Distance, Power Projections and Strategic Investment: A case study of India-Afghanistan relationship in context of Pakistan and China

*Savita Mirdha

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner

Abstract

India and Afghanistan have always been friend since the ages. Buddhism connected the two countries all together along with the ancient silk route extending from china to central Asia. India and Afghanistan have always been good friend except the Taliban period in the beginning of 21st century. In recent years, India is still developing strength in the region, and has made extensive efforts to establish India as a strong country and to influence other countries in the region. Meanwhile India’s neighbour China is also trying to show its presence in this region. This paper is based on the study of India-China policy with relation to Afghanistan, power projection uses and how distance decay effect impacts the relation between two nations. The secondary data of trade, military and infrastructure investment has been used in this article to reach at the final conclusion.

Keywords: Power Projection, trade, bilateral relations, foreign policy

Introduction

India After gaining independence from Britain in 1947 and establishing an independent state in India, India began relations with many nations around the world. Among all others nations, Afghanistan was one of them. Historically, India has maintained excellent relations with Afghanistan since the early years of independence. Both countries strengthened this relationship by signing a friendship agreement between the two countries in the 1950’s, and this friendship continues even today. India is one of the world’s largest power consumers with one of the highest economic growth and 17% of the world’s population, and in 2008 became the world’s fourth largest consumer of oil and in 2020, the third largest consumer of oil. Despite the global financial crisis, India’s energy demand continues to rise. Its dependence on oil imports will also increase manifold by 2035, and India will not have enough domestic energy resources and will import most of its growing energy needs. For this, India and China both have strategic plan, long term goals for their neighbours like Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the biggest player in South Asia, the most important thing for India in Afghanistan is to support the Afghan government that was established after the year 2001. However, the political and security challenges after the announcement of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan have had a major impact on India. Afghanistan faces both national security and political challenges. At the level of security, although counter-terrorism measures taken by US and Afghan military forces have lasted for more than a decade, the Taliban and other Islamist groups continue to have a major political and security impact throughout Afghanistan. At the political level, a new coalition government, formed by President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah, the Chief Executive Officer, after two terms in the presidency of Hamid Karzai, points to possible and uncertain divisions. Facing new challenges, on the one hand, India is striving to continue its “soft measures” to protect its interests in Afghanistan, while on the
other hand, India is strengthening partnerships with international organizations and other regional regions to create conditions conducive to Afghan stability and reconstruction. However, due to the worsening political and security uncertainty in Afghanistan, India still faces a number of challenges (Wang, 2017).

China, and to a large extent India, are often blamed of building up its aid system and taking undue advantage of the natural resources found in neighbouring Asian and African countries. This criticism supported by the belief that that flow of financial and security aid can increase recipient's debt level. It can lead to ignorance of environmental and social impacts because it is solely focus on access to resources and it has has led to the depletion of progress made in traditional services and past efforts (Dornsife, 2013).

The geo-strategy status of Afghanistan as a country of Rimland joining the Eurasian Heartland and the Indian Ocean has enhanced its political significance in the world. Nicholas J. Spykman changed H. J. Mackinder's view of Heartland and argued that the real power of Eurasia lies in what Mackinder's Inner Crescent, not Heartland. He named the Rimland powerhouse and developed another formula, “Regulating the Rimland laws governing Eurasia; who controls Eurasia controls the world”. Afghanistan as a political party made up of three important provinces namely Khyber, Khojak and Gomal and Wakhan-like tunnel that joins Heartland and the lower parts of the Indus. In the British Empire and later in the US, control of Afghanistan was crucial in spreading their influence in Hoodland to develop a continental strategy. In addition, controlling Afghanistan from a Soviet perspective was to gain international connections with Pakistan, India and China. Russia and Pakistan are separated by a carefully negotiated episode of Afghanistan that gives Afghanistan the same border with China (Jackson, 1973).

