



Afghanistan's political and economic importance for India

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Abstract

In international relations and in world diplomacy, states are going to have relations with other states for furthering their national interests. India has been enjoying cordial relations with Afghanistan. Since 1947 that strengthen its roots on 4th of January 1950, when both of them became signatories of "Friendship Treaty". Basically the treaty was to build up traditional and historical ties for mutual benefits and cooperation in different sectors such as development in political, economical, technological and scientific sectors. It was also to support democracy, protection of human rights, peace and freedom. Before 9/11, means in Taliban regime India did not have close relationship with Afghanistan but after India once again found a vacuum to have close ties with Afghanistan and to achieve its objectives in Afghanistan as well in the region. For getting such objectives (objectives (countering Pakistan influence and having control on Afghanistan), India has played an active role in the development of Afghanistan, based on the understanding that social and economic development is key to Afghanistan becoming source of regional stability. There is a huge change in financial support from India to Afghanistan. India announced a financial assistance of USD100 million for Afghanistan; US\$ 31.5 million and the mentioned amount was used during 2002-2003 and then USD 30 million has been used during 2003-2004. Moreover, the Government of India further announced USD 70 million (over and above USD 100 million) for construction of roads. Through this aid India follows its national, political and economical interests in Afghanistan. Later, we will elaborate India's economic and political interests in Afghanistan.

Keywords: international relations, political, economic, Afghanistan's

Introduction

Afghanistan has remained under Indian regional policy (India wants to have control on south Asia countries). Indian interest in Afghanistan has furthermore increased due to Afghanistan's strategic importance i.e. having borders with Pakistan, Central Asia and Iran. India has been enjoying cordial relations with Afghanistan. Since 1947 that strengthen its roots on 4th of January 1950, when both of them became signatories of "Friendship Treaty". Basically the treaty was to build up traditional and historical ties for mutual benefits and cooperation in different sectors such as development in political, economical, trade, technological, scientific etc. It was also to support democracy, protection of Human rights, peace and freedom .

After its invasion over Afghanistan in 1979, India recognized the pro Soviet Union government and thus India became the first noncommunist country to recognize this government (i.e. Karmal become the successor of Amin in Afghanistan). India supported the pro USSR government and also signed some protocol and agreements in order to increase its role in the country.

Indian government in the time of Indragah Gandhi supported the pro-Soviet in Afghanistan to have positive political and economical relations with the Afghan government. Besides, there were visits to stimulate the political, economical and cultural ties. For instance, Indian external affairs minister, Natwar Singh, met Babrak Karmal, the Afghan president, at his native country, Afghanistan in 1983. The sole aim of his visit was to tighten the countries' political and economical affairs. In 1979 USSR invaded Afghanistan and this event provided an opportunity to the Indian government to enhance

its ties with Afghanistan. During the era of pro Soviet government, India increased its investment and supported the country in various projects like industrial and irrigation. Let's have a bird's eye view over cost Indian trade in Afghanistan. It imported 54.37\$ million of goods from Afghanistan in 1978-79; 16.42\$ million in 1979-80; 75.54\$ million in 1980-81 and 21.43\$ million in of goods 1982-83 respectively. In the same years, India exported goods that cost 85.37\$, 58.21\$, 27.20\$ and 20.17\$ million.

India had good relations with Dr. Najibullah government but due to a number of events, like the Mujahedeen rise against the government which were supported by US and Pakistan, the defeat of USSR and the formation of new government of Mujahideen and overthrowing of Najibullah affected the bilateral relations. There arrived a political turnover that led diplomatic isolation and lessened the Indian influence in Afghanistan. However, later in 1992, when Burhanuddin Rabbani established a pre-dominantly non-Pashtun Government, India fully supported his reign against Mujahedeen that headed by Gulbadden Hikmatyar.

In 1996, the Taliban took over and removed the government headed by Rabbani, this event badly affected the Indian relation with Afghanistan. On the other hand Pakistan, Saudi Arab and UAE recognized the new government while India decline to support and recognize. India didn't have any relations (i.e. political, economical, educational and cultural) with Taliban regime installed in Kabul because of its tilt towards Pakistan. Whereas India stated that Taliban had training camps for Kashmiri Mujahedeen.

