

**A Study of the Pakistan Factor in India's Foreign
Policy Towards Afghanistan, 2001-2021**

A Dissertation Submitted
To
Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I, **Jnyanendra Barman**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university. This is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Department of Political Science, School of Social Science, Sikkim University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "A Study of the Pakistan Factor in India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan, 2001-2021" submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Phil in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Mr. Jnyanendra Barman** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate ship, and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been dulyacknowledged by him.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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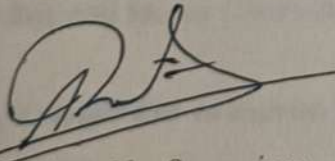
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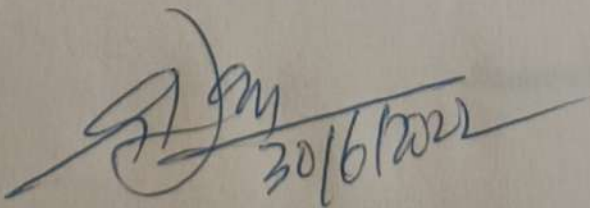
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Abstract

For both India and Pakistan, Afghanistan has been a playground where both the country's foreign policy goals differ and mostly contradicts, as mutual rivalry and suspicion have characterized relations between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign policy revolves around its competition with India, while India itself has been unable to look much beyond South Asia due to its difficult relations with Pakistan. Afghanistan plays a crucial geostrategic role for India. Afghanistan is critical for India's outreach to the Central Asian Republics and as a balance to Pakistan and China. Pakistan has had a significant role in Indo-Afghan relations being the most significant outside actor in Afghan political affairs. India, which has shared religious and historical ties with Afghanistan, Pakistan is particularly sensitive to India's long-standing alliance with Afghanistan. Time and again Indian assets and investments have been targeted by groups which are known to be proxies of Pakistan. Afghanistan offers Pakistan an alluring chance to engage in conflict with India. Pakistan is able to threaten India by using covert activities in Afghanistan, bypassing its traditional ways of doing so. Pakistan consequently deploys proxies (the Taliban, the Haqqani network, the LeT, etc.) in Afghanistan as part of its rivalry management strategy. Hurting India somewhere aids the conflict everywhere since issues within rivalries are interrelated. Pakistan has posed itself as one of the biggest hindrances on India's Afghanistan foreign policy strategy limiting India's regional aspirations.

The study provides an historical perspective on Afghanistan's political history and the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan to India and Pakistan. The study also seeks to give a detailed analysis on India's foreign policy in Afghanistan over the time, and it additionally aims to provide an analysis on the role played by Pakistan in India's Afghan foreign policy strategy from the period of 2001-2021.

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Abbreviations

ACB	Afghanistan Cricket Board
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANI	Asian News International
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APTTA	Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
BCCI	Board of Control for Cricket in India
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BSF	Border Security Force
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
HM	Hizbul Mujahideen
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICC	International Cricket Council
ICCR	Indian Council for Cultural Relations
IEC	Independent Election Commission

ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISKP	Islamic-State of Khorasan Province
ITBP	Indo-Tibetan Border Police
JeM	Jaish -e- Mohammed
JEMB	Joint Electoral Management Body
KhAD	Khadamat-e Aetlaát-e Dawlati
LeT	Lashkar -e- Taiba
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MFN	Most Favoured Status
MSR	Maritime Silk Route
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIA	National Investigative Agency
INSTC	International North- South Transport Corridor
NUG	National Unity Government
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan
PDPA	People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan
R&AW	Research and Analysis Wing
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SREB	Silk Route Economic Belt
UF	United Front
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USA	United States of America
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Chapter:1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Geographically Afghanistan connects West Asia and South Asia with Central Asia (Khan & Shirazi, 2021). However, non-existence of a strong government in Kabul and history of power tussles among various sections within Afghanistan has made the country a playground for various countries within its neighbourhood and the West too. For both India and Pakistan, Afghanistan has been a playground where both the country's foreign policy goals differ and mostly contradicts as mutual rivalry and suspicion have characterized relations between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign policy revolves around its competition with India, while India itself has been unable to look much beyond South Asia due to its difficult relations with Pakistan. Each country feels that the other is a threat to its existence since partition. (Mazumdar, 2015)

India and Afghanistan have close historical, sociocultural, cultural, and economic links. India has tried to support the country's stabilisation efforts in an effort to stop it from devolving into a haven for terrorism and conflict. With India's interest expanded in Afghanistan it has also faced a lot of harsh consequences by its adversaries as the West got more involved in Iraq. Allowing the Taliban, with support from Pakistan, to bounce back and reclaim the strategic space from which it had been ousted. "As the balance of power shifted in favor of Pakistan and its proxies, Indian interests, including personnel and projects, emerged as viable targets" (V.Pant, 2012). Afghanistan plays a crucial geostrategic role for India. Afghanistan is critical for India's outreach to the Central Asian Republics and as a balance to Pakistan and China. The country is bordered to the north by the Central Asian Republics, to the east by Pakistan, and to the deeper south through Iran and Pakistan. Trade between India and the Central Asian Republics may pass through the Indian Ocean's lanes of communication through the port of Chabahar of Iran and continuing by land along the Delaram highway that India has constructed

in Afghanistan to locations in the Central Asian states. Additionally, the route competes with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and could serve as an alternative to the BRI if given a boost and the necessary political stability along its length. (Chatterji, 2020)

Pakistan has had a significant role in Indo-Afghan relations being the most significant outside actor in Afghan political affairs. India, which has shared religious and historical ties with Afghanistan, Pakistan is particularly sensitive to India's long-standing alliance with Afghanistan. (Kaura, 2017) With groups like the Haqqani Network, LeT, Haizbul Muzahideen and JeM known to be proxies of Pakistan, and which considers India as enemy. Pakistan has used these proxies to unleashed attacks on India and Indian interests in Afghanistan. "At the heart of Islamabad's calculus is a long-standing fear that India, in league with Kabul, is using Afghanistan as a springboard to weaken Pakistan's territorial integrity, particularly by stoking unrest among its ethnic Baloch and Pashtun populations" (Constantino, 2020). A friendly, Islamist regime in Kabul was also expected to help Pakistan achieve "strategic depth" for its military in the event of war with India and utilize Afghan volunteers to fight against the Indian security forces in Kashmir. The support to the Taliban can be explained along these lines (Mazumdar, 2015). India's objectives in Afghanistan are "to promote a stable democratic order, counter Pakistani influence, and prevent Islamabad-backed militants from using Afghanistan as a platform for terrorism that could threaten Indian interests. New Delhi sees each goal as interconnected" (Constantino, 2020).

With the Taliban coming to power again by August 2021, it is not the first time Afghanistan has the world's attention on it. Following the US led invasion that toppled the previous Taliban regime in 2001, the Taliban regrouped across the border in Pakistan and gradually began taking back territory after their ouster in 2001. "By August 2021, the Taliban had seized most major cities, including the capital of Kabul.

The group's swift offensive came as the United States withdrew its remaining troops from Afghanistan as outlined in a 2020 peace agreement with the Taliban". (Maizland, 2021) Taliban "not explicitly anti-Indian in its declared goals and mistrustful of the ISI, the Taliban's dependence on Pakistan for sanctuary and alliances with terrorist organizations implacably hostile to New Delhi effectively mean the group is an asset in Islamabad's calculus". (Constantino, 2020)

India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

Rise of the "Taliban in the early 1990s led India to slowly engage with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in Afghanistan and to withdraw its diplomatic representation from Kabul following the Taliban takeover. India saw the rise of the Taliban regime as fundamentally opposed to its regional security interests. Domestically, India also linked the rise of fundamentalist Islam in Afghanistan to the rise of fundamentalist groups within Indian-administered Kashmir". (Mullen, 2017) India's support of the Afghan government "is linked to its historical support of the Northern Alliance (anti-Taliban forces comprising Tajiks and other ethnic groups operating out of the Northern parts of the country) during Taliban era. With the fall of Taliban in 2001, many Northern Alliance were positioned to assume influential roles in the Afghan government" (Mitton, 2014). This gave an opportunity to India to make favourable relations with the country.

Regarding India's stand towards Taliban during the groups rule in 1996-2001, India refrained from negotiating with the Taliban. While "India closing its embassy in Kabul in the wake of the Taliban take over in 1996 and the unforgettable experience of the Taliban's non-cooperation during the hijacking of flight IC-814 to Kandahar in 1998 shaped the Indian outlook before the 9/11 period". (Routray, 2013) The post-Taliban era 2001 to August 2021, India's security policy in Afghanistan has revolved around

three broad objectives: “security concerns, economic interests and regional aspirations”. (ibid)

With the fall of Taliban during the US led War on Terror campaign led to India’s proactive Afghanistan Policy. “This was reflected in an immediate upgrade of Indian representation in Afghanistan from a Liaison Office to a full-fledged Embassy in 2002. India actively participated in the Bonn Conference 2001 and was instrumental in the emergence of post-Taliban governing and political authority in Afghanistan”. (V.Pant, 2012) During the Bonn Conference 2001, “India threw its weight behind the US chosen Pashtun candidate, Hamid Karzai, which annoyed the Taliban. The continued attacks on Indian personnel are involved in infrastructural projects, the targeting of its embassy and consulate staff and offices were engineered by the ISI and carried out by the Taliban”. (Sarooha, 2019)

India launched a pro-active assistance program in Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and “pledged \$750 million toward reconstruction efforts, most of which was unconditional. From this amount, approximately \$270 million has already been utilized, and the projects range from humanitarian and infrastructure to health and rural development, as well as training of diplomats and bureaucrats. New Delhi has emerged as one of Afghanistan’s top six donors, having extended a \$500 million aid package in 2001 and gradually increasing it ever since”. (V.Pant, 2012) Along with the double-circuit transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul, which required an investment of over \$80 million, India also sponsored and carried out the Salma Dam Power Project in Heart Province (ibid.).

In addition to providing free medicines and healthcare services on a monthly basis to more than 30,000 Afghans living inside the nation, India provided humanitarian aid by expediting visas for Afghans seeking medical care there. Two million Afghan

schoolchildren were given vitamin-fortified biscuits daily, and over 30,000 Afghans were given free access to medicines and healthcare services each month. Along with financing the construction of the Delaram-Zaranj Highway for USD 135 million, India has provided support to the Afghan infrastructure sector by building and equipping the country's parliament complex for USD 90 million. The ring road around Afghanistan and Iran are connected by this motorway. It then connects to the Chabahar port in Iran, which is being extended with Indian economic support, and gives Afghanistan a channel for exporting to and importing to India through Iran. India also built a 400-km power transmission line that brought energy to Kabul, continuing to support the hospital's upgrade at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, and provided some equipment and medical services. (Mullen, 2017)

India has built a significant amount of goodwill in the nation due to substantial low-cost unconventional initiatives. India sent Afghanistan a massive 97 by 65-foot Afghan flag in 2014 as a token of their friendship. This gift necessitated a specially built 200-foot-tall flagpole. This flag apparently cost less than USD 7,000 and was donated by the Indian foreign minister with help from a millionaire in his country. "Political analysts noted the symbolism of India gifting Afghanistan a flag at a time when American troops were drawing down and Afghan leaders, including President Karzai, were vocally questioning Pakistan's support for a democratic and stable Afghanistan". Another example of an Indian initiative that has gained attention and praise for India is the provision of providing a "home" cricket field and hosting of matches for the Afghan national cricket team, which began in 2015. Afghan national cricket team has seen a spectacular ascent, reaching the elite ranks of the twelve country teams that are members of the International Cricket Council in June 2017. Cricket has grown in popularity in Afghanistan. (Mullen, 2017)

Strategic realities in “South Asia radically altered in the aftermath of Osama bin Laden’s death on May 2, 2011, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh lost no time in reaching out to Afghanistan with his 2-day visit to Kabul, where he announced a fresh commitment of \$500 million for Afghanistan’s development, over and above India’s existing aid assistance of around \$1.5 billion”. (V.Pant, 2012) Indian soft power initiatives also extend to supporting “Afghanistan’s initiatives in health, agriculture, education, water management, housing, sports, and tourism. New Delhi trains Afghan civil servants, soldiers, and law enforcement personnel and offers educational scholarships to one thousand Afghans annually”. (Constantino, 2020)

In December 2015, Kabul received an officially unannounced visit from India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After being elected prime minister, for the first visit to Afghanistan. In 2011 and 2005, the former prime minister Manmohan Singh travelled to Kabul. Two of India’s most significant projects in Afghanistan were disclosed during Modi's visit: the opening of the Afghan parliament building and the ceremony for the transfer of four Mi-25 assault helicopters. The delivery of helicopters signalled a change in India’s stance about the provision of offensive military hardware. India started to overcome its past reluctance to simply provide Afghanistan with non-lethal aid, such as transport vehicles and training, under Modi’s direction. In June 2016, PM Modi travelled to Herat in western Afghanistan and with Ghani, inaugurated the Afghan-India Friendship Dam, previously known as the Salma Dam. Afghanistan is anticipated to benefit from new chances made possible by the opening of Iran’s Chabahar port due to the Salma Dam. India and Afghanistan are striving to improve other routes, such as the air freight corridor opened in June 2017 and the Chabahar sea route, while Pakistan has blocked any Indian products from travelling overland via Pakistan. In October 2017,

1,30,000 tons of wheat were sent from India's western coast of Kandla to Afghanistan via Chabahar Port, opening a trade route that excluded Pakistan. (Kaura, 2017)

Since 2001, India has contributed more than \$3 billion to Afghanistan—more than any other country in the region—in the form of finance for infrastructure and transportation, humanitarian aid projects, and institutional capacity-building initiatives. This “assistance will continue to be badly needed in Afghanistan in the context of likely reductions in US and other international assistance, which today funds between 75 and 80 percent of total public expenditure”. (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021) India’s External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that India had executed more than 400 development projects in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan while speaking at a conference on Afghan peace negotiations in Doha, Qatar in September 2020. However, there is concerns about the future of these projects and any potential reversal in the bilateral relationship are raised in India due to the Taliban's return. (Bana, 2021)

Pakistan Factor in India’s Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

The strategic significance of Afghanistan to Pakistan has been one of the important factors of the country’s foreign policy. Unlike India, Pakistan shares a land border with Afghanistan and historically both Afghanistan and Pakistan have been engaged with various disagreements. Following Pakistan’s independence, Afghanistan was the only country to oppose Pakistan’s membership at the UNGA because Afghanistan does not accept the Durand Line. As Pashtuns lives either side of the border, Pakistan always felt threat by “Pashtun nationalism within its territories and to prevent the emergence of a unified cross-border identity, Pakistan’s rulers attempted to support Islamic elements both in the tribal areas, as well as inside Afghanistan. A dominant Islamic identity was expected to marginalize Pashtun nationalism, and thereby reduce the threat of the tribal areas seceding from Pakistan” (Mazumdar, 2015). “Pakistan has always

considered religion and religious forces as a strategic weapon and a tool of policy, both foreign and domestic” (Khan I. A., 2007). The history associated with the creation of Pakistan, its founding ideology, its strategic objectives vis-a-vis Kashmir and Afghanistan and its desire to appear as sympathetic to Islamic causes worldwide motivated these actions. All of these would serve to legitimize its rule in the eyes of the people of Pakistan. Under the leadership of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, Islamic sharia legal code was implemented in the country and religious influence on civilian and military institutions increased. It was under Zia-ul-Haq that Pakistan emerged as a frontline country against Communism during the 1980s. Support to insurgent groups fighting for independence for Kashmir also began during his rule (Mazumdar, 2015). The Al-Qaeda was relatively weak due to US presence in Afghanistan. As of now US have withdrawn, it may come again gaining power. “The terrorist outfits have already upped the ante against India, especially in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Through a video released in July 2019, Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-zawahiri has called on militants to inflict unrelenting blows against India in Kashmir”. (Sarooha, 2019)

Pakistan's Afghan policy began during and after the Soviet Invasion was based on support for the Taliban from their emergence in 1994, “until it had to be changed in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001. Sympathy towards the Taliban, at both official and unofficial levels, persisted even after President Pervez Musharraf announced that Pakistan would join the ‘war against terrorism’ declared by the US after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US” (Khan I. A., 2007). During the US led War on Terror campaign, “As November 2001, when Pakistan’s military executed the Kunduz Airlift, in which it evacuated thousands of Taliban leaders and their Al-Qaeda associates, along with their Pakistani advisers from armed forces and the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI)”. (Fair, 2017) Al-Qaeda by 2004 abandoned its remaining redoubts

in Afghanistan and located itself to the sanctuaries in Pakistan. Taliban had shuras (leadership councils) in a number of important Pakistani cities and were securely established in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). By 2005, the Afghan Taliban had begun their insurgency campaign against US and ISAF operations with considerable backing from Pakistan and the Waziristan-based Haqqani Network. This was true even though Pakistan was being well compensated for its claimed coalition partner role. (ibid)

An explosion at the Indian Embassy in Kabul in July 2008 resulted in 60 deaths, including a member of the Indian Foreign Service and the defence attaché. At least 17 people were killed and many more were injured in a suicide vehicle bombing that occurred outside the Indian Embassy in October 2009. Investigators concluded that the Haqqani Network, which has its base in Pakistan, was responsible for the attack, and they suggested that Pakistani intelligence have also played a role. (V.Pant, 2012) For Pakistan, “Afghanistan presents an attractive opportunity for confrontation. Activities in Afghanistan act as a means through which Pakistan is able to challenge India, circumventing its ability to do so conventionally” (Mitton, 2014). “As strategy of rivalry management, therefore Pakistan uses proxies (the Taliban, the Haqqani network, the LeT etc) in Afghanistan. Because of the interconnectedness of disputes within rivalry, hurting India anywhere helps the fight everywhere” (ibid). “Pakistan fears the Indians doing to them in the Baluch and Pashtun regions of Pakistan exactly what Pakistan has been doing to the Indians in Kashmir for the past 60 years – undercutting their sovereignty with proxy terrorists. To defend against this, Pakistan seeks a predominant role in Afghanistan for its Taliban proxies; even while fighting against the Pakistani Taliban at home. After NATO is gone, Pakistan will resume its meddling and manipulation through its Taliban proxies, now members of a government of national

reconciliation, with an eye to countering any residual Iranian and Indian influence”. (Dobbins, 2014)

Under the Taliban, “Afghanistan became a training ground for Islamabad-sponsored militants waging a guerrilla war in Indian-administered Kashmir. During the late 1990s, Pakistan’s principal intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), relocated many of its Kashmir-focused proxies into eastern Afghanistan to evade US pressure on Pakistan to curb militant infiltration”. (Constantino, 2020) As reported by ANI on July 18, 2021, “More than 10,000 Pakistanis have entered the warzone of Afghanistan to openly support the Taliban’s offensive against the Asraf Ghani led Afghanistan government. The Pakistani and the Taliban fighters there been sent in with specific instruction to target the Indian built assets and remove any signs of Indian goodwill there”. (Dubey, 2021) Amar Sinha, a former Indian diplomat who served as an ambassador to Afghanistan between 2013 and 2016 said “Taliban’s victory will give a fillip to radical ideology and groups with similar orientation in the region and around the globe. It will also embolden Pakistan to continue using terror as part of its state policy” (Roy, 2021). The “Taliban’s dependence on Pakistan for sanctuary and alliances with terrorist organizations implacably hostile to New Delhi effectively mean the group is an asset in Islamabad’s calculus” (Constantino, 2020). India will be willing to see a friendly Afghan government which is not a proxy of Pakistan. The primary concern of India is these radical Islamist groups which has previously targeted India. A hostile government in Afghanistan will threaten India’s interests in Central Asian countries including Iran (Dobbins, 2014).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan again in 2021 has changed the geo-strategic thinking of the neighbouring stakeholder countries on how to deal with it. India which has deeply relied on soft diplomacy with the previous governments has to rethink on its Afghan policy.

