

India's Soft Power and Pakistan's Hard Power Policy in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

The strategic importance of Afghanistan has increased since 2001 for both India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan are in pursuit of gaining influence in Afghanistan through the use of soft power and hard power respectively as a foreign policy tool. Soft power is associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions. In contrast, hard power is usually associated with tangible resources like military and economic strength. India has been able to make an impact and generate goodwill by spending billions, mostly on infrastructure to help turn Afghanistan into a modern state. On the other hand, Pakistan has used hard power in Afghanistan in order to achieve its objectives. The focus of this paper is to have a comparative study of India's soft power and Pakistan's hard power in Afghanistan since 2001.

1. Introduction

Afghanistan has turned into one of the principle destinations of Indian Soft power. The strategic importance of Afghanistan has increased since 2001 for India. India is in pursuit of gaining influence in Afghanistan through the use of Soft power as fundamental techniques of its foreign policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan. Rather than deploying its troops, India has sought to make an impact and generate goodwill by investing in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. India has generated far more goodwill among Afghans than any other country. Indian Soft power approach has won India many hearts and minds in the Afghan people. The Afghan people are appreciating the role India is playing in Afghanistan's reconstruction, economic development and social upliftment. At the same time, India's Soft power strategy is appreciated and acknowledged by almost all the countries of the world.

On the other hand, Pakistan has used hard power in Afghanistan in order to achieve its objectives. Pakistan through its intelligence agency ISI is helping the Taliban by providing sanctuary, logistic support and manpower. One cannot refrain from noting that the Taliban could not operate without the benefit of sanctuaries in Pakistan. Also, it is alleged that Pakistan is turning a blind eye towards the Taliban leaders. It is also alleged that Pakistan's intelligence agency is guiding the Afghan insurgency. It is well understood that Pakistan is preparing for the eventual U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, viewing the militant groups as insurance and as a means of exerting influence inside Afghanistan and against India. Afghans also perceive Pakistan as an archaic power, willing to control Afghanistan through a physical presence in the country. The main aim of this paper is to have a comparative study of Indo-Pak policies towards Afghanistan with special focus on India's soft power and Pakistan's hard power.

2. Soft Power and Hard Power: Theoretical Aspect

Power is the ability to get things done. It is an ability to make others do what you want to do. There are two types of power: Hard and Soft Power. The term 'soft power' was coined by Joseph Nye, Professor at Harvard University in his book, Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power

published in 1990. Soft power chiefly means an ability possessed by a state or non-state actor to establish its influence through attraction and persuasion. In other words, it is the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions (Nye 2004: 6). Soft power is the ability to make others do what you want on the basis of how they see you (Hymans 2009: 235). The sources of soft power are the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies (Nye 2004: x). When we are able to get others to admire our ideals and to want what we want, then we do not have to rely on sticks and carrots in order to move them in our direction. What soft Power shares with other power resources is that its potency increases when it is projected (Nye 2004: x).

In contrast, hard power is associated with tangible resources such as military and economic strength. The intangible resources constitute soft power, while as the economic inducements and military strength is regarded as Hard Power. Hard Power can rest on inducements (Carrots) or threats (Sticks) (Nye 2004: 5). Hard power is a coercive force while soft power can be about anything else. Hard power is related to military strength or use of force. (Hymans 2009: 235). When power is used to coerce or induce others it is regarded as Hard power. In other words, the economic inducements and military strength are regarded as Hard Power. The tangible power resources like military and economic might constitute Hard-Power. Hard Power can rest on inducements (Carrots) or threats (Sticks) (Nye 2004: 5). Hard power is a coercive force. Hard power is related to military strength or use of force. Realists are the proponents of Hard Power. As per Bismarck, "This policy cannot succeed through speeches and songs; it can be carried out only through blood and iron". Similarly, Mao, Zedong argues that power grew out of the barrel of a gun. Likewise, Machiavelli insists that it is better to be feared than loved (Cooper 2004: 2-3).

