

Genesis of indo afghan relations history essay



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Afghanistan, as evident from its history had always remained a battleground between the great Powers. Owing to its geo-strategic location, it has excessively suffered from external interferences led to constant instability and internal power struggle in the country. Attempts by the external players to control Afghanistan, has proved to be considerably difficult. Of late, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan influenced the policy makers to re-evaluate their strategy towards Afghanistan, which led to a decade long armed struggle. The post 9/11 situation and subsequent invasion by US yet again altered the regional dynamics and is viewed as beginning of a new ' Great Game ' whereby regional and global players are pursuing their politico-economic interests in the region. India, being the emerging military and economic power is also venturing to exert her influence in Afghanistan along with other players.

The growing relations between India and Afghanistan and her presence in our backyard is a matter of great concern for Pakistan, keeping in view the historic animosity between the two. The greater representation of Northern Alliance in an interim administration provided India with opportunities to re-establish its links in Afghanistan. In subsequent years, it contributed millions of dollars for up-gradation/ reconstruction of various projects and dams along with investment in communication infrastructure, revealing her efforts to reach at CARs energy sources through Iran.[1]On the other hand, situation in Afghanistan pose new security challenges for Pakistan. The geographical proximity invites regular trespassing through porous border having many crossing points. About 40, 000 people cross the border on daily basis.

Pakistan, a frontline ally in the Global Campaign on Terror, finds itself in a

vulnerable situation wherein increased Indian influence is appreciably compromising its western borders. Cognizant to new geo-political developments, Pakistan visualizes Indian influence in Afghanistan as part of its strategic encirclement.[2]

The aim of this paper is to assess the regional implications for the growing military, economic, political and diplomatic influence of India in Afghanistan to devise a policy response against this new dimension of Indian threat emanating from Pakistan's western frontiers. The present study is an effort to understand Indian motives in Afghanistan and beyond and assess the emerging scenarios' of new ' Great Game' in the region. Following hypothesis will be theoretically and empirically tested in the course of the research work.

a. The new ' Great Game' in Afghanistan is constantly disturbing the Balance of Power in the region, which is not in favour of South Asia.

b. Increased Indian presence in Afghanistan especially after US invasion may further enhance after drawdown of NATO Forces, surrogating the US.

Emerging scenarios' may pose serious security challenges for Pakistan, require a formidable policy response. The divergence of interests of global/regional players may again destabilize the Afghanistan with its ripple/spillover effects.

There are many theories in International Relations (IR), which can be used to research the assigned topic especially with regard to new ' Great Game' in Afghanistan. However, my research work will be theoretically grounded within the parameters of Neo-Realism or Structural Realism outlined by <https://assignbuster.com/genesis-of-indo-afghan-relations-history-essay/>

Kenneth Waltz in 1979 in his book "Theories of International Politics." Neorealism holds that the international structure is based on the principle of anarchy. This anarchic International structure is decentralized, means no central authority, and it comprises of equal sovereign states. These states act in accordance with their own national interests and never subordinate their interest to another's.

Following major/minor questions derived from the Hypotheses will be addressed to investigate the gap of the knowledge during the course of research:

- a. What is the geo-political significance of Afghanistan from the historical perspective?
- b. What is the genesis of Indo-Afghan relations during and post-cold war?
- c. What is the nature of new 'Great Game' and Indian involvement in Afghanistan?
- d. What will be the implications for the region in general and Pakistan in particular due increased Indian influence in Afghanistan?
- e. What will be the future map in Afghanistan post 2014?
- f. What should be the response options available with Pakistan to counter the increased Indian Influence in Afghanistan?

A logical, systematic and an organized approach will be adopted by using primary, secondary and Tertiary data sources to address the above-mentioned queries. Both qualitative and quantitative research

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techniques/methods will be employed to incorporate facts, perceptions, opinions, attitudes, statistics, images, behavioral reports regarding the field of investigation etc. Survey through Questionnaires and Interviews will also be carried out to ascertain the facts, if so required. However, research will primarily be focused on the extensive use of Tertiary data sources which include Articles, Journals, Periodicals, Internet, Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, and News Papers etc due to paucity of time. Accordingly, the data and material, so collected, will be minutely analyzed and selected in support of the queries under the expert guidance of the supervisor and thereby produced in line with the plan of the research paper.