Time and again Indian assets and investments have been targeted by groups which are known to be proxies of Pakistan. Pakistan has posed itself as one of the biggest hindrances on India's Afghanistan foreign policy strategy limiting India's regional aspirations. Taliban's anti-Indian proxies like the Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Haizbul Muzahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) which have roots in Pakistan have been making it difficult for India to engage in any mutual relation with the present Taliban. On the other hand, Pakistan has previously supported the Taliban backing it politically, economically, and militarily. India has serious concerns about Afghanistan being used as a terror hub to inflict serious damage to it. As these conflicts are inter linked, India also has serious concerns by the groups like JeM and LeT which have time and again involved in terror attacks in India resulting in heavy casualties. According to a detailed report by Institute of Conflict Management in its South Asia Terrorism Portal there were more than 50 plus incidents from the period 2003-2018 where Indians associated with various developmental projects and for its security, were attacked and abducted in Afghanistan by the Taliban. On 3rd January 2008, the first ever suicide attack on Indians where two ITBP soldiers was killed, on 8th October 2009 another suicide attack where three ITBP soldiers were killed and on 26th February 2010 nine Indians were killed which included two Major rank army officers and five officers were injured.

A stable Afghanistan gives an opportunity to both India and Pakistan to get land access to the energy producing countries of Central Asia and Iran. However, conflict and disagreements between the two countries cannot be ignored as it has emerged as a major hindrance towards stability in the South Asian Region. Thus, the study seeks to study the changing dynamics of Indian foreign policy strategy in Afghanistan and analyse Pakistan's role in it.

1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the book, **“India’s Foreign Policy in Transition”**, by **Arijit Mazumder (2015)**, the author analyses the nature of Indian foreign policy in the post and pre cold war period. According to the author rejection of reflective anti-Americanism was probably important shifts in Indian foreign policy. The author analyses India’s avoidance of getting directly involved in the internal conflicts of South Asian countries. The book provides a detailed explanation on the historical perspective in the region right from the time of British and Russian empire to the period of 2014. The book tries to explain the importance of Afghanistan for both India and Pakistan. A political vacuum to occur after the withdrawal of NATO/ISAF troops and regional actors like India and Pakistan will compete for it.

In the book, **“Afghanistan, Pakistan and Strategic Change - Adjusting Western regional policy”**, edited by **Joachim Krause and Charles King Mallory IV (2014)**, the authors explore the possible future scenarios as the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been undergoing a major strategic change. The chapter also provides detailed analyses of how the Taliban managed to bounce back as a strong group post 2001 and highlights US and Karzai government’s failure in ensuring a stable Afghanistan. In the **chapter 2, “Not too little, but too late: ISAF’s strategic restart**

of 2010 in light of the coalition's previous mistakes", by **Robin Schroeder**. The author highlights the failure of the Bonn Agreement of 2001 as 75 percent of the total population of Afghanistan was neglected. The author discusses how FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan in Pakistan became the major recruitment bases of Taliban fighters at the beginning of the insurgency and highlights the role of Pakistan in this regard. In **chapter 3, "Prospects for Transition in Afghanistan",** by **Anthony Cordesman and Ashley Hess**, the authors discuss about the Afghan peace process and the many participants roles in it. The author lends support to the idea that Pakistan would try to take advantage of the US and ISAF exit for its own interests, seek control over at least the Pashtun districts on its borders, and utilize Afghanistan to offer strategic depth or to deploy the various organisations against India. In **chapter 4, "Launching an Afghan peace process"** by **James Dobbins**, the author argues that almost exclusively through the lens of the Indian threat, Pakistan's security establishment sees Afghanistan. The main goal of Islamabad in Afghanistan is to reduce Indian influence and the possibility of encirclement.

In the book **"Politics and Geopolitics Decoding India's Neighbourhood Challenge"** edited by **Harsh V. Pant** (2021), the author analyses how the India and Pakistan rivalry has constrained Indian foreign policy options in the region and prevented the region from attaining its full potential. In the **chapter "Pakistan Inimical Neighbour"** by **Arpana Pande**, the author discussed Pakistan's foreign and security policy is driven by a fervent desire to check hegemonic India from achieving its nefarious aims in South Asia and beyond. The author here explains how Pakistan exploits the issue of Kashmir through its hold on the various insurgent groups active in Afghanistan.

In the article **"India's Afghanistan Policy"** by **Bibhu Prasad Routray** (2013), the author discussed the main objectives of India's policy towards the war-torn country.

The author analyses India's donation, infrastructure projects and peace building efforts mainly after the 9/11 period. The author explains the NATO/IASF withdrawal from Afghanistan and consequences on India's Afghan policy.

In the article **“India in Afghanistan: Understanding Development Assistance by Emerging Donors to Conflict-Affected Countries”** by **Rani D. Mullen** (2017), the author analyses India's donation to Afghanistan since 2001. The article provides a detailed account on India's infrastructure projects and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

In the report titled **“India's Changing Afghanistan Policy: Regional and Global Implications”** by **Harsh V. Pant** (2012) discusses India's response to the strategic situations shaped by the other actors in the regions after 2001 in Afghanistan. The author here analyses the desire of India to be a major global player and highlights the various diplomatic and humanitarian investments by India. The report also analyses importance of Afghanistan to India and its rivalry with Pakistan. Here the relationship between Taliban and Pakistan and the threat concerns India has been also discussed. The developments in relationship during the Karzai government and India are also discussed in the report.

In the article **“India-Afghanistan Relations in the Modi-Ghani Era”** by **Vinay Kaura** (2017), the author explains the souring relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan after 2016 Ghani took the office of the president who was keen to have a good relation in his initial years after 2014. The article gives detailed information on the PM Modi's efforts, from his visits to Afghanistan and commitments of more aid and investments in the country.

In the article, **“Understanding Pakistan's Pro Taliban Afghan Policy”**, by **Izaz Ahmad Khan** (2007), the author explores the changed in Pakistan policy in

Afghanistan after US declared its War on Terror campaign. The article provides a justification on the gradual growth of religion in Pakistani foreign as well as domestic policy, especially in its relations with India, having direct implications for its Afghan policy and has strengthened the religious content of the Pakistani identity question. The article also provides an analysis on the Pakistan's security concerns on the issue of the Pashtun nationalism within its borders.

In the report, **“Pakistan: Shoring up Afghanistan’s Peace Process”** by **International Crisis Group**, (2021). The report highlights the present relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan. With Pakistan's role in Afghanistan and the recent hasty withdrawal of troops by the US, the report highlights the major flow of events of negotiations from the side of US, Pakistan, and Taliban.

In the article **“Geostrategic Importance of Afghanistan for Pakistan”** by **Imran Khan and Safdar Ali Shirazi** (2021), the author gives a detailed explanation on the geographical positioning of Afghanistan and geostrategic importance of Afghanistan in the South Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia. Here the authors try to analyse the importance of Afghanistan and relate that the security situation of Afghanistan deteriorates or stabilizes has a direct sway on the economic interest of Pakistan.

In the report **“The India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan”** by **Zachary Constantino** (2020), the author points India's objectives in Afghanistan as to promote a stable democratic order, counter Pakistani influence, and prevent Islamabad-backed militants from using Afghanistan as a platform for terrorism that could threaten Indian interests. Here the author analyses the use of proxy anti-Indian militant groups like the JeM, LeT, Haizbul Muzahideen by Pakistan.

In the article **“The India–Pakistan rivalry and failure in Afghanistan”** by **John Mitton** (2014), the author points out that India's support of the Afghan government is

linked to its historical support of the Northern Alliance during Taliban which gave an opportunity to make favourable relations with the country. The article highlights the constant tussle between India and Pakistan over Afghanistan and relates with the issue of Kashmir.

In the article **“Pakistan’s Deadly Grip on Afghanistan”** by **C. Christine Fair** (2017), the author basically puts light on the double game that Pakistan plays as on one hand supporting the various militant organisations targeting NATO/ISAF forces and on the other joining hands in the US War on Terror campaign to avail economic aid by the west. Here the author argues that “Pakistan inherited its security concerns about Afghanistan from the British along with the doctrine of Strategic Depth, which the British themselves formulated in the nineteenth century to manage their imperial rivalry with Russia”.

RESEARCH GAP: The existing literatures fail to give a detailed analysis on the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan for both India and Pakistan. Likewise, the literatures have also failed to comprehensively analyse Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan, which has shaped India’s Afghan foreign policy from the period 2001-2021.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The realist approach regards power politics as the “be all” and “end all” of international relation. N.J. Spykman in his book ‘Americas Strategy in World Politics’ states that “preservation and improvement of its power- position in relation to other states” should be the “primary objective” of a nation. The realist approach assumes that “rivalry, strife, and struggle for power continue among nations in some form or the other and it cannot be controlled by international law or government”. The realist approach theory explains “international politics in terms of the concept of interest defined in terms of power”. (Malhotra, 2014) Morgenthau with his principles of political realism in his book,

'Politics among Nations' argues that "interest, of different states may vary by the circumstances of time and space. The political and cultural environment determines the nature of interest of a state" (Chatterjee, 2010).

This notion of realist theory can be used to understand the US decision to withdraw troops as, "Afghanistan strategic relevance for US has been lost as the threat from the core of al- Qaeda in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan has receded" (Krause & Charles King Mallory, 2014). Another reason regarding the troops pull out decision is the 2008, "financial crisis in the US and in Europe has contributed to a large degree to the decline in readiness to invest in the future of Afghanistan and to sacrifice soldiers' lives" (ibid). The "transformation of China from an ambiguous partner to a strategic rival" with the US and growing tensions between China and US with its allies at the present times, has also contributed to the change in US's strategic interest (Tellis, 2019).

Regarding India and Pakistan, circumstances of time has changed the interest of both the country's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Pakistan being one of the first country to recognize the Taliban regime of the 1996 but later joined the US led war on terror campaign, which eventually toppled the Taliban regime of 1996. In the current time with the Taliban coming to power by August 2021, Pakistan have been acting as one of the core supporters of the regime. On the other hand, India which sees Afghanistan as an important factor of its national interest in the region has also changed its foreign policy with time. During the 1996 Taliban rule in Afghanistan India completely refrained itself from negotiating with regime. However, with the end of Taliban rule after 2001 India had maintained a cordial relationship with the Karzai and Ghani governments of Afghanistan. In the present situation with the Taliban back in power by August 2021, India has closed its embassy in Kabul with its diplomats and

citizens evacuated. The realist notion “interest, of different states may vary by the circumstances of time and space” (Chatterjee, 2010) can be applied to understand the study.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study provides an historical analysis on the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan to India and Pakistan. The study also seeks to give a detailed analysis on India’s foreign policy in Afghanistan over the time, and it additionally aims to provide an analysis on the role played by Pakistan in India’s Afghan foreign policy strategy from the period of 2001-2021.

1.6 OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To analyse the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan for India and Pakistan.
- ❖ To examine India’s Afghanistan foreign policy during the period from 2001-2021.
- ❖ To assess Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan, which has shaped India’s Afghan foreign policy.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ❖ How the changing political dynamics in Afghanistan has shaped India’s Afghan foreign policy?
- ❖ What has been Pakistan’s role in the political equation in Afghanistan and how has it shaped India’s foreign policy towards the region?

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research seeks to use analytical method in accordance with qualitative approach. Analytical method in the sense to analyse the various changing developments over the time regarding the study. The research seeks to analyse the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan for India and Pakistan, India's Afghanistan foreign policy during the period from 2001-2021 and Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, which has shaped India's Afghan foreign policy. The methodology of the present study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary data includes government reports of India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The secondary source of information includes books and literatures available in published form focusing on Afghanistan and India and Pakistan's policies in Afghanistan. In addition to this, newspaper reports, magazines and journals have been studied in detail

1.9 CHAPTERISATION

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter includes introduction, statement of the problem, literature review, theoretical framework, scope of the study, objectives, research question, research methodology and lastly chapterisation of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Political History and Geo Strategic Importance of Afghanistan

This chapter includes a detailed analysis on the political history and geo strategic importance of Afghanistan has been provided in this chapter.

Chapter 3: India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

This chapter includes a detailed analysis on Afghanistan's geo-strategic importance to India. This chapter also includes India's foreign policy and role in Afghanistan during

the period of Hamid Karzai government (2001-2014) and Ashraf Ghani government (2014-2021) has been provided in this chapter.

Chapter 4: The Pakistan Factor in India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

This chapter includes a detailed analysis on the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan to Pakistan. This chapter also analyse the role and influence of Pakistan towards India's foreign policy in Afghanistan.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter includes the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the study are included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Political History and Geo Strategic

Importance of Afghanistan

2.1 Historical Background

In the pre-Islamic period from 550 B.C. to 331 B.C the Iranian Achaemenian Dynasty, controlled the region which is presently known as Afghanistan. The Achaemenian emperor Darius III was overthrown by Alexander the Great between 330 and 327 B.C. Successors Alexander, known as the Seleucids, continued to influence the region with Greekian culture. Buddhism was introduced in Afghanistan by the Mauryan empire of India as it got control of the southern part of Afghanistan during the period of 304-180 BC. Thereafter from third century to seventh century the Kushan Empire ruled over the region. The Sassanians were overthrown by Arab Muslims at the Battle of Qadisiya in 637, initiating a 100-year process of dominating Afghan tribes and spreading Islam. The Ghaznavid Dynasty, a descendant of the Samanids, created the first significant Islamic dynasty in Afghanistan in the tenth century. By 1220, however, Genghis Khan's Mongol army had conquered all of Central Asia. Afghanistan remained scattered until Timur expanded the existing Mongol Empire in the 1380s. In the early sixteenth century, Timur's descendants-controlled Afghanistan. In 1504, the province was captured by the Mughals of northern India, who established a new empire. The Iranian Safavi Dynasty and the Mughals fought for control of Afghanistan for the following two centuries. With the death of the great Safavi ruler Nadir Shah in 1747, a native Pashtun, known as the Durrani, started a period of nominal dominance in Afghanistan which that lasted until 1978. The first Durrani king, "Ahmad Shah, is credited with founding the Afghan nation by uniting Pashtun tribes and expanding his power to Delhi and the Arabian Sea by 1760. After Ahmad Shah's death in 1772, the kingdom fragmented, but Dost Mohammad, the Pashtun Muhammadzai tribe's leader, restored order in 1826". (Congress, 2008)

The Great Game (1813-1907), which is known as a century long contest for domination over the entire Central Asia and Afghanistan between the British and the Russians. Dost Mohammad who ruled over Afghanistan during the beginning of the Great Game. The notion that shaped the British policy towards Afghanistan is the desire to keep its Indian empire safe from perceived threats by the French and Russians in the region. The “British ousted Dost Mohammad in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42) but left their Afghan garrisons in 1842”. The Russian armies approached Afghanistan’s northern border in the decades then after. (Congress, 2008) In the First Anglo-Afghan war Dost Mohammad was ousted from power and Shah Shuja was restored to the throne, later forcing Dost Mohammad to go into exile in India. However, Dost Mohammad’s son Muhammad Akbar led a fierce resistant against the British, ultimately resulting in withdrawal of British forces and craved an opportunity for Dost Mohammad to return in power. Dost Mohammad continued his rule over Afghanistan until his death in 1862. On 3rd September 1879, British Indian envoy to Afghanistan Pierre Louis Cavagnari along with his staff were assassinated by the Afghan troops which signalled the start of Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-79). The British won the war and recognized Abdur Rahman as Amir of Afghanistan and withdraw its troops from Afghanistan to India. (Clements, 2003) Abdur Rahman, a Durrani, began a 21-year rule during which British and Russian interests were balanced, various Afghan tribes were consolidated, and civil administration was reorganised into what is regarded as the modern Afghan state. The Durand Line (1893) was created at this time, “dividing Afghanistan from British colonial territory to the southeast and planting the seeds of future problems over the Pashtun tribes divide. Habibullah, Abdur Rahman’s son (reigned 1901–19), carried on his father’s administrative reforms and secured Afghanistan’s neutrality throughout World War I”. (Congress, 2008)

2.2 Independence and Soviet Occupation

The Third Anglo-Afghan War was the shortest, lasting from 4 May 1919 until 3 June 1919 when a cease-fire was reached. The demand for recognition of Afghanistan as a sovereign nation became the main reason of the conflict as the British were not prepared to accept and Amir Habibullah was assassinated in February 1919. Habibullah's son Amanullah took over the throne and continued fight for the demands forwarded by his father. In 1919 the Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed between the British and King Amanullah, British recognised King Amanullah as the ruler of independent Afghanistan as a result of the treaty. Amanullah introduced a new constitution in 1923 with a role of constitutional monarch, and he also established diplomatic relations with Europe and Asia. On the social scenario, reforms like allowing employees to wear western dress, women were also allowed to go out without veils and modern education was provided. However, these reforms angered the conservative section of the society. This led to rebellion by the Shinwari Pashtun tribe in east of Jalalabad and Khost tribes led by Habibullah Kalakani (a Tajik) laid siege of Kabul, which compelled Amanullah to flee to India in May 1929. Habibullah Kalakani became the first non-Pashtun to hold the Afghan throne, however his rule short-lived lasting for only nine months. During Kalakani's reign a complete reverse to Amanullah's policies were introduced, such as strict veiling of women, destroying museums, and cultural institutions. With the economy drastically collapsing and dissatisfaction among Pashtuns led to the end of Habibullah's rule by Nadir Shah, who returned from his exile in India and took over Kabul on 13 October 1929. Similar to Habibullah, Nadir Shah's reign too short-lived as he was assassinated. (Clements, 2003)

In 1933 Amanullah's nephew and Nadir Shah's son Mohammad Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan, commenced his 40-year reign. In the mean with the independence

of Pakistan in 1947 the conflict over the division of Pashtun tribes by the Durand line raised. On this issue the US supported its ally Pakistan, thus in response, Afghanistan shifted its foreign policy towards Soviet Union. The king's cousin, that is Mohammad Daoud (1953–63) was a reformist. He centralized the government and strengthened ties with the Soviet Union. However, Daoud was removed by Zahir Shah in 1963 because his anti-Pakistani policies had harmed Afghanistan's economy. (Congress, 2008) By the new constitution in 1964, free press and political activities were encouraged, eventually leading to a rise of multiple political parties. The Afghan communist party, known as PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) emerged, which was formed under the leadership of Babrak Karmal as one of its leaders. In the first election of September 1965, which was conducted under the new constitution of 1964, Karmal was victorious and was elected to the parliament. Likewise in the 1969 elections Hafizullah Amin another communist, along with Karmal was elected to the parliament. (Clements, 2003) In July 1973, while King Zahir was in Europe, Muhammad Daud backed by the PDPA declared himself as the president of the Republic of Afghanistan by abolishing monarchy on 17 July 1973. However, soon after a conflict between President Daud and the PDPA emerged, which ultimately led to the Saur Revolt on 27th April 1978. The revolt brought a Marxist government with total dependence on the Soviets. The coup led by PDPA and its members within the military and Soviet assistance led to the killing of Daud and his family. (Clements, 2003) Nur Muhammad Taraki became president and prime minister after the coup, with Babrak Karmal as deputy prime minister and Abdul Qadir, a Pashtun air force officer, as defence minister. Hafizullah Amin, who was also nominated second deputy prime minister, was handed the Foreign Ministry. The new administration was characterised by in-experienced, incapability, and ruthlessness. Soon after political unrest between Taraki and Amin ensued in the party

which led to factionalism within the political and military leaders that in turn led to chaos and hardship in the economy. At the same time in the rural parts of the country, opposition forces like the Mujahedeens emerged which gave tough fight to the Communist regime. Thus, on 24th December 1979 the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan with the objective to stabilize Afghanistan, hold key urban areas and assist the Afghan army to deal with the Mujahedeens. Amin was executed by the Soviet Special forces in the president's palace on 27th December 1979 and Babrak Karmal of the Parchami faction of the PDPA was placed as the leader. However, the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated with the rise of the resistance against the foreign force. In 1985, Karmal was replaced by Najibullah, but disunity within the PDPA continued as in 1990 a coup was attempted by defence minister General Shanawaz Tanai who led the Khalq faction. (Congress, 2008) By the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988 the Soviet government accepted to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan within nine months. Leaving Najibullah government and Afghanistan in chaos the Soviets departed Afghanistan on 15th February 1989, ending the ten year long direct military intervention. (Clements, 2003)

