diplomatic presence in Afghanistan against each other. After the Bonn conference, India took a number of steps to increase its influence in Afghanistan. After the formation of the interim government in Kabul, India immediately started to strengthen its political position in Afghanistan and reopened its embassy in Kabul, which had remained closed during the Taliban rule.⁷⁹ The Indian government has also re-opened consulates in Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar, and Mazar-i-Sharif⁸⁰ (see the map showing Pakistan's and Indian consulates in Afghanistan below). These consulates have been criticised by Pakistan for their alleged involvement in the insurgency in Balochistan.⁸¹ Pakistan also challenged the rationality of

these consulates near the Pakistan border where Afghan people are not interested in visiting India. A Pakistani foreign office official once said, “Indian consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar are a veritable base for RAW (India’s intelligence agency) and its accessories.”⁸² However, India rejects these allegations and has said that it uses these consulates for enhancing its position in the south where there was very little influence of the Indian government before. Afghanistan is of the view that these consulates only serve humanitarian purposes and have nothing to do with the sabotage activities on Pakistan soil,⁸³ which is quite in line with the Indian narration. These consulates have increased the prestige of India among the Afghan people because India has completed a number of schemes to improve the living conditions of the people of these areas.⁸⁴

Figure 1
Indian and Pakistani consulates in Afghanistan
and various trade routes



Developed by the authors based on open source information.

India is actively seeking a broader pan-Asian influence and—its policy towards Afghanistan is no small part of this effort.⁸⁵ According to Raj Chhikara, India’s main interests in the region include “growth as a

regional power and counteracting adverse Pakistani propaganda.”⁸⁶ This attempt at broader pan-Asian influence can quickly be interpreted by Islamabad to mean an encirclement policy—something Pakistan feared (and has actively worked to prevent) for decades. However, in order to benefit from the enormous ‘soft power’ of India and minimise its security threats, particularly from the south with the help of Pakistan, Afghanistan has to keep a balance between India and Pakistan.

India wants a politically and economically stable Afghanistan after the US/NATO withdrawal in the future and tries to prevent the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban from taking over Kabul, considering them a threat to its political and other interests in Afghanistan and a tool in the hand of its rival, Pakistan, for sabotaging Indian interests in Afghanistan. The geostrategic and political position of Afghanistan is also very important to India as Afghanistan lies at the door of Central Asia and it has an eye on the Central Asian states to enhance its prestige as a regional power.

Thus, the main concerns of Indian policies in Afghanistan seem to be revolving around Pakistan as it considers Pakistan a threat to its political interests. This mindset of both the countries, especially of India, has created a number of unresolved problems for the region in general and Afghanistan in particular.

Strategic rivalry

Pakistan and India are rivals in Afghanistan for securing better strategic positions against each other. Pakistan considers Afghanistan very important in its security calculations. The geo-strategic position of Afghanistan for India is such that it cannot afford to lose ground in Kabul. Pakistan believes that a friendly government in Kabul can give it a ‘strategic depth’ in case of an Indian attack on Pakistan. Though this idea has been criticised inside and outside Pakistan, it is still a relevant option. In fact, a friendly government in Kabul can minimise security threats to Pakistan, especially at its western border. A pro-Pakistan government in Kabul can be a means to resolve not only political issues with Afghanistan but also to check the India-Afghanistan nexus, which can be dangerous to Pakistan’s national interests in Afghanistan. Similarly, India wants a pro-India government in Kabul for securing its national interests.⁸⁷ India would never want to see the Taliban or any

other Islamist militant group controlling Kabul, which can provide some sort of 'strategic depth' to Islamic militants in Kashmir or inside India. The strategic ambitions of the two countries in Afghanistan clash with each other in an endless struggle to outclass the other. Hence a proxy war in Afghanistan is continuing with an accelerated rate and will climax on the eve of US/NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. The present government in Kabul has better relations with India than Pakistan. India and Afghanistan have signed a strategic agreement for training Afghan security forces⁸⁸ to enhance the capability of Afghan national security forces to face any eventuality from pro-Pakistan Taliban after the withdrawal of US/NATO forces from Afghanistan. This factor also draws India nearer to the Afghan security establishment, which is not very friendly towards Pakistan and is still dominated by the pro-India Northern Alliance.⁸⁹ Pakistan views the strategic agreement between Afghanistan and India for the training of Afghan forces with serious concern. Pakistan considers it an encirclement of Pakistan by India from east to west. Islamabad believes that RAW is involved in the ongoing Baloch insurgency, drawing active support from Indian consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad.⁹⁰ A former Indian consul general in Kandahar privately admitted that he had met with Baloch leaders at his consulate there, but he claimed that his ambassador gave him strict instructions not to aid them in any way against Pakistan. Still, he hinted that RAW personnel were present among the staff at Kandahar and Jalalabad consulates.⁹¹ A case in hand is that of Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav, an Indian naval commander, who was involved in subversive and terrorist activities in Balochistan, Pakistan. He was arrested by Pakistani forces on 3 March 2016 during a counter-intelligence operation in Balochistan. Jadhav was subsequently, sentenced to death by Field General Court Martial on 10 April 2017. However, his sentence was stayed by the International Court of Justice on 18 May 2017 until the final judgement of the case.⁹² Both India and Pakistan are worried about the outcome of the US/NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and want a friendly government in Kabul after the US/NATO transition for strategic purposes.