The paper has been divided into five chapters. Theoretical debate will be undertaken in the first three chapters while its application will be followed in the next two. Chapter-1 will briefly focus on the Geo-political significance of Afghanistan from the historical perspective. Chapter-2 will delineate the genesis of INDO-AFGHAN relations pre and post-cold war. Chapter-3 will cover the concept of the “ New Great Game” and the nature of Indian involvement in Afghanistan. Chapter-4 will highlight the repercussions of increased Indian influence in Afghanistan, regionally and with special emphasis to Pakistan. Chapter-5 will focus on the most likely emerging scenario in Afghanistan post ISAF drawdown in year 2014 and will lay out a broader policy frame work for Pakistan authorities in order to mitigate the growing Indian influence in its western neighborhood.

PART-I: THEORETICAL DEBATE

CHAPTER – 1

AFGHANISTAN – CROSSROADS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Rudyard Kipling said, “ When you’re wounded and left on Afghanistan’s plains and women come out to cut up what remains, just roll to your rifle, blow out your brain and go to your God like a soldier”. [3]

GEO STRATEGIC LOCATION:

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia. Its unique central positioning makes it accessible to many important parts of Asia even stretching to Eastern Europe. According to world fact book:

It has an area of 647, 500 sq km and shares borders with Pakistan in the South West (2430 km), Iran in the west (936 km), Central Asian Republics in the North including Tajikistan (1206 km), Uzbekistan (137 km), Turkmenistan (744 km) and Chinese province Xinjiang in North-East (76 km). It stretches 1300 km from Southwest to the Northeast and has a general width of about 600 km. A narrow stretch of territory known as “ Wakhan corridor” [4] was carved out by the British to prevent the Russians from having a direct access to their possessions in India. For the most part, the boundary runs along navigable Amu (Oxus) Darya. The Durand Line forms the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The boundary runs most of the way through precipitous mountain ranges. [5] (See Annex A)

GEO-STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE:

In view of its vital geographical location, it has always remained a pivot area in Global politics. Its culture, ethnicity, history, economy, language and certain other demographic indicators are shaped because of its unique geostrategic position (South and Central Asia). Its Geo strategic significance can be traced back to history as illustrated by Rudyard Kipling in the famous Old Great game. It has remained a cause of geo political rivalry between two great empires i. e. " Russia" and " Britain". The British Empire considered Afghanistan as vital for the defense of Indian subcontinent and it remained as a buffer state between the two imperial powers. Latter during the cold war, importance of Afghanistan again surfaced in the global politics when Soviet Union invaded it. Accordingly, it remained a battle ground for Soviet Union and United States in the latter period of twentieth century. The geo strategic significance of Afghanistan once again emerged when US led NATO forces attacked Afghanistan in 2001. Presently, it is a part of New Great game being played by the regional as well as global players, each trying to consolidate its influence. Although, economic opportunities in Afghanistan are not very potent, however, its geostrategic location makes it important regionally and globally.[6]

DEMOGRAPHY:

Afghanistan has a varied ethnic mixture due to its central location being at the cross roads of Central, South and West Asia. The population of Afghanistan is divided into various groups on the ethnic and linguistic basis. However, due to lack of a comprehensive survey since last many decades,

the exact demographic statistics are not available. Talal Hussian in his thesis on Afghan complex situation writes:

The estimated population of Afghanistan in July 2003 is 28, 717, 21310 out of which Pashtoon are 44%, Tajik 25%, Hazara 10%, minor ethnic groups (Aimaks, Turkmen, Baloch, and others) 13%, Uzbek 8%. Major and minor languages include Pashtu 35%, Afghan Persian (Dari) 50%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%. Farsi is the dominant language in Kabul and widely regarded as more cultured than Pashtu[7].

ECONOMIC CONDITION:

Decades of conflict and foreign interventions has adequately destabilized the Afghan economy. According to the estimates, “ The GDP stands at about US \$27 Billion and GDP per Capita is about US \$900. Its un-employment rate is 35% and roughly the same percentage of its citizens live below the poverty line. About 42% of the population lives on less than one US dollar a day.”[8] However, on the positive side, the nation has a very low external debt and is gradually recovering with the assistance of the world community. “ The Afghan economy has been growing at about 10% per year since the last decade, due to the infusion of over US \$ 50 Billion as international aid along with remittances from Afghan expats. The economy of the country is mainly relying on agriculture, horticulture, cattle herds and minerals.”[9]

MODERN HISTORY:

The modern history of Afghanistan dates back to 1709 with the establishment of “ Hotaki dynasty” in Kandahar. Subsequently, in 1747

Ahmed Shah Durani came in power. However, throughout the 19th century Afghanistan remained engulfed in the power struggles between two imperial nations, " Britain" and " Russia" widely known as the " Old Great Game".