Realists argue that the international community is anarchic in nature. To defend and protect themselves, states do not recognize any superior authority. The states are governed by the rules of survival, self-help and security. In this competitive situation, each state seeks to maximise its power

(Pallaver2011: 84-85). Realists argue that power comes from military and economic means. In other words, economic sanctions, inducements, rewards, military invasion, bargaining and alliances are hard power strategies. Therefore, hard power is the ability to force the outcomes one wants (Weinbrenner 2007: 1). Hard power is a form of power that rests on the capacity of a state or non-state actor to accumulate as many as resources as necessary to impose its will (Pallaver 2011: 82).

There are different degrees of inducement and coercion. The key element is actually the capability and capacity to threaten others. It is important to note that whoever makes the threat is also capable of implementing it. Inducement is related to the economic superiority of subject A towards subject B. It can be both positive and negative. As for as negative side is concerned, A should be able to impose economic sanctions and should have the capacity to destroy every source of subject B's economic survival in order to guarantee his obedience (Pallaver 2011: 81-82).

As for as positive side of economic power, superiority is concerned A can induce subject B to do what he wants him to do by granting him a certain amount of money. In this case, A's power over B derives from his capacity to "buy" him. This can be viewed also in terms of "reward". In this case, B obeys because he will receive a reward. At the end both are happy. Subject A gets what he wants and B gets the money (Pallaver 2011: 82). However, coercion has to do with the use of force. Coercion is the capacity to exert violence. Hard power, therefore, rests first and foremost on the possession of certain basic resources: among others, money and the means to coerce (Pallaver 2011: 83).

3. Indo-Pak Policies in Afghanistan:

India and Pakistan have contrasting goals in Afghanistan, and thus carry out different policies there. India is keen to bolster the Afghan government and seeks to integrate Afghanistan into wider regional political and economic structures. However, by strengthening Afghanistan, India advances its own national security objectives. The Indian goals in Afghanistan certainly involve minimizing Pakistan's influence in the country and to advance India's broader domestic and regional interests. Likewise, Pakistan's goals for Afghanistan are mainly India-centric. Pakistan seeks to establish a weak Afghan government dominated by a supportive Taliban so that it can maintain "strategic depth" against India. In order to achieve their objectives, India and Pakistan are relying on Soft and Hard power strategies respectively. Before analysing India's Soft power policy in Afghanistan, let's first discuss Indian interests in Afghanistan.

3.1. Indian Interests in Afghanistan:

As for as India is concerned, its policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan is based on the following interests:

- (i) The 9/11 attacks and its aftermath provided an opportunity for India to pursue its foreign policy goals of accomplishing hegemonic position in the region. More importantly, India aims to marginalize the role of Pakistan in Afghanistan (Khalid 2011: 242-243). Likewise, India also wants to limit the role of China in

Afghanistan. In addition, good time and sociable relations with Afghanistan give the prospect of developing good ties with central Asian Republics (CARs). As India does not have a direct link with (CARs) it has to depend on Afghanistan to access CARs (Khalid 2011: 245).

- (ii) India has also economic interests in Afghanistan and they are as important as the political gains. India's aim is to emerge as a regional superpower and to enhance its trade in the region (Khalid 2011: 247).
- (iii) The Taliban regime had been anti-India and pro-Pakistan in its approach. So a friendly and stable government in Afghanistan can diminish India's security concerns. India needs to make sure that Afghanistan does not become a base of Anti-India Taliban once again. (Khalid 2011: 248).

After highlighting the Indian interests in Afghanistan, let's now discuss and analyse the Indian Soft power in Afghanistan.

3.2. Indian Soft Power in Afghanistan:

After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, India extensively supported the new government in Afghanistan. Since then India has been very active in reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan. India is one of the biggest donors of Afghanistan and in addition both the countries have signed many treaties and agreements of co-operation. Since 2001, India has been involved in many developmental projects. For example, India has provided \$ 80 million for 280 Km road Afghanistan that link it to Iran border. Similarly, the Salma Dam project was reconstructed with the assistance of India (Khalid 2011: 244).

Since, the fall of the Taliban regime, India has focused on the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. India has been engaged in building infrastructure like dams and roads. Similarly, Indian movies have become the primary source of entertainment of Afghans (Purushothaman 2010: 9). India is the most popular country among Afghans. India has been involved to train the Afghan army and Police officers. The Afghan parliament was also built by India. The biggest children's hospital in Afghanistan is run by India (Smith & Manno 2012).