2.3 Civil War and The Birth of Taliban: Afghanistan between 1988 – 2001

From 1979 to 1989, the Mujahideen fought against the Soviets and the troops of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan with the assistance of various countries like USA, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The Mujahideen were the loosely aligned Afghan opposition groups which rebelled against the pro-Soviet regime. Splits between the Mujahideen were eminent as the group consisted with both Islamic radicals and moderates. The Mujahideen were a seven-party alliance, popularly known as the Peshawar Seven, divided into two categories. First, the radical group which consisted of the Hizb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Khales Faction led by Muhammad

Yunis Khales, Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and Jammāt-i-Islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. The second was of the moderates, which included National Islamic Front for Afghanistan under Sayyed Ahmad Gailani, Revolutionary Islamic Movement under Muhammad Nabi Muhammad, and Afghanistan National Liberation Front under Sabghatullah Mujaddidi. These groups were from diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Pashtun, Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara and many others. (Clements, 2003) With the withdrawal of the Soviets and the fall of Najibullah regime in March 1992, a peace and power sharing agreement were signed between the parties, known as the Peshawar Accord and thus established the Islamic State of Afghanistan. An interim government was appointed for the transitional period, with a general election to be followed. However, distrust and disagreements within the various factions of the Mujahideen led to bloodshed, which later culminated into a four-year civil war in Afghanistan. (Abdali, 2016)

Chaotic social and political situations ultimately gave rise to a vacuum of leadership and provided an incentive to the appearance of a new political force, which came to be known as the Taliban. Under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar, a veteran Mujahideen commander, the group emerged in the southern part of Kandahar Province in 1994. As a response to the brutality against residents, loots, and offences against local values of the areas Taliban firmly managed to gain support in the areas with chaotic social and political order. (Nojumi, 2009) As after the capture of Kandahar by the Taliban, the crime rate in Kandahar was brought down to almost zero. The Islamic sharia was imposed, criminal's hands were amputated, and women were barred from outside work, Burqa (veil) for the women was declared compulsory, girls stopped going to school, music and television were not allowed (Khan A. Q., 2022).

The members of the Taliban were earlier students in the madrasas (religious schools) that dot the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier. Later they participated in the anti-Soviet and anti-Najibullah war as members of the mujahedin groups based in Peshawar. The majority of these madrasas were part of vast networks operated by two Pakistani religious parties: Mawlana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Association of the Ulama of Islam) and the Islamist Jama'at-e-Islami (Islamic Party). The Taliban's origins may be traced back to this group of students who attended Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam schools. The Taliban seized control of various parts of Afghanistan in stages. The Taliban surged into Kandahar in November 1994, occupying critical locations, and dismantling the city's most ruthless criminal organisations of former government fighters. In December 1994 they occupied the adjoining provinces of Zabul and Uruzgan with a little resistance. Taliban fighters stormed Helmand in January 1995, and by early 1995, they had reached Hekmatyar's strongholds to the south and southwest of Kabul and defeated his forces comfortably. The province of Herat with the strategic airbase fell to the Taliban by March 1995, by then half of Afghanistan was with the Taliban's control. Taliban forces swept through Ghilzai Pashtun-populated districts with ease, capturing Jalalabad and Hekmatyar's last foothold in Sarobi. In September 1996, they launched an offensive on Kabul, entering the city on September 27 and driving their opponents back to their northern strongholds. (Sinno, 2009) The Taliban surrounded the UN compound where the deposed Najibullah was hiding. The Taliban got hold of Najibullah and his brother, eventually killing them both and hanged their bodies on the square on the Kabul–Jalalabad Road (Khan A. Q., 2022). The country's name was changed to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Mullah Omar assumed the title Commander of the Faithful. Pakistan recognised the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government on May 25, 1997. In the next two days, Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates took the same stand. The Taliban effectively controlled more than 90% of Afghanistan during that period. They only faced scattered guerrilla resistance in the Hazarajat and the Uzbek regions. Masud of the Panjsher Valley resisted in his stronghold and carried out some ingenious, but ultimately insignificant, efforts to expand his zone before being murdered on September 9, 2001, by two al-Qaeda Arabs dressed as journalists. (Sinno, 2009)

2.4 Afghanistan after 9/11 and Operation Enduring Freedom

Attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, and the Pentagon, Washington DC, on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, by al-Qaeda defined Afghanistan's future in the coming years. Two of the four planes which were hijacked by the terrorists smashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and killed some 2,750 people in New York. 184 people were killed at the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania and left a large number of people wounded, resulting in one of the deadliest attacks on America. International problems for the Taliban started with this particular attack. The American investigations revealed Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect who was residing in Afghanistan. Osama had lived in Khost, Kunar, Laghman, and Jalalabad in Afghanistan and had fought in the war against Soviets (Khan A. Q., 2022). An ultimatum was given to the Taliban leader Mullah Omar with two choices, either hand over Osama to the US or to get ready to fight. President George W. Bush in a speech to the Congress after 9/11 made clear that if the Taliban fails to handover Osama bin Laden and close the al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan it would suffer severe consequences (Lee, 2018). Mullah Omar said according to the Islamic ethos, the Taliban could not hand over Osama as he is a guest rather the Taliban demanded proof of Osama's involvement in the 9/11 attacks. (Khan A. Q., 2022) On October 7, 2001, US began, a joint and combined war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The military campaign began at night

with strikes against 31 targets, which included command and control facilities, Taliban and al-Qaeda infrastructures, early warning radars, Taliban's ground forces and airfields (Lambeth, 2005). A US-led coalition that included the United Kingdom, Germany, other NATO allies, and Middle Eastern countries launched an attack against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. This attack, dubbed a "war on terrorism" by the alliance, ended in the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the displacement of millions of people to refugee camps to escape the bombing raids and the harsh Taliban rule. On September 25, 2001, the name of the operation was changed from Operation Infinite Justice to Operation Enduring Freedom. (Combs & Slann, 2007) The mission's prime objectives were the destruction of terrorist training infrastructure and camps in Afghanistan, capture of al-Qaeda leaders, and to dismantle all terrorist activities inside Afghanistan (Clements, 2003). As a result, the US attempted to portray itself as Afghanistan's saviour, cooperating with local resistance organisations such as the Northern Alliance to defeat a common opponent. Long-time allies, such as the United Kingdom, and Islamic nations on Afghanistan's borders, particularly Pakistan, was engaged. Several of Afghanistan's neighbours were concerned about the Taliban's radicalism and took advantage of the chance to overthrow the rule. (Combs & Slann, 2007) Formally justifying its actions as USA asserted "the exercise of its inherent right of individual and collective self-defence", in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, "designed to prevent and deter further attacks on the United States" (Cottey, 2003). The Taliban's rule that extended from September 1996 to November 13, 2001, came to an end with the fall of Kabul. The city was left ravaged with its buildings shattered and jugged by shrapnel (Khan A. Q., 2022).

2.5 United States led Nation Building effort in Afghanistan

By November 2001, there were significant signs that the Taliban regime was collapsing and that a political and security framework for post-Taliban Afghanistan was urgently needed. The Northern Alliance's quick advance across northern Afghanistan and into Kabul gave the Tajik and Uzbek-dominated coalition de facto control of most of the nation, including the capital and core government institutions. (Cotter, 2003) With the Taliban thrown out of power, the immediate challenge for the international community was to rebuild Afghanistan as continued war in the country had devastated the country from all corners. The Bonn Agreement, officially known as the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, was signed on December 5, 2001, and it established the core norms and timeline for Afghanistan's future democratic structure. The Bonn Agreement's main goal was to turn Afghanistan, which was economically devastated and destroyed by war, into a functioning democratic state. (Sultana & Aquil, 2009) The delegation to Bonn drew its members from the "Iranian-backed and ethnically mixed Cyprus group, the Rome group of Pashtun exiles loyal to King Zahir Shah, the Northern Alliance, a union of primarily Tajik and Uzbek forces and the Peshawar group of Pashtun urban elite exiles in Pakistan". (International Crisis Group, 2012) The participants agreed on an interim administration, a special independent commission for the convening of the emergency Loya Jirga (grand assembly), a Supreme Court of Afghanistan as well as such other courts as might be established by the interim authority serving as the repository of Afghan sovereignty with immediate effect (Sultana & Aquil, 2009). The Bonn Agreement also contained a request to the UN Security Council to authorize the deployment of an international force to maintain security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. The topic of the Interim Authority's leadership and composition

has been a point of disagreement in the Bonn talks. The Northern Alliance pushed for Burhanuddin Rabbani, the president when it ruled Kabul in the early 1990s, to be the Interim Authority's Chairman, threatening not to recognize it if he was not. Former king Zahir Shah was to be named chair, according to the Rome Group. The US exerted pressure on both groups, eventually persuading them to accept Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, as chairman. As a result, Hamid Karzai emerged as a compromised candidate who was approved by major parties and had long-standing relations to the United States. (Cottey, 2003)

A Loya Jirga was held in Kabul, from 11th and 19th June 2002 to elect the transitional administration as directed by the Bonn Agreement and the Bush Administration. Hamid Karzai was chosen president of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan in 2002, with a ruling council made up of anti-Taliban Northern Alliance leaders. (Congress, August 2008) However, the dominant position of the Northern Alliance was reflected in the composition of the Interim Administration as the group was holding 17 out of 30 cabinet positions. On the other hand, the Peshawar and the Cyprus groups were holding one each and the Rome Group had eight cabinet positions (Cottey, 2003). Across Afghanistan, 1,550 selected delegates from 381 districts agreed to have a unitary government and president rule. Hamid Karzai was chosen as the provisional president of the interim administration. By October 2002, a permanent constitution was drafted by a 35-constitutional commission. The second constitutional loya jirga on December 13, 2003, to January 4, 2004, was attended by 502 delegates selected by the UN throughout Afghanistan approved the constitution with minor changes (Dobbins, Poole, Long, & Runkle, 2008).

After twenty years of conflict, the country's economy and infrastructure had been mostly decimated, it became an enormous challenge to the Authority and Chairman

Karzai. Both Northern Alliance and southern Pashtun leader's commitments to the Authority and the Bonn process were too shaky. Regional leaders reasserted their control over most of Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban's demise, making the Interim administration's authority ineffective beyond Kabul. The Interim government's conventional institutions, including as the police, courts, and a legal system for tax collection and public finances, as well as armed forces for security, were almost non-existent. Even before the US invasion, the country was plagued by a massive humanitarian catastrophe and ongoing war. 3.8 million Afghans dependent on UN aid for food and housing, and tens of thousands of civilians displaced before to the US invasion posed a serious barrier for Karzai's Interim Government. (Cottey, 2003)

2.6 Hamid Karzai and the Re-emergence of Taliban 2004 – 2014

Headed by the various international actors a new system of rhetoric democratisation was introduced to carry out the state-building initiatives after the 2001 military invasion. The country's first presidential elections were held on October 9, 2004. The election was regarded as a remarkable success, with an 80% turnout across the country and Karzai declared the winner. It was coordinated by the Joint Elections Management Body (JEMB) and mostly an international managed exercise. While in many Afghan eyes, who were first-hand witnesses to the fraud, did not agree with the official announcement of a free and fair election, the achievement was nevertheless impressive. Similarly, on September 18, 2005, parliamentary and provincial council (PC) elections were held, with a reasonably high turnout. The four-year Bonn Process came to an end in November 2005 with the inauguration of parliament, which was seen as the first step toward achieving the primary goal of establishing a broad-based, multi-ethnic, gender-sensitive, and entirely representative government. (Larson, 2011) Regional warlords and vast areas of Afghanistan, remained beyond the jurisdiction of the Karzai

administration. Despite receiving significant foreign assistance, the Afghan administration, which comprised representatives from a variety of factions, was unable to deal with a variety of social and economic issues. Regional warlords gained significant authority in both houses of the National Assembly during the legislative elections in September 2005, significantly limiting Karzai's capacity to unite the country. After the 2005 elections, the Bonn Agreement lapsed. The Afghanistan Compact, which replaced the agreement in January 2006, established targets for foreign aid in economic growth, security, human rights protection, and the fight against corruption and drug trafficking till 2010. (Congress, August 2008)

With Afghanistan's political transition moving forward on one side, the situation regarding security was on the verge of a failure on the other. A succession of assaults against prominent figures, including the assassination of Vice-President Haji Abdul Qadir in July 2003, have highlighted the fragility of Afghanistan's stability and the Transitional Administration. During President Karzai's visit to Kandahar on September 5, 2003, gunmen attempted to assassinate him. On the same day, a bomb strike in Kabul killed more than 20 people. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's reappearance in late 2002 and early 2003, together with his affiliation with Taliban remnants, indicated a radicalization of Pashtun insurgency to the central government. (Cottey, 2003) The Taliban along with other insurgent groups aimed to overthrow the newly elected Afghan government. The fighting transformed into a full-blown insurgency by beginning of 2006 (Jones, 2015). Attacks reached three times higher by 2007 compared to 2002. During 2005 to 2006 suicide attacks quadrupled to 139 from 27, bombings detonated through remote doubled to 1,677 from 783 and armed nearly tripled to 4,542 from 1,558. Just as the US and its allies agreed to expand ISAF's mission beyond Kabul, the focus of the force

transformed from peacekeeping to counterinsurgency. (Dobbins, Poole, Long, & Runkle, 2008)

As in the early 2003, a large number of the Taliban leadership had fled to the neighbouring Pakistani province of Baluchistan particularly to its capital Quetta, thereafter, reconstituting the groups central leadership council known as the Rahbari Shura. (International Crisis Group, 2021) The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan became the major recruitment bases for the Taliban to gather fighters. Many refugees located in Pakistan due to the continued war in Afghanistan and the madrassas became an ideal target for the Taliban to recruit radicalized unemployed and uneducated young men. The Taliban also recruited new fighters in the villages and cities like Quetta and Karachi. Propaganda spread by clerics, Taliban veterans, Islamist radio stations, and DVDs. Safe havens in Pakistan became operational headquarters for the Taliban insurgency. These also enabled the Taliban to form alliances with other insurgent groups and launch havoc at the Afghanistan government. The Hezb-i-Islami of the former Afghan Prime Minister and warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as well as Jalaluddin Haqqani, who also commanded several hundred fighters, became allies in the insurgency war against the new Afghan government and the NATO troops. (Schroeder, 2014) Other factors like civilian casualties by the military operations has also contributed to the surge of Taliban recruitment.

Beginning in 2007, the Taliban used safe havens in Pakistan to gradually re-establish and expand their rule over Afghanistan. In early 2008, Taliban controlled estimated about 10 percent of the whole of Afghanistan while Karzai's government had 30 percent of the territory of Afghanistan under its control and remaining territory were controlled by the local tribes and war loads. In 2007 and 2008 cultivation of poppies for narcotics

increased in a major scale despite US aided efforts to reduce. Narcotics trade became a major source of finances for the Taliban. (Congress, August 2008) Meanwhile, increasing widespread economic hardship prevailing in the country, the Karzai government's support and goodwill among the population weakened drastically. With the Bonn Agreement of December 2001 for re-establishing governance in the war-torn country of Afghanistan. However, nothing much has improved. According to these improvements were largely confined to the urban areas of the country. Seventy five percent of the Afghan population comes from the rural areas, which were neglected with insufficient aids and reconstruction. The new Afghan government as well as the Coalition not only failed to provide basic services but also to expand political authority and security to these regions. Instead, they relied on local warlords and militia commanders who emerged immediately after the Taliban had lost their monopoly of force. (Schroeder, 2014)

After 2001 the alienation of the Taliban by the new Karzai government can be one of the major reasons. In the parts of Southern Afghanistan, the marginalization of various tribal groups, communities, and individuals in the competition for political power by the Karzai government and its allies. These resulted in a creation of a broad recruitment base and support for the insurgents as the alienated ones joined the Taliban. In this situation of domestic political and military polarization (Taliban vs Karzai/ISAF and Karzai vs. former mujahideen), the political middle ground, and the leverage of pro-democratic forces, was further limited. In the North and Northeast of Afghanistan, the support from conservative Islamic clergy gave leverage to the Taliban. Increased foreign military pressure, starting with the increase of U.S. troops in early 2009 and the resulted escalation of the fight. On one hand it led to an ideological homogenization for the Taliban as a nationwide Islamic anti-occupation movement and led an asymmetric

backlash by the Taliban on the other. (Ruttig, 2014) The Karzai Government's incompetency in the areas of rural Afghanistan benefited the Taliban to gain control and install shadow governments. The Taliban filled the administrative vacuum by providing security from criminals, basic aid, and law and order services based on Sharia which the coalition and the government failed to deliver. According to the COIN doctrine of ISAF's, Taliban gained more control over areas through because of USA's shift in focus towards Iraq. Moreover, factors like poorly built up, untrained, ill-equipped, lack of basic education, corruption, poorly paid, and abuse of authority by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) led the uncontrolled growth of the Taliban insurgency. (Schroeder, 2014)

The United States and the Taliban officially met in November 2010, when US officials visited Tayyab Agha, a representative of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, in Munich, Germany, for covert negotiations arranged by German authorities and the Qatari royal family. Following that, in 2011, the Taliban had two rounds of exploratory negotiations in Qatar and Germany before establishing an unofficial political office in Doha in January 2012. The preliminary discussions centred on prisoner exchanges, with five Guantanamo prisoners being released in return for American soldier Bowe Bergdahl. The discussions broke down in March 2012 after the US rejected the accord. According to the US, this occurred because the Taliban refused to guarantee that Guantanamo inmates would not re-enter the fight against US troops in Afghanistan, but it also occurred during the US election campaign, when the idea of prisoner releases was met with strong opposition in the US Congress. (Sheikh & Khan, 2019). However, attacks on the peace negotiators continued as on 20th September 2011 former president Burhanuddin Rabbani was killed, who led the Afghan Government's peace initiative (Cordesman A. H., August 2021).

