

**EVOLVING DYNAMICS OF AFGHAN-PEACE PROCESSES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN
PAKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS**

By

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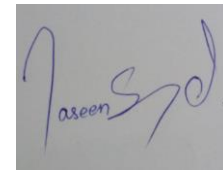
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April 26, 2022

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Dedication

With modesty, I devote this work to my (late) Father, my beloved Mother, my brothers, sister and companions, and to all the staff individuals from the International Relations Department of NUML who has helped me all through this wonderful excursion. Without their assistance, I could never have had the option to overcome this. I might want to say thanks to Allah Almighty that he conceded me the will and solidarity to continue to push ahead despite numerous unfavorable hardships.

Abstract

Afghanistan has been a bone of contention in the Asian continent for nearly about half a decade. The reason behind this is the political instability in the country and some external and internal factors which have not proved to be beneficial for the country. After a long stay of the United States in Afghanistan, the Taliban finally regained the control of Afghanistan and established their government. This phenomenon has changed the landscape of politics, economy and security at regional level. Presently, peacebuilding in Afghanistan has become an essential component of regional security. Afghanistan's neighbors namely Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and China are now exposed to potential threats emanating from Afghanistan. Moreover, the present crisis in Afghanistan has been steering daunting threats to regional connectivity projects between Pakistan with the Central Asian Republics. This study is examining the efforts of China, Russia, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics in Afghanistan's peace process. Later an account of likely threats to energy, rail and roads projects has been presented. In the end, recommendations are provided by observing the dynamics of peace process in Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to analyze the impact of the Afghan peace process on the relationship of Central Asian Republics (CARs), namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan with Pakistan. The ongoing peace process in Afghanistan demands a stable neighborhood. Since there are several stakeholders of regional peace and stability, not solely the United States but Russia and China also, the complexity becomes grave as there are deep-rooted clashes between these stakeholders. However, if the peace process is finalized, Afghanistan, CARs, and Pakistan can become huge beneficiaries of various economic projects underway, such as the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). America has been striving for a long to harness the people of Afghanistan, yet nothing is achieved. In this regard, the United States (US) is consolidating its position with the help of its neighbors of Afghanistan by offering C5+1 to CARs. There are several projects the US wants to sponsor such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Indian gas Pipeline (TAPI). It will be a source of commercial linkages and it would also improve the security condition of Afghanistan. Russia is another important Actor in Afghanistan's peace process; it wants to play the role of security guarantor of Post-Soviet Central Asia. Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is worth mentioning project which currently holds Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is a potential future member of it. The third important peace stakeholder is China which offers several projects of geographical connectivity. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is at the top of these projects.

All the above-mentioned projects are indicating peace through commercial activities in Afghanistan and show the interests of great powers behind their geographical connectivity ambitions. Hence, it is established that peace-building in Afghanistan is not possible for Russia, China and the US without earning the support of neighbors of Afghanistan, namely Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In this background, the study would find out peace-building mechanisms of great power through Pakistan and CARs and it would also examine the impacts of the peace process on the relations of Pakistan with CARs.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a long struggle of peace building in Afghanistan by great powers namely Russia China and the United States (US). The events of 9/11 instantly transformed the interests of great powers in Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia. The continuous unrest in Afghanistan has given birth to a new discourse of peace-building through regional connectivity. However, the continuous suffering and confrontations made this state a hotspot of major powers' tangle. Resultantly, the whole region especially Pakistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan have become a new ray of hope to build peace in the region through economic activities. The cooperation between states is seemingly inviting China, Russia and US to start connectivity projects, yet the indecisiveness of stakeholders puts peace efforts in limbo. Since Pakistan, Afghanistan, and CARs have common religions and cultures, their support for each other is the center of the peace process either initiated by the US, China or Russia. However, the dilemma is the power struggle between these three great powers and emanating terrorist threats in the region. In this situation, this study rotated around the examination of territorial availability among Pakistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) and its viability in the continuous harmony process in Afghanistan.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant in the sense that, that It redefined the importance of Pakistan for CARs in a sense that it stays a significant player in the district. The geo-key area makes it hard for CARs to ignore Pakistan. Lately, Pakistan's relations with the CARs have upgraded.

The study also explored why Central Asia is more important than other regions for Pakistan and on what grounds. CARs are rich in oil and gas. It highlighted the possibilities of the connectivity between Pakistan and CARs via Afghanistan to the readers by giving a possible way out of the Afghan peace process which can help policy-makers and students to understand the alternative potential solutions to instability in Afghanistan, with a comprehensive account of the peace-building dynamic of Afghanistan.

Objectives of the Study

The study had the following objectives;

- To map out the roadblocks in the Afghan peace process initiated by China, Russia and the US.
- To understand the primacy of regional connectivity for peace-building in Afghanistan.
- To analyze the Afghan peace process from different angles.

Research Questions

- What are the prospects of the Afghan peace process for China, Russia and the US?
- How can the Afghan peace process establish regional connectivity between Pakistan and CARs?
- How can Pakistan and CARs help consolidate peace efforts in Afghanistan?

