



ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ

Значение Афганистана для региональной безопасности в Южной и Восточной Азии

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Аннотация: В статье оценивается важность Афганистана для Южной и Восточной Азии и ее региональной безопасности. Азия в целом и ее южный регион в частности играют все более важную роль в мировой политике и экономике. Полагаем, что Южная Азия развивается и будет иметь гораздо лучшие позиции в будущем как в политике, так и в экономике во всей Азии и мире в целом. Этот регион обусловлен динамичным взаимодействием экономических и дипломатических факторов и безопасности, усиливающих друг друга из-за сложного характера территориальных претензий и религиозной экстремистской деятельности. Стратегическое расположение Афганистана значимо для таких стран Азии как Пакистан, Индия, а также для Китая, Ирана и России для их стабильности и безопасности в регионе. Поскольку Афганистан по-прежнему является убежищем для международных террористических группировок и талибов, то он представляет собой серьезную угрозу для региона и мира в целом. Из-за геостратегического положения Афганистана любая существенная проблема будет влиять на стабильность и безопасность в регионе, как это было до недавнего времени. Дальнейшие сменяющие друг друга режимы в Пакистане убедительно старались навязать благоприятное правительство в Афганистане, но эта политика только навредила им. Для Китая важность Афганистана становится очевидной из-за внутренней безопасности в регионе Синьцзян. Иран хотел бы видеть Афганистан свободным от влияния США. С другой стороны, Россия обеспокоена притоком опиума и других наркотиков из Афганистана в Центральную Азию.

Ключевые слова: региональная безопасность, региональная связь, разрешение конфликтов, международный терроризм, международные отношения, международная торговля, стратегия

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Importance of Afghanistan for Regional Security in South and East Asia

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Abstract: In this article, the importance of Afghanistan for South and East Asia and for regional security is assessed. Asia as a whole and the south Asian region in particular is playing an increasingly important role in world politics and economy. It's believed that south Asia is moving forward and will be in a much better position both in politics and economy in the future of Asia and world. The region has been characterized by the dynamic inter-play of security, economic and diplomatic factors reinforcing each other owing to the complex nature of territorial claims and religious extremist activities. Afghanistan strategic location is so important for south Asian countries like Pakistan, India and also for China, Iran and Russia stability and security in the region. As Afghanistan is still a safe haven for international terrorists' groups and Taliban, therefore it's a serious threat to the region and world. Due to the geo-strategic Location of Afghanistan any problem will affect the region stability and security as it did in the past too. Further Successive regimes in Pakistan have tried their best to impose a favorable government in Afghanistan but those policies harmed them only. For China, the importance of Afghanistan becomes evident from the internal security in Xinjiang region. Iran would like to see Afghanistan free from US existence. From other side Russia worry about the inflow of opium and other narcotics from Afghanistan to the central Asia.

Keywords: Regional security, Regional connectivity, Conflict resolution, international terrorism, international relationship, international trade, strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is located in South-Central Asia. It is variously described as being located within Central Asia, South Asia, or the Middle East. It has an important geo-strategic location in south Asia, which connecting East and West Asia or the Middle East. Afghanistan's security

and prosperity depends on its neighbors. Afghanistan was always a target of various invaders, as well as a center from which local powers invaded neighboring regions to form their own empires. Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan was a key focal point in ancient

Silk Road [1]. Its strategic importance can be understood by the following:

1. Regional Security and geo-strategic location.
2. Regional Balance of Power.
3. Pipeline Routes.
4. Natural Resources.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND GEO-STRATEGIC LOCATION

Afghanistan is located between the four most populous and resource-rich regions in the world: South Asia, Central and North Asia, the Middle East and the Far East. The South Asian sub-region with India at the center and surrounded by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka Myanmar and Maldives has been in the focus of world attention in recent years (Fig. 1.).

It is becoming clear that Afghanistan is increasingly an integral part of South Asia. It may not feature in the «official» categorization of South Asian states (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), but it impacts the two most important states of the region, Pakistan and India [3].