Nonetheless economic growth of Afghanistan increased; however, it was heavily dependent on the NATO/ISAF military spending and financial aid to the Afghan budget and other allies (Cordesman A. H., August 2021). At the Bonn II Conference in December 2011 and the Tokyo Conference in July 2012, Afghan President Hamid Karzai requested \$10 billion per year until 2025 for a programme that set ambitious security and development goals, demanded equally ambitious reforms and governance improvements, and called for the Afghan government to achieve full independence from outside assistance by 2030. By 2015, Afghanistan had emphasised that it would be fully responsible for its own security and that it would be leading development initiatives and procedures with the confidence to undertake crucial fundamental investments that would lead to economic growth and budgetary sustainability. By 2025, Afghanistan emphasised that it would no longer be completely reliant on foreign help for non-security spending, and that it would only receive support on parity with the other least developed countries. The extractive industries sector would be developed to be strong and increasing. As a result, the fundamental causes of insurgency would be eliminated via effective development and improved delivery of government services. (Cordesman & Hess, 2014)

2.7 Ashraf Ghani and The New Moderate Taliban 2014-2021

Ashraf Ghani returned to Afghanistan in 2002 soon after the collapse of the Taliban government and served as the Finance Minister in Hamid Karzai's cabinet. However, he resigned in December 2004 and became the dean of Kabul University. Ideologically liberal and independent politician Ghani ran for the 2009 presidential elections and came fourth. With unexpected less violence and high turnout, the first round of the 2014 presidential election was held on April 5, 2014. And the second round between the two candidates, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah who got the highest turnout was

conducted on 14th June 2014. According to Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) preliminary results of the second round showed win for Ghanni by more than a million votes. (Byrd, 2015) However, Abdullah's camp and his supporters immediately alleged a massive electoral fraud and warned massive protest and strikes. An alarmed international community, led by U.S. government and UN, intervened in the Afghan political scenario at the highest level (the interventions such as phone calls to the candidates from the US President Barack Obama and followed by it, two visits to Kabul by Secretary of United State John Kerry), calling on both sides to leave violence and to engage in internationally mediated negotiations to achieve a peaceful outcome. By July 2014 with the visit of Secretary Karry both the parties agreed to form a National Unity Government (NUG), with Ghani as the President and a new position of CEO for Abdullah Abdullah. (ibid.)

During Ghani's rule our regional shuras (councils) oversaw the Afghan Taliban, which were in Quetta, Peshawar, Miramshah, and Gerdi Jangal, the Quetta Shura is first in primacy, and the other three are associated networks of the Haqqani, Hezb-i-Islami (led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), and the Mansur networks. The latter three networks overlapped to varying degrees with the regional shuras. (Dobbins, Launching an Afghan peace process, 2014) The term 'moderate' refers amicability, impartiality, compromise, and balance. By these synonyms, the moderate Taliban refers to the willingness to negotiate peacefully. Taliban members who do not rule out the idea of official talks with the international community or the state government are referred to as 'moderates.' The presence of a less restrictive Taliban faction known as the 'moderate Taliban' was first found in 2001. Then, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf saw the opportunity to include less oppressive Taliban members in the formation of the Afghan coalition government. Afghanistan's

key factional groups opposed and dismissed this concept, claiming that such a body did not exist with whom to engage. Regardless, such groups existed inside the Taliban regime's ranks. Once governor of Kandahar Mullah Mohammad Hasan Rahmani and Ibrahim Baloch, Taliban's military commander were considered moderate as they advocated flexible laws regarding minorities and women's rights. (Safi, 2007) In the past few years have also shown some positive hopes in the Afghan peace settlement. A deal was signed between the Afghan government and Hizb-e-Islami in September 2016. The Hizb-e-Islami promised to withdrew violence and on the other hand government resettle Afghan refugees residing in Hizbaffiliated camps in Pakistan, free prisoners and to incorporate the former insurgents in Afghan governments security services. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar the leader of Hizb-e-Islami returned to Afghanistan after 20 years of exile. The deal came as a major breakthrough to Ghani Government's peace negotiations. However, the deal did not turn out that Kabul had expected it to have on the Taliban, which dismissed the deal as a "political marriage". (Sheikh & Khan, 2019) During the period US agreed to hold talks with the moderate Taliban in July 2018, in Qatar without including Afghan government. This should that the US had given up the idea of incorporating the Afghan government in the peace talks. To lead the Afghanistan Reconciliation process, Zalmay Khalidzad former ambassador of US to Afghanistan was appointed as the special representative. The global threat by the Islamic State was seen more seriously than the local concerns of Taliban insurgency by the Trump administration. As in an odd way, US and the Afghan Taliban have been on the same side in the fight against ISKP in Afghanistan. By the summer of 2018 during Eid, an eight-day ceasefire was declared by the Ghani Government, however the Taliban announced a three-day ceasefire. The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, promptly announced that the US and NATO would also observe temporary ceasefire.

The brief pause of violence by the group hinted the willingness and readiness to end the ongoing conflict for a settlement. In the talks, the Afghan Taliban had mostly repeated the same demands, such as withdrawal of US and other foreign troops from Afghan soil; an Afghan system which would be built on Islamic principles, recognition them as legitimate part with an official office; free movement for Taliban's by removing them from blacklist and a new constitution without foreign involvement. (ibid.)

On 28th September 2019 presidential elections was conducted, however due to various irregularities and protest of malpractices by numerous candidates the results were announced on 18th February 2020. According to the election commission President Ghani was elected for his second terms as he won 50.64 percent and Abdullah Abdullah secured 39.5 percent of the national vote. Several candidates along with Abdullah Abdullah cried foul and rejected the verdict of the election, by refusing to recognize Ghani as the President. Similarly, like in the 2014 Presidential elections the US tried to resolve the issue of the 2019 presidential election. As the US failed to resolve, both Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah had simultaneous swearing in ceremonies and declared themselves as the de-facto president of Afghanistan. As with no clear winner and disagreements among the Afghan government, it hampered the intra Afghan peace negotiations with the Taliban (Farr, 2020). As of 2019, the government of Afghanistan had its control over some 15.2 million people which were largely based in the urban areas and on the other hand the Taliban controlled over some 4.6 million Afghans primarily based on the rural areas. Control over 13.3 million people in Afghanistan were contested between the government and the people. District wise the Taliban controlled 75 districts and the Afghan government controlled 133 districts, whereas there was contested control on 189 districts. (Cordesman & Hwang, 2020)

The Taliban and US signed the Agreement for bringing peace to Afghanistan in Doha, Qatar on 29th February 2020 and to end the war in Afghanistan. The Agreement contained the same conditions largely that was agreed between the two parties on September 2019, however the 2019 agreement was scuttled by the former US President Trump. The three-page agreement called for the complete removal of US and coalition forces from Afghanistan in exchange the Taliban accepted not to allow terrorist groups use Afghan soil against US and its allies. The agreement with problematic assumption as the Afghan government in Kabul was not involve in the negotiations and nor was a signatory of the agreement. The Taliban insisted Afghan government of not being a legitimate government and a puppet of the west to hold talks. As the US agreed to release up to 5000 Taliban prisoners, despite viewing the Taliban prisoners as terrorists. As the US was holding the primary space in these negotiations, President Ghani indicated of releasing 1500 Taliban prisoners by March 15, 2020. The agreement was also an assurance by the US to start diplomatic discussions with the UN, which was aimed to removing Taliban leader's names from the UN sanctions list. (Farr, 2020)

2.8 Geostrategic importance of Afghanistan

The political history of Afghanistan reveals that the country has been used as a corridor for centuries by invaders, which has made a historically significant impact on the entire South Asian and Central Asian regions. As has also been evident the country's geostrategic location has been crucial in international politics since the days of the imperial rivalry between Britain and Russia. (Jha, 2015) Afghanistan is a territory with shared origins that stretches from Central and West Asia to the Indian subcontinent, and whose portions meet in Afghanistan to a large extent (Weinbaum, 2006). Despite being a landlocked country geographically, Afghanistan connects South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. It is located at the crossroads of the Middle Eastern, South Asian,

and Southeast Asian fault lines (Abdali, 2016). As also discussed, historically, Afghanistan provided a land bridge over which great powers crossed with ambitious imperialist and commercial goals. It was crucial in determining the destiny of Greek, Arab, Persian, Mongol, Soviet, and, most recently, American armies. The country's diversified population, which includes Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks, among others, reflects the country's deep ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, and cultural ties with the countries it borders. (Weinbaum, 2006)

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the colonial expansion of Russia and British India in various directions drew Afghanistan into their strategic thinking. The British main goal was to keep Russia out of Afghanistan at all costs, even if it meant military participation. In its modified strategic version, Afghanistan evolved as a buffer between Russia and British India, preventing direct territorial contact between the two. Both empires desired to prevent direct interaction between their territories and, over time, came to an agreement on Afghanistan's buffer position. (Abdali, 2016) Afghanistan lost its prominence in the eyes of the western countries when the British left the subcontinent. This was due to the fact that the west chose Pakistan as its key ally in the area in order to withstand Soviet expansion. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the situation altered, and Afghanistan was thrust back into the spotlight. This scenario drew the attention of regional powers, resulting in a significant shift in the region's geopolitical balance. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan's geopolitical importance became even more. (Zaman, 2015) Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the formation of new countries in Central Asia emphasized the vast hydrocarbon natural resources available. Regardless of its location, Afghanistan's importance in the context of geo-economics has made it a crucial energy corridor for central Asian energy resources for production and market access for the

area's massive oil and natural gas assets, which are being appraised but have yet to reach market. (Khan & Shirazi, 2021) Those emerging Central Asian governments were anxiously seeking for alternative channels or methods of communication to export their oil and gas resources in order to break their dependency on Russia. Afghanistan gained an important position in this scenario, providing a land passage from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea. Despite its landlocked status, Afghanistan plays an important role in the Central Asian Republics' economic and energy corridors. (Zaman, 2015)

Afghanistan occupies a unique geographical location. The country is strategically positioned in the region's economic, cultural, and geopolitical hubs. Pakistan and India are to the east, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are to the west, Tajikistan and China are to the north, while Iran and the rest of West Asia are to the south. The length of Afghanistan's international borders with the "Republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is 2087 km, with the Islamic Republic of Iran 936 km, with Pakistan 2430 km and with China 76 km. The longest distance between east and west Afghanistan from the Khyber Strait on the Pakistani border to the Zulfiqar Strait on the Iranian border is about 1,240 km and from the north to the south is about 855 km. It is noteworthy that the joint border between Iran and Afghanistan starts from the mouth of Zulfiqar in north-eastern Iran and continues to Malek Siah Mountain in the southeast" (Khan & Shirazi, 2021). Afghanistan connects South Asia and West Asia with Central Asia, which is significant since South Asian countries are overpopulated and energy-hungry, whereas Central Asia has abundant energy resources. Central Asia and South Asia's connectivity can offer up multiple opportunities for each other but owing to a lack of secure transit routes and appropriate communication channels, they have been less able to develop positive and constructive commerce and cultural contacts with each other. Afghanistan, on the other hand, due to its unique geographical location, may

benefit from a significant economic potential in the sector of commerce and transit, which it can employ for the country's growth, building, and prosperity. (Khan & Shirazi, 2021)

In a positive perspective the Afghanistan and Pakistan region provides a strategic bridge between Eurasia and South Asia, connecting both the regions with an emerging network of energy and trade corridors. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), the International North-South Transport Corridor, Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India and Iran–Pakistan–India and Central Asia–South Asia power grids, and the International North-South Transport Corridor all aimed at promoting peace and economic development in the region. However, the inability to curb terrorism in the region, Afghanistan has been particularly vulnerable to the wide spread of terrorism. As the United States Department of Defence stated in a briefing in December 2016 that 20 out of 98 US designated terrorist groups operates in the Pakistan-Afghanistan. With the strategy of a protected warfare these groups use a variety of methods and fund sources, including cyberterrorism, suicide attacks, charity donations, narcoterrorism, drugs, and illegal arms trade which possess serious threats to the region (Sharma, 2017).

This chapter has discussed the political history of Afghanistan in various phases, from the pre-Islamic period to the period known as the Great Game for competing dominance over Afghanistan. The chapter further illustrated the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the rise of the Mujahideen's and the birth of the Taliban regime. Explaining on how the political scenario got completely changed in Afghanistan with the start of US led War on Terror campaign, the chapter has further analysed the presidency of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. Lastly the chapter focused on the changing geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan in regional and global perspective. India and Afghanistan share a long

historical and cultural relationship. India's aim of being a prominent regional actor with global ambitions draws the Afghanistan's importance to its foreign policy. India's security in domestic and foreign realm are interconnected with a friendly Afghanistan. India's ambition to outreach towards Central Asia and West Asia deeply relies with its relationship with Afghanistan. The next chapter explores the significance of Afghanistan to India and India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

Chapter 3: India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

3.1 Introduction

Despite not sharing a land border, geo-strategically Afghanistan for India is extremely critical in terms of counter balancing Pakistan and China and its outreach towards Central Asian Republics (CARs) and West Asian countries like Iran. Afghanistan's importance from India's perspective can be seen in areas concerning security, trade, strengthening regional and global foothold and its energy ambitions. However, security has thrived to be the prime driving factor of Afghanistan's importance to India as Afghanistan has been a crucial factor for regional and domestic stability.

With continued rivalry and even war, countering Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan has been one of India's prime goals. Preventing anti India terrorism, sponsored by Pakistan which has inflicted serious attacks through Afghanistan on India and Indian interest, makes Afghanistan important to India (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). For example, one of the deadliest suicide attacks on the Indian security forces by the Jaish-e-Mohammad happened to be on 14th February 2019 in Pulwama which claimed 40 casualties. The suicide attack on Indian security forces nearly brought both India and Pakistan in a brink of a larger conflict. With India retaliating the Pulwama attack by bombarding alleged terror camps in Balakot inside Pakistan on 26th February 2019. Followed by Pakistan's counter retaliation on 27th February inside Indian part of Kashmir where one MiG-21 Bison of the Indian Air Force was downed, and its pilot was taken prisoner by Pakistan military when they later returned to India on 1st March 2019 (Singh S. , 2020). According to the National Investigative Agency (NIA) in its report, there exists a close link between the anti-Indian terror groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban in its Pulwama attack investigation. In the chargesheet by the agency the main accused of the Pulwama attacks were trained at the

Sangin camp of Helmand province in Afghanistan. The evidence of which was provided by way of pictures and videos (Arunima, 2020).

Sunni Islamist militant organisations like the Haqqani Network which is primarily based in North Waziristan in Pakistan engages in the cross-border attacks into eastern Afghanistan. The group which is known to be closely aligned with the al-Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) have been time and again attacked Indians and Indian interests in Afghanistan. (Lurie, 2020) On 7th July 2008 the Indian Embassy was attacked by a bomb blast with 58 deaths and 141 injuries. Among the deaths were Indian foreign service officer V. Venkateswara Rao, a defence attaché Brig. Ravi Dutt Mehta and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel Roop Singh and H.A.S Pathania (Paliwal, 2017). On 8th October 2009 the Indian Embassy again came under attack by a suicide car blast leaving 17 dead including three ITBP personnel's and 93 were injured. Investigators concluded stating the role of Pakistani Intelligence agency the ISI and the attack was perpetrated by the Haqqani Network. The involvement of the Pakistani intelligence was put up by the Afghan envoy to the United States on the attack. (V.Pant, 2012) A stable relation with Afghanistan gives India an upper hand to counter Pakistan's influence and Pakistan's idea of strategic depth in Afghanistan against India. Furthermore, an active Pakistan-Afghanistan border prevents Pakistan from deploying additional military assets along its borders with India (Chatterji, 2020). The same concern lies with India after the US troops withdrawal and the Taliban back in power in August 2021. As Pakistan pro-Taliban enables it to transform Afghanistan as a safe heaven and training base for the anti-Indian extremist. India's other concern is China which is a dominant player in the region and shares even borders with Afghanistan. Thus, China's nexus with Pakistan, and rivalry with India, brings Afghanistan in conflict of interest between India and China. China is in a much

better position in terms of economic capacity and political will and has prominent dominance in the region that adds up to India's concerns. (Mazumdar, 2015) China is a rising power with global ambitions and as its influence over South Asia grows, India's concern on managing China and to compete for prominence becomes important. The China led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since its inception in 2013 has been one of the biggest initiatives funding infrastructural development and promoting connectivity. India questioned China's transparency by not attending the Belt and Road Forum in May 2017 and is adamantly opposed to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a BRI initiative that threatens India's sovereignty along the disputed boundaries (Baruah, 2018). China hosted the Taliban in July 2021 deepening its diplomatic ties which took over Afghanistan by August 2021. (Johnson, 2021) China with good relations with the present Taliban government signifies a threat to the Indian interest in Afghanistan, CARs, and Iran. A friendly government in Afghanistan is essential to safeguard these interests for India.

In Afghanistan India has invested more than 3 billion dollars and both the countries bilateral trade amounted around to 1.5 billion US dollars before the Taliban take over. The preferential trade agreement in March 2003 opened the vast Indian markets for Afghan products. As a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and by the regulations of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Afghanistan was eligible for duty free access in the large Indian market. Afghanistan in return serves as a major market for India in terms of pharmaceutical products, tea, cement, and other construction materials. Afghanistan due to its significant regional connectivity and strategic location holds a central position in India's New Silk Road strategy designed to connect trade and energy in the CARs and South Asia (Choudhury, 2021).

Earlier too, from 3rd century BC to 15th century BC through Silk Route India had a historical and civilisational linkages with the region of Central Asia. The route served a connection in terms of goods transportation and exchange of ideas, philosophy, and religion. However today, religious fundamentalism and extremism, along with drug trafficking poses a serious threat to this region. Central Asia is rich in minerals and hydroelectric resources, with Kazakhstan being the largest producer of Uranium, Turkmenistan having the fourth largest reserves of natural gas, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan holding a huge potential in hydroelectricity makes the CARs important in terms of resources in the region (Chauhan, 2022). The first-ever India-Central Asia summit held on 27th January 2022, hosted by India, agreed upon creating a joint working group on Afghanistan committing a common approach in dealing with the Taliban regime. With a joint statement issued in the summit noted a broad regional consensus relating issues like combating terrorism, drug trafficking, women rights, and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. India with its rising energy requirements needs to collaborate with the CAR states, however, before that a stable Afghanistan is requisite (Bana, 2021). India, the world's second-fastest-growing energy market, is expected to need to import 80 percent of its fuel by 2030 (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). With the uncertainty with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, question arises on the successful operation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. The TAPI project is an 1,814 km long trans-country gas pipeline from Turkmenistan (via Afghanistan and Pakistan) to India. The pipeline will be extremely beneficial for India to meet its growing requirements as India is estimated to receive 33 billion cubic meters of gas (Basu, 2022).

The construction of the Zaranj-Delaram highway (Route 606 and A71) by India at a cost of USD 135 million in 2010, connects Afghanistan's ring road with the Iranian

border and the Iranian Chabahar port. The road provides an alternative to India and Afghanistan without relying on Pakistan to export and import from Afghanistan (Mullen, 2017). India used the Chabahar port for the first time in March 2012 to transport wheat of 100,000 metric tons as humanitarian aid and by September 2013 India received 20 containers of dry fruits from Afghanistan (Bhatnagar & John, 2013). From Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Kandahar to Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan region, the Zaranj-Delaram route links 16 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. By connecting the Indian subcontinent to Central Asia, the highway establishes a North-South transportation route (Kaura, 2017). An unstable and unfriendly government in Afghanistan threatens the potential to use Delaram-Zaranj highway and Chabahar port in India's interest.