Theoretical Framework

The connectivity of Pakistan with CARs is only possible if peace will be established in Afghanistan. Peace means stability and prosperity for Afghanistan whereas stability results in cooperation among the neighbors and the regional actors which can be further resulted in the prosperity of the region, so after understanding the current situation of Afghanistan and the need for time in terms of connectivity of this region in a progressive way we can find out that if we look through the lens of Neo-Liberalism, founding members of this framework are Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. As neoliberalism worldview is established on two interlinked pledges the essential capacity of requests to deliver substance and elaboration encyclopedically; and the increased prospects for peace in surrounding inter-state integration along liberal institutional and request lines.

Neoliberalism highlights the importance when it comes to competition. It is important to understand the act that Neoliberalism shed some light on when it comes to the various elements of the characteristics of the theory and practice, but the main connection of Neoliberalism is with the

free economy. There are different terms which have been used for the free economy when it comes to the theory of Neoliberalism. This element in Neoliberalism states the very fact that economic progress and sustained profit growth are some of the core elements which can induce prosperity and progress. If economic growth is not present in Neoliberalism, it can minimize the element of progress for humans. Therefore, the main focus of states is on Neoliberalism where states intend to create good and cordial relations with each other based on combined economic progress. This is the main implication when it comes to the theory of Neoliberalism.

Consequently, neoliberal is just a potential hypothetical system that attempts to make sense of the local participation and the network of the area. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye have been viewed as the organizers of the neoliberal way of thinking. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, contribute their work in light of neorealism, and foster a restricting hypothesis they name "Complex relationship" Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye make sense of, "... complex reliance once in a while draws nearer to reality than does authenticity." In making sense of this, Keohane and Nye cover the three suppositions in pragmatist thought: First, states are intelligible units and are the prevailing entertainers in worldwide relations; second, force is a usable and viable instrument of strategy; lastly, the suspicion that there is a progressive system in global legislative issues.

Literature Review and Research Gap

This study is novel as it explores the connection between the proposed commercial activities through geographical connections. There is very little work done by Pakistani scholars on the peace process in Afghanistan from the angle which is being presented here.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asian Republics (CARs) have a very important geostrategic location in which Afghanistan and CARs are landlocked countries at the crossroads of South Asia. Moreover, this locale has seen many conflicts and clashes throughout the most recent years. As indicated in "Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia", Ahmed Rashid's significant book Taliban acquainted American perusers with that now-famous system. In this new work, he gets back to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia to survey the horrendous fallout of America's bombed battle on fear. Called "Pakistan's ideal and most intrepid correspondent" by Christopher Hitchens, Rashid has demonstrated that he is a voice of

reason amid the mayhem of present-day Central Asia. Drop into Chaos is his rankling scrutinizes of American arrangement a desperate admonition and an enthusiastic call to address these sad methodologies before these faltering states compromise worldwide dependability and carry obliteration to our reality¹.

Whereas in “The Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan” in which author G. Jones comprehends and exerts his focus on various issues and topics. However, the main question on which the focus is given is the question of how insurgency developed to a level that could not be handled. When the attacks of 9/11 took place, the US was agitated to remove the Taliban from the government in Afghanistan. This is what they did by overthrowing the regime of the Taliban. A peaceful and coexistent society was created after the removal of the Taliban. Some hard measures were taken by the United States of America. Just for an example, the United States of America carried out extensive military operations against the various operators of the Taliban. Moreover, the United States of America carried out detailed attacks against the stakeholders of the government and other banned groups such as Al – Qaeda to make sure that the United States of America can dismantle their operations. But in the meantime, the United States of America was getting its focus diverted from one war to the other which is also mentioned by Jones in his book. For instance, the United States of America was agitated to step up in the Iraq war. This is where the United States of America provided a chance to the banned outfits in Afghanistan to take their heads up once again. It is important to understand that the United States of America indulged in the Iraq war and a lot of resources which were used by the United States of America in the Afghan war were being used in the Iraq war. There was no real progress made by the United States of America in Afghanistan as they were only capable to push the Al-Qaeda headquarters to just certain miles.²

¹ Ahmed Rashid, “Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia” *‘Penguin’*, (April 7, 2009) 498 p

² Seth G. Jones, “In the Graveyard of Empires America's War in Afghanistan”, *‘Paperback’* (April 12, 2010) https://www.rand.org/pubs/commercial_books/CB416.html

Where The Islamic State in Khorasan: Afghanistan, Pakistan and the New Central Asian Jihad³ by Antonio Giustozzi observes the position of another banned outfit, named the Islamic State in the province of Khorasan. It is also believed by a lot of scholars that this place is the main site when it comes to the functions and operations of the Islamic State in the South Asian region. Though there are no fixed or apparent reports present it is a near to a certain fact that the Islamic State is operating via Khorasan. Most of the activities of the Islamic State were present in this specific region. All the phases including the phase of revolution of the Islamic State were present in this specific area. Therefore, it is important to understand that by the information which has been attained from the various interviews and other data material from the members of the Islamic State, it is observed that the book contains a lot of elements and contents which are useful information. Just for an example, the Islamic State's whole funding model has been explained in the book which is published all around the world. The relation of the Islamic State with the different elements and power groups present across the region is another core content which has been discussed in the book. Therefore, it will not be wrong to state that book has covered some core issues and aspects concerning the Islamic State. It is also observed in the work that at the start, the model on which the Islamic State worked was not realistic. They had very high-end aims which were not possible for the Islamic State to achieve. As of now, the Islamic State have more realistic goals which also include the slow recovery of the group.