In his *Afghanistan and Taliban*, Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakil, Taliban's the foreign minister, utters, "Pakistan had closed

relations with Afghan Mujahedeen during Afghan Jihad at that time some of Kashmiri Mujahedeen, Al-Badar Kashmiri group, had training camps inside Afghanistan. When Taliban came into power, they had their training camps but after some time Taliban closed the training camps in Afghanistan". Since Indian didn't have any kind of links with Taliban regime but, indirectly it supported the Northern Alliance (anti-Taliban group headed by Ahmad Shah Masoud). India provided humanitarian and financial aid from its Tashkent embassy and from consulate of Mazar-i-Sharif. They built 25- bed hospital at Farkhor in Tajikistan for the treatment of injured Northern Alliance commanders; supplied high altitude warfare equipments worth 8 billion USD ;they used to send defense advisers regularly to provide operational guidance during the war against Taliban and supported with technical assistance to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance of Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masoud. Finally India closed its embassy in September 1996 .

The 9/11 attack, the initiation of war against terrorism and "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan in 2001 again provided a key role for India in Afghanistan and also in the region. In the post 9/11 time period, India further enhanced its ties with Afghanistan which were abundant during the Taliban regime. India again established cordial relation in all sphere like diplomatic, economic and social. India also provided millions of dollars and assistance for the development and reconstruction projects in the country. Although, India need Afghanistan in different sectors, specially Economic and Political sectors. This article will elaborate, the importance of Afghanistan for India in Political and economic.

First: Political importance

As a regional power India needs to control neighbouring countries, Afghanistan is on of them. India has political and diplomatic relations with Afghanistan since independence of Afghanistan in 1919 till 1992. Due to establishment of Taliban government in 1996, India blocked its diplomatic and political relations with Taliban Government and it even did not recognize the Taliban government because they were inclined to Pakistan. As a result India closed its embassy in Afghanistan.

After the 9/11 attack, the U.S led war against terrorism in Afghanistan, has provided an opportunity for India to re-establish its relations with Afghanistan that were marginalized by Taliban in 1996. India was the first country to set up the diplomatic relations with Afghanistan under the former ambassador Mr.S.K Lambah. India is among a few countries who took oath for rehabilitation of Afghanistan . Apart from good relations, after 9/11 tragedy, India had to achieve its objectives (countering Pakistan influence and having control on Afghanistan) in the region (i.e. connecting a friendly bond with Central Asian States and breaking the influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan). When Taliban again take over Taliban over on Kabul meanwhile Indian government closed its embassy in Kabul. But after 9/11 tragedy happened; India began its cooperation with Afghanistan government. In first step, Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, had reopened the embassy in Kabul in 2001. In August 2002, the president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, accompanied with 13 ministers traveled to India.in that meeting, both sides discussed rehabilitation process of Afghanistan. In 2010, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, visited India and both sides had discussion to

strengthen the relations. On October 4th 2011, Hamid Karzai visited India to sign an agreement on strategic partnership between the both countries.

In august 2002, Indian officials visited Afghanistan to strengthen political relations. They opened the consulate in Herat and Mazar sherriff provinces and in Nangahar and Kandahar provinces in December 2002. In February 2005, foreign minister of India, Parnab Mukhargee, visited Afghanistan who emphasized on Afghanistan and India bilateral relations .

To support the democracy, in the visit of Indian PM both the leaders' discussions were held to structure the Parliament of Afghanistan and its foundation stone was laid by Baba-e-Millat, Zahir Shah in the presence of the President of Afghanistan and the Prime Minister of India in 2005. India also trained officials of the National Assembly secretariat in India's Bureau of Parliamentary Study and Training. Afghanistan and Indian Independent Elections Commissions have visited on sides, sharing mutual cooperation and training based on MOUs. India and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership in October 2011. According to that India would not only train the Afghan security forces but also provide equipment to the forces. According to Indian government, the training would be bound for officer corps and will be undertaken in India .

On 25th December 2016, Prime Minister along with a high level delegation paid a visit to Afghanistan. During his visit he called on President Ashraf Ghani; he met Chief Executive, Dr Abdullah and Former President Hamid Karzai. During his visit he inaugurated the newly built Afghan Parliament; announced 500 scholarships for the children of the martyrs of Afghan Security Forces and gifted four Mi-25 Attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force. During the visit, it was also decided to conduct the second Strategic Partnership Council meeting headed by the Foreign Ministers of the both countries in the first quarter of 2016 along with four joint working group meetings.

His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (CEO) visited India from 31 January- 4 February 2016. During this visit, he met Prime Minister on 1st February 2016 and held discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest including the security situation and peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. EAM and NSA called on CEO, on February 1 & 4, respectively. In continuation of India's development assistance to Afghanistan, Government of India approved the 3rd phase of Small Development Projects comprising of 92 projects. An Agreement on Exemption from Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic Passports was signed. On 3rd February, CEO addressed a joint interaction with the three leading chambers of commerce and industry in India, namely ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI. CEO delivered the Keynote Address at the Counter Terrorism Conference organised by India Foundation in Jaipur on February 2, where the inaugural address was by Rashtrapatiji.