The Afghan people have welcomed Indian involvement in their country. India is building roads, improving medical facilities and helping the Afghans with educational programs. The Indian policy has been to help the Afghan administration in its reconstruction efforts. India is reframing to directly engage itself in security operations. There is a general consensus that India should not send its troops in Afghanistan (Pant 2009).

Some observers argue that India should deploy military in Afghanistan. However, this option seems unwise and impractical. First, there has been no request from Afghanistan for the same. Secondly, if deployed the supply lines would have to pass through Pakistan, which is impossible. In addition, sending Indian troops to Afghanistan is certainly not an option because the Afghan government seeks the removal of all foreign troops (Katoch 2013).

3.3. Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan:

Pakistan's goals in Afghanistan are mainly India-centric. The focus is mainly on undermining India's influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan seeks to capitalize on Taliban influence in Afghanistan and to maintain "strategic depth" against India. In addition, Pakistan seeks to facilitate training and operations of anti-India extremist groups. Similarly, Pakistan wants to marginalize the historical demands of Pashtunistan. Furthermore, the aim is to developing trade links with CARs (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 25). These Pakistani interests are illustrated in the following paragraphs:

- a) **Block Indian Influence:** Pakistan is considering India a hostile state that poses a fundamental threat to its existence. This notion of insecurity is due to India's demographic, geographic, economic, and military advantages. Its military leadership has a zero-sum view of the Indian-Pakistani security dynamics, seeing anything that benefits India as a loss for Pakistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 25).
- b) **Prevent Encirclement and Maintain Strategic Depth:** Pakistan perceives India's efforts in Afghanistan as a calculated strategy of encirclement that is aimed at trapping Pakistan between two hostile fronts. Pakistan's principal objective in Afghanistan is therefore to block India's influence in Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 25). Pakistan thus sees a friendly regime in Afghanistan as necessary to keep India out and also that a weak, friendly government in Afghanistan is needed to ensure that Pakistan has sufficient strategic depth against India (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 26). In addition, Pakistan continues to pursue a proxy war against India in Kashmir. This strategy has the dual purpose of maintaining pressure on India to eventually come to a settlement on Kashmir (Siddiqi 2008: 42).
- c) **Establish Safe Havens for anti-India Extremists:** It is argued that a pro-Pakistani Afghan state would provide Pakistan with a rear base to train militants of various extremist groups such as Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 26).
- d) **Undermine Afghan Claims on Pashtunistan:** Various Afghan regimes have never accepted the legitimacy of the Durand Line. In February 2006, President Hamid Karzai publicly announced that the Durand Line a "line of hatred" and denied to accept it as an international border (Siddiqi 2008: 34). So, Pakistan's objective is to advance a friendly regime in Afghanistan that weakens the sense of Pashtun nationalism and demands for an independent Pashtun homeland (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 28).
- e) **Build Economic Links to the Central Asian Republics (CARs):** The other main objective of Pakistan's Afghan policy during the 1990s was to reach Central Asia for economic purposes. The control of a friendly force in Afghanistan could open the prospect for an energy and trade corridor between Pakistan and Central Asia. Pakistan was keen to import gas from Turkmenistan but that would only be possible through a pipeline via Afghanistan. (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 28).

After discussing Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan, let's now focus on Pakistan's Hard power policy in Afghanistan.

3.4. Pakistan's Hard Power Policy in Afghanistan:

In the so-called "War on Terror" Pakistan assisted the US with facilities and bases as well as the intelligence necessary to win the war in Afghanistan quickly. However, the small number of ground troops scattered the Taliban leaders and its fighters into Afghanistan's mountains and Pakistan's tribal areas. It is believed that many Taliban fighters returned to their villages and towns or to refugee camps in Pakistan. Mostly, these Taliban fighters were able to rely on clan connections. Furthermore, the ISI, utilizing its assets welcomed many of these fighters back, saving them as a bargaining chip for future strategies (Siddiqi 2008: 33). In addition, because of clan connections, the provincial governments did much to promote the insurgency in both Afghanistan and Pakistan by sheltering militants and legitimating their ideology. Thus, contrary to international perceptions, Talibanization occurred at an extraordinary rate due to the government's double game (Siddiqi: 37).