In the book “Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan,”⁴ Robert D. Kaplan overcame the risks of war-attacked Afghanistan during the 1980s, living among the mujahidin-the "troopers of God"- whose relentless dedication to Islam energized their central goal to expel the imposing Soviet trespassers. In Soldiers of God, we follow Kaplan's uncommon excursion and figure out how the obstructed Soviet attack led to the savage Taliban and the characterizing global fire of the twenty-first century. In The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence.⁵

³ Antonio Giustozzi, “the Islamic State in Khorasan: Afghanistan, Pakistan and the New Central Asian Jihad”. (London, *Hurst*, September 1, 2018)

⁴ Robert D. Kaplan *Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. (*Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group*) 2008)

⁵ Pauline Jones Luong, “The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence”, *Ithaca, New York Cornell University Press* (November 10, 2003)

Another author named Pauline Jones stated the fact that when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics broke up in 1991, it was the prime time when it faced a lot of issues. For example, one of the major implications and issues which were witnessed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was the creation of a system and states which did not exist before. Out of all of them, one of the major tasks for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was the creation of the Central Asian Republics. When it came to the Central Asian Republics, these regions had a lot of similarities. But the Central Asian Republics had a lot of other things which were different from each other and due to this very reason, they did not agree to combine up. This is how the Central Asian Republics were formulated which contained 7 different states. It was in favor of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to introduce a system in these states which were favorable to them. Hence, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics prepared numerous systems, help was taken from the bunch of establishment characters and organizations. Financial elements were covered and supporting agencies were developed in these states.

Whereas "Stephen Tanner", "Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban ", contends for more than 2,500 years, the prohibiting an area of Afghanistan has filled in as an indispensable intersection for armed forces and has seen history-forming conflicts between human advancements: Arab, Mongol, Greek, and Tartar, and, in recent times, British, Russian, and American.⁸

In the book "Ghost Wars"⁶, Steve Coll responds to the inquiries so many have posed since the abhorrence of September 11: To what degree did America's best knowledge experts handle the rising danger of Islamist radicalism? Who attempted to stop receptacle Laden and for what reason did they come up short?

Culture and political history of Afghanistan is another book which sheds light on the political history of the country. All the different elements of the history of the country are present in it. For example, the history of the country starts from the different dynasties living in the country to different nations and powers coming into the country to rule over them. Such as the in the history

⁶ Steve Coll, "Ghost War"', New York', Penguin Press, 2004.

of the country, it is present that Britishers came and then the Soviets came. All of these elements are narrated Vis a Vis their impact on the society of the country and other related aspects.

Whereas in the article, “In the New Great Game in Central Asia⁷ by Rajan Menon” where he communicates Greater Central Asia - the locale comprising the five Central Asian states, in addition to Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Xinjiang, and Afghanistan - has been decisively changed. American vital interests in Central Asia, negligible before the 11 September psychological militant assaults, have out of nowhere become significant. To proceed with the mission against psychological warfare, the United States held the Central Asian bases it procured to obliterate the Taliban. Focal Asia's tyrant state run not set in stone to develop American inclusion - as a shield against assailant Islam and Russian authority. Russia is justifiably restless about the arrangement of American soldiers on its southern outskirts. Recently tucked away in a fierce district, the United States deals with the enduring issue of the strong: keeping commitment from coming full circle in capture.

The book, *China and Central Asia* are one of the core books present on the subject which covers the different and numerous dynamics of the relations between the two nations. It is stated in the book that different events have taken place in the past which have largely reshaped the political and economic relations between China and Central Asia. For example, after the disintegration of the Union, China and Central Asia came close to each other. It was due to the reason that both China and Central Asia had economic interests and therefore, reshaping of relations between China and Central Asia took place.

“Relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: An analysis⁸ by Faisal Javaid and Asghar Ali Dashti” portrayed that since autonomy Central Asian states stand out enough to be noticed by territorial and worldwide powers. Topographically, this area is landlocked but extremely wealthy in regular assets. Pakistan, then again, needs energy assets and accordingly has

⁷ Rajan Menon, *The New Great Game in Central Asia*, (Published online DOI: [10.1080/00396338.2003.9688581](https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2003.9688581): 15 Aug 2011)

⁸Faisal Javaid and Asghar Ali Dashti, “Relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: An analysis”, (Karachi: ‘Islamic Research Academy’, 2016) 67-78

stayed ready to get benefits from these states. Critically, Pakistan and Central Asian states have a typical history, religion and culture. According to a geostrategic perspective, Pakistan gives these provincial expresses the most limited course to worldwide ocean exchange. They have consented to a few arrangements, deals and reminders of understandings (MoUs), however because of political insecurity and delicate security circumstance of Afghanistan and the absence of consideration from the side of strategy creators in Pakistan, these arrangements have been insufficient up to this point. This study is an endeavour to recognize the fluctuating connections between Pakistan and Central Asian states. Besides, it centres around Pakistan's inclinations in Central Asian states and their essential significance. The motivation behind this study is to distinguish the obstructions and open doors in relations between Pakistan and the Central Asian states.