As per a report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2020 land for poppy cultivation has increased by 37 percent in Afghanistan which contributes to about 75-80 percent of the world's heroin supply. Narcotics trade and terror funding link to Afghanistan and Pakistan has been one of the major concerns for India. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on 12 September 2021, seized 2,988.21 kg of heroin in the Mundra port of Gujrat from two containers from Afghanistan. 40 kg of heroin was seized by the Border Security Forces (BSF) in two separate incidents on October 7, 2021, and the Punjab Police has reports over 150 sightings of drones were made which are suspected of carrying arms, ammunitions, and narcotics in the period during 2019 to 2021. The probe on the seizure of 532 kg of narcotics in June 2019 by NIA in Attari, Punjab revealed the involvement of rackets based on Afghanistan and Pakistan and its link with the Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist group in Kashmir. (Tripathi, 2022) The issue of terror funding through narcotics trade with links to Pakistan and Afghanistan poses serious security challenge to India domestically. India's concern lies

with the funding from drug trade is used to support militants and to fuel unrest in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (Jha, 2015).

3.2 Historical Perspective of India Afghanistan Relation

India-Afghanistan relations can be traced back to the Indus valley times and are truly civilisational. The depth of both India and Afghanistan's geographical and historical proximity can be understood by the Grand Trunk Road which dates back to the Mauryan empire. Considered to be one of the Asia's longest and oldest roads that connected Kabul with Chittagong through Delhi and Lahore. The road had strategic importance due to its both commercial and military value and also connected cultures of this region. Buddhism spread in some areas of Afghanistan during the rule of emperor Ashoka. Following Ashoka, Afghanistan saw decades of instability, with the development of Greco-Bactrians, Indo Greek kingdoms (Kushan empire), and Indo-Scythians. India was conquered by many invaders having origins in today's Afghanistan, for example the Mughal empire that ruled India from 1528 to 1858 entered India from Afghanistan. Starting with Babur whose grave is in Kabul the Mughal emperor had great rulers as Akbar, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb who still play an influential role in the contemporary historical imagination of India (Paliwal, 2017).

Ahmed Shah Durrani an Abdali Pashtun who later established the Durrani Empire in the period of 1747, actually laid the foundation of gives the origin of the modern-day Afghanistan. Being a former general in the Persian Army he led the military expedition in 1761 against the Maratha Empire of India. The English East India Company became the most dominant entity in the entire sub-continent with the defeat of the Marathas. Which eventually paved way for the emergence of British rule in the South Asian region. During the nineteenth century the British desired control over Afghanistan's affairs to carve out influence over the area. The immediate threat to the British India

came from the rivalry with Russian expansionism in the nineteenth century, as both tried to gain influence over Afghanistan and Central Asia, which later came to known as the Great Game. (Mazumdar, 2015) In order to defend the British Indian empire's territorial bounds and exert control over its territories, British political, diplomatic, and military effort was directed towards Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2017). An agreement in 1907 between Russia and Britain brought an end to the Great Game (Mazumdar, 2015).

Both India and Afghanistan had close ties at this period, notably during the independence struggle in India led by Mahatma Gandhi and comparable nationalist figures in the Pashtun territories led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as Frontier Gandhi (Mullen, 2017). However, with the bloodiest partition of India in 1947 separating both India and Afghanistan geographically, The Indian strategist's imaginations were occupied by Pakistan rather than Afghanistan. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship on 4th January 1950 was signed between India and Afghanistan. The treaty aimed to strengthen trade and cultural links and an initiation of diplomatic exchange mutually (Paliwal, 2017). Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan emerged as Afghanistan laid claim over the Pashtun dominated areas on the other side of the Durand Line in Pakistan. Afghanistan refused Pakistan's claims over Jammu and Kashmir and became the only country to oppose Pakistan's membership to the United Nations. These situations have served to strengthen relationship between India and Afghanistan (Mazumdar, 2015). The Bandung Conference, also known as the Asian-African Conference for International Order, was held in 1955 and provided an international framework for India and Afghanistan to establish their bilateral relations. The non-alignment platform was utilised by both India and Afghanistan to criticise Cold War binary. It was also meant to criticise Pakistan's decision to side with the US when the two countries signed the Mutual Defense Treaty in May 1954. Pakistan's

membership in the Southeast Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954 and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1955 pulled India and Afghanistan closer together owing to a common objective in countering Pakistan (Paliwal, 2017).

During India-Pakistan war of 1965 Afghanistan officially objected India's targeting of Peshawar and Kohat in Pakistan, because Afghanistan considered these areas parts of Pashtunistan not Pakistan. Pakistan's military gamble had failed to yield strategic gains by October 1965. Afghanistan joined India's campaign for Pashtuns and Baloch people's right to self-determination in a diplomatic move. Two days after signing the Tashkent Declaration, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri was supposed to visit Afghanistan, but his trip was cancelled owing to his untimely death. The then India's Vice President Zakir Hussain visited Afghanistan on July 1966 to set a stage for mutually favourable economic collaboration between the two countries. A series of developmental projects were introduced by the Indian government during the 1970s. Projects like the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul, Chardeghorband Microhydel Scheme and various technical assistance in mining, power, and irrigation were initiated. In Kabul, Kandahar and Bamiyan agricultural research centres were established. Both India and Afghanistan departed from their declared objective of non-alignment by taking a strong lean towards the Soviet Union in the 1970's. For Afghanistan India became an important nation to have good relations, in order to pressure Pakistan over the Pashtun issue. The signing of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation drew India closer to the Soviet Union. Similarly, Afghanistan too became more dependent for military and economic support from the Soviets as the two factions of the PDPA was supported by the Soviets (Paliwal, 2017). India's developmental cooperation to Afghanistan continued as training of Afghan bureaucrats. By the 1970s,

Afghanistan had become India's most important development partner under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. (Mullen, 2017)

The decade of 1970's saw a major political upheaval within Afghanistan. Zahir Shah was ousted in a bloodless coup by former Prime Minister Mohammad Daud Khan mostly believed in socialist principle and saw monarchy as an unsuitable system. Daud Khan's strong stand against Pakistan on the Pashtunistan issue was viewed as a welcome sign by the Indian leadership. However, with the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, USA uplifted arms embargo on Pakistan. The Daud regime criticise the move and which created considerable concerns to Afghanistan. Daud request for India's active military support against Pakistan's atrocities against Baluchistan and the Pashtun dominated territories was rejected by India (Paliwal, 2017). During the Cold War there was continued attempts by Pakistan to influence the Afghan affairs as Pakistan aimed to create a friendly state towards its western border. Difference over Durand Line with Afghanistan, its conflict with India and being an ally of the western bloc determined India's action towards Pakistan during the cold war. (Mazumdar, 2015).

The Saur Revolution in the 1978 eventually led to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Daud's assassination by the Khalq faction, which led Nur Mohammad Taraki becoming the PM of Afghanistan supported by the Soviet's. India's reliance on the Soviet Union and with rising Islamic radicalism in Pakistan and Afghanistan influenced India's decision to recognise the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan or the PDPA regime. With Bhutto's assassination in 1977 and General Zia-ul-Haq coming to power in Pakistan, who had a strong Islamist inclination influenced the Janata Party's Government's decision to accept the new regime in Afghanistan. The External Affairs Minister (EAM) Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Afghanistan in September 1978 and reiterated continuity of friendly relations with Afghanistan. (Paliwal, 2017) Factional

struggles between the PDPA led to the the of Taraki's short rule on 14th September 1979 due to the ongoing tussle between the deputy PM Hafizullah Amin, who had a dispute with Taraki and his group. The failure to maintain order in Afghanistan eventually led to direct Soviet interference in the country in December 1979 (Mazumdar, 2015). In an interregnum of Indian politics as the polls were scheduled by early 1980, then PM of India Charan Singh rejected Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and asked to remove its troops. However, with the polls over and results declared Indira Gandhi assumed the PM office on 20 January 1980 and undid Charan Singh's stance. Pakistan's refusal to deny support to the Mujahideen's who were actively fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan paved Indira Gandhi's dependence on her pro-Soviet support in Afghanistan. However, domestically Indira's Afghanistan policy came under criticism as India lost its stature of being a NAM leader. With the Cold War politics India's Afghanistan policy was greatly dominated by the relationship with the Soviet Union. India's pro Soviet tilt gave India opportunity to engage with Karmal and later Najibullah, however it also alienated it in influencing the other factions like the Mujahideen. As Indian Media reports during February 1980 that anti-India sentiments swelled up among the Afghan people for the first time (Paliwal, 2017). These position of India in support of the Soviet supported governments in Afghanistan alienated the Pashtuns from India and led to the erosion of India's standing among Afghans (Mazumdar, 2015).

After Indira Gandhi's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India, who had a strong support to Najibullah against all odds during the late 1980's. Close relations with Najibullah gave India practical measures to undercut the influence of Pakistan. Both Najibullah and Rajiv's anti-Pakistan partisanship and the Soviet Union's support in the time of its impending withdrawal brought them together as a necessity

rather than choice. As India intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) received active support from Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati (KhAD) or State Information Services agency of Afghanistan on issues related to the Khalistan and Kashmir militants trained and armed by the ISI in Pakistan. However, striking balance between the various political fractions in Afghanistan became an important theme in India's Afghan policy debates. With Soviet's decision to withdraw and the Mujahideen gaining more control, instead of engaging with the Mujahideen India decided to continue its relationship with Afghanistan under Najibullah. (Paliwal, 2017)

The Islamic Unity of the Afghan Mujahideen based in Peshawar was recognised by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as Afghanistan's government in exile in February 1989. By 15th February 1989, the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan and by April 1992 the Mujahideen ousted Najibullah. The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 shifted India's position in Afghanistan, as Pakistan emerged as an important external actor in Afghanistan by 1990s and supplemented its relevance on India's Afghan policy comparatively. Pakistan affected Afghan politics after the Soviets left, as seen by the Peshawar Accord on April 24, 1992, which placed the Mujahideen administration in Afghanistan. In 1991, along with the introduction of New Economic Policy, Narasimha Rao also initiated several policy changes on its outlook towards Afghanistan with the willingness to move beyond the boundaries of anti-Pakistan, despite very strained relation with Pakistan. Known as the Rao Doctrine, India initiated to engage with all existing Mujahideen groups and deal with whosoever in power in Afghanistan and focused on P-2-P (people-to-people) relations in Afghanistan. India recognised the Mujahideen government on 30th April 1992 two weeks later Najibullah's fall. The Indian government announced medical supplies and humanitarian reliefs, which were air lifted to Kabul in July 1992 and 44,000 tonnes was sent off on a grant basis to Afghanistan.

India's change in policy was also driven by the fact that the Soviet Union disintegration had led to the creation of the five new resource rich countries in the Central Asia. India's view on Afghanistan was seen on a Central Asian context. Apart from the economic interest India also had the desire to gain support on the Kashmir issue at the UN from these new Central Asian countries (Paliwal, 2017).

Narasimha Rao stepped down as PM of India on 16th May 1996 and by 25th September Kabul was under Taliban's control. The two unrelated events changed the courses of India's Afghanistan Policy. India's position regarding the Taliban was total opposition to the Taliban's social and political conduct. India closed its embassy and had no diplomatic foothold in Afghanistan during the Taliban's rule 1996-2001. India also supported the UNSC Resolution 1076 that criticised Taliban's violation of human rights and did not recognise the Taliban government as the legitimate one. However, India continued diplomatic relations with the Rabbani government as it was recognised internationally and also hosted Massoud Khalili, political aide of Rabbani as ambassador to India. India also provided covert military, medical and financial support to the United Front (UF) or the Northern Alliance along with Iran, Russia, and the CAR's. Through India's perspective supporting the UF was an option to make balance between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2017). The rise of Taliban was seen by India as a threat to its regional security interests which led India to start engaging with the anti-Taliban groups such as the Northern Alliance. Domestically, the rise of Taliban was linked to the rise of fundamentalist group within Kashmir. India continued its humanitarian aid and medical help to the Northern Alliance through its Farkhor air base in Tajikistan (Mullen, 2017).

The 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines aircraft IC-814 from Kathmandu to Delhi by the Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Ansar (later known as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen) confirmed

India's concerns. The jet was flown to Kandahar, a Taliban stronghold. Due to a lack of official connections with the Taliban, the Indian government was compelled to engage in discussions with them. (Choudhury A. , 2019) The eight-day deal to release the hostages convinced India of Pakistani-Taliban nexus and also showed India its strategic failure for not developing ties with the other Afghan groups (Paliwal, 2017). The hijacking incident deepened India's policy perception on the Pakistan Taliban relations. The 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight to Afghanistan led to an increased recognition of the strategic importance of Afghanistan to India and resulted in further logistical, security, and humanitarian development assistance to Northern Alliance in Afghanistan" (Mullen, 2017). However, the tide totally shifted following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on USA which paved India's way back into Afghanistan.

3.3 India's Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan 2001-2014

After the US led War on Terror campaign that ousted the Taliban regime, actually led to induction of an Interim Authority. Here on India's engagement in Afghanistan became multidimensional (V.Pant, 2012). Following the change of events in Afghanistan, India's representation was immediately upgraded from a Liaison Office to an Indian Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Satinder Lambah, who visited Kabul in November 2001. Soon after India reopened its Embassy in Afghanistan in December 2001 with the visit of then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh who visited Afghanistan on 22nd December for the inauguration of the interim authority under Hamid Karzai's chairmanship (Ashraf, 2007). India has pursued a policy of engagement with Afghanistan through wide-ranging and extensive humanitarian, financial and project assistance. India has continued participation with various international efforts that are aimed at economic rebuilding and political reconciliation in Afghanistan (V.Pant, 2012). Hamid Karzai as the Chairman of Afghanistan's Interim

Administration accompanied by 13 ministers visited India on 26th February 2002. During the visit Indian Prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced a grant of US \$ 10million to the Afghan government for immediate use.

Unlike Pakistan, India and Afghanistan do not have a continuous and contentious border that hinders their relations. India's continued support to the Northern Alliance during the period of 1996-2001 against the Taliban helped India to strengthen its relationship with Afghanistan in the post-Taliban period (2001-2021). As many members of the Northern Alliance held key and influential position in the interim government. India backed interim Afghan President Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun who was educated in India and attempted to strengthen connections with Pashtuns. India did not choose to send troops to the international security efforts in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime. Domestic factors which included the compulsions of coalition politics along with internal insurgencies and US deep reluctance to antagonize Pakistan, restricted India from participating in Afghanistan militarily. India instead focused more on economic assistance to engage in Afghanistan (Mazumdar, 2015). India's assistance has mainly focused on building physical infrastructure, improving security, building human capital, helping the agriculture and other important sectors of Afghanistan's economy (V.Pant, 2012).

India's reengagement with Afghanistan after the Taliban was mainly motivated by two factors. Firstly, due to the regional and domestic security reason, India wanted a democratically elected and secular Afghan government. India's goal was to prevent the rise on the re-emergence of a fundamentalist Islamic regime which provides a threat to India's domestic and regional goals as it attributed the rise of insecurity during the Taliban regime of 1996-2001. India's active engagement with the Karzai government was seen as a key to safeguard India's security in the region and economic aspirations.

Secondly, in safeguarding India's ambition to establish itself as an important regional power with global ambitions. As Afghanistan serves as a gateway for India to reach out to the CARs and West Asian nation like Iran. Increased engagement in Afghanistan was also seen as a key to continue engagement with other neighbours, ensure economic growth and regional harmony. (Mullen, 2017)

With the quick re-opening of its Embassy in Kabul, India also established its consulates in Kandahar, Mazari-Sharif, Herat, and Jalalabad. These consulates provided enormous opportunity for India to connect with the ordinary Afghans, promote democracy and also to monitor its economic assistance to Afghanistan. These consulates also helped India in understanding the intra Pashtun tribal and political dynamics. However, these consulates are alleged by Pakistan of collecting information in its tribal areas and also supporting armed separatist insurgency in the Pakistan's province of Baluchistan by the Indian intelligence agency R&AW (Mazumdar, 2015).

Expanding bilateral trade between the two countries was seen as a vital requisite for economic development. India and Afghanistan signed a Preferential Trade Agreement in March 2003 during the visit of Hamid Karzai as President of Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan. President Karzai was conferred with an honorary doctorate by the Himachal Pradesh University during this visit. The agreement provided substantial duty concessions on certain category of Afghan dry fruits ranging from 50% to 100% imported to India. Indian products such as cement, tea, sugar, and pharmaceuticals were allowed reciprocal concessions by Afghanistan. The trade agreement was aimed at integration of the domestic Afghan market to the Indian market and vice versa (Mazumdar, 2015).

With the collapse of the Taliban, India began a massive aid programme in Afghanistan by pledging a huge amount for the reconstruction efforts, and most of it was

unconditional. India's assistance to Afghanistan included humanitarian aid, infrastructure for health and rural development and as well as training of bureaucrats and diplomats. India emerged to be one of the six top donors by extending a \$500 million aid package and had increased it gradually (V.Pant, 2012). India's aid to Afghanistan also covered small development projects, big infrastructural projects, education, and capacity building (Paliwal, 2017). Big infrastructural projects such as the 220 KM long Zaranj-Delaram road which enabled Afghanistan to have access to sea via Iran's Chabahar port. The road was done in 2008 by India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) which has also helped Indian humanitarian assistance to reach Afghanistan through Iran (V.Pant, 2012). The tripartite trade agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran signed in 2003 made the linkage for India to supply aid and assistance to Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2017). India's capacity building initiatives in Afghanistan included providing trainings to various professions, including lawyers, judges, paramedics, doctors, women entrepreneurs, teachers, including public officials and cartographers (V.Pant, 2012). Various other big infrastructural project financed by India includes the 42-megawatt Salma dam on the Hari-Rud River located in Herat, the parliament building in Kabul and with collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) the Government of India installed a power transmission line between Kabul and Pul-e-Kumari. These developmental projects created a good will for India among the common Afghans (Paliwal, 2017).

Hamid Karzai visited India on 23rd February 2005, during the visit, an MoU on cooperation in the field of Civil Aviation and MoU on Media and Information was signed. By December 2005, nine private sector and seven public sector Indian companies were involved in TV transmission, air ticket sales, power transmission, and construction of common facility, dam construction, telecom banking, and offering cold

storage facilities in Afghanistan employing over 798 employees. Afghan women received vocational training from the Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA), which was financed by India's Ministry of Women's Affairs. Increased in media cooperation between the two countries have been seen as India helped to develop various channels, such as, the Jalalabad TV, Kabul TV, and big media conglomerates as the Tolo TV. Flights between Delhi to Kabul were operationalised by India Airlines by 31 March 2005 while Iran agreed to operate flights from Tehran and Delhi via Kabul. India gifted three civilian airlines to Afghanistan and a total of 274 busses to Afghanistan. (ibid.)

Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Afghanistan in August 2005 after 29 years of Indira Gandhi's visit. Despite security concerns Singh's visit demonstrated commitments by India aiming at reaffirming to reinvigorate past ties and to develop new partnerships (V.Pant, 2012). During this visit India and Afghanistan an Agreement for Co-operation and two Memoranda of Understandings (MoU) was signed. The Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Healthcare and Medicinal Sciences, MoU on Co-operation in the Field of Agricultural Research and Education, and MoU on Small Developmental Projects were signed. India has also declared that it will adopt 100 villages to encourage integrated rural development through the use of rainwater collection technology and solar energy. On President Karzai's visit to India in April 2006. India and Afghanistan signed a total of three MoU's: on Cooperation in the Field of Education, on Co-operation in the Field of Rural Development, and on Co-operation in the Field of Standardization. (Ashraf, 2007)

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation created in 1964 has played a significant role in providing low-cost developmental assistance to Afghanistan. As the program includes deputation of experts from India to abroad, donation of equipment,

study tours, training to Afghan officials, and also providing low-cost education and scholarships to Afghan students. India has provided Afghans with easy to obtain visas to access health care services and education. Afghan students have received scholarships or fellowships to study in Indian Colleges and University from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). (Mullen, 2017)

In Afghanistan in the 1990s, India was viewed as backing non-Pashtun interest groups over Pashtun people. However, post 2002 the opposite perception, that is India began the pro-Pashtun commitments. The small developmental projects by India were mainly focused on the Pashtun dominated east and south of Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2017).

