



India-Afghan Relations: A Historical Understanding

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Abstract

The entrance to "Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia" is through Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a crucial nation from a geopolitical and strategic standpoint. History shows that international powers attempted to expand their influence in Afghanistan in order to do so in this region, but were unsuccessful. It has been established that Afghanistan is the resting place of invaders. India made every effort to grow its influence in Afghanistan. The democratic regime in Afghanistan was supported by the Soviet Union with aid from the Indian government. Indian and Afghan friendships have a long history. The centre of Indian culture has occasionally been said to be in Afghanistan. At a time when both Buddhism and Hinduism were widely practiced there, Buddha had also travelled to Afghanistan. Today however, Afghanistan has relatively few remnants of these two religions. After 9.11.2001, India continued to support Afghanistan.

Introduction

Relations between India and Afghanistan have a long history. It was acknowledged that Afghanistan served as the hub of Indian culture. Buddha had also visited Afghanistan; although Buddhism and Hinduism were once widely practiced there, their influence on Afghan culture today is rather small. Buddhism and Hinduism respectively encountered widespread and vehement opposition to Islam in Afghanistan and India throughout the seventh century AD. The Arab army ruled Persia in 643 AD, and with these assaults, the Arab armies crushed Siesta. In 650 AD, they also assaulted Kabul. The Arab army had traversed Afghanistan's terrain and arrived at the Oxus River (An annex boundary to Central Asia).

The historical and cultural ties between India and Afghanistan are deep. This relationship extends beyond the governments of the two nations and has a long history of interpersonal interactions. In the past, Afghanistan's western edge served as a bridge between India and Pakistan. Additionally, despite the geopolitical and strategic planning of every country in the region, relations between India and Afghanistan remained friendly. The only instance of a rupture in Indo-Afghan relations is when India acknowledged the Afghan Soviet administration. Additionally, India's government provided Afghanistan with financial support during its civil war. In 1990, the Indian government gave Afghanistan a sizable sum of US cash through the UN. It is apparent that India made

great efforts to extend its influence in Afghanistan, but the 9/11 catastrophe gave the Indian government the chance to solidify that power. The Taliban's defeat by American and NATO partners opened the door for India to start a new chapter of engagement with the Afghan government. India established diplomatic links and helped the Afghan government with intelligence in this situation. "The Indian Prime Minister declared relations with Afghanistan to be transparent. He went on to say that our civilizations are comparable and that India would support the Afghan people. India will take over as head of the Afghan government after the withdrawal of foreign soldiers. India helped the Afghan coalition administration as well. Afghanistan accepted India's proposal to join SAARC in 2007 after receiving it in 2005.

India has made a considerable contribution to Afghanistan's rehabilitation and reconstruction. We think that the main strategies for ensuring that Afghanistan contributes to regional stability are democracy and prosperity. This is reflected in the Strategic Partnership Agreement that Kabul and Delhi signed in October 2011 during a state visit to India by the President Hamid Karzai. It formally established a framework for collaboration between the two nations in a range of fields, including capacity building, education, trade, and economics as well as political and security cooperation. This accord sends a clear message about our unwavering commitment to Afghanistan's peace, stability, and development at this crucial time of security and governance transition. Our extensive programme of development assistance, which has risen to a current value of about \$2 billion USD and places India as the 5th-largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan after the U. S., U.k., Japan, and Germany, also serves as a testament to our commitment. By any standard, this is a sizable donation, especially coming from a non-usual country like India.

Moreover, it is impossible to ignore Afghanistan's significance in this area. South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia are three regions that India wants to enter. India has let the Afghan government know that it will keep helping Afghanistan financially. Afghanistan's financial needs are entirely met by India and the US. Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan, declined Pakistan's offer of financial assistance at the Heart of Asia meeting in Amritsar, India. He suggested that Pakistan use the funds to stop trans - border terrorism. In his speech at the conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi backed up this assertion. India was concerned that Pakistani-backed anti-Indian forces would prevent the Indian government from establishing its presence in Afghanistan. India has strained ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan while also solidifying its bond with the Afghan leadership. Afghanistan viewed their friendship as a "Open Book" on a few instances. Because it was thought that anti-Indian terrorists were being trained in Afghanistan, the India made it a major priority to counteract Pakistan's influence there. India also intended to interfere with Pakistan's plans to install a pro-Pakistani administration in Afghanistan. In fact, anti-Pakistan militants in Afghanistan were trained and funded by the Indo-Afghan nexus. Together, India and Afghanistan are fighting the alleged Islamic extremists. "Three Memorandums of Understanding (MOUS) were signed between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Afghan National Standardization Authority (ANSA) in the domains of education, rural development, and standardization during Hamid Karzai's 2006 visit to India." In addition, the year 2011 was regarded as a time of significant improvement in the relationship between Afghanistan and India. Karzai declared "that Pakistan is our twin brother and India is our wonderful friend" after both governments inked the strategic pact.