A stable Afghanistan is important for regional security in South Asia including India. For India, energy security, looking at prospects of a TAPI or similar pipeline is so important. Further, India has big economic stakes in the country. When the Taliban government collapsed after that India start supporting Afghan government for developmental purposes. India has a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghan government, in which India agreed to assist in the training and equipping of Afghan security forces. Further Afghanistan is also important for Internal Security and stability of Pakistan. Pakistan is severely affected by the extremists and militant threats from its Afghanistan bordered area [4].

For China, the importance of Afghanistan becomes evident from the internal security in Xinjiang region. There are claims of links between Al Qaeda and Xinjiang Islamic terrorist organizations. For Iran, Afghanistan is important, it would like to see it free from US. Russia worry about the inflow of opium and other narcotics from Afghanistan to the central Asia [5].



Fig. 1. Geographical Map of Afghanistan [2].

REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER

Afghanistan itself is a path which provides for super powers to control and put pressures on eastern giants and it makes the country important for major powerful empires.

All countries that we mentioned above are non-allied with each other, with no direct sequence geographically. This is evidenced by the competing political and strategic interests between the three nuclear weapon countries of the region viz: China, India and Pakistan. There is no question of sorting out Pakistan and India's issues with each other without the country featuring somehow in the discussion. The Cold War in Afghanistan and the US War on Terror have made sure of that [6].

Pakistan, India and Central Asian countries, as well Saudi Arabia and Iran, have been providing assistance to Afghanistan, especially in infrastructure and construction. However, this is more so because of their own interests rather than to meet the development needs of Afghanistan [7].

Afghanistan is already a member of some regional and economic forums like South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) but the participation of Afghanistan has not been very effective.

Afghanistan became member of SAARC in 2007 in the 14th summit of SAARC which was held in New Delhi. Both political rivals India and Pakistan have shown their interest and welcome Afghanistan as a new member of SAARC [8].

India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan must understand that basing policy on illusions and supported by unrealistic rhetoric will deepen mistrust. Instead, they must pursue rapprochement by addressing differences between them, strengthening state-to-state partnerships, and further confidence building measures the US, Russia and China – which have had fluctuating

interests in Afghanistan and the Due to its location, Afghanistan serves as the epicenter of division of power. It clearly divides the powers of Russia, China and Pakistan, India and to its left, Iran and then the middle East [9].

PIPELINE ROUTES

Afghanistan's historical significance is due to its presence in the ancient silk route which was an important trade and commerce route on land. Though Afghanistan itself is not energy rich, but its position along with Iran and Turkmenistan makes it more important. As Turkmenistan has one of largest Gas reserves in the world. This gas can be marketed only via pipelines. These pipelines can easily connect South Asia to Central Asia. One example is the proposed Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (or TAPI). It this pipeline sees the light of the day; it will be equivalent to a modern Silk Road.

Afghanistan is an important geographical trade passage for linking the middle East to South Asia Countries of the region seeking opportunities to complete massive regional energy connectivity projects. Some of these include:

1. The Central Asia-South Asia (known as CASA-1000), transmitting surplus electricity from the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan.
2. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India (TAPI) pipeline, supplying natural gas from the Central Asian country to the South Asian ones.
3. CASAREM, the Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market, whereby Afghanistan could effectively operate under the connectivity strictures of not only the FNRC, CASA-1000, and TUTAP, and TAPI, but many other connectivity initiatives on the horizon.
4. The Five Nations Railway (FNRC) Corridor, connecting China to Iran via Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan [10].

NATURAL RESOURCES

Latest research shows that despite the large scales of Lithium, iron, copper, cobalt niobium and gold mineral deposits in Afghanistan, there are other potential undiscovered minerals such as cobalt, chromium, silver, barite, sulfur, talc, magnesium, salt, mica, marble, ruby, emerald and lapis lazuli. It's said that some known deposits of asbestos, mercury, lead, zinc, fluor-spar, bauxite, beryllium, and lithium deposits are also present in the country (Fig. 2).