Many Pakistani scholars have pointed out the very fact that the Central Asian Republics are very rich when it comes to the oil and gas reserves and potential. This is why some books have been narrated on the Central Asian Republics and their relation with Pakistan. One of the books which are important to mention is by Professor Doctor Umbreen Javaid and Azhar Rashid. This book covers different elements about the Central Asian Republics and their relation with Pakistan. There are certain other elements present which are denoted in terms of the Central Asian Republics and their relation with Pakistan. For example, the Central Asian Republics are rich in oil and gas resources. But the Central Asian Republics are in a very complex geographical position and due to this very element, the Central Asian Republics cannot bind politically with every or any nation they want to. Therefore, it is important to understand that on the global level, the Central Asian Republics cannot bind with many countries. One of the major reasons which have played a role in this section is the presence of NATO forces and the US in the region which makes it harder for the Central Asian Republics to cooperate with other nations. This is the core concept and argument which is presented in this section of the work *Vis a Vis the Central Asian Republics*. So, this paper aims to look at the Central Asian Republics' relations with Pakistan. It observes what kind of relationship is present between the Central Asian Republics and Pakistan and what the role of the US is in it.

One of the core articles presents the history and current situation of Pakistan and the other Central Republics goes by the name of Pakistan's relations with the Central Asian states. It was written by

Christine Fair. One of the main elements which are designed by the author in this work is the focus on the historical events which have played a vital role in the development of core relations between the two states. For example, Pakistan came closer to these states in the 1990s era. Moreover, these states were also looking for an ally that could be used so that the Indian influence on the region could be controlled. Over time, the interests of Pakistan have changed and due to this very reason, the interests have matured in the current situation.

In another book which goes by the name of “Development of Infrastructural Linkages between Pakistan and Central Asia⁹ by Zahid Anwar”, the author has presented the fact that the Central Asian Republics and Pakistan are located a very complex located in the map. Most precisely Pakistan is stated at the three-way window when it comes to the global map. Pakistan has a firm located at the window of the West, Central and South Asia. As Pakistan has a geographical position where it can access the West, Central and South Asia, it provides some core options to the states and nations which are located around it. For example, the West, Central and South Asia nations want to carry out trade, they must pass through Pakistan as they do not have any sea and they are landlocked. Therefore this is the main reason present that the West, Central and South Asia are obliged to use the waterways present in Pakistan as they do not have an option or very less options are there for them to converge with. Many authors have presented the fact that this element from the West, Central and South Asia states can change the economic fortunes of Pakistan. It is because Balochistan is a province of Pakistan which has more than 29 trillion cubic feet of gas and other reserves which are yet to be drilled. Moreover, there are ports such as the Gwadar port which is very big and can handle a lot of ships and carriages. It is also important to note down the very fact that there are some core highways present in the country which are the main tool of connection with the other parts of the country as well as with the outside world. In the end, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan gas pipeline project is important to talk about. A project called Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan gas pipeline project has been started which will meet the needs and demands of the gas when it comes to Pakistan and India. It is a historic move under Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan gas pipeline project because Pakistan and India will be

⁹Zahid Anwar, Development of Infrastructural Linkages between Pakistan and Central Asia, *South Asia Journal of South Asian Studies* (June, 2011)pp.103-115 <http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/7-Dr.%20Zahid%20Anwar.pdf>

able to attain a lot of free gas and other opportunities which can enhance the position of these countries. In the end, the Central Asian Republics have a lot of opportunities and chances to be explored. This is the major reason present that the Central Asian Republics can be called one of the core nations from which Pakistan can take help.

Whereas, in the article “India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan Implications for the United States and the Region”¹⁰ by Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk in which they made sense of India and Pakistan have different dreams for Afghanistan, and they try to progress profoundly dissimilar interests through their particular commitment in the country. Pakistan sees Afghanistan fundamentally as a climate wherein it seeks to compete with India. India seeks after homegrown needs, (for example, getting control over an enemy of Indian illegal intimidation, getting to Central Asian energy assets, and expanding exchange) that expect Afghanistan to encounter dependability and financial development. Along these lines, though Pakistan tries to design an Afghan express that would bring down local security, India would improve Afghanistan's dependability, security, financial development, and local reconciliation. Afghanistan would invite more noteworthy inclusion from India, however, it should oblige the interests of various other outside powers also. India has a scope of choices for connecting with Afghanistan, from proceeding with current exercises to expanding financial and business ties, sending powers to safeguard Indian offices, proceeding with or extending preparation for Afghan powers, or conveying battle troops for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions. To try not to alienate Pakistan, India is probably going to build monetary and business commitment while keeping up with or maybe increasing, military preparation, however, it will keep on directing such preparation inside India. Expanded Indian commitment in Afghanistan, especially improved Indian help to Afghan security powers, will progress long haul U.S. goals in focal and south Asia. As the United States gets ready to pull out its battle powers from Afghanistan in 2014, it ought to along these lines urge India to fill the likely vacuum by embracing an undeniably self-assured political, monetary, and security technique that incorporates expanded security help.