Indian Strategy of Soft Power in Afghanistan

After the US withdrew, India wished to assume the power position in Afghanistan. As a result, India strengthened its connection with Afghanistan by funding various projects. The following categories have been established for these projects:

- The nation that aids Afghanistan the most is India.
- She granted \$2 billion for a variety of Afghan programmes.
- She is engaged in numerous rehabilitation projects, including the rebuilding of air and road networks.
- She promoted women's emancipation and health cooperation.
- She did train Afghan diplomats, police officers, and government employees.

In the Nimroz region of Afghanistan, the Indian Army constructed a crucial road in 2009. This connects Zaranj and Delaram. India did construct a dam known as the Salma Power Project. In addition, India has made over \$100 million in contributions to the trade relationship between Afghanistan and Iran via the Chabahar port. India, Iran, and Afghanistan would conduct their commerce while Pakistan will be bypassed. Additionally, India gave the Afghan government 710 INR crores towards the building of a new Parliament. For this aim, India gave around 400 vehicles to the Afghan government in an effort to improve Afghan Television's capacity. The US assured Pakistan this time that Afghanistan wouldn't be abandoned without reconstruction. The US has therefore helped India expand its dominance in Afghanistan. The Indian Prime Minister stated that India would aid Afghanistan in boosting its capabilities for security and financial development.

Indian Strategic Interest in Afghanistan

NATO and the America attacked Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. The political climate in Afghanistan had changed as a result of this invasion. The Taliban regime was forced to flee as a result of the arrival of American and NATO armies in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the US grabbed control. Additionally, the US' success in overthrowing the Taliban administration in Afghanistan gave the Indian government a chance to expand its influence there. India's government was unable to expand its influence in Afghanistan while the Taliban were in power. India has plans to assist Afghanistan in a variety of areas, including economic development and rehabilitation. In addition, the deterioration of ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan has paved the way for cordial ties between India and Afghanistan. Blame-shifting is in full swing between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and this conduct has negatively impacted Pak-Afghan ties.

India abruptly reopened diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and pledged to support Afghanistan militarily and in terms of intelligence. The prime minister of India claims that ties with Afghanistan are "an open book." He continued by saying that because the two countries share a common civilization, the Indian government would stand for the Afghan people no matter what. India made it possible for the coalition government to exist in Afghanistan in 2005. Additionally, the US asked India to assist Afghanistan. Moreover, India and Afghanistan have formed a partnership to combat Islamic extremists. "During Hamid Karzai's 2006 visit to India, the two countries signed three memorandums of understanding (MOUS) pertaining to education, rural

development, (BIS), and Afghan nationals (ANSA)." Following the 2008 attack on the Indian embassy, which resulted in 58 fatalities and more than 141 injuries, Afghanistan responded that Due to strikes like these, the kinship between Kabul and Delhi could not be severed.

Pakistan voiced its opposition to the strategic pact when it was signed by India and Afghanistan. Pakistan was told by Karzai that the agreement wouldn't be detrimental to them. He went on to say that India is our friend and Pakistan is our brother. Politicians in Pakistan are well aware that the Indo-Afghan friendship would collapse. Since India's government wants to play a big role in Afghanistan after the removal of foreign forces, it has been influencing Afghan civilians' hearts and minds by utilizing its idea of soft power. As a result, the Indian state would affect Afghan policy. India has started to participate more actively in Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development. India and Afghanistan have cordial relations as a result of the deterioration in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Indian strategy in Afghanistan is driven by Pakistan

Early Indian participation with post-Taliban Afghanistan was viewed as a move against Pakistan by the U. S., Pakistan, and the Afghan government. India, meanwhile, has recently acknowledged that Pakistan's "special interest" in Kabul trumps its own, even though initially this may have been the case. Indian strategy is now primarily based on the need for normalcy in Afghanistan rather than an anti-Pakistani stance.