The newly founded natural resources of Afghanistan will play a magnificent role in economic growth of the country. The latest study on mineral deposits found Afghanistan's potential lithium deposits as large as Bolivia Lithium deposits, which currently has the world's largest known reserves of the light-weight metal. Because of the long war in Afghanistan, Afghans were not able to use these natural resources, it's left underground. Now Afghan government is trying to invite foreign investors to invest in this field, but unfortunately security still remains the main challenge.

Afghanistan would become world's biggest exporter of iron and copper in the upcoming decade. Poverty and unemployment in the region cannot be eradicated without mutual cooperation. Security and stability will not be ensured until poverty is not addressed in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. One way to eradicate poverty in Afghanistan is to invest on natural resources and extract it [12].

WHY AFGHANISTAN' IS SO IMPORTANT FOR PAKISTAN?

Pakistan and Afghanistan two neighbors' countries in the south Asia with long history of conflict. Durand line is one of the main reasons of a conflict between these two countries, which still remain unsolved. Neighboring state widely considered most important, in this regard Pakistan, which playing double and a negative role in Afghan affairs for decades.

India and Pakistan two important countries of south Asia are having economic and trade relations with Afghanistan. As Pakistan was a training place for Mujahedeen in the past.

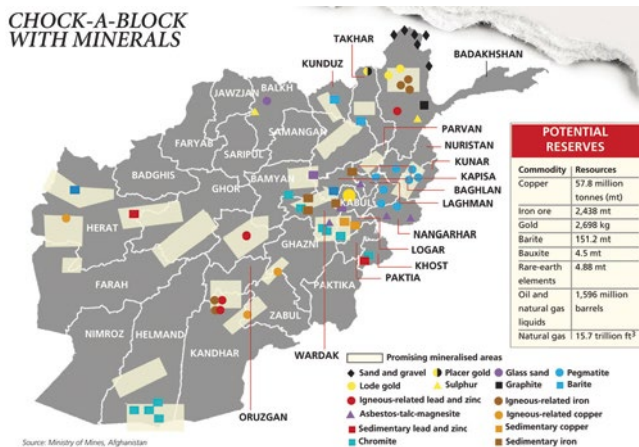


Fig. 2. Natural Resources Map of Afghanistan [11]

Now Pakistan security services maintain ties to Afghan insurgent groups, most notably the Haqqani Network and Taliban at all.

Pakistan can increasingly facilitate Afghan trade and get the opportunity of being a state that has maritime route towards the rest of the world. Such steps will further boost the economic development of both neighboring countries. In Pakistan, in fact, there is still a need of concentration on the internal development of different sectors in the Afghanistan and for the reason somehow; Pakistan has planned many projects to enhance its role in the social and economic development of the Afghanistan [13].

A stable Afghanistan presents several direct benefits to Pakistan.

1. Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, fled during war against Soviet Union and civil war in Afghanistan. Over the years even more Afghans were born in Pakistan, which increased the economic burden on a country that was already struggling. In last few years Pakistani government has forced several hundred thousand refugees to return to Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan will allow these refugees to return to Afghanistan and will be not further burden on Pakistan's economy.
2. Second, with an improving economic situation in Afghanistan, supplemented by enhanced security, the region could serve as a transit hub for countries like Pakistan to reap the benefits of trade.
3. Third, cooperating on economic development while also emphasizing security will be a win-win for both countries and allow for the improvement of cross-border relations. So, they need to focus on a win-win policy rather confronting each other and there is a need of a close cooperation between both countries' security forces, it will lay the groundwork for eliminating militancy along the

Afghanistan-Pakistan border (the Federally Administered Tribal Areas or FATA), which has been a militant haven [14].

WHY AFGHANISTAN IS SO IMPORTANT TO INDIA?