From the Indian perspective, Afghanistan, since Afghan jihad and the Taliban rule has become the abode of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism and has boosted the struggle of Kashmiri militants, thus, having a very unfavourable strategic impact on India.⁹³ In Indian

calculation, the success of Islamic militancy in Afghanistan has not only proved to be a source of inspiration for the Kashmiri militants but has also provided them with 'strategic depth' for training and safe havens. India would be quite averse to the return of the Taliban in Kabul believing that it will encourage the Kashmiri militants further and will prove to be a serious threat to Indian security. The hijacking of an Indian plane by Kashmiri militants and its subsequent drop-scene in Kandahar airport through which the Indian government was compelled to free top militant Kashmiri commanders Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar and Maulana Masood Azhar is still alive in the Indian memory. India is convinced that an Islamic fundamentalist government like the Taliban in Afghanistan will be in the best interest of Pakistan. India thinks that the soil of Afghanistan will be used by Pakistan against the Indian security interests. A friendly Afghanistan, where religious extremism continues to flourish, is considered essential by Pakistan to keep the pressure on India in Kashmir by providing a base where militants could be trained for fighting against the Indian forces.⁹⁴ The victory of Afghan Mujahideen over USSR gave tremendous inspiration to the Kashmiri militants and the victory of the Taliban over another superpower will boost the morale of the Kashmiri militants. In the wake of NATO withdrawal, the militants will get safe havens for their militant activities. Indians are aware of this potential threat to its security. According to Henry Kissinger, "In many respects India will be the most affected country if jihadist Islamism gains impetus in Afghanistan."⁹⁵

Thus, India links militancy in the India-Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and elsewhere in India with Afghanistan's geo-strategic environments. Indian security establishment believes that Pakistan will use Afghan territory for militancy in IOK and also in India if there is a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul. An Indian newspaper the *Daily Live Mint* observed that once Islamabad is assured of a friendly government in Kabul, it will unleash the terrorists at its disposal on India.⁹⁶ This, it is believed, will only mean more trouble in the IOK and will embolden terrorist groups to attack Indian cities with greater frequency. Consequently, India will certainly hope for a broad-based, multi-ethnic, and powerful government in Kabul after the US/NATO withdrawal. It is in the larger interests of India that the Northern Alliance forces, which have been fully backed by

India in their rainy days, get an upper hand in Kabul after the US/NATO transition.⁹⁷

Economic rivalry

A conflict between Pakistan and India has also been observed in the economic field. Both the countries are in a race to achieve their economic objectives in Afghanistan, which has unexplored natural resources and also lies at the gateway of resources-rich Central Asia. That is why both the countries are interested in having trade with the Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan.⁹⁸ India is interested in exploring Afghan copper mines and other natural resources and to invest in agriculture, hotel, medicine, and banking sectors.⁹⁹ Pakistan, as against India, has meagre resources and expertise to compete with India in exploring copper mines in Afghanistan but has the potential to outclass India in trade and investment because of its geographical location. Afghanistan is an important recipient of Pakistani exports and the markets of Kabul and Jalalabad are replete with Pakistani goods. Pakistani goods are very popular in Afghanistan, cheaper than the Indian goods, and easily available in Afghanistan due to lesser distance as compared to India. The economic rivalry between India and Pakistan is revealed from the Pak-Afghan trade agreement. One clause (Article 52) of the agreement explicitly says that Afghanistan can use Pakistani territory for exports to India but cannot transport Indian exports to Afghanistan via Pakistan. It clearly shows how conscious Pakistan is about Indian trade and investment in Afghanistan. On the other hand, in order to defeat the intention of Pakistan, the Indian government is trying to create new routes to reach Afghanistan. India has recently constructed a 218 km road from Dalaram to Zaranj in Afghanistan in order to connect Afghanistan to the Iranian port of Chabahar. This project will certainly end the monopoly of Pakistan over landlocked Afghanistan. Presently, Afghanistan uses the Karachi Port of Pakistan for trade activities but the opening of Chabahar port will provide it with more opportunities for trade routes. India will benefit from it because Pakistan will no more be able to monopolise trade between Afghanistan and India. This development shows why India considers Afghanistan so important for its trade and investment to compete with its arch-rival, Pakistan. Delhi also wants to undermine the importance of Karachi and Gwadar ports of Pakistan for

Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics.¹⁰⁰ Afghans still consider Karachi and Gwadar ports helpful for Afghanistan but think that Chabahar will end the monopoly of Pakistan and will free them from Pakistan's dictation in the economic field.¹⁰¹ Distance from Kabul to Chabahar is 1,840 km (28 hours of travel time). The distance from the port of Chabahar to Mumbai is 936 nautical miles (4-day travelling) and from Mumbai to Delhi 1,429 km (22 hours of travel time). So the total travel from Kabul to New Delhi is 3,269 km and 936 nautical miles with a total time of non-stop 8 days while the real-time could be two weeks with loading and unloading at three stages. On the other hand, the distance from Kabul to Delhi with one loading via Pakistan is 1,297 km with an estimated time of 16 hours and 40 minutes which is more feasible for both India and Afghanistan. Gwadar is also the most feasible choice as the distance from Kabul to Chabahar is 1,840 km while from Kabul to Gwadar is 1,237 km.¹⁰² Afghanistan has enough to offer in trade and investment sectors and India has the requisites resources and skills to benefit from this opportunity. Currently, India is engaged in exploring the Hajigak iron mine in Afghanistan.¹⁰³ The private investors of India have shown interest in the hotel, banking, and many other sectors in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁴ India has paid great attention to improving the infrastructure and other institutions of Afghanistan, which affect the life of the common man. The Indian government has built roads to improve communications and boost trade activities. Important projects undertaken by India include construction of the Afghan parliament building, the expansion of the Afghan national television network, and several smaller projects in agriculture, rural development, education, health, energy, and vocational training.¹⁰⁵ India has also improved the power sector of Afghanistan by enhancing the capacity of power transmission lines.

Kabul will remain high on the priority list of Indian policy not only for security reasons but also for natural resources and regional trade as well as connectivity with Central Asia, a region considered India's extended neighbourhood.¹⁰⁶ According to Rahimullah Yusufzai, "India while anticipating various threats has spent huge money for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and won over the support of the people and the government of Afghanistan."¹⁰⁷ In order to develop technical skills of the people of Afghanistan, India has started a number of

community skills development programmes inside and outside Afghanistan, where basic skills are provided to men and women in plumbing, welding, carpet weaving, fashion designing, marketing, etc.¹⁰⁸ India has also provided hundreds of scholarships to Afghan students for education in India.¹⁰⁹

Afghanistan is also included in the priority list of Pakistan for trade and investment reasons. Due to its landlocked nature, history of war, limited investment capacity, and little technical know-how, Afghanistan has a poor industrial base and heavily depends on Pakistan from flour to heavy machinery. Afghanistan is one of the largest importers of Pakistani goods in the world and imports rice, cement, vegetables, fruits, electronics, household equipment, medicine, fish, etc. to Afghanistan.¹¹⁰ Moreover, thousands of skilled workers from Pakistan are working in Afghanistan. Pakistan wants this state of affairs not to be disturbed by any state, especially by India. This competition between the two rivals is likely to increase after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Indian economy is growing at a higher speed and tends to explore new avenues to boost it further. Afghanistan is very important in this respect for India because of its natural resources. Afghanistan's iron ore deposits are estimated to be worth \$421 billion, copper deposits about \$274 billion, niobium \$81 billion, cobalt \$51 billion, and gold deposits are estimated to be worth \$25 billion. Similarly, the US geological survey estimates 36.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the northern region of Afghanistan. Oil reserves of the country are estimated to be around 3.6 billion barrels.¹¹¹

There is also a potential for economic activity between Afghanistan and India in exploring and developing the minerals sector of Afghanistan. Private investment of Indian companies in Afghanistan in the near future is a possibility. A large number of private direct investments in the mineral sector seems to be on the rise. Presently, the Indian companies are busy in exploring the Hajigak mines¹¹² and will certainly produce millions of tonnes of iron from these mines. India can import Afghan minerals via Pakistan because according to the transit agreement between Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, Afghanistan can export to India through Pakistan but not vice versa.

