



## ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE OF GEO-POLITICAL RELATIONS OF INDIA AND AFGANISTAN

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article provides an introduction to the geopolitical significance of Afghanistan for India in the geostrategic and geo-economics context of the twenty-first century. The geopolitical and security situation in south Asia has worsened since the United States pulled out of Afghanistan and the Taliban retook Kabul. India, Afghanistan's neighbor, has always been a staunch advocate for a government run by Afghans. The relevance of Afghanistan for international stability and progress will also be explored.*

**Keyword:** -Political, Country, Policy, Afghanistan, India

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India and Afghanistan have had a long and fruitful history of cultural interaction. India has been on good terms with every Afghan government with the exception of the Taliban. India became an important player in Afghanistan's reconstruction after the conflict and made significant contributions to the country's development and peace. India has also stepped up its efforts to restore its influence in Afghanistan. Over the years, their connection has shifted from shared history and culture to productive partnership in modern advancement. After the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, India's government immediately set to work increasing and boosting Afghanistan's capability for the sake of the country's long-term prospects. In order to regain its previous prominence, India is making progress economically, politically, and strategically.

History, geography, and strategy all interact in geopolitics. With this wide definition in mind, geopolitics tries to examine how geographical considerations affect politics generally and international relations in particular. As a result, geopolitical studies focus on how factors like a nation's location, climate, natural resources, population, and physical topography shape its diplomatic stance. Afghanistan's strategic relevance as a land route to India dates back to the country's founding. Gaining strategic control over Afghanistan's commerce channels requires gaining control of the country. The geopolitical and geo-economics contest for domination in the area has Afghanistan at its center as a vital point of interest and junction. In addition, it is surrounded by strong countries. For this reason, it is still an essential geopolitical need for every major state, since it plays a crucial role in effectively linking the areas.



## **II. The Geopolitics of Afghanistan: Its regional and global significances**

Afghanistan, a landlocked mountainous nation, is part of central Asia in terms of its history, geography, politics, culture, and strategic importance. Aside from the fact that it's a good way to wow a girl, it's also a good way to impress a guy. China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan all have borders with this country. Due to India's unlawful occupation of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), a minor section of Afghanistan's border with India is in dispute. Afghanistan's geography and history have combined to create a shattered country. Many attempts at imperial conquest have been thwarted by the country's harsh desert and mountain terrain. Afghanistan has a total of 652,200 square kilometers. The Hindukush Range separates the northern and southern halves of Afghanistan. About three-quarters of Afghanistan is covered by other significant mountains in the central and eastern parts of the nation (Political Map of Afghanistan - Nations Online Project, n.d.). Northeast of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and China lie the Pamir Mountains. Passes in the Suleiman mountains, such as the well-known Khaybar passes, have allowed travelers to reach the Indian subcontinent from the East.

Afghanistan's history is marked by foreign interference. Afghanistan is strategically located at the crossroads of Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia. Regional, extra-regional, and external superpowers use Afghanistan as a staging ground for force projection and competition over the geopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-economic significance of Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia. Maintaining hegemony over vital trade routes, oil and natural gas supplies is the primary objective of superpowers. It is also known that Afghanistan has a substantial rare earth element deposit. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there are one million metric tons of rare earth elements in Afghanistan's Helmand region that have not been discovered. Unmanned aerial aircraft, turbines, electric cars, and other forms of ICT hardware all rely heavily on these earth metals. Pipelines nowadays, owing to energy security demands, are like railroads in the 19th century: they link commercial partners and have an outsized impact on a whole area. The TAPI project is a clear illustration of this. The primary reason for the escalation of competition among the concerned nations is the growing conventional and non-traditional dangers and difficulties, such as religious extremism, terrorism, narco-terrorism, nuclear material proliferation, and assertive nationalism. It is common knowledge that Afghanistan is landlocked, restricting its access to regional and international commerce. Furthermore, the stability, security, and prosperity of a landlocked country are all intertwined with those of its neighbors. A peaceful Afghanistan is key to regional connectivity in South and Central Asia, and the Afghan government has demonstrated this commitment since the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001 (A Peaceful Afghanistan Key to Regional Connectivity in South and Central Asia, n.d.).

## **III. Geo-strategic and geo-economic Significance of Afghanistan for India**

There are deep historical, cultural, religious, humanitarian, and emotional ties between India and Afghanistan. "India-Afghanistan ties are ancient as history," the current prime minister, Narendra Modi, has declared. Both the "Heart of Asia" and "The graveyard of empires" refer to Afghanistan's location. These characteristics show that careful geographical interpretation is required to unravel geostrategic and geoeconomic complexities. Culturally and politically, it was a part of the vast Indian subcontinent until



the advent of Islam, Arab commerce, religious speakers, and troops. The Hindukush Mountains were included in the vast Mauryan Empire. Buddhism and Hinduism both have their cultural roots in Afghanistan. The Bamiyan Buddha statue represents this tranquil faith in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was the gateway for the spread of Buddhism to Central Asia and China. In the middle ages, Afghanistan was home to the formidable Mughal Empire, whose founder was an Afghan named Babur. Afghanistan has played a crucial geopolitical role in ensuring India's existence, wealth, and peace since the middle ages. Afghanistan has been the birthplace of several ambitious groups and emperors (including Mahmud Ghaznavi, Muhammad Ghori, Babur, Nader Shah, and Ahmad Shah Durrani) who sought to disseminate their beliefs, expand their territories, and plunder the country's wealth. After the Crimean War and the beginning of the Great Game (a political and diplomatic contest), the British Indian government under colonial authority in India attempted to make Afghanistan a buffer state in order to preserve the Balance of Power. The British government was well aware that Russia might launch an assault on India through neighboring Afghanistan.