In fulfilling its objectives in Afghanistan, Pakistan has relied on a variety of strategies. The ISI is widely believed to have provided extensive assistance to the Taliban and Haqqani network in the form of training, funding, munitions, supplies, and safe haven (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 28). Some observers allege that ISI observers have participated in meetings of the Quetta Shura and have used coercion, such as selectively arresting and releasing of key Afghan militant leaders, to manipulate decisions regarding military operations in Afghanistan or negotiations with Afghanistan or U.S (Brown 2015: 10).

Similarly, to counter India's military, political, and economic presence in Afghanistan Pakistan is encouraging anti-India extremists such as JeM and Haqqani network by providing them training and other logistic support. (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 29). According to Stephen Tankel, JeM is recruiting militants providing them with both training and payments for fighting in Afghanistan. Tankel further asserts that the group has emerged since 2006 as one of several major entities battling for control of the Kunar province of Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 29).

On the economic front, Pakistan has also blocked two-way Indian-Afghan trade, permitting the latter's goods to cross its territory but refusing the former's goods the same access. Interestingly, Pakistan continues to block Indian exports to Afghanistan, a fact that suggests that Pakistan is not trying to hurt the Indian economy so much as limit India's access to Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 31).

On the issue of negotiations with the Taliban is concerned, India had difficulty making itself relevant to Afghan peace negotiations. However, Pakistan has positioned itself a very important player in any Afghan political reconciliation process (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 29). Pakistan has demonstrated its ability to influence peace negotiations by preventing moderate Taliban figures from participating in talks. For example, in February 2010, Pakistani authorities seized Abdul

Ghani Baradar, Mullah Omar's second in command. The arrests were merely an effort to control the Taliban's political agenda. It is believed that most of those taken into custody had reportedly agreed to open talks with the Afghan government and may have been moving to conclude a settlement with Afghanistan without consulting Pakistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 30). Similarly, the arrest of Mullah Baradar (in 2010), the Taliban second in command, is believed to have independent links with the Karzai government, and who would have gone with the negotiating with the Taliban without consulting ISI (Halton 2012: 56)

Also, some argue that the Taliban hardliners backed by Pakistan have pledged to undermine the peace process by killing Afghans engaging with reconciliation talks if they go ahead without Pakistan's consent. For example, assassinations of former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani and former Taliban minister Maulvi Arsala Rahmani can be seen the result of this strategy. These assassinations have deeply undermined Afghan efforts to unilaterally conduct high-level negotiations with the insurgency (Halton 2012: 56). The Pakistani strategy is to control who participates in reconciliation talks and also that it must play a central role in any discussions on Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 30).

3.4.1. Reasons for Use of Hard Power:

There are different views as for as Pakistan's use of hard power in Afghanistan is concerned. Some argue that it is difficult for an army to fight its own people and therefore, the military has failed to check the Pakistani Taliban. While as others claim that Pakistan simply does not have the military capability to control the insurgency or spread of terrorism in Pakistan. However, the Pakistani military has historically been more expert at suppressing insurgencies internally than it has been at fighting external threats. It has done so in Baluchistan in the 1940s, 1950s, 1970s and then from 2003 to 2008. Thus, explanations relying on the assertion that Pakistan's military does not have the capacity to fight its own people does not hold ground (Siddiqi 2008: 38). So, what explains Pakistan's inaction against Taliban cadre and its Hard power policy in Afghanistan? The reasons are:

- a) Clan and kinship ties have played some role in the military's initial half-hearted action against Taliban cadres. There is no doubt that many of Pakistan's frontier paramilitary forces share not only ethnic but also blood ties with the Pashtun Taliban fighters.
- b) There is also an ideological dimension of the insurgency. The Taliban consider and proclaim to be Jihadis or Mujahideen and are garbed in the cover of Islamic legitimacy. Pakistan is itself an ideological state having a national identity tied in with Islam. It has for decades idealized for an Islamic state in Afghanistan (Siddiqi 2008: 38).
- c) Pakistan hopes to keep the areas in chaos whereby its Taliban assets are preserved to be utilized to expand influence into both Afghanistan and India (Siddiqi 2008: 41; Yusuf 2013: 15).
- d) Another reason is that the insurgency has been good for Pakistan, and particularly for its military. The Pakistani military benefited immensely from at least \$10 billion, and perhaps as much as \$20 billion, in aid provided to

Pakistan. Most of this aid went to the military (Siddiqi 2008: 41).