It is more crucial to stop the resurgence of an Islamist government because it might provide extremists in Pakistan and Kashmir more strategic depth than supporting an Afghan government that favors Delhi over Islamabad. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has invested a large amount of political capital in establishing improved ties with Pakistan, which is grappling with a number of financial and safety concerns as well as the worsening of its relations with the US. There are consequently more opportunities for a reconciliation driven by the economy. Although the two nations currently have few commercial connections, Pakistan has offered to grant India Most Favoured Nation status (however since the declaration, execution seems to have halted). The majority of Indian policymakers now recognise the challenges to national security posed by an unstable and economically precarious Pakistan.

Indian-Afghan ties and the role of the US

India allegedly wants to undercut Pakistan's strategic advantage in Afghanistan, according to a US congressional assessment. A congressional investigation found that the 2011 Abbott Abad incident harmed ties between the US and Pakistan. This report made clear India's resolve to stop terrorist attacks from Afghanistan. The study also addressed Indian reservations about terrorist outfits fighting under the Al Qaeda banner. They are thought to pose the most dangers to Indian interests. These groups, according to India, are involved in the military war in Kashmir. India believed that these groups were responsible for the attacks on Mumbai in November 2008 and July 2011.

The study also made mention of Afghanistan's desire to enter the Indian market. Kabul aspires to benefit from the fast-growing economy of India. The reports further stated that in New Delhi, former Afghan President

Hamid Karzai inked a contract with India. In accordance with this arrangement, Delhi would yearly equip 600 members of the Afghan army. Afghanistan's leadership had grown irritated with the border disputes with Pakistan in 2013. Hamid Karzai took it seriously and travelled to India to purchase planes and other military hardware for his army in order to adequately defend his country. India at the time declined Afghanistan's plea. Despite the fact that Ashraf Ghani eventually secured all the necessary military hardware, India no longer wanted to actively take part in the battle. India now actively supports Afghanistan and uses it as a means of obstructing Pakistan.

The US overthrew the Taliban administration. India will benefit from this since the Taliban prevented India from stabilizing its presence in Afghanistan. She had US support during India's establishment of its presence in Kabul. India has been using its soft power in Kabul in this way, with the help of the US and the world community. Additionally, this instilled anxiety in Pakistan's military establishment. India has received assistance from the US in Afghanistan. The decision-makers in Pakistan's government are really concerned about this.

Pakistan was also a frontline nation in the fight against terrorism. Pakistan was now at the top of the Taliban's list of targets. Many of the attacks, which left hundreds of people injured and many dead, occurred in Pakistan. Although many of these attacks targeted civilians, many also targeted Pakistani law enforcement organizations, causing significant casualties. On the other hand, the US had provided some financial assistance to Pakistan. The US is still unsatisfied with Pakistan. The US has accused Pakistan of not doing more to combat terrorism. Military actions within Pakistan began in FATA. Large internal displacement was another effect of this. The Pakistani Army drove the Taliban into Afghanistan during these military operations. The United States and Afghan army are still staying quiet and not working with Pakistan on this issue. On the other hand, the US keeps putting pressure on Pakistan to take strong action against local terrorist organisations. The US is fully backing India in Afghanistan while continuing to hold Pakistan responsible for Taliban support. Relations between Pakistan and the US are unstable as a result of this mistrust. Since there has been mistrust between Pakistan's and the United States' friendships, Pakistan has been forced to look for other allies like China and Russia.

Conclusion

There is without a doubt a defense and safety component to India's relationship with Afghanistan, under which it seeks to uphold peace in that country. but this element is eclipsed by its relationship with Pakistan. Despite the potential for it to significantly rise depending on both Afghan developments and Pakistan's actions, the strategic relationship with Afghanistan is still in the early stages of development and is currently somewhat low-key.

It is more encouraging to have a social and economic connection if there are investments made by Indian companies and government-sponsored development programmes. India's initiative to normalise Kabul from a local perspective is highlighted by its leadership position in the regional engagement project known as the Istanbul Process. The stability of Afghanistan is undoubtedly important to our involvement.

According to a 2010 Gallup poll, a thousand people were reportedly surveyed. 44% of adults disagreed of India's management's performance, 50% of respondents' approved, and 6% of adults declined to participate. It was India's highest rating of approval from any other Asian nation. According to the report, Afghan adults are more likely to favor Indian leadership than Chinese or American leadership. Both nations are moving toward friendship. Both states have a strong interest in this.

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