#### **IV. India's interaction with Afghanistan: 1947–2009**

Afghanistan's stance on the creation of Pakhtunistan, its vote opposing Pakistan's entry into the United Nations in 1948 (making it the only country to do so), and its refusal to toe Pakistan's line on the question of Kashmir set the stage for forging close links quite early on with the new Republic of India that took over the reins of power from the British. The relationship between the two countries strengthened as India moved closer to Moscow and Afghanistan became more reliant on Soviet help. The two countries' relations remained cordial, and they had strong cultural and small economic ties.

After the Soviet military intervened in Afghanistan in December 1979 to support a pro-Soviet Communist administration that had stolen power via a brutal coup dubbed the Saur Revolution, India's Afghan policy faced its first significant test. Because of its non-alignment stance, New Delhi now faces an even greater difficulty. When the Soviet Union attempted to intervene in his country, then-Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh strongly objected and demanded that their forces leave immediately. When Indira Gandhi staged a stunning political comeback and was re-elected as prime minister in January 1980, this stance was quickly abandoned.<sup>4</sup> She said that the Soviet Union sent soldiers to Afghanistan "only after Pakistan started training Afghan rebels and sending them in to topple the government there... nonetheless India was opposed to the USSR's presence and it had told that country so."<sup>5</sup> But although it avoided an outright support of Soviet military action, India routinely decided to abstain on crucial United Nations resolutions asking for Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan.

The following four variables largely determined India's attitude to the Soviet incursion in Afghanistan. It's no secret that the U.S. government is trying to persuade other countries to adopt its economic model. Second, Islamabad's crucial involvement in Washington's thawing of relations with Beijing. Third, an increase in American Navy presence in the Indian Ocean. Sixth, Pakistan's evident strategic advantage in Afghanistan stems from the dread of a mujahedeen triumph. The Soviet Union had become India's primary source of defense hardware and space technology, and despite strong opposition from the United



States and China, India needed Soviet Union support to advance its interests on pressing international issues like Kashmir and the Bangladesh war of 1971.

By being the only nation outside the Warsaw Pact to recognize the pro-Kremlin rule in Kabul, India's moral standing was diminished, particularly within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and its image was tarnished inside Afghanistan. New Delhi's decision in 1982 to revive the Indo-Afghan Joint Commission, which had been put on hold after the Saur revolution of 1978 for economic and technical aid, further weakened India's standing internationally.

Despite Najibullah's increasingly tenuous hold over the nation, India supported all Kabul administrations backed by Moscow and provided minimal developmental aid to the Najibullah regime. Najibullah's rule, however, collapsed spectacularly within months after the Soviet collapse, and a mujahideen alliance headed by Badrudin Rabbani took power in its stead. India, seeing its political options were highly constrained, threw its support behind Rabbani despite its misgivings about his Islamist Jamaat-i-Islami background and his apparent willingness to replicate the stance of Pakistan's previous administration towards Kashmir. But the mujahideen under Rabbani were plagued by factionalism, guaranteeing their own defeat and plunging Afghanistan back into a bloody civil war.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Today, geopolitics is more accurately described as geo-economics. Economic issues bring about diverse social, ethnic, political, physical, and mental changes, making the economy crucial to a country's stability, prosperity, and development as a rising tide. The restoration of the Taliban to Kabul is a potential safe haven for terrorists and terrorist organizations, with global repercussions beginning in the Afghanistan–Pakistan region. India has to keep the energy flowing and the connections open with the nations of the Middle East and the Central Asian Republics to protect its crucial economic, geopolitical, and cultural interests. Therefore, New Delhi seeks favorable ties with the Afghan Government, since India can best meet its essential interests and requirements if it has good relations with the Afghan Government.

India may feel further pressured by the powers that be as the international community scrambles to find a way out of the Afghan quagmire. If India wants to be a significant player in Afghan affairs and avoid political marginalization, "New Delhi must recalibrate its strategic calculus in Afghanistan" by taking an active role in the political re-alignments taking place in Kabul, rather than looking down its nose at them. This will be a challenge for India in the summer of 2010. If New Delhi wants to stop Pakistan's ISI from having a free run again, it must expand its political participation outside the perimeter of the Kabul administration. Second, without a politically and militarily stable, no hostile framework, India's endeavors to usher in growth would be futile.



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