There are vast opportunities for Indian entrepreneurs to exploit the Afghan trade. Both the governments are keen to develop trade in

different sectors. India and Afghanistan have concluded four agreements on cooperation in the relevant areas, including small development projects, fertilizer sector, and mineral resources during the visit of the former Afghan president Hamid Karzai to New Delhi on 12 November 2012. Again, apart from Afghanistan, the natural resource-rich Central Asian countries are also important for India and Afghanistan. About 80 percent of the energy consumed in India is imported,¹¹³ which renders Central Asia extremely important for New Delhi to fulfil its energy needs. India shares no border with the Central Asian Republics, thus, compelling it to pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan to reach Central Asia. Due to its fast-growing industrial sector, India's deficiency in energy may increase further. So Delhi is keen to use Central Asian oil and gas reserves, which can only be possible with the help of Afghanistan. Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan are partners in a gas pipeline project named as TAPI, stretching from Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan. The US, being a major player in the region, has welcomed this development and has described it as a 'very positive step forward'.¹¹⁴ Turkmenistan will supply 90 million metric standard cubic meters per day of natural gas, with India and Pakistan getting 38 standard cubic meters each and 14 standard cubic meters to be received by Afghanistan.¹¹⁵ The project will be helpful in solving the energy crises in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. It would transform Afghanistan into an energy bridge between Central Asia and South Asia.

Cultural rivalry

Taliban, during their rule in Afghanistan, had banned all kinds of movies and songs, thus, created a vacuum in the market, which India quickly filled after their fall. India has tried to enhance its cultural influence in Afghanistan through its famous Bollywood movies, songs, and dramas and has poured thousands of CDs of Indian movies, songs, and dramas into Afghanistan's market. Afghan TV and radio channels broadcast Indian movies and songs on regular basis. They have become an integral part of Afghan cultural sphere and have started engulfing the Afghan media entertainment market. Most of the Indian movies propagate anti-Pakistan propaganda and influence Afghan society to a great extent. The influence of the Indian culture can be seen in Afghan weddings and other festivals. Wearing Indian dresses on such occasion

is becoming popular, as Afghan youth idealise Indian film heroes and heroines. On the other hand, the influence of Pakistani movies and songs is rarely felt in Afghan society. Afghanistan and Pakistan share the same cultural traits but the influence of Indian culture is a new phenomenon because of the Indian government's conscious efforts. The popularity of Bollywood music and Indian soap operas hints at India's significant cultural influence in Afghanistan¹¹⁶ affecting traditional Afghan culture and customs.

The preceding discussion hints at potential Pak-India rivalries in Afghanistan, with each state struggling to downplay the other and achieving its policy objectives to the maximum. To safeguard its interests, India wants a pro-India government in Kabul. India has urged the US not to leave Afghanistan prematurely without the formation of a future setup in Afghanistan, which could provide an opportunity to the Taliban to capture Kabul and sabotage the peace process. Indian Afghan policy is from the very beginning Pakistan-centric while Pakistan has a great weight of Indian factor in its foreign policy. Both India and Pakistan want to see a friendly government in Kabul, which has kept them in a constant competition with each other. This competition will intensify at the endgame of Afghanistan (NATO/US withdrawal). According to Rahimullah Yusufzai, an expert on Pak-Afghan relations, "There is an Indian factor in Pak-Afghan relations and this factor will show its presence with increased velocity after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan."¹¹⁷ Each country tries its level best to lower the influence of the other on Kabul for strategic, economic, and political reasons. India has seen bad days during the Taliban years and has experienced strained and tense relations with them. Consequently, it is against the entry of the Taliban in future Afghan setup. Pakistan, on the other hand, is eager to see the role of the Taliban in a future set up in Kabul. A British diplomat in Islamabad said, "There is an Indo-Pak proxy war, and it is going on right now."¹¹⁸ Thus, Afghanistan is becoming a zero-sum game for both the countries.