- e) Additionally, Pakistan's willingness to accommodate Afghanistan-oriented militant groups is also motivated by a fear of provoking these groups to incite violence in Punjab and threaten the core of the Pakistani state (Brown 2015: 11). The belief is that going after them militarily would not only turn them against the Pakistani state but also earn extra support for domestic militants (Yusuf 2013: 9-15).
- g) Pakistan's dual approach with respect to the Taliban has kept US costs in Afghanistan high enough. The assumption is that the USA would ultimately have to give up any hope of military domination and consider it necessary to negotiate with the Taliban (Yusuf 2013: 15-16).

4. Analysis of Indo-Pak Policies in Afghanistan:

An important way of measuring a country's soft power is to look at its culture and domestic institutions by measuring the number of individuals who want to visit the country for education, immigration and tourism. In India's case, the number of foreign students has increased over time. Similarly, the numbers of international migrants in India have fluctuated (Mukherjee 2014: 52). A 2012 study concluded that Afghanistan and Bhutan's perceptions of India were positive. However, the perception of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka about India highlighted a "Trust deficit". While as Palestine and Nepal criticized India's "Big Brother" attitude towards their nations (Mukherjee 2014: 49-51).

On the other hand, Pakistani hard power strategy to achieve their goals in Afghanistan has created some unintended effects. Particularly the power of ISI has increased as well as the radicalization of elements of Pakistani society is growing sharply (Halton 2012: 56). The militant groups (including Afghan Taliban living there) and radicals in the Pakistani authorities exert greater power in some areas than the civilian administration (Halton 2012: 56).

Similarly, Pakistan's support for jihadists has backfired by alienating its potential partners in the region and is generating internal instability. Some of the groups like TTP have turned against Pakistan and groups such as JeM and HuM have splintered, with new factions and have carried out bombings and assassinations within Pakistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 34). Additionally, in times Pakistan's continuing support for the Haqqani network and other extremist groups has angered the Afghan administration (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 33). These policies have damaged Pakistani ties with Afghanistan. The heightened level of mistrust between the Afghan and Pakistani governments is helping to deepen the Indo-Afghan partnership (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 33).

Likewise, with its military-dominated decision-making apparatus, Pakistan has little positive value to offer either Afghanistan or its neighbours. Neither Pakistan is positioned well to boost trade nor has it demonstrated a willingness to take steps designed to improve the lives of ordinary Afghans. In contrast, India's democratic polity, institutionalized decision-making processes, relative internal stability, a political military,

and growing economy make it a far more favourable partner for Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 2). The common Afghans are welcoming greater Indian involvement in Afghan affairs. As per public opinion polls, the Afghan public opinion is very hostile toward Pakistan and relatively positive toward India. For example, the 2009 BBC/ABC News/ARD poll found that, although only 8 percent of Afghans held a favourable view of Pakistan, 74 percent of Afghans viewed India favourably. Similarly, although 86 percent thought that Pakistan had a negative influence in Afghanistan (with only 5 percent saying Pakistan made positive contributions), India's impact was seen as positive by 41 percent of Afghans and negative by only 10 percent (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 3).

On the economic front, as compared to India, Pakistan has failed to leverage its \$300 million in development assistance to improve its image in Afghanistan. As per Yousafzai Rahimullah, Pakistan "failed to build a hospital, college, or road that could serve as a visible example of Pakistan's generosity towards Afghanistan." As compared to India, therefore, Pakistan has been unable to project its soft power successfully in Afghanistan (Hanauer & Chalk 2012: 35).

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