The second Strategic Partnership Council meeting was held in New Delhi on September 11, 2017. Foreign Minister H.E Salahuddin Rabbani led the Afghan delegation comprising of senior members of the Afghan Government. Making use of the fresh US\$ 1Billion announced by Prime Minister, India and Afghanistan launched a New Development Partnership. Government of India worked with the Government of Afghanistan to identify priorities and projects where Afghanistan needed the Indian assistance to be directed. India

agreed to implement some important new projects such as the Shahtoot Dam and drinking water project for Kabul that would also facilitate irrigation, water supply for Charikar City, road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyan Province that would promote tourism, low cost housing for returning Afghan refugees in Nangarhar Province to promote their resettlement, a gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul to promote value added local industry and for import substitution, and a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif. In addition, India will also take up 116 High Impact Community Development Projects in 31 provinces of Afghanistan. These important investments will be in the areas of education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydro power, sports and administrative infrastructure. India also announced that on-going programmes for education, capacity building, skills and human resource development of Afghanistan, one of the largest such programmes in the world, will continue for a further period of five years from 2017 to 2022.

The question is why India supports Afghanistan politically? There are many reasons that India support politically, for instance:

First: if India not supports Afghanistan then India's 17 years of tremendous investment in Afghanistan is at great risk, so therefore, India involve in Afghanistan to achieve its investment result of seventeen years. Second: India has historically rivalry with Pakistan. India supporting of Afghanistan just for countering Pakistan influence in Afghanistan. Third: India supporting Afghanistan current government, because they are afraid of pro Pakistani Government (Taliban) not to take over in Afghanistan. Then India all hopes will go down. Fourth: India is raising power in the region, so India want to have control over regional states.

Second: Economic support

India works in reconstructing Afghanistan because it is a transit country in the term of economic integration between South Asia and Central Asia. India and Afghanistan signed A professional trade agreement on March 6, 2003 and it had come into implied in May 2003. The purpose of agreement was to reduce the custom duty that could encourage the bilateral trade. India announced a financial assistance of 100\$ million for Afghanistan; 31.5 million in the years 2002-03 and 30 million were spent in 2003-04. India further announced the \$70 million fund for the reconstruction of road from Zaranj to Delarm in Afghanistan. Zaranj-Delaram Highway a 218 km road was approved that would connect South-West of Afghanistan to Iran. Besides, there was an approval for regional cooperation of trade and transit through the Iranian port of Chahbahar. Finally a shorter access of Afghanistan to the sea was also approved.

India also sees Afghanistan as an essential component of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline. To address its energy needs to sustain its economic growth, pipelines from Iran and Central Asia would be extremely important. The general fear in India is that an unstable Afghanistan would hurt the construction of this pipeline and the subsequent flow of gas.

The question is why India supports Afghanistan economically?

There are many reasons that India support economically, for instance:

First: Afghanistan is a market for Indian goods and products.

Second: Both countries have a historically cordial relations and friendship, so regarding friendly ties India need to support Afghanistan economically. Third: Afghanistan is like a bridge between south Asia and central Asia. So India need Afghanistan for transit its products to central Asia. Fourth: India need to support current Afghan government, if not might be the government will fall into pro Pakistani government (Taliban). Fifth: India's efforts to open a transit corridor to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran's Chabahar port, thus bypassing Pakistan, came to a standstill because of the renewed US sanctions on Iran. This is by far the biggest setback in India's strategic investment in the context of regional competition for access to tremendous energy resources in Central Asia.

Conclusion

India and Afghanistan have warm relations from the independence, and these ties were strengthened on 4th of January 1950, when both signed "Friendship Treaty". In 1979 India was the first non-communist country which recognized the pro-government Afghan led by President Babrak Karmal. while 9/11 accident was accrued, India was the first country to open their embassy and start the diplomatic relations with Afghanistan just for their national interest in Afghanistan. India need Afghanistan Politically, here is some reason; if India not supports Afghanistan then India's 17 years of tremendous investment in Afghanistan is at great risk, so therefore, India involve in Afghanistan to achieve its investment result of seventeen years. Also India has historically rivalry with Pakistan. India supporting of Afghanistan just for countering Pakistan influence in Afghanistan. Finally, India supporting Afghanistan current government, because they are afraid of pro Pakistani Government (Taliban) not to take over in Afghanistan. Then India all hopes will go down. India also need Afghanistan economically, because of Afghanistan is a market for Indian goods and products. Also Afghanistan is like a bridge between south Asia and central Asia. So India need Afghanistan for transit its products to central Asia. Finally India need to support current Afghan government, if not might be the government will fall into pro Pakistani government (Taliban).

Eventually, countries have their foreign relations to protect their national interests.

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