Old Great Game:

The old Great game is a term coined in Kipling's novel " Kim".[10]It was a war for influence between the two great powers " Britain" and " Russia" fought in the lonely passes and deserts of Central Asia throughout the 19th century. Britain status as an Indian sub continental colonial power was challenged by the Tsarist southward expansionist policies. According to David Fromkin:

In the early part of the century, the focus of strategic concern was Constantinople. Later, as czarist armies overran Central Asia in 1869, attention shifted to Persia, Afghanistan and to the mountain passes of the Himalayas. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was a common assumption in Europe that the next Great War was going to be the final showdown between Britain and Russia in Afghanistan.[11]

Britain fought two wars in Afghanistan to build its influence so that Afghanistan may become a buffer zone and Tsarist southward expansion could be ceased. The same was achieved during the second war when finally Afghanistan came under British influence. According to Qaeem Ahmed Shayeq:

In July 1887, an Anglo -Russian agreement was signed at St. Petersburg by which the Russian agreed to halt further advance southwards. By another Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1895, the Wakhan corridor became a

permanent part of Afghanistan. In 1893, Great Britain and Russia agreed to earmark river Oxus as Northern frontier of Afghanistan. Accordingly, Durand Line was established by “ Sir Mortimer Durand” to demarcate the boundaries between Russian and British Empires in 1893[12].

This century long power struggle finally came to an end in the beginning of 20th century. “ Anglo Russian convention” was signed on Aug 31, 1907 which formally ended the old great game[13].

Cold War period:

King Amanullah rose to power in Afghanistan after the Afghan War of 1919 and peace accord called “ Treaty of Rawalpindi”[14]. Prior to World War II, US maintained a policy of Isolation and did not meddle in Afghan affairs. However, the changing geopolitical realities; US emergence as a global power and Soviet Union expansionist policies after World War II compelled United States to adopt a proactive approach to this battle hardened region . As the cold war started to take momentum, it was further intricate by the invasion of Soviet Union on Afghanistan in 1979. The invasion united the broken Afghan society and they waged war against the invaders backed by Pakistan and US in which over a million Afghans lost their lives.

During ten years of war in Afghanistan, the Afghan society was badly disintegrated. Many of the locals migrated to Pakistan as Afghan refugees thus burdening the Pakistan’s economy. Infrastructure, roads, institutions, economy, culture and standard living opportunities were all devastated. With the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, the war was formally over. However, its culmination gave birth to two important developments i. e. the

disintegration of Soviet Union resulting in a unipolar world dominated by United States and Afghan civil war which further crippled the Afghan society.

Afghan Civil War and beyond:

Throughout the Afghan war, United States continued backing Pakistan's ISI to fight the proxy war with the Soviets. However, when their objectives were achieved by the disintegration of Soviet Union, they completely alienate themselves from the Afghan cause. The instant withdrawal of United States from the Afghan arena left the war torn region upon the mercy of war lords and tribal factions. Anarchy prevailed in Afghanistan resulting in a civil war and power struggles among the warring factions. Groups who were earlier trained and armed to fight against Soviets were never disarmed. The civil war continued for nearly a decade with the succession of weak governments one after another.

Although, the phenomenal rise of Taliban's in 1996 gave some hope of a centralized government. However, those hopes were completely dashed as civil war continued and AL-Qaida-Taliban nexus brought United States to jump in the region as a result of 9/11 attacks. The US invasion in Afghanistan in Oct 2001 and Pakistan's decision to act as a frontline state altogether brought a new dimension to regional politics. As a spillover effect of Global war on terror, many of the Taliban-Al-Qaida groups took sanctuaries in the Pakistan's tribal area bordering Afghanistan and started overt & covert terrorist activities both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. " In 2007-08, more than 1, 500 people were killed in suicide and other attacks on civilians".[15]After more than a decade long fighting, US led NATO Forces have not been able to eradicate the Taliban's resistance. The fact is that Taliban's power has slowly

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increased especially in southern Afghanistan, restricting ISAF control in major cities only. Drawdown of US forces in 2014 has posed new challenges for lasting stability in this country/region.

CHAPTER – 2

GENESIS OF INDO-AFGHAN RELATIONS

PRE-INDEPENDENCE:

Relations between Afghanistan and India can be traced back to the ancient history when different dynasties' in India had maintained cordial relations with the Afghans. Northern India was invaded by the number of Turkic invaders based in Afghanistan during tenth to eighteenth centuries and founded the Muslim empire in India. Due to political unrest and instability in their region, especially during the Mughal period (1526-1857), many Afghans began immigrating to India. During Nineteenth century till the beginning of Twentieth century, the Afghanistan again became the focal point and interplay between the empires of Soviets and Britain for their so called 'Great Game'.