¹⁰Larry Hanauer, Peter Chalk, “India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies in Afghanistan Implications for the United States and the Region”, “Center For Asia Pacific Policy”, (March, 2012). https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2012/RAND_OP387.pdf

Also in “Economic Prospects between South and Central Asia with Special Reference to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan”¹¹ Shagufta Bano the author examined the Central Asian States which have understood their sway in the new past have extremely significant social, strict and financial binds with South Asian Countries, especially with Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Albeit these Central Asian States are extremely princely in normal as well as HR yet, at present, they are not prosperous financially. The center’s justification for their inadmissible financial circumstances is their actual area. Every one of the Central Asian States is land-locked and they have no possibilities and admittance to the external world to foster their economy by using assets. South Asia on other hand partakes in the best geological position having a large number of miles of the seaside region thus some very much evolved coasts. Assuming both the locales hold hands and extend their financial relations they can conquer their monetary emergency with the assistance of one another.

Another article “The Changing Dynamics of Pakistan’s Relations with Central Asia”¹² by ‘Asma Shakir Khwaja’ attempts to address the relations that are a complex mix of monetary reliance and doubt.

In another article “The Analysis of Regional Bilateral Trade between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics”¹³ by S. Khan Safdar Ali, Saima Urooge leads this examination analyzes the force, greatness and course of exchange respectively among different states. The investigation utilizes files of commodity import force and exchange complementarity. The consequences of the review show that Pakistan is a significant exchanging accomplice to the locale and on normal experience, more noteworthy commodity force instead of import power, portraying the way that Pakistan has appreciated force in by and large exchange and was moderately more specific as opposed to CARs during the time of this investigation. Pakistan fundamentally sent out cereals, oil and drug items while imported cotton, iron and steel and so on. The more prominent worth of the complementarity list shows that Pakistan has sent out the greater part of these items to the nations which have appeal.

¹¹ Shagufta Bano, *Economic Prospects between South and Central Asia with Special Reference to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan*, (Lahore, *South Asian Studies*) (Dec 2012)

¹² Asma Shakir Khwaja, “The Changing Dynamics of Pakistan’s Relations With Central Asia”, ‘*CACI Analyst*’, (23 February 2005) <http://www.cacianalyst.org/resources/pdf/issues/20050223Analyst.pdf>

¹³, Saleem KHAN & Sher ALI & Saima Urooge "The Analysis of Regional Bilateral Trade between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics," ‘*Pakistan Journal of Applied Economics Applied Economics Research Centre*, vol. 29’(1), 93-106.

The discoveries of extraordinary exchange relations between Pakistan and CARs recommend that Pakistan has a chance to take advantage of its assets, differentiate products and increment its exchange relations with the area by consenting to deregulation arrangements.

“Geo-Economic Imperatives of Gwadar Sea Port and Kashgar Economic Zone for Pakistan and China” by¹⁴ ‘Dr Shabir Ahmad Khan’ is another element which has to be considered. There are certain developments present in which a lot of aspects are present. Just for an example, the Sea Port of Gwadar and the Special Economic Zone of Kashgar are present. One of the core reasons present is that the Sea Port of Gwadar and the Special Economic Zone of Kashgar have the potential to revive the old policies and elements. The elements of the Sea Port of Gwadar and the Special Economic Zone of Kashgar provide a chance with the fact that it can enhance the regional trade in the region. So, these two projects of the Sea Port of Gwadar and the Special Economic Zone of Kashgar is the fact that they can change the outlook of the nation.

Research Methodology

The research was based on qualitative methods of research. It will be interpretive research. Essential, auxiliary and tertiary sources like archives, interviews, books diaries, reports, records and articles were utilized to gather information for this exploration. The examination is interpretive and looked at the centrality of network projects for CARs and Pakistan for the Afghan harmony process. To comprehend the flow succession of examination, work has been made in this segment to disperse the models of information assortment, investigation and understanding. The information for this exploration was gathered through optional sources. Since research in Social sciences isn't trial and the vast majority of the times investigations are done through clarification of a peculiarity. Additionally, this study will be investigated after social occasion information from important books, articles, papers and entries word for word.

Delimitation

¹⁴Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Geo-Economic Imperatives of Gwadar Sea Port and Kashgar Economic Zone for Pakistan and China, SA Khan “*IPRI Journal X! no.2 (Summer 2013)*”: 87-100, 2013. <https://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art5sha.pdf>

This study analyzed the Afghan peace process initiated by China, Russia and the US. The explanation of the peace process covered some projects of geographical connectivity between Pakistan and CARs via Afghanistan.

Organization of the Study

The first part of the thesis would be the “Introduction”. It will present an overview of the study.

Chapter One “Critical Analysis of Afghan-Peace Process” This chapter will examine the peace process. Here a deep analysis of different states will be presented.

Chapter Two “Regional and Geographical Connectivity: Sequel of Afghan-Peace Process”. This chapter would explore the primacy of regional connectivity for this building in Afghanistan

Chapter Three “Details of Geographical Connectivity Projects and Great Powers Contributions to Peace”. This chapter will examine different economic activity projects, railways networks and what sort of help can be provided by great powers will be expressed.

The conclusion will comprise the outcome of research, recommendations and way forward.

Key Words

Regional Peace, Neo-liberalism, Connectivity, Regional Stability, South Asia, Central Asia, Trade, Peace and Security, and Pakistan.

CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE AFGHAN-PEACE PROCESS

This chapter debunks the definition of the Afghan Peace process and presents the importance of internal and regional actors in peace building in Afghanistan. It was part of the Afghan peace process to begin conversations and recommendations to stop the conflict in the nation beginning in 2001 and concluding in 2021. Taliban-US talks warmed up in 2018 regardless of inconsistent endeavors to end the contention in Afghanistan since the conflict started, with the two sides making concessions. It's been going on from the beginning.¹⁵ Many countries contributed to the peace process besides the United States. Afghans who participated in the People's Peace Movement argued that regional and global forces were responsible for the country's ongoing strife.