Relation between India and Afghanistan is not only relation between two countries, it is relation between two nations which have a long and deep historical and cultural root. It traces even back to the Indus Valley Civilization. India is a most reliable regional partner for Afghanistan and the largest contributor of development assistance in the region, including civil development projects such as the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam and the Afghan parliament building.

India and Afghanistan share centuries-old rich heritage with deep-rooted linkages in the field of arts, culture, architecture, cuisine and language [15].

The only issue Afghanistan had with India is Pakistan's worry about the Indian presence in Afghanistan, in particular the misinformation regarding re-opening of consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad bordered provinces with Pakistan and the «Indian agents» working from them. The Indians have a very limited intelligence activities in Afghanistan and has never asked Afghanistan to work with them against Pakistan in any way. India continues to worry about a destabilized Pakistan, and extremist Islamic movements within their own population.

In 2005, India proposed Afghanistan's membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

In 2016, Afghanistan supported India's boycott of the SAARC summit hosted by Pakistan. This was a major diplomatic victory for India [16].

India has strategic Agreement with Afghanistan signed in 2011. This agreement shapes India overall engagement with Afghanistan. India agreed to help in the equipping and ca-

capacity building programs for Afghan National Security Forces.

The inauguration of the Dedicated Air Cargo Corridor in June 2017 between Kabul-Delhi and Kandahar-Delhi has provided a fresh impetus to bilateral trade [17].

WHY AFGHANISTAN'S STABILITY IS SO IMPORTANT TO CHINA?

China and Afghanistan have a long history of relations which involved both the movement of goods and ideas. Tea and fruit were traded across the border, and Buddhism and Islam spread into China from Afghanistan. China-Afghanistan has Strategic and Cooperative Partnership in which they agreed to cooperate in the political, economic, cultural and security fields, as well as on regional and international affairs. Afghanistan's instability affects China's own stability, particularly that of its terrorism-prone Xinjiang region. Members of the Turkistan Islamic Party, a Xinjiang-focused Islamic separatist group, have been apprehended in Afghanistan. China fears that an unstable Afghanistan will permit greater use of Afghan territory by the militants to plot attacks on Chinese territory and sustain the country's thriving drug industry. This can threaten social stability in China and the perceived ability of the Chinese government to protect the populace from harm. China is prepared to play a key role, and has sought great power status consistent with its own strength that can influence the international system [18].

Accordingly, Beijing's ultimate objective is to create an area of stability across its western territory, have a secure corridor into the energy rich Middle East region, develop comprehensive trade and investment opportunities, and spread the Chinese soft power to increase the country's overall strategic reach. In conclusion, Chinese policies in Afghanistan may be seen as part of a larger experiment [19].

CONCLUSION

Geo-strategic and Geo-political location of Afghanistan in Asia caused decades of war and misery for Afghans, it's still a center of conflict between super powers and some countries in the region. Afghanistan as heart of Asia playing important role in world politics, international relation, regional and international security. As we mentioned above Afghanistan is in great position to link the markets of South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia and China as a transit and transport hub.

Two neighbors' countries of Afghanistan in south Asia, India and Pakistan cooperation with Afghanistan will increase the prospects for peace and stability in this country and also in the whole region, it will facilitate the ground for better economic cooperation, regional integration. Further, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan should work for promotion of trade and economic relations rather than security issues in their foreign policy.

It is crucial for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to establish greater interactions at different levels specifically at the government to government level for border management, the revival of Afghan peace process and to enhance trade and commerce.

Relations between these three neighbors Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan in South Asia will have direct implications on the peace, security, prosperity, and stability of the broader region.

Further, the 2019 presidential elections and US-Taliban peace talk will shape the security environment in the near future. If the election results can be accepted by all parties, then attention can be placed on restarting on reconciliation efforts. These talks must be intra-Afghan in nature and offer concrete solutions to a range of issues including ceasefires, withdrawal of foreign troops and the Taliban ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

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