POST INDEPENDENCE:

Afghanistan has been the focal point of Indian Foreign Policy since 1947, and they have enjoyed cordial relations for a long time. The relationship strengthened more when the " Friendship Treaty" was assigned in 1950. This pro-Soviet era witnessed various agreements and protocols between the two countries.[16]

Despite Pakistan's physical proximity to Afghanistan, Indians have always remained very close to Afghan regimes, influencing them against Pakistan,

taking advantages of their differences over Durand Line and sparking Afghanistan's irredentist claims on some parts of Khyber Pakhtoonkha (KPK). Abubakar Siddique, in his article "The Durand Line: Afghanistan's Controversial, Colonial-Era Border" explain this paradox as:

Afghanistan-Pakistan border had exacerbated the tensions between the two countries since the end of British rule in India. The ethnically Pashtoon and Baloch belts straddling the Durand Line made that demarcation illegitimate in the eyes of many in the tribal areas. The Durand Line runs directly through traditional Pashtoon lands, splitting one of the world's largest tribal societies in two. Those to the west of the line are Afghan and to the east are Pakistanis. India was soon able to exploit this rivalry following partition. Pashtoon nationalists, who had already been advocating for a "Pashtunistan," took the matter to a loya jirga in 1949. The jirga believed that Pakistan, being a new state at the time, was not an historic extension of British India, and therefore all treaties signed prior to independence were nullified. This included the demarcation of the Durand Line and Pakistan's putative annex of tribal areas more closely aligned with Afghanistan. Throughout the Cold War, India kept paying lip service to the idea of a "Pashtunistan" with the goal of keeping Pakistan's army occupied on its restive western borders.[17]

India was consistent in following a policy of improving ties gradually with Afghanistan during King Zahir Shah's rule (1933-1972), excluding a brief rift during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflict. King Zahir's overthrow did not obstruct this process and India maintained good relations with successive governments. In 1965 and 1971 wars, Indians continuously pursued

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Afghanistan to engage Pakistan at its western borders; however, Afghans choose to remain neutral, thanks to the wisdom of King Zahir Shah, which provided Pak Armed Forces an opportunity to remain focused on eastern borders.[18]

Indians always remained involved in various construction projects in the garb of India's rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, which provided ample opportunities to RAW, Indian intelligence agency to continue its covert mission of training, funding and maintaining insurgents to malign Pakistan. These workers were estimated to be between 3, 000 and 4, 000 at any given time with the main objective to fuel instability and insurgency all along western borders of Pakistan.[19]

AFGHAN WAR:

During the Soviet Afghan war, Indians were not able to extend much of their geo-political influence in the region, particularly due to US-Pak-Afghan alliance. However, they en-cashed this opportunity to strengthen economic ties with Afghanistan. While maintaining their support for the occupation by Soviet Union, they also augmented reconstruction/development activities in Afghanistan. According to Fahmida Ashraf:

After failing to engage Pakistan with the prospects of a regional solution to the Soviet invasion and faced with substantial American military and economic assistance to Pakistan (\$3. 2 billion for six years), India avoided any public censure of the Soviet occupation. It chose instead to work with successive Soviet puppet regimes in Afghanistan because it cared little for the Islamist ideological orientation shared by a bulk of the Afghan

mujahedeen groups that Pakistan was supporting on behalf of the United States. During this period, India massively increased its investments in developmental activities by “ co-operating in industrial, irrigation and hydro-electric projects” in Afghanistan.[20]

POST DEMISE OF USSR (1990 AND BEYOND):

The rise of Afghan Mujahideen against the Soviet invasion mainly supported by Pakistan and the US, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, the formation of a government by Mujahideen in Afghanistan after overthrowing the pro-Soviet regime of Najibullah in 1992, all were events that led to the first instance of diplomatic isolation and lessening of Indian influence in Afghanistan.[21] However, in 1992, when Burhanuddin Rabbani established his government, dominated by non-Pashtoons, India again become active in building its relations with Afghanistan. The continuity of their cordial relations was not long lived and was fractured by the emergence of a Muslim fundamentalist group i. e. Taliban[22] in 1996. According to Iram Khalid:

In 1996, Taliban’s captured Kabul and took control of the government and renamed the country as “ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan,” which was recognized only by Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Pakistan. Ahmad Shah Massoud created the United Front (Northern Alliance) in opposition to the Taliban and fought for the democratic system to be implanted in Afghanistan, while Al Qaeda supported the Taliban with troops from Central Asia and other Arab countries. By July 1998, the Taliban had taken control of much of the area north of Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif. Massoud stayed in opposition until his assassination in September 2001.[23](See Annex B)