Two peace accords were signed as part of the reconciliation endeavor. Hezb-e Islamic Gulbuddin and the Afghan government signed their first pact on September 22, 2016. U.S. troops would leave Afghanistan in only fourteen months if the Taliban agreed to the second peace deal, which was signed on February 29, 2020, by both parties. The Trump administration proposed to leave Afghanistan by May 1, 2021, assuming the Taliban and the Afghan government got a nonaggression treaty and promised to keep al-Qaeda and the Islamic State under control.¹⁶

Insurgent assaults on Afghan security personnel increased during the US-Taliban accord.¹⁷ When peace discussions started in Doha, Qatar, in September 2020, there was a spike in civilian deaths. More than a decade has passed since the United Nations began keeping count of Afghan fatalities,

¹⁵ C.Todd Lopez, "DOD Anticipates Significant Troop Reduction in Afghanistan" 'DOD NEWS' (September 22, 2020). <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2357183/dod-anticipates-significant-troop-reduction-in-afghanistan/>

¹⁶ Abdul Basit, "The US-Taliban Deal and Expected US Exit from Afghanistan: Impact on South Asian Militant Landscape" 'Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses Volume 12, Issue 4' (June, 2020), (7-14) <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CTTA-June-2020.pdf>

¹⁷Hamid Shalizi, Abdul Qadir Sediqi, and Rupam Jain "Taliban step up attacks on Afghan forces since signing U.S. deal: data", 'Reuters' (May 1, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKBN22D5S7>

yet the assaults in May and June of 2021 nevertheless resulted in the deaths of 800 people and the injury of 1,600 more.¹⁸

As a result of a Taliban assault on Kabul in August 2021, the Afghan government-initiated discussions with the Taliban, which eventually led to the government's unconditional surrender. The government and the Taliban have said that they are willing to allow a peaceful transition of power. The government suggested a transitional administration, but the Taliban and the government had their hearts set on an outright transfer of power.¹⁹

1.1. Dissection of Peace Process

Before indulging in the depth of this section, it is important to state what is meant by the term peace process. The peace process can be defined as a phase when two parties indulge in a negotiation to observe a peaceful end of the conflict. There are numerous terms and definitions of the peace process present but this definition can be termed a holistic definition.

The Taliban retreated from Kandahar in response to Hamid Karzai's offer of amnesty after Kabul's collapse and Karzai's appointment as an interim national leader. The United States, on the other hand, rejected an amnesty clause that would have allowed Taliban leader Mullah Omar to in his home in Kandahar. As a result of their exclusion from December 2001's Bonn Agreement, the Taliban have returned to the battlefield and continue to wage war.²⁰ This was owing in part to the Taliban's seeming loss, but it was also due to a US stipulation that the Taliban refrain from participating. Around 2003, the Taliban was rising in popularity, and their campaign was well underway. UN mediator Lakhdar Brahimi claimed in 2006 that "our worst miscalculation" was not inviting the Taliban to Bonn. According to reports, the number of rebel assaults against the nation grew from 2002 to 2006. Despite 40,000 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) NATO-led ISAF

¹⁸ Susannah George, "Civilian casualties in Afghanistan hit record highs as U.S. forces withdraw". *The Washington Post*. (July 26, 2021). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/07/26/afghan-civilian-casualties/>

¹⁹ "Taliban officials: there will be no transitional government in Afghanistan". *Reuters*. (August 15, 2021). <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-officials-there-will-be-no-transitional-government-afghanistan-2021-08-15/>

²⁰ Borger, Julian "Bonn conference could mark formal start of Afghan Peace Process". *The Guardian*. (June 20, 2011). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2011/jun/20/afghanistan-taliban-talks-bonn>

troops (International Security Assistance Force) at the end of 2007, Afghanistan was still at "severe risk" of Taliban control.²¹

Over time, the administration in the US and other regional countries such as Pakistan are very vigilant in carrying out the peace process in Afghanistan. It is said that when Afghanistan is in turmoil, the whole region is in turmoil. Therefore, when Afghanistan suffers, all of the regions including the Central Asian States suffer as well. It is important to understand that the Central Asian States did not play a large role in the recent peace agreement defined between the Taliban and the US. But the Central Asian States are major stakeholders in the process due to several reasons. First of all, these states are in very close geographical proximity to Afghanistan. All the Central Asian States are neighbors of Afghanistan and any insurgency in Afghanistan can be very futile for these states. Another element to put forth is the Central Asian States required a good and healthy neighbor without any insurgency. So, Central Asian States did play a limited role with the US where it kept the hopes of the peace process alive. Almost all the leaders of Central Asian States were adamant to bring peace to the region. So, directly or indirectly, Central Asian States had some say in the peace process.