Conclusion

Pak-Afghan relations have remained tense throughout history, mainly because of the Durand Line and Pashtunistan issues. India has successfully managed the situation to its advantage. Although

Afghanistan is a next-door neighbour of Pakistan, its relations are more cordial with India than Pakistan. The fear of Pakistan being encircled by India has remained its main perception and a major determinant of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Keeping in view this predicament, the foreign policy managers of Pakistan have always desired and actively worked for the installation of a friendly government in Kabul to safeguard its political, economic, and strategic interests. India also works for having a friendly government in Afghanistan to minimise Pakistan's influence there. This struggle for interests by Pakistan and India has turned Afghanistan into a theatre of the Cold War between the two countries, with serious ramifications for the people of Afghanistan in particular and the region in general. Due to the active involvement of India, Pakistan's foreign policy choices in the past have made Afghanistan suspicious of Pakistan's activities and policies towards Afghanistan, thus, compelling it to trust India more than Pakistan. This trust-deficit and suspicion are among the main factors in the strained Pak-Afghan relations—a situation India has turned to its advantage.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbours and neighbours cannot be changed. Good relations bring peace and development, while stained relations bring destruction and miseries. Both the countries must realise the fact that peace and amicable relations are the only guarantees for development. Without peace and stability, there will be no room for socio-economic, political, and industrial development. Afghanistan, being a landlocked country, is heavily dependent on Pakistan for its access to the sea. Similarly, Pakistan depends on Afghanistan for access to the Central Asian natural resources. The construction of the Chabahar port will not alter the vitality of Pakistani routes for Afghanistan's trade with other countries. As said earlier, the distance through Pakistan for Afghan transit trade is much smaller. So both the countries are so interlinked that only friendly relations between them can guarantee the overall development of the region.

Hostile Pak-India relations have severely affected this pattern of relations. Pakistan's major foreign policy objective in Afghanistan is to see a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul while India sees the same for itself and considers Pakistan a threat to its interests in Afghanistan. The main concerns of Indian policymakers in Afghanistan revolve around Pakistan. This Indian mindset has created a number of unresolved

problems for the region in general and Afghanistan in particular. In the current scenario, India occupies a better position because it has very successfully applied its 'soft power approach' in Afghanistan to influence Afghan people and government. The use of soft power has brought very good results for India and today it is highly respected in Afghanistan. What Pakistan needs is to develop a realistic soft power policy towards Afghanistan to counter this Indian approach. Pakistan has the potential to outclass India in trade and investment because of its geographical contiguity with Afghanistan. Afghanistan is an important recipient of Pakistani exports and Pakistani goods are not only cheaper than the Indian ones but are also more readily available in Afghanistan due to the short distance.

Both the countries are so interlinked that they cannot be separated. Both are suffering from terrorism and are partners in the war against terrorism, they have to understand that their roles need to be of allies and not of rivals. Currently, Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of cross-border movement of militants and its active support to the Haqqani Network and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan rejects these allegations and instead accuses Kabul of providing sanctuaries to Pakistani outlaws in Kunar and Nuristan provinces. Pakistan needs to formulate consistent policy mechanisms to deconstruct this misconception/misunderstanding in the minds of the people of Afghanistan. Both the states need to sit together and resolve their outstanding issues through a continuous process of dialogues and other diplomatic means. Afghanistan needs to keep a balance between the rivalries of India and Pakistan and to prevail on India for the non-use its soil against Pakistan. To achieve a high degree of mutual cooperation, trust, and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and political independence in bilateral relations, both the countries need to apply sincere efforts to resolve the lingering issues, specifically of the Durand Line and Pashtunistan. Both the countries need to develop a mechanism to resolve misconceptions and trust-deficit. Kabul should recognise and understand the sensitivity of Pakistan about the Indian presence in Afghanistan and should protect Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan. Similarly, Islamabad needs to understand that a stable and broad-based government in Kabul is in its larger interest. An effective border management between Pakistan and Afghanistan can bring highly fruitful results and will be an effective tool in minimising the

effects of terrorism. Pakistan and Afghanistan can help each other in intelligence sharing. Similarly, Pakistan can help Afghanistan in the fields of defence and police. Such policies can help in trust building and removing suspicion in their mutual relations.

The region can develop only through good, normal, and friendly relations and not through suspicion and trust-deficit. Pakistan and Afghanistan ought to establish relations based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and political independence. There is a view in Pakistan's policy circles that a stable and broad-based government in Kabul is in the larger interest of Pakistan. Afghanistan also has to ensure that its soil must not be used against Pakistan.

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Pakistan's choices were very narrow at the Bonn conference. It had no option but to accept the outcome of the agreement.

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