India played an important role in Afghanistan's inclusion in SAARC as Afghanistan officially joined the group in its 14th summit in April 2007. Membership of SAARC provided Afghanistan a platform to address various issues related to trade and transit with the other South Asian nations and to promote economic development (Mazumdar, 2015). Moreover, this inclusion also enabled South Asia to reach out with West and Central Asia more meaningfully through Afghanistan as a SAARC member. On the 12th of May 2011, former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Afghanistan for a two-day visit, during which he pledged a new \$500 million commitment for Afghanistan's development, in addition to India's previous aid of roughly \$1.5 billion. India and Afghanistan reached an agreement on a strategic relationship between the two countries, which would be executed through a partnership council led by their respective foreign ministries. Security, organized crime, law enforcement and judiciary, narcotics trafficking, financial crimes, and the fight against global terrorism are among the areas where the two countries committed to cooperate. The then Indian Prime Minister also addressed a joint session in the Afghan Parliament. India has expressed

its support for the Afghan government's national reconciliation initiative with the Taliban. (V.Pant, 2012)

India and Afghanistan signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement on 4th October 2011 during Hamid Karzai's visit to India. India officially accepted an Afghan-led, Afghan-controlled, and Afghan-owned transition in Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2017). The agreement was based on the principles of sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity, mutual respect and mutual benefit and non-interference in their internal affairs. India and Afghanistan agreed to cooperate and consult at the UN and other multilateral, regional and international forums in the interest of both the countries. At the United Nations and other multilateral discussion forums, cooperation included cooperative actions on critical international and regional concerns, as well as support for the UN Security Council's extension and reform, including India's permanent membership. In order to improve regional peace and security, both nations decided to establish Strategic Dialogues chaired by their respective national security advisors. Both nations agreed to increase their separate and joint measures in the fight against global terrorism, illegal narcotics trafficking, money laundering, and other issues. India has also pledged to help the Afghan National Security Forces by aiding, training, equipment, and organizing capacity-building initiatives. Both parties agreed to expand commercial, economic, scientific, and technical collaboration, as well as cooperation with other corporate groups and industry leaders, in terms of trade and economic cooperation. The two sides committed to further deepen and diversify cooperation in the sectors such as agriculture, industry, mining, communication and transport, energy, and civil aviation. Both the sides agreed to create favorable environment to enhance trade and investments by enhancing investment protection, promoting removal of non-tariff hurdles, and simplifying customs, coordinating at international trade and other financial bodies.

Both the sides also agreed to recognize regional cooperation as a vital element for future economic development and prosperity. India agreed to assist Afghanistan to prosper as a trade, transportation, and energy hub by connecting South Asia and Central Asia by enabling free and transit linkages to strengthen regional cooperation under SAARC. In the capacity development and education perspective India agreed to expand the Small Development Projects (SDPs) for grassroots development in the rural and remote areas. Because of the high success, of the annual scholarship program through ICCR and ITEC, India agreed to broaden the support of higher education in Afghanistan by expanding scholarships in engineering, medical and management institutes. Both nations resolved to strengthen their current links in the areas of social, cultural, civil society, and people-to-people contacts by increasing exchanges of collaboration between parliamentarians, women, the press, youth, academics, sports, cultural, religious, and intellectual leaders, and bodies. The agreement was implemented under the framework of a Partnership Council headed by the foreign ministers of both India and Afghanistan. The council consist of separate joint Working Groups on Trade & Economic Cooperation, Political & Security Consultations, Social, Cultural & Civil Society and Capacity Development & Education including high-ranking officials from the various ministries. With the strategic pact signed, two more agreement were signed on India-Afghanistan cooperation in developing hydrocarbons and mineral resources. Underscoring the role as a major economic partner to Afghanistan, India hosted the Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan inviting regional states and private sectors to invest in Afghanistan. (Mullen, 2017)

3.4 India's Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan 2014-2021

After the 2014 presidential elections in Afghanistan a major power tussle broke out between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah which ultimately led to the US and UN

to intervene. A new National Unity Government (NUG) came into effect in Afghanistan in 2014 with the power sharing agreement signed between Abdullah and Ghani, Ashraf Ghani was declared as the President and Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer. The continued political bickering between the president and CEO resulting in poor accountability which ultimately helped the Taliban to acquire more areas under its control. The takeover of Kunduz by September 2015 and the fall of Helmand province by December 2015 under the Taliban defines the weakening of the NUG to govern. (Ishtiaq & Shah, 2016) On the other hand, after the 16th general elections of 2014, Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India. As NATO's combat operation in Afghanistan came to an end, the number of soldiers on the ground dropped from 100,000 in 2010 to about 16,000 by 2014, and around 10,000 by mid-2015. Both military involvement and donor financing dropped, putting the NUG's economic and political capabilities, which was heavily reliant on Western support and assistance, in risk. However, India's developmental assistance to Afghanistan continued to increase from \$1.5 billion in 2014 to \$ 2 billion by 2017. (Mullen, 2017)

Change in governments in both the country and with changing political parameters, President Ghani in the beginning of his tenure seemed to have more tilt towards Pakistan. Ghani began his presidency by bringing about a paradigm shift in his Afghan foreign policy. By conciliating Pakistan and forging strong relations with China which made India conscious on Ghani's fundamentally different foreign and security policy from Karzai. As Ghani soon after assuming presidency showed his policy towards Pakistan by calling on the Chief of Army Staff in Rawalpindi before meeting Pakistan's Prime Minister or President. (Prasad, 2021) Despite this strain in Indo Afghan relations, India's developmental assistance remained stable. President Ghani first officially visited India on 28th April 2015, after completing visits to China in October 2014, and

to Pakistan in November 2014. He also visited United states in March 2015. During President Ghani's visit to India discussions on wide range sectors cooperation and assistance were put forward, which includes education, health, disaster management, agriculture, electoral and power management. Both the sides agreed in joint cooperation along with the global community and to combat terrorism and called on the international community to deal with safe heavens of terrorism referring to regional and global security. The Afghanistan's Embassy on decided building sister-city relationship connecting Ahmedabad and Asadabad, Hyderabad and Jalalabad, Ajmer Sharif and Herat, Mumbai and Kandahar, Delhi, and Kabul and also the state of Assam and the Province of Helmand. (Kaura, 2017)

Soon after, Narendra Modi visited Afghanistan for the first time after being the Prime Minister of India in December 2015. During the visit Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly constructed Afghan Parliament India also handed over four Mi-25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan. It was a shift on India's policy towards Afghanistan from just providing training and non-lethal assistance like transport vehicles to providing lethal assistance to the Afghan armed forces. The foreign ministers of both nations decided to convene the inaugural Strategic Partnership Council meeting in early 2016, which would include four joint working groups. (Kaura, 2017) India gained a significant good will by the Afghan citizens with the help of many low-cost, unconventional projects as in 2014 as a symbol of friendship India gifted 97 by 65 feet Afghan flag with the construction on a 200 feet high flagpole. Other Indian initiatives include the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2015 between the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) to utilise the Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex as the Afghan national cricket team's home arena. Cricket is a popular sport in both nations, and support for the

Afghan national cricket team's participation in the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 2007 aided their growth. These goodwill development and cooperation in uplifting Afghan sports has helped India to gain tremendous goodwill within Afghanistan. (Mullen, 2017)

P.M Modi revisited Afghanistan in June 2016 within a span of six months, to jointly inaugurate the \$290 million Afghan-India Friendship Dam also known as the Salma Dam. PM Modi was awarded with the highest civilian honour, the Amir Amanullah Khan Award during the visit, India also announced \$1 billion economic aid to the war-torn country. The Salma Dam designed to irrigate fields of 640 villages across Afghanistan's districts of Obe, Pashtun Zarghun, Chist-i-Sharif, Gozara, Koshan, Injil, Karokh and Ghoryan. The Salma Dam was expected to help the people of these districts on the opportunities to capitalize with operationalisation of the Chabahar Port as a Trilateral Transit Agreement for international transit and transport which was signed between Iran, Afghanistan, and India on May 2016. (Ishtiaq & Shah, 2016) The first major shipment by India of 1,30,000 tonnes of wheat via Chabahar port to Afghanistan was sent in October 2017 (Kaura, 2017). As Pakistan's continued refusal of allowing land access for trade to India and Afghanistan an air-freight corridor was instituted in June 2017. Within three years of operationalisation of the corridor it has entitled about 1,000 flights, carrying goods valued over \$216 million (Prasad, 2021). Disillusioned by Pakistan's inability in brokering peace with the Taliban during 2016 and the increase in Taliban's territorial gains, led Afghanistan to reengage with India. India- Afghanistan partnership heightened as Western security and assistance decreased through 2017 (Mullen, 2017).

Abdullah Abdullah Afghanistan's CEO visited India on 31st January 2016 where both the countries held discussions on issues concerning bilateral, regional, and global

security and the reconciliation process with the Taliban. The CEO addressed the Counter Terrorism Conference held in Jaipur and an agreement on Exemption from Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic Passports was signed between India and Afghanistan. (Kaura, 2017) Abdullah Abdullah re-visited India on 27th September 2017 where both the countries signed an MOU on Technical Cooperation and Police Training to create an enabling framework for cooperation and capacity building of the Afghan police force. Foreign Minister of Afghanistan visited India on 10th September for the meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council to make use of the fresh \$1 billion as announced by PM Narendra Modi. India agreed on the implementation of new projects in the form of connecting Shahtoot Dam, water supply for Charikar city, drinking water initiative for Kabul, low-cost housing for the coming back refugees in Nangarhar province, promoting tourism by road network to Band-e-Amir in Bamyan province, gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul and a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif. In 31 provinces of Afghanistan India aimed to take 116 high impact community development projects. India announced the continuation of its ongoing developmental programmes such as on education, skill and human resource development, capacity building to a further period of five years from 2017-2022. (IANS, 2017)

President Ghani visited India in October 2017, the visit came after CEO of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah and Foreign Minister Salahuddin's key visits. The visit reviewed the progress of the multifaced Strategic Partnership Council, and a New Development Partnership which was brought in with the objective of promoting peace, stability, prosperity and security in Afghanistan and combat terrorism and to discuss global and regional issues of mutual interest. In this particular visit a storm was created by Ghani by asserting that Afghanistan would not to be a part of the CPEC project if Pakistan refused land connectivity to India and Afghanistan via Attari and Wagah, Ghani also

asserted to restrict Pakistan's access to the CARs via Afghanistan. (Kaura, 2017) Thus, as evident, Pakistan has been playing a central role in India's Afghanistan policy, the next chapter seeks to analyse the same.

Chapter 4: The Pakistan Factor in India's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan

4.1 Introduction

Since its very independence, Pakistan has consciously oriented its foreign policy towards the notion designed for creating a unique Pakistani identity. Islamic identity became the principal factor of Pakistan's ideologically driven foreign policy, and Islam became a base of Pakistani identity. The national narrative of Pakistan was constructed on a religion-based perspective. The security dilemma from the perceived Indian threat played an important role on Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies. The feel of mistrust with India's larger "Hindu" identity, insecurity with the size and the perceived desire of India to reabsorb Pakistan. These factors have helped Pakistan believe on India being the prime threat of its existence since its creation. Pakistan became the first country to call itself an Islamic Republic, as religiously driven nationalism was seen as an ideology to bind the country together. This ideology driven national identity ultimately led to a corresponding foreign policy. With independence from the British raj Pakistan got divided into two territories known as the East Pakistan and West Pakistan divided by a much larger neighbour India. Both East and West Pakistan were linguistically and ethnically different, a larger Pakistani Islamic identity was seen to bind both of its territories against internal and external threats. (Pande, 2011)

Strategically the fear of encirclement by India has been in the minds of Pakistani policy makers. As the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan shares its borders with Kashmir. The fall of whole of Kashmir with India would lead to encirclement of Pakistan's north-eastern border. Acceding of whole Kashmir threatens the whole of Pakistan as the two main strategic railway and road systems north-west of Pakistan runs parallel to Kashmir. The fear that lies here that, it will help India to obtain direct link to the tribal areas of Afghanistan. Pakistan fears the support of India to the various Pashtun tribes in its NWFP bordering Afghanistan for greater autonomy or independence.

Hence, Pakistan seeks an ally and a pro-Pakistan government on its western neighbouring country Afghanistan. Afghanistan's good relationship with India threatens the Pakistan's security and is seen as extremely dangerous for its survival. India as a hostile neighbour towards its east and existence of a pro-Indian government in Afghanistan, the fear of having a hostile neighbour also towards its west makes Afghanistan crucial for Pakistan. (ibid.) Competition with India has been a prime factor that revolves around Pakistan's foreign policy, and India's outreach beyond South Asia has been deeply affected due to its difficult relations with Pakistan (Mazumdar, 2015). Afghanistan continues to be a prominent factor in the geo-strategies of various super and regional powers as it was for more than hundred years before (Khan & Shirazi, 2021). Foreign great power and regional rivalries has made Afghanistan as the epic centre of conflicts. Afghanistan's formation and stability have suffered a heavy toll due to proxy violence, externally backed coups and arming of various client groups. One of consequential competition to access influence over Afghanistan is the competition between Pakistan and India. In this regional contest Afghanistan soon became entangled as Pakistan has continuously suspiciously eyed any Indo-Afghan ties as a threat to its ethnic and territorial integrity. Historian William Dalrymple describes the dynamics between Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan as "three countries caught in a deadly triangle of mutual mistrust and competition" (Constantino, 2020). Pakistan has been the most influential and notable external actor in the Afghan political landscaped and always has been a prominent feature in Indo-Afghan ties. India's long friendship which stresses the common bonds of religion and history with Afghanistan has a special sensitivity for Pakistan. As Pakistan believes on being the expert player in Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral equation, it asserts that Afghanistan must act on Pakistan's directions. Largely, Pakistan's attempts to make Afghanistan as a client state with the use of

strategic instruments as the Mujahideen's and the Taliban have been successful, though minor backlashes. (Kaura, 2017)

Pakistan sees Afghanistan as a strategic depth against any attack by its much larger neighbour India. Strategic depth as a military term refers to the "distance between the front lines and the combatants". As Pakistan contains two of its vulnerable frontiers with India and for a successful defense against any attacks by India the area of Pakistan would be insufficient to absorb the initial thrust (Pande, 2011). Regarding the concept of "strategic depth" of Afghanistan for Pakistan against any attacks by India remains a hallowed doctrine within the Pakistan's military. Some analysts believe this concept to be outdated particularly in the nuclear era as the mere threat of nuclear retaliation makes an overwhelming Indian invasion unlikely in the first place (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). Pakistan's goal is to prevent any Indian influence on Afghanistan, as it sees it as a threat to its security. Pakistan desires to form an ideological alliance with Afghanistan, as two Muslim neighbors under an Islamic identity that would counter Indian influence and would play a prominent role in the broader Muslim world. A friendly Afghanistan would also completely dismiss any possibility of Afghanistan being used by India for any attacks on Pakistan. (Pande, 2011)

With its independence Pakistan inherited the already troubled British frontier on the western border, which required a strong army and resources to defend. The Pashtunistan issue along with the continued tension with Afghanistan regarding the Durand line had doubled the threat perception for Pakistan. The Durand Line drawn by the British Raj in 1893 demarcated the Pakistan and Afghanistan border. However, the 2,640 km long border divided the various Pashtuns tribes on both side of the border, which still exist as an important issue of disagreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. (ibid.) Afghanistan renounced the agreement on Durand Line in 1944 and

claimed the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan. Pakistan's concern on Afghanistan can be understood as twofold, firstly, an India friendly Afghan government and Afghan claims on the areas of Pashtun majority (Khan I. A., 2007).

Basically, for Pakistan the problem of Pashtunistan and championing of this particular claim by various Afghan governments from time to time was an issue of concern. In fact, Afghanistan was the only country to vote against Pakistan's membership to the UNGA on September 30, 1947. Pakistan's concern on Afghanistan's irredentist goals and links to India increased as supported by various incidents, such as, Afghan national assembly passing a resolution aimed to repudiate all treaties signed previously with the British empire and very firmly rejecting the Durand line. Pakistan's fear of collaboration between its western and eastern neighbour increased as 'Pashtunistan Day' were being celebrated and supported by many Indians. During the 1970's, the rise of tribal insurgency in Pakistan's population wise smallest and territorially largest province of Baluchistan was apparent. Baluchistan's long Makram coastline makes the province extremely important for Pakistan strategically as it extends to the Persian Gulf. Bordering areas of Iran and Afghanistan with Pakistan have a large Baluch population, similar to Pashtunistan issue Pakistan fears Baluch nationalism. As demand for more representation and resources in Baluchistan has culminated into a "movement for autonomy and occasionally for secession". Pakistan sees any Indian and Afghan collaboration as a threat. This perception is supported with the breakup of East Pakistan into an independent country of Bangladesh mostly with Indian military support. Relations of India with the Pashtun nationalist like Ghaffar Khan in the early times, and vocal champion for the Sindhis and the Pakistani assumption of Indian aids to the Baluch separatist makes Pakistan see relationship between India and Afghanistan as anti-Pakistan. (Pande, 2011)

4.2 Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan during the Soviet Invasion

Pakistan's relations with various Afghanistan governments have not been friendly. As Prince Mohammed Daoud the prime minister of Afghanistan (1954 to 1963), with a coup against King Zahir in 1973 became the president of Afghanistan and continuously called for a greater autonomy along with the Pashtun's in Pakistan. Pakistan in return granted asylum to King Zahir and the opposition leaders to Daoud after the 1973 coup. In the 1970's various small revolts against Daoud in the parts of Eastern Afghanistan were supported by the Bhutto government. As after the Soviet invasion, USA, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf countries provided considerable military and financial support to the Afghan Mujahideen who were trained by Pakistan's agency ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). (Wagner, 2010)

Because of Pakistan's geostrategic location bordering Afghanistan, Iran, the Central Asia and India, Pakistan became an important ally of the United States during the cold war for containment of communism. With close ties with the Muslim Middle East countries, Pakistan played an important role in Afghanistan during the Cold War as an ally of the US (Pande, 2011). During the 1970's to counter Indian-Soviet alliance influencing policies of Afghanistan, Pakistan under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto began supporting the Afghan Islamist groups to gain strategic goals. Organisational and ideological ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan pre-existed as groups like Jamiat-e-Islami of Afghanistan had close ties with Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan. With involvement of the United States, Pakistan gained support both in intelligence, militarily and finance to form a pro-west or pro Pakistan government in Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion largely increased Pakistan's concern on its security. With the Soviet invasion Pakistan accommodated the flux of incoming refugees and also provided arms to fight the Soviet and Afghan forces. Rejecting the \$400 million

economic and military aid from the outgoing Carter administration, Pakistan under General Zia took the \$3.2 billion from the newly formed Reagan administration. Supporting, training, and arming the various anti-Soviet groups by the United States with the help of Pakistan ultimately culminated the beginning of the Afghan jihad by the Mujahedeen. Along the border provinces of Pakistan, in Quetta and Pakistan several training camps were set up to train the fighters fighting Jihad against the Soviet in the 1980's. With the help of the Pakistan's intelligence service these camps trained over "80,000 fighters by 1987". The other pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy is to escape from the Indianness by striving for a Middle Eastern identity—was developed with the aid of the Afghan jihad and Pakistan's support of an Islamic cause. (ibid.) Pro Pakistani Afghan government gives Pakistan a rear base to train anti-Indian Islamist militant groups such as Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM), Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (JEM) and LeT for non-attributable attacks in India's Jammu and Kashmir. These surrogate groups allow Pakistan to calibrate extremist violence against India, a capability for Pakistan that acts as an important defence against India's influence and a tool that can both deter Indian outreach to Afghanistan and also undermine Indian successes in Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012).