1.1.1. Initial Attempts for Peace

Ex-Afghan President Hamid Karzai has long pushed for negotiations with the United States (US), but the British and Pakistani governments have rebuffed them. Foreign forces were cited as a reason by the Taliban for rejecting Karzai's peace negotiations in September 2007. In 2009, most Afghans believed that the fighting needed to end, but how it did so was a crucial consideration for the Afghan presidential contenders running that year.²² Karzai has been re-elected as president of Afghanistan. He asked for "our Taliban brothers to come back home and love their nation" after being elected as president, Hamid Karzai began preparations for a Loya Jirga to look into ways to restore peace to Afghanistan during his inauguration address. The "Peace Jirga" was the name given to the gathering. The Obama administration's decision to increase the number of American

²¹ Afghanistan 'falling into hands of Taliban'. *The Guardian*. November 22, 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/22/afghanistan.richardnortontaylor>

²² Gall, Carlotta "Peace Talks with Taliban Top Issue in Afghan Vote". *The New York Times*. (August 17, 2009). <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/world/asia/18taliban.html>

troops in the country hindered efforts. Afghan President Hamid Karzai reiterated his aim to convince the Taliban in London in January 2010 to lay down their weapons.²³

In contrast, Pakistan committed to assisting Afghan peace negotiations, but its ultimate stance on the Taliban remained questioned. By arresting Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in February, Pakistan demonstrated its willingness to aid the United States and the Afghan government to limit the group's control. According to a former UN official in Kabul, Kai Eide, Baradar's imprisonment was meant to derail attempts to settle the war by diplomatic rather than military means.²⁴

1.1.2. Preliminary Talks and Peacebuilding Jirgas

As the United States continues to withdraw its forces, President Hamid Karzai has summoned nearly 2,000 Afghan officials to Kabul for a Loya jirga also known as Afghanistan's National Consultative Peace Jirga to examine the fate of bilateral relations between the United States as well as peace negotiations with the Taliban and other militant organizations. Since the Loya jirga wasn't a formal ruling body, it will make suggestions to the president and parliament just at end of the four-day session.²⁵ Karzai extended an invitation to the Taliban and Hezb-i Islami Gulbuddin to show good faith, but they declined.

During the conference, Karzai's goal was to garner support for his proposal to compensate rehabilitated militants. Those who quit gangs should expect to seek amnesty and reintegration assistance from the government. The UN blacklist of Taliban members and leaders would be deleted to facilitate peace talks. He has stated that certain Taliban commanders will be granted shelter in another Islamic nation to further peace talks. Members of Afghanistan's National Consultative Peace Jirga NCPJ successfully lobbied for the release of many prisoners held by the United States. The jirga urges that prisoners held by the insurgents be freed as a sign of good faith

²³ Landler, Mark; Rubin, Alissa J.). "War Plan for Karzai: Reach Out to Taliban". *The New York Times*. (January 28, 2010). <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/29/world/asia/29diplo.html>

²⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghanistan-War/U-S-troop-surge-and-end-of-U-S-combat-mission>

²⁵ "Afghanistan: The Future of the National Unity Government" *'Asia Report N°285'* | (April 10, 2017)

before talks with the Taliban begin. Furthermore, it emphasized that militants who wish to engage in peace must eliminate their affiliations with international terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda.

To bring about lasting peace in Afghanistan, the Taliban and the Afghan government began discussions under Obama's watch. However, from 2011 to 2013, all efforts were a failure. As a result of the Taliban placing an "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" sign and a "so-called flag" outside the office where the negotiations were due in Doha, Qatar's capital, President Hamid Karzai postponed the talks in June 2013. It was closed down, and peace negotiations were put on hiatus for a good month later. Three years later, Pakistan organized a conference with the involvement of the United States and China; nevertheless, the Taliban-Kabul peace summit in 2016 again failed.²⁶

1.2. US-Taliban Peace Deal

U.S. officials and Taliban representatives agreed in February 2020 to begin peace talks in March. The Taliban and Afghan government teams reached an agreement on rules and procedures early in December despite delays in negotiations. Both sides have made progress in finding a political solution to their decades-long struggle with this procedural agreement.

1.2.1. Hindrances in Peace Process

It is just a tiny sample of the many issues that have been discussed in intra-Afghan discussions over the future of Afghanistan's democratic institutions and constitutional framework. As soon as the February deal between (the US) and the Taliban was reached, these conversations were immediately having problems, as you could expect. An agreement was struck between the US and the Taliban in which up to 5,000 insurgents from the Taliban in exchange for up to 1,000 Afghan security troops were to be exchanged.²⁷ Ethnic, sectarian, and tribal differences might make it more

²⁶ Merve Seren, "Analysis - A critical stage in Afghan peace process" *Anadolu Agency* (April 18, 2021) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-a-critical-stage-in-afghan-peace-process/2212632>

²⁷ Grant Farr: "The Afghan Peace Agreement and its Problems", *E-International Relations* (April 6, 2020). <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/82654>

difficult for the process to proceed. Numerous factors, including low voter turnout, attacks on polling stations, and months-long delays in releasing election results, were blamed for the country's 2019 election being impeded. Ghani's main rival Abdullah vowed to form a new government after he was proclaimed the victor of Afghanistan's presidential election.