Perhaps of equal importance, India is interested in preserving Afghanistan as a friendly country capable of guarding even Pakistan, where possible, cultivate goods to influence jobs in Pakistan. India's interest in developing important relations with Afghanistan is small equated with Pakistan's interests in denying India such opportunities and cultivating Afghanistan as a client country, or at least as an undeveloped country to settle the concerns of the Pakistani region. Remarkably, Pakistan has demanded expanding its power in Afghanistan since 1947, to varying degrees, and has failed in many ways, such as Kabul-without the Taliban government has always been closer to Delhi than Islamabad but the viewpoint for regional security is vague and likely consigned to sporadic crises due to the presence of China in this region (Carol, 2010).

India-Afghanistan relationship in the context of China

The smooth engagement of India and Afghanistan, both at the level of government and society almost two decades ago, suggests that India has been able to successfully implement its soft energy policies and power projection strategy. Through its cultural and political values, economic incentives and strong connections, India has been able to convince the international community of its importance to the region. President Trump's new South Asian policy, in which he praised India's priorities to Afghanistan over China, has significance importance in term of relationship of both countries in context of Afghanistan.

China and India, two of the most important countries, will take on the huge responsibility of stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan. He has identified Afghanistan as a destination for foreign investment in essential oil and gas, scarce natural resources and mineral resources. India's role in Afghanistan after the 9/11 phase suggests India's willingness to emerge as a regional power and it was time to try to guess the power. India actively participated in the Bonn summit and contributed to the emergence of post-Taliban political power in Afghanistan. Since then India's main emphasis has been on the system in the country as mandated under the Bonn Convention of 2001 (Choudhury, 2011).

In India, stability in Afghanistan remains important at the national level. Its policy, however, still outlines its core values and a system of non-disruptive and coercive belief. In terms of strength, its complexity and its many internal and external factors, it is important to understand India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, the factors that shape similarities and possible changes.
India has been able to maintain strong relations with Afghanistan based not only on historical and cultural connections but also on the strong strategic relations they have built over the years. At the heart of India's foreign policy has been the demonstration of its soft power, with amazing historical features of preparation. It has increased its soft spot on the policy of providing economic incentives to Afghanistan in a consensual rather than oppressive manner. Above all, India's role in Afghanistan is far different from the role played by other major regional and international powers, and its involvement extends beyond government to public relations.

India's crude oil demand could reach 5 million barrels a day, making it the third largest consumer in the world after the United States and China. India is in dire need of energy due to rapid economic growth, slower growth and increased car sales. The International Energy Agency predicts that by 2040 India will be consuming a quarter of the world's energy production.

India severed ties with Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 1996. New Delhi resumed its relationship with Kabul after the Taliban was ousted and a caretaker government led by President Hamid Karzai took office in December 2001. India has spent $3 billion over the past 20 years to rebuild war-torn Afghanistan, including major projects of infrastructure such as the construction of the Afghan Parliament building in Kabul and the Salma dam in Herat. As India gained hearts in Afghanistan, it is clear that it sent jitters to Pakistan. The Indian ambassador to Kabul and its envoys in Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kandahar were therefore repeatedly attacked by terrorists. Many Indians working on development projects in Afghanistan were abducted or injured or killed in a terrorist attack.

For the past ten years India has been using various soft materials to further its interest in Afghanistan. Last year, India undertook 116 High Impact Community Development Projects in 31 Afghan provinces. Recently, it opened the Afghan-India Friendly Dam, formerly known as Salma Dam. This highlights the nature of India's role in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The smooth engagement of India and Afghanistan, both at the level of government and society almost two decades ago, suggests that India has been able to effectively implement its soft power policies and power projection. With its cultural and political values, economic incentives and strong links, India has been able to convince the international community of its importance to the region. In comparison to China, India has gained more faith in Afghanistan but with the ongoing withdrawn of American troops from Afghanistan, all efforts seem to be in vain. India is also reluctant to withdraw its security personnel, diplomats and officials from Afghanistan. The most suitable option for India in the near future is to couple its diplomatic approach to continue developmental support to Afghanistan. Critically, It would permit India to safeguard its presence in Afghanistan without undermining the gains of the last 15 years, irrespective of whichever power leads the reconciliation process.

References