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The rise of Taliban and removal of Rabbani government in September 1996, led to the sidelining of Indian influence in Afghanistan. India ceased its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and closed its embassy in Kabul, sensing increase in militancy in the region. During this period, the non-Pashtoon groups opposing the Taliban regime formed the Northern Alliance and controlled most of the Northern areas of Afghanistan, bordering the Central Asian states of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As part of its efforts to maintain its influence in Afghanistan and to counter Pakistan's support to the Taliban government, " India established its links with the Northern Alliance and strengthened their defense by providing high-altitude warfare equipment, helicopter technicians and technical advice." [24] According to one report, " Indian military support to anti-Taliban forces totaled US \$70 million, including five Mi-17 helicopters, and US \$ 8 million worth of high-altitude equipment in 2001." [25]

The primary reason to support Ahmed Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance was because of its enmity towards the Pakistani-supported Mujahideen groups and Indian dislike for the Taliban being an extremist Muslim fundamentalist group. India also remain distant from Taliban regime because of their antagonistic behavior towards the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs but much more serious issue in Indian eyes was the Taliban pronouncements on Kashmir, the training of Kashmir's, Pakistanis and foreign militants in Afghan training camps. These activities used to touch the core of India's vital interests and New Delhi was compelled to strengthen its assistance to the non-Pashtoons forces. [26]

Therefore, throughout the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan (1996-2001), Indian efforts were aimed at marginalizing the Taliban's influence and to encourage groups having links with India. However, the regional dynamics took another U-turn with the invasion of US led NATO forces in Afghanistan post Sep 9/11. With the support of ISAF forces, Northern alliance ousted the Taliban from power in Kabul in December 2001.

CHAPTER – 3

NEW GREAT GAME AND THE INDIAN INVOLVEMENT

NEW GREAT GAME:

Just like the old great game, Afghanistan is now part of another venture for influence and greed for resources among the Global super powers and regional players in the so called " New Great Game"[27]. According to Alexander Cooley:

The " New Great Game is a conceptualization of modern geopolitics in Central Eurasia as a competition between US, UK and other NATO countries against Russia, China and other SCO countries for influence, power, hegemony and profits in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasus. It is a reference to the old ' Great Game', the political rivalry between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia during the 19th century.[28]

It has been argued that ' Central Asia, the place of old ' Great Game' is once more a key to the security of all Eurasia, as Russia and China are engaged in a complex geo-political drills and West does not permits their domination.

The aspects of New Great game are appended below:

Quest for Caspian petroleum:

Caspian petroleum has become a focal point and a subject of interest for the participants of the Great Game. Realizing the great potential of Caspian reserves, it has motivated corporate interests and rekindled regional and international rivalries. "As struggle for Eurasian oil is a multi-dimensional geopolitical and economic game, this Great Game is quickly becoming a paramount challenge for policy makers." [29] K. Meyer and S. Brysac in their book "The Great game and race for empire in Asia" are of the view that, "India and China, each with exponentially growing energy needs are vying for access along with Russians, Europeans, and Americans. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan have their own political, economic, and cultural interests in the region, whereas slumbering rivalries have also abruptly awakened amongst various factions." [30]

Pipeline Politics: As per the Great Game hypothesis, the quest for the Caspian resources has resulted in formation of a pipeline regime which is directly related to route, safety, composition of consortia etc. The same includes Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) and Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) who are major players in the struggle for influence in pipeline and oil politics. [31] With oil remaining a strategic commodity, issue of secure supplies of oil, gas and other energy resources became of paramount concern after the Gulf Wars. Currently, Turkmenistan and China receive most attention with number of pipeline projects in all over Central Asia and even up to Siberia for oil. [32] (See Annex C)

Security aspects: In the aftermath of 9/11 and US led invasion of Afghanistan, the concept of new 'Great Game' was revisited. The presence of the western

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troops in Afghanistan and Central Asia certainly has an impact on regional politics. The extension of ' War on Terror' into Georgia was seen as a challenge to Russian hegemony in the region. There have also been reports of Israel undertaking military co-operation with Uzbekistan. The above shows the type of actors involved in new ' Great Game'. " Multinational companies, state governments, transnational organizations and sub-state influences have all allegedly been part of this New Great Game. Therefore, it is multifaceted, covering arrange of sectors from economic to social and cultural too hard security, with a variety of actors operating in different geographical areas".[33]

New Silk Route strategies:

New Silk Road Strategy is a socio-economic approach having geo-political objectives to neutralize