Islamist extremism gained prominence with General Zia-ul-Haq coup in 1977 and the concomitant of Islamist Jamat-i-Islami's political prominence and its client groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Taliban's rise under Jamiat-i-Ulmea-i-Islam an umbrella organisation with its apex Deobandi dominance and various militant groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir has also acted in various attacks with Pakistan. Pakistan continues to support these groups due its strategic interest in Afghanistan and Kashmir (Brasher & Ganguly, 2014). Pakistan's relationship with both India and Afghanistan underwent fundamental changes with the withdrawal of the Soviets in the late 1980's.

Following General Zia-ul Haq takeover as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in 1988, Aslam Beg outlined the strategy in which Afghanistan should act as Pakistan's hinterland. According to Pakistan, Afghanistan was seen as a backyard and a safe haven for various militant groups that could be used against India. This strategy of using anti-India militant Islamic groups for its foreign policy interest in Afghanistan and India reached its peak in the 1990s. As in Kashmir with the support of the ISI, militant groups which still continue to inflict serious damage to India like the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) with its goal of Islamization and accession of Kashmir to Pakistan have been constantly conducting terrorist activities. Foreign fighters from the Middle East that fought against the Soviets were sent to Kashmir (Wagner, 2010). Afghanistan shares the longest border with Pakistan than any other of its neighbours. Insurgencies have been fuelled on both the sides of the border due to provincial and interethnic rivalries. The division of the Pashtun population has brought both the countries together and also has set them apart. India as the potential threat, Pakistan policy has aimed to maximize its influence in Afghanistan on one hand and minimize India's influence on the Afghanistan's central government on the other. Pakistan has often promoted adversarial relations among the ethnic groups and Pashtuns, thereby using Afghanistan's ethnic mosaic to achieve its strategic goals. During the anti-Soviet war, Pakistan provided support to the largely Pashtun Mujahideen factions and also provided political assistance to the largely Pashtun Taliban movement in the mid 1990's. No matter which regime ruled over Afghanistan, Pakistan's strategic goals towards Afghanistan basically focused on creating accommodating, if not subservient, Afghan regimes. (Weinbaum, 2006)

In 1971 war, Pakistan lost its eastern wing in the war with India further this amplified Pakistan's negative narrative towards India. Allegedly, both physical and psychological

threat looms on Pakistan from India, both in the form of military defeat, and the reabsorption of the Islamic Pakistan identity with the larger Indian national identity (Pande, 2011). Pakistan has a long-standing fear that India along with the government in Afghanistan uses Afghanistan as a springboard to weaken Pakistan's territorial integrity, particularly by supporting unrest among its ethnic Pashtun and Baloch populations. A notable example here is India's intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) backing the rebels in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in the Indo-Pak war of 1971. As a general proposition, Pakistan has time and again pointed its fingers towards R&AW on causing attacks and unrest in its territory bordering Afghanistan. (Constantino, 2020)

As per the Geneva Accords signed in 1988 by the Soviets, the Soviets forces left Afghanistan in 1989, with a pro Soviet President Najibullah who kept on holding power for another four more years. Along with the assistance of the US, Pakistan continued to pursue its Afghan policy which denied any compromise between the Mujahideen's and Najibullah government which would compromise Pakistan aim of attaining strategic depth in Afghanistan. (Khan I. A., 2007) However, with the withdrawal of the Soviets, Pakistan found itself in a difficult situation with a pro Soviet government in Afghanistan and the huge influx of refugee crisis on its western border. With the decline of military and financial aid from the US another blow came to Pakistan with sanctions imposed by the Bush administration due to its nuclear weapon programme in the 1990s (Pande, 2011). After the Soviet withdrawal Pakistan's attempts on forging any political settlements among the Mujahideen factions failed where Pakistan chose to support Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e Islami. As Hekmatyar group lost its ground along with the Tajik dominated Jamiat-e-Islami, the Pakistani military leadership eventually shifted its support to the Pashtun Taliban. Most of the Taliban commanders and leaders

were students in the Madrasas run by the two factions of Iamiat Ulema-e-Islam, a Pakistani Deobandi Pashtun political party, led by Fazlur Rehman and Samiul Haq. These madrasas over the time became major source for recruitment for the Taliban as many Pakistani Pashtun joined in from Akora Khattak madrasa headed by Samiul Haq located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Nowshera district in Pakistan. As the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, Pakistan along with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates recognized the Taliban's Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance mostly dominated by the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras gained India's support. (International Crisis Group, 2021)

4.3 Pakistan's Involvement in Afghanistan Post-Soviet Withdrawal

The Taliban era from 1996-2001 was the nadir of Afghanistan-India relations. India had reasonably good ties with previous Afghan monarchist, communist and republican regimes preceding Taliban's ascendancy. With India's hasty evacuation of its embassy in 1996, the Taliban with Pakistan's military backing forced the Afghan allies of India to retreat to the embattled northern redoubt. Afghanistan under Taliban rule became a training ground for Pakistan-sponsored militant groups waging a guerrilla war in India parts of Kashmir. During late 1990s, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), transferred majority of its Kashmir-focused groups into eastern part of Afghanistan to evade US pressure on Pakistan in order to restrain militant infiltration (Constantino, 2020).

A day before the September 11, 2001, attacks on America, Pakistan was in a rogue state. With numerous sanctions due to its nuclear and missile proliferation, the 1998 nuclear test along with the sanctions followed by General Musharraf's coup in 1999. President Clinton's visit to the subcontinent in 2000, where he spent a total of five days in India and merely few hours in Pakistan while even refusing to shake hands with Musharraf. As Pakistan was one of the three countries to recognise the Taliban

government since it came to power in 1996. However, attacks of the 9/11 changed US attitude towards Pakistan as General Musharraf joined the United States in its war on terror campaign in Afghanistan, benefiting Pakistan with financial and military aid and also withdrawing of sanctions by the US. (Fair, 2014)

General Musharraf's decision to join in the US counter terrorism operation brought a huge turn around in Pakistan's Afghan policy. By being bound to join the US led war on terror, Pakistan gave up the idea of installing a government of its choice with the Taliban. To retain influence again, Pakistan chose to rely on the personal networks with various Pashtun leaders, which was built up by its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate. It backed certain Pashtun regional political and militant power brokers, some of whom were opposed to the central Afghan government and had endorsed Pashtun claims of being neglected in the distribution of funds by the Karzai's government offices. It was anticipated that Taliban sympathizers within Pakistan continue to remain active within Pakistan's security apparatus. (Weinbaum, 2006) After 9/11, Pakistan's Afghan strategy changed more as a result of external factors than as a result of internal strategic culture and decision-making. Pakistan's policy of supporting Taliban also risked the state towards regional and international isolation as both regional and international community became wary about the Taliban's foreign and domestic policies. (Khan I. A., 2007)

After US's war on terror, the Afghan Taliban leadership mainly fled to Pakistan's bordering areas mainly in the norther Baluchistan and the FATA region (Pande, 2011). Following the US led invasion of Afghanistan against the Taliban, Pakistan accommodated shelter to the Rahbari shura which is the body composed of top Taliban leaders. These sanctuaries allowed the Taliban to raise capital, recruit fighters and conduct attacks on Afghan government and other foreign forces and offices. In 2005

since the Taliban insurgency took pace and successive governments under Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani attributed, this fact to Pakistani sanctuaries and Pakistan's active material and logistical support to the Taliban. Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan also strained Pakistan's relationship with US as in 2011, after an attack on the U.S. embassy in Kabul, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, called the Haqqani Network an aligned group of the Taliban "a veritable arm" of Pakistan's ISI. (International Crisis Group, 2021)

The large Indian diplomatic presence in Afghanistan after the ouster of the Taliban, was viewed as a concern to its interest in Afghanistan. India's embassy in Kabul along with its four consulates in the cities of Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad are often accused by Pakistan to spy and support Baluch, Pashtun, and Sindhi separatist groups across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. As in May 2003, India was accused by Pakistan for creating unrest in Waziristan a part of Pakistan's FATA, by supplying arms and financial aids. In the midst of Pakistani acquisitions against India, consulate of India in Jalalabad was attacked in September 2003. (Pande, 2011)

4.4 Pakistan Led Attacks on Indians in Afghanistan

As India has important stakes in the peace and stability in Afghanistan as the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between Afghanistan and India in October 2011, highlighted India's commitment to ensure positive momentum in India-Afghan ties. After the ouster of the Taliban regime the US reliance on the ISI for its support despite accusing the spy agency on supporting the groups which had mounted attacks on Western and Indian targets like the Haqqani Network. (V.Pant, 2012) India's aim to carve out a larger position for itself in regional affairs, more in line with its expanding military and economic prominence, is one of the main drivers behind India's ambitious Afghanistan policy. India sees itself as an important economic power capable of

ensuring around its periphery. As one of the major donors of assistance to Afghanistan India projects itself of being in a position of being a significant economic power. The long-term ambition of India for being a great power is also assessed in the international realm in terms of India's strategic capability to deal with the Afghan instability. Pakistan has for long been backing Islamist extremism in Jammu and Kashmir in the name of self-determination and India over the years has been major victim of radicalization of various Islamist groups in Kashmir. Any breeding ground for radical Islamists groups under Pakistan gives a direct impact on both internal and external security of India, resulting in a rise of cross border infiltration of terrorists and as well attacks. It is vital for India that Afghanistan do not emerge as a safe haven for terrorism and extremism which are anti-Indian. Afghanistan with flourishing religious extremism is seen as an essential factor to keep pressure on India in Kashmir. As the extremist fighting the Indian forces in Kashmir have drawn inspiration from the Mujahideen's resistance against the soviets and also have secured both material and resources backing from Pakistan. (Pant, 2010) Although not exclusively India-centric, Pakistan's one of the primary focuses for Afghanistan is to undermine India's influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has sought to maintain a weak government in Afghanistan so that Pakistan can maintain strategic depth in case of any Indian attack. Pakistan tries to prevent India from projecting power in South Asia by providing guarantee safe haven for the Islamic anti Indian proxies. The other goal of Pakistan is to obstruct India's ability in supporting various separatist groups in Pakistan. According to Pakistan's calculus regarding Afghanistan, defending itself against any Indian encroachment takes precedence overachieving Pakistan's larger economic and geopolitical objectives. This particular strategic orientation is partly due to Pakistan's military structure's dominant decision-making role, which prioritizes security issues over almost all other aspects of Pakistan's

foreign policy. There will not be any fundamental shift in this policy as long as the military enjoys an upper hand in setting Pakistan's policy and India is viewed as an existential threat. With this decision-making apparatus completely dominated by the military on keeping out other regional nations out of Afghanistan, Pakistan seems to provide very little positivity in Afghanistan and in the region. Pakistan is not in a position to maximize trade, and over the years it has demonstrated very little willingness to take actions which are designed to improve the lives of ordinary Afghan civilians. On the other hand, India's democratic polity, relative internal stability, institutionalized decision-making processes, large consumer base, apolitical military and growing economy make India in a position of being a more palatable partner for Afghanistan. "Thus, although Hamid Karzai's government has clearly been prepared to play India and Pakistan against one another—often effectively—it has also taken explicit steps to distance itself from Pakistan while embracing India's cooperation and assistance". (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012)

Pakistan has backed proxies to attack Indian interest in Afghanistan, as the ISI has extensively provided assistances to the Haqqani Network and the Taliban in form of training and arms supply. Many commentators think Pakistan purposefully switched the focus of the activities of various Kashmiri extremists to the Afghan theatre. LeT, that has long been among the ISI's preferred strategic assets in the standoff against India, is instrumental in the recruitment of fighters from Peshawar's mosques and madrassas by promising them training and financial support in exchange for fighting in Afghanistan. (ibid.) The presence of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) known to be a proxy of Pakistan military yet another anti-Indian group in the Afghan conflict concerns India. In 2008 LeT carried out multiple attacks in Mumbai which left a total of 166 dead, which included six Americans. LeT has targeted Indian infrastructures in Afghanistan

that house diplomatic missions, government staff, and relief workers. According to former State Department intelligence analyst Tricia Bacon, the LeT has never claimed any responsibility to the attacks in Afghanistan against Indian targets in order to avoid any international pressure against Pakistan. A terrorism specialist Stephen Tankel adds that LeT's presence in Afghanistan enables ISI to gather intelligence on India in Afghanistan. The Indian security officials estimate over hundreds of LeT militants are active and fighting in Afghanistan. For example, the 2014 attacks on Indian consulate in the province of Herat was done by LeT militants, but the group denied claiming any credit of that particular attack. The US State Department after a month confirmed LeT's full role in attack as India has always asserted Pakistan's hand in all attacks against its diplomatic facilities and personnel. (Constantino, 2020)

The hijack of the IC-814 by the Pakistan based outfit Harakat-ul-Mujahideen in 1999, compelled India to negotiate with Taliban which also cast an enduring shadow over Indian perceptions of the Taliban. As the plane was forced to land in Kandahar then completely under Taliban control the Taliban government mediated the exchange of hostage which eventually led to the release of Masood Azhar. Masood Azhar is the founder of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM), which is known to be carrying out many vicious attacks in India, like the December 2001 parliament attack, the Pathankot air base in 2016 and 2019 and the 2019 Pulwama attacks on an Indian military convoy. JeM has played a minor role in the Taliban's war against US and Afghan government, however, JeM's long association and ideological kinship with the Taliban remains of grave concern to India. (ibid.) Nurturing these groups lies in the long-term goal of Pakistan's security interest to use these assets to counter any India-Afghan collaboration after the US withdrawal. (Pande, 2011)

The Haqqani Network attacked the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008, killing fifty-four persons, including India's defense attaché. This attack was the bloodiest of all of them. A prominent example of the frequent cross-fertilization across terrorist networks is the bomber, who was trained by LeT members. Senior US officials approached Pakistani authorities following the bombing with overwhelming evidence that the ISI was behind the strike. The ISI responded by making personal changes, but there was no institutional change in its approach to using and safeguarding proxy assets. 2009 saw a second, less severe attack of the Indian embassy, with no consequences for Pakistan. (Constantino, 2020)

Following the ouster of the Taliban, Pakistan have never fully cooperated with the Hamid Karzai administration despite proclamations of brotherhood and friendship. Despite being an ethnic Pashtun and leading Afghanistan, Karzai was seen as anti-Pakistan and pro-India by the Pakistani security establishment (Kaura, 2017). Pakistan has also deeply influenced the negotiations, as many Afghans engaging with the Afghan government have been killed in the past years. The primary suspects in the killings of former Taliban minister Maulvi Arsala Rahmani in May 2012 and former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani in September 2011 continue to be Pakistan-backed terrorist organisations. Both were key players in the peace process as well as significant members of the High Peace Council, which President Karzai established to negotiate with the Taliban. (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012)

Pakistan has continuedly attempted to contain India's growing influence in Afghanistan. The rise of attacks on Indian targets were alleged to have been carried out at the behest of Pakistan's military. With the rise of attacks Indian government was compelled to send a small number of troops to protect Indian interest in Afghanistan (Mazumdar, 2015). Over the years Pakistan have been a source of terrorism inflicting

in the Indian sub-continent and also been a victim of various terrorist groups emerged from its erstwhile proxies. Despite being a parliamentary democracy, Pakistan has been mostly dominated by the army indirectly or directly for most of the state's existence. With authoritarianism never garnered popular legitimacy and democracy not fully rooted, the army has always played an important role in Pakistan's foreign policy. The Pakistan enjoys the notion of "right to intervene" because of being an insecure state and its security threat perceptions with India's as a regional and an emerging global power. Many Pakistanis hold the same view as the army, which sees itself as the sole institution capable of safeguarding Pakistan. Normalized civil-military relations are probably an essential (though insufficient) prerequisite for Pakistan to settle its security issues with regard to India, as the army formulates foreign policy, particularly those on the employment of Islamist terrorists. (Fair, 2014)

Afghanistan's disadvantage of being a landlocked country and its dependency on Pakistan's Gwadar and Karachi ports which serve as a lifeline for Afghanistan's trade gave Pakistan an upper hand. However, Afghanistan's access to Iran's Chabahar port gives the country potential to decrease its dependency on Pakistan's ports. Pakistan has always denied any overland permission for transit of trade between Afghanistan and India, which have been one of the prime obstacles for any serious trade between the two countries. Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for imports limits Afghanistan's coordination and collaboration with India. Afghanistan's trade with Pakistan between 2014 to 2015 amounted \$ 2.7 billion dollars, however severe rules along with rivalry between the two nations reduced the amount to \$ 500 million dollars in 2018. This eventually made Iran, with its Chabahar and Bandare Abbas port as a substitute for Afghanistan's trade. (Khan & Shirazi, 2021) Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) in 2010 which permits

Pakistan to transit its goods to Central Asian Republics and Pakistan allowed Afghanistan to export to India through the Wagah crossing point between India and Pakistan. However, the agreement has not permitted Afghanistan to import goods from India through Pakistani territory. Interestingly, Pakistan granted Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) status to India on November 2nd, 2011, to normalize its bilateral ties with India. However, Pakistan continues to block any Indian exports to Afghanistan aimed to limit India's access to Afghanistan. Pakistan has vociferously opposed any increasing robust Indian role in Afghanistan and U.S. support for such a role. Pakistan has retaliated against India with military, economic and political pressure. Blocking Afghan exports to India, most of which crossed through Pakistani territory. Pakistan is turning increasingly towards China for assistance with commercial, military and infrastructure development assistance, which further impedes Indian initiatives to project power in South and Central Asia. (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012)

Pakistan's dual track strategy regarding any India-Afghan nexus has been seeking good ties with the Afghan governments and shielding the Taliban leadership and providing safe haven in Pakistan. Taliban which is not explicitly anti-India according to its declared goals, but Taliban dependence on ISI and its alliances with various organisations which are hostile to India. For India it effectively means that Taliban is an asset of Pakistan's calculus. Pakistan denies providing any aid to the Taliban, but Pakistan also, does occasionally admit the same. As in 2015, Pakistan's former military president General Pervez Musharraf confessed that Pakistan supported the militant "proxies" as a retaliation because Hamid Karzai "helped India stab Pakistan in the back". (Constantino, 2020)

Pakistan had hosted the first formal talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban along with representative from US and China on 7th July 2015. The second

round which was scheduled for 31st July, got aborted due to the news of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Omar two years earlier in a Pakistani hospital which was disclosed by Afghanistan. The dialogue, eventually came to a halt after the U.S. killed the successor of Mullah Omar, Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour in a drone strike as he re-entered Baluchistan in Pakistan from Iran in May 2016. Shaikh Haibatullah Akhunzada became the leader of the Taliban after Mansour's death and the appointment of Sirajuddin Haqqani as one of his principal deputies completely worked on Pakistan's advantage as the Haqqani's were particularly closed to Pakistan. By 2021, Anas Haqqani younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani became one of the members of the Taliban's negotiating team in Doha with the US (International Crisis Group, 2021). On May 31, 2017, in the diplomatic neighbourhood of Kabul a tanker explosion killed 80 people and injured hundreds. NDS the Afghan news agency reported the explosion was carried out by Haqqani Network with the help of ISI (Yellinek, 2017).

Pakistan's stakes in the peace process have been much higher for its domestic as well Afghan interests. Taliban being the long-time ally of Pakistan, the group was supported by Pakistan in the Afghan peace process to gain international legitimacy and also economic support. With Trump administration starting a political settlement with the Taliban in Afghanistan by 2020 to withdraw its troops, it was an opportunity for Pakistan to carry forward its Afghan goals. (International Crisis Group, 2021)

Pakistan's then prime minister Imran Khan and the military leadership had continuedly emphasized on political settlement to end conflict in Afghanistan since the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, Qatar, which started on 12 September 2020. Pakistan for many instances denied backing any party in the peace process, committing to support a pure Afghan-led peace process. However, with the presence of Taliban's top political and military leadership on Pakistan's territory gave Pakistan a direct role, and hence a big

stake, in the intra-Afghan negotiations. After, the sanctuary that Pakistan provided to the Taliban reinforced mistrust of Pakistan's intentions among Afghan governing and many opposition circles. New opportunities arrived for Pakistan as it supported the Taliban's inclusion in Afghan government structures as the Trump administration intended to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. President Donald Trump in his 2017 South Asia policy address, criticized Pakistan on playing a double game, benefiting from massive U.S. assistance on one hand and then providing the Taliban "safe heavens". (ibid.)

Afghans have welcomed greater involvement by India in the Afghan affairs; however, this is vehemently opposed by Pakistan. The Karzai government took many clear steps to distance itself from Pakistan while it embraced Indian assistance and cooperation. Afghan public opinion has been extremely hostile towards Pakistan and relatively welcoming of Indian cooperation and assistance. The BBC/ARD/ABC News poll of 2009 showed 74 percent of Afghans viewed India as a favourable nation and on the other hand 8 percent of Afghans favoured Pakistan. 86 percent viewed Pakistan's negative influence on Afghanistan, only 5 percent accepted Pakistan's positive contributions. Similarly, 41 percent of Afghans accepted India's positive influence and 10 percent accepted that India's negative influence. (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012) A survey by BBG-Gallup conducted in 2016 stated 62 percent of Afghans held India favourable. On the other hand, only 3.7 percent of the respondents favoured Pakistan (Constantino, 2020).

Ashraf Ghani soon after his ascent as President of Afghanistan in 2014 tilted his foreign policy in favour of Pakistan. In the first year of his tenure Ghani gambled to improve relations with Pakistan in a hope that Pakistan would incentivize and pressure the Taliban to join talks with his government. India on the other hand was disquieted with

Ghani's decision to press the memorandum of cooperation between the intelligence services of Afghanistan and Pakistan also soliciting a greater role for Pakistan and Afghanistan in the peace talks. (Constantino, 2020) Ghani distant himself on any comment on the ISI's support to the Taliban and other anti-Indian and Pakistan backed terror outfits like the LeT. Pakistan's then, ISI Chief, Rizwan Akhtar, and army chief Raheel Sharif, visited Kabul amid much fanfare. By November 2014, Ghani's unexpected visit to the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Pakistani army in Rawalpindi caught India off guard as well. Ghani underlined India's position in Afghanistan as a source of aid, not security, during his visit to Beijing. Karzai, who consistently emphasised India as a vital and significant security ally, was replaced by Ghani. However, despite Ghani's diplomatic outreach towards Pakistan there was no significant change in Pakistan attitude towards Afghanistan leading to bitter bilateral relation. Disappointments on Pakistan's role, Ghani on number of occasions criticised and blamed Pakistan openly. Ghani urged Pakistan to fight the Taliban rather than attempt to engage them in peace negotiations in April 2016 when speaking to the Afghan parliament following a horrific Taliban attack that left more than 60 people dead in Kabul. The Taliban commanders, he claimed, were "enemies of Afghanistan who bled the blood of their compatriots" and were hiding out in Pakistan's Peshawar and Quetta province. Afghanistan's then vice-president Sarwar Danish in September 2016 while speaking at the United Nations General, severely criticized Pakistan for financing and training groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani network and also providing safe havens to these groups. At the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) held in December 2016 in Amritsar, Ghani targeted Pakistan with a hard reply. At the conference \$500 million was pledge by Sartaz Aziz Pakistan's foreign policy advisor, for reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

Ghani asserted that no amount of money can assist Afghanistan if there is support to terrorists by Pakistan (Kaura, 2017). However, with the increase of violence by Taliban and Pakistan's apparent unwillingness to curb its support for violence cemented a stronger Afghan-India relations through a series of high-level visits. India's permanent representative to the UN in June 2019 cautioned against the decision of US withdrawal, which according to him was "not intrinsic to the needs of the Afghan people". As the Trump administration had temporarily suspended the negotiations with the Taliban in September 2019, which was welcomed by India. India continued to reiterate on the concern about Pakistan and terrorism would be bolstered with the resumption of US-Taliban talks (Constantino, 2020).

With the capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in February 2010, and with the arrest of various other Taliban leaders involved in talks with the Karzai government, led to the assumption of Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace negotiations (Pande, 2011). Later, Taliban's co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and former Mullah Omar's deputy was released by Pakistan in October 2018. Baradar who was detained by Pakistan in Karachi in 2010, reportedly reached out to the Karzai government without Pakistan's consent. Soon after the release, Baradar was allowed to join Pakistan's camp in Doha for the Afghan peace process. (International Crisis Group, 2021)

4.5 India's Afghan Policy with the Taliban Takeover and the Pakistan Factor

Rules has changed in the Afghanistan game for Afghans along its neighbours. Joe Biden took the President's office of the US administration in January 2021 as the talks with the Taliban were at an impasse. Ghani's government unwilling to accept substantive compromise, Taliban continued to gain more momentum and strengthened its bargaining position. With Biden's decision on 14th April 2021, to withdraw all troops of US by September 11, 2021, declaring that US has long ago accomplished its

goal of denying any safe haven to terrorist, and later pre-ponding it to August 30, as in the meantime, Taliban had a complete upper hand on the conflict in Afghanistan. (International Crisis Group, 2021) On 15th August 2021, Taliban fighters entered Kabul, hours later President Ghani fled Afghanistan and eventually the Taliban declared victory. Ending a 20-year of war the US forces departed Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, leaving the country in chaos and uncertainty. As civilians, flooded the Kabul airport to be part of the evacuations by US and other countries for the foreign nationals and its Afghan allies. On 26th August 2021 a suicide attack in the midst of the chaos led to the killing of 180 people which also included 13 US troops in a checkpoint outside Kabul airport (Zucchini, 2021). Several days later the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed the responsibility of the attack (Relations, 2022). Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban's spokesperson on his first official appearance announced a caretaker government on September 7, 2021, to govern Afghanistan. Being ousted from power in 2001, the movement retook control over Afghanistan after a complete collapsed of the Ghani government amid US troops departure. Haibatullah Akhundzada holds the supreme position as the group's Emir (commander) and Mohammad Hasan Akhund as the acting Prime Minister of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Taliban taking over Afghanistan in a swift in August 2021 not because the Taliban had massive popular support but because the former government evidently had so little. However, the new Taliban regime faces various new economic, social, and political challenges completely different from the rule two decades ago. In the caretaker cabinet announced by the Taliban, with all male officials and over half of them still remains in US and UN sanctions list, as the acting Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani. Who heads the Haqqani Network, an US designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). (Thomas, 2021)

A complete variety of various Islamist extremist groups have been operating in Afghanistan for decades. The regional Islamic state affiliated known as Islamic State-Khorasan Province and al Qaeda are two of the significant groups operates in Afghanistan would be affected in different ways with the Taliban takeover. As relationship of Al-Qaeda and Taliban dates back to its first rule in Afghanistan and amid concerns on ties between the two groups. With the intensification of ISKP's attacks amid Taliban's takeover, ISKP's prominence over Afghanistan puts another threat to the regional security and political dynamics. With an increasing worried neighbourhood, Taliban also faces a looming humanitarian crisis, factionalism, lack of governance experience, tackling a hostile ISKP and also potential resistance.

After a cordial relationship of two decade between the governments of Karzai and Ghani, India emptied its embassy in Kabul with the US withdrawal. After almost three months later of the Taliban takeover, on November 10, 2021, India hosted "Regional Security Dialogue", an Iranian initiative on Afghanistan which was convened by the heads of seven National Security Councils. The meeting was chaired by Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and was attended by the representatives Iran and Russia and the five CARs namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Both immediate members of Afghanistan; China and Pakistan refused to join the meeting despite India's invite (Ghosh, 2021). Publicly stating "(India) a spoiler can't be a peacemaker", Pakistan's NSA Moeed Yusuf rejected India's invite, while China stated, "scheduling difficulties" (Sood, 2021). An important joint statement known as Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan which specifically referred on the political situation in Afghanistan was issued by the participating nations. Issues regarding the rise of terrorism, Islamist radicalization, drug trafficking and the ongoing poor humanitarian conditions regarding refugee crisis and food shortage. India and other six

countries foremost concern on the use of Afghan soil for training, sheltering, financing, or planning terrorist activities was warned. Further the declaration called out cooperation against extremism, radicalization, drug trafficking and separatism. The declaration called for an inclusive government and asserted the UN to play central role in ensuring fundamental rights of women children and other minority communities in Afghanistan. The conference served India an opportunity to be back on the stage of the Afghan regional-political scenario. However, due to India's limited relations with Taliban and the backing of two prime regional actors, Pakistan, and China; the conference tends to do little to strengthen India's position in Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and China have hosted various senior Taliban officials, however India is yet to do so. Nonattendance of both Pakistan and China also proves that neither country plans nor ready to help India to pursue its Afghanistan interest. Pakistan which has time and again alleged India of sponsoring anti-Pakistan activities has also recently rejected India's request to allow trucks of India to deliver shipments of food to crisis affected Afghanistan. (Kugelman, 2021) In terms of India's Afghan policy, the Delhi Declaration has undoubtedly one of the significant approaches by India. The declaration which contradicts India's stand on Taliban in the year of 1996. It highlights India's readiness of coordinating its Afghan policy with the regional countries while willing to assert its role as a key interlocutor. The aspects highlighted in the declaration are extremely critical for India's security and regional aspirations. However, various challenges lie ahead against India's goal of transforming these pledges into practice. With the constant Pakistan factor, the road ahead for India's goal of a harmonized and coordinated approach regarding Afghanistan is expected to be difficult. Though not invited, Taliban welcomed the Delhi Declaration and has repeatedly asserted India to reopen its embassy in Afghanistan (Sood, 2021). India have been in

‘wait and watch approach’ as the Afghan scenario unfolds. As the West, India being an important part of the South-Asian region, cannot completely disengage. On 2nd June 2022, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and India held its first official talks since the Taliban takeover. India’s first ever diplomatic outreach to the interim Taliban government led by an official delegation to Afghanistan, under J.P. Singh, joint secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran Division) at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) discussed on activation of diplomatic ties, resumption of stalled infrastructure projects, and restarting the issue of visas for Afghan patients and students. India has so far sent the people of Afghanistan with 500,000 doses of the Covid vaccination, 13 tons of medications, 20,000 metric tons (MT) of wheat, and winter apparel. Because India lacks personnel on the ground to distribute it, the help has been dispersed through foreign organisations including the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, and UNICEF. (Basu, 2022)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Thus, as discussed in the previous chapters, regime changes in Afghanistan have been a constant phenomenon. To deal with the government of the day with different set of ideologies, India has consistently changed its position. Be it during Mohammad Daoud Khan's coup against Zahir Shah in 1973; the Saur Revolution 1978, the Soviet military intervention in 1979 or the Mujahideen regime post-Soviet withdrawal. India's quest to engage with the regimes in Afghanistan was not much influenced with the ideological changes with every new regime. However, India's position after 1996, as Taliban took over Afghanistan changed to a complete diplomatic pull out from Afghanistan with non-engagement strategy. India's withdrawal of diplomatic presence in Afghanistan had significantly hampered India's foot hold in the region during the period of 1996-2001. Later with Taliban's ouster in Afghanistan India has actively involved in Afghanistan for a period of two decades with the governments of Karzai and Ghani.

On the other hand, Pakistan's international and internal policy are heavily influenced by the security issue posed by the perceived Indian threat. Pakistani policymakers have been anxious about being circled by India from a strategic standpoint. Because of India as a hostile neighbour to the east and the presence of a pro-Indian administration in Afghanistan, Pakistan is concerned about having a hostile neighbour to the west too. Pakistan's foreign policy has been dominated by competition with India, and India's outreach beyond South Asia has been severely harmed as a result of its tense ties with Pakistan. The competition between Pakistan and India is one of the most crucial competitions for influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan viewed Indo-Afghan connections as a danger to its ethnic and geographical integrity, and Afghanistan quickly became engaged in this regional battle. Pakistan has always been the most powerful and visible foreign player in Afghan politics and has always played a key role in Indo-Afghan

relations. In Pakistan's Afghanistan strategy, defending against Indian incursion takes precedence over achieving the country's larger economic and geopolitical objectives. Part of the rationale for this strategic orientation is Pakistan's military structure's dominant decision-making role, which prioritises security over nearly all other aspects of Pakistan's foreign policy. There will be no substantial transformation in Pakistan's strategy as long as the military has a stronghold on the country's decision-making and also while India remains a major player.

The September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda's attack on the United States led to the military operation in Afghanistan that brought the Taliban administration to an end. This development presented a significant opportunity for India which was largely sidelined in the Afghan geopolitical scene following the Taliban takeover in 1996. With the new Karzai government, India had the opportunity to re-engage and expand its footprint in Afghanistan. India unleashed its soft power strategy on focusing completely on various aspects of development as humanitarian assistance, small projects for community development, capacity and infrastructure building perspective and not engaging militarily. The two nations bilateral relations were boosted in October 2011 when they signed a collaboration agreement. It was Afghanistan's first strategic contract with India since the Soviet Union left. The pact included Afghan security personnel training as well as socioeconomic development initiatives.

Till the time Taliban re-gained its position as the de-facto ruler of Afghanistan in 2021, India has invested and aided Afghanistan with over \$3 billion US dollars. In terms of infrastructural development assistance in Afghanistan, India has built over 400 projects that includes a dam, a paediatric hospital, a highway, and its parliament building which has gained India an overwhelming goodwill from Afghan citizens (Kugelman, 2021). As in August 2021 with the Taliban takeover, India repeats its 2001 strategy of a

complete diplomatic pullout from Afghanistan, questioning on its diplomatic foothold in Afghanistan, that the country has gained over the period of two decades. India's waning of influence in Afghanistan after Taliban takeover not only represents a strategic loss, but it has also put many of its investments in the country at risk.

The concern in India is that under the Taliban's control, Pakistan would be able to more freely train, equip, and encourage anti-India terror organisations such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and JeM in Afghanistan, and then use them to sow unrest in Jammu and Kashmir. The unavailability of a democratically elected government, as well as the law-and-order situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, has further contributed to those concerns. As in the past, India's immediate priority was to guarantee that Pakistan does not take advantage of Afghanistan's instability and utilize its land for anti-India terrorist activities, particularly in India. India's prime concern on the security and stability in the region have been badly affected as Taliban in power and with Pakistan in a position to influence its policies. With filtration of US weapons in Kashmir and seizures of large narcotic shipments from Afghanistan are some immediate hard security challenges to India.

Nations such as China, Russia and Iran had opposed earlier the Taliban regime of 1996-2001 due to various domestic and regional issues. However, with Taliban re-emergence in Afghanistan, these nations are seen to directly engage with the new Taliban regime contradicting India's position. For India, the Pakistan factor has been a prime determinant of India's Afghan policy. Taliban's close relationship with Pakistan, and Pakistan being a prime actor in the Afghan power struggle scenario, has affected India's willingness to engage. On the other hand, China, which avoided relations with the previous Taliban regime, is on the forefront of welcoming the new Taliban regime and opened diplomatic channels. Two of India's geo-political rivals having border disputes

with India; China and Pakistan have received an upper hand with the US withdrawal, where's India options in Afghanistan has limited.

As asserted in the previous chapter, Pakistan has long played a prominent destabilizing and disruptive role in India's Afghan policy. From its ouster in 2001, Taliban have received significant support from Pakistani military establishment, making it as an important ally of Pakistan. Pakistan's triumphalism was on sight when ISI head Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed paid a high-profile visit to Kabul to settle concerns over power sharing among the various groups, allowing the first cabinet list of the Afghan Taliban to be announced (Sood, 2021). It is also seen that the scenario has bolstered Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and added strength to its decades long aim to limit Indian influence in Afghanistan.

Another factor that comes in the Afghanistan-Pakistan and India's scenario is the role of intelligence agencies that plays very critical roles. With Pakistan's both domestic and foreign policy decisions being largely dominated by the military establishment, ISI plays a critical role in it. As the study suggest attacks on India and Indian interests in Afghanistan shows the role the agency plays. A strong foothold for India in Afghanistan also gives an upper hand for the Indian intelligence agency R&AW to acquire critical data against anti-Indian activities.

However, Pakistan influence over Taliban has also been limited. The old ethnically tinged dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Durand Line is still alive. As the previous Afghan regimes remained in a firm position of not accepting the border as official, Taliban too have not accepted the Durand Line. Pakistan also fears the rise of Pashtun nationalism along its border. Pakistan is also deeply concerned on the rise of attacks on Pakistani interests by anti-Pakistan extremist organizations such as the TPP or Pakistani Taliban, and its close affinity with Taliban. Furthermore, with continuous

tensions ensuring between Pakistan and the Taliban over problems such as border skirmishes, as well as little progress in Taliban-Pakistan peace negotiations, India should seek more opportunity for future involvement with the Taliban. More engagement with Taliban could resolve India's basic security concerns. In fact, during the present Taliban regime too, India has delivered humanitarian aid to Afghanistan across Pakistani borders, despite Pakistan's initial hesitation. Because the Taliban government has accepted the aid, much to Pakistan's annoyance. This arrangement is likely to continue in the future. Ordinary Afghans and the Taliban's reaction to India's assistances in Afghanistan has been overwhelmingly praised, as they see India's expanding prominence as beneficial to the country's growth. As Afghanistan is a landlocked country and deeply relies on Pakistan, India should help Afghanistan achieve its goal of decreasing its reliance on Pakistan.

In the aim of gaining diplomatic recognition, the Taliban leadership is collaborating with the international world and warring ethnic Afghan factions to bring more stability to Afghanistan. Pakistan is assisting the temporary Taliban administration in this process by conducting discussions with the international community in order to get recognition. As a result, the Taliban is growing increasingly reliant on Pakistan, further bolstering Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. A "Pakistan-dependent" administration in Afghanistan is not desirable for India since it would exacerbate security concerns in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in the nation. Despite, ideologically differences, India must increase its engagement with the Taliban, and capitalize to leverage its influence with Taliban. India requires to adopt a more pragmatic and approach towards Afghanistan and continue with its humanitarian assistance and small projects for community development, capacity, and infrastructure

building programs, etc. India thus requires opening of more diplomatic channels towards the Taliban rather than repeating its Afghan policy stand during 1996-2001.

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