1.2.2. Commitments of Parties under the US-Taliban Agreement

The US committed to a 14-month phased withdrawal of all US and NATO forces from Afghanistan by signing the agreement on February 29 in Qatar. The Taliban has agreed that Afghan land would not be used to target the US or its allies. The Taliban has also promised to sever ties with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, which was hosted by the Taliban during the 9/11 attacks.²⁸

1.2.3. The Treaty of Peace

A little more than three pages long, the document is printed in Dari, Pashto, and English under the official title "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan." There are two parts to the agreement: the Taliban pledges that "Afghan land would not be employed against the security of the United States and its allies," and the United States undertakes to remove all foreign troops from Afghanistan. An initial seven-day "reduction in violence," rather than a ceasefire, which the Taliban opposed, was adopted because "ceasefire" suggested a complete cessation of hostilities, which the Taliban were not ready to commit to. All US and Coalition troops must depart within 14 months after signing the deal. Non-diplomatic public servants, military troops, security contractors, trainers, consultants and support staff are included. The agreement also says that the number of American soldiers in Afghanistan would be decreased to 8,600 within a year of signing. The US and Coalition forces will vacate five military bases within a year of signing the agreement.

1.2.4. Difficulties for Kabul

²⁸ Mehdi-Jalalddin Hakimi, "The U.S.-Taliban Agreement and the Afghan Peace Process", *SLS blogs* (December 7, 2020). <https://law.stanford.edu/2020/12/07/the-u-s-taliban-agreement-and-the-afghan-peace-process/>

The agreement relies on several speculative assumptions. Afghanistan's government was excluded from the outcome because it was not a party to the discussions and did not sign it. Zalmay Khalilzad's attempts to keep Afghan President Ashraf Ghani informed and onboard failed to dissuade the Afghan leadership from becoming more terrified and angrier that they were being excluded from discussions about their own country's future.

There were no discussions if Afghanistan's government or officials weren't allowed to participate, alleging that the current administration was only a puppet of the United States. This may or may not be accurate, but the Taliban prevailed in this fight. As a result, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and other Afghan officials have been angered by the government's non-participation in the discussions, which has created a hurdle to future negotiations. A "confidence-building" agreement between the Taliban and the Kabul administration was reached. The Afghan government would release up to 5000 Taliban detainees by March 10, 2020, and the Taliban would release 1000 prisoners at the same time. Afghanistan's security forces are detaining prisoners, not American troops. Afghan authorities have no reason to free Taliban captives who they deem terrorists because of the country's non-signatory status to the agreement in question. Consequently, negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government have been postponed until further notice.²⁹

1.2.5. Afghanistan after the US Withdrawal

The current situation of Afghanistan is an outcome of various agreements which took place in recent times. The adoption of the "Agreement for the Peaceful Reunification of Afghanistan" in May 2021, symbolizes the completion of a long and difficult road to put this long and sad conflict to an end. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and his team had been working for a long time to get to the point where US officials could meet with Taliban leadership. The withdrawal of US soldiers

²⁹Waqar Ahemd, "CPEC to provide impetus to Pak-CARs relations.", *The News* (May, 2018) <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/323064-cpec-to-provide-impetus-to-pak-cars-relations>.

from Afghanistan is now a certainty. President Trump's commitment to bring the troops home and bring the conflict to a conclusion has indeed been fulfilled. Yet, there are a few stumbling blocks that might prevent the agreement from being completely executed. To begin with, the Afghan government did not take part in the negotiations. Many portions of the accord are unpopular with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who has hesitated to take the next measures needed to bring the peace process forward. This includes the release of Taliban detainees, which he has yet to achieve while proposing a more limited release. Another issue is that the most recent Afghan presidential election was contested, resulting in a splintered and dysfunctional government in Kabul. In Kabul, no one is in charge after two opposing candidates declared themselves winners. Because the next step in the peace deal is for the Taliban and the Afghan government to meet, a divided and broken administration in Kabul makes that step difficult.³⁰

While the Taliban's leadership leaders have agreed to the plan, field commanders may not be on board. Commanders in this group are younger and more seasoned in warfare, having fought in some of the nation's most challenging and remote areas. At the Taliban's core, they may have conflicting objectives with the peace agreement.

These difficulties have not deterred the US from making Afghanistan a top priority. This goal has been achieved, and American troops are now on their way out of the country. On March 18, 2020, a coronavirus epidemic temporarily delayed the evacuation of American soldiers from Afghanistan. However, American forces had already started to leave the nation. Some in the United States have questioned the agreement's phrasing, with some even calling it a surrender document. Like the US military prepares to withdraw, some fear that the Taliban would hold off on an assault on Kabul until the US soldiers have gone home, as they did in 1995. It will be for the two decades of conflict and the almost 2,500 American lives sacrificed.³¹

³⁰Adam Gallagher, Progress in Taliban Talks, But 'Long Way to Go', says U.S. Envoy Special Rep. Khalilzad emphasizes centrality of intra-Afghan dialogue to achieving inclusive peace Monday, "*United States Institute Of Peace*" (February 11, 2019) <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/progress-taliban-talks-long-way-go-says-us-envoy>

³¹ Grant Farr, "The Afghan Peace Agreement and Its Problems", '*E-International Relations*' (April 6, 2020). https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/soc_fac/139/

1.3. Pakistan's Role in the Afghan Peace Process

A stable Afghanistan is more important to Pakistan than ever before as the violence in Afghanistan worsens, and the September 2020 peace process remains deadlocked chiefly. Pakistani Taliban and other extremist organizations may gain strength if Afghanistan falls apart, leading to yet another influx of Afghan migrants. They were trying to talk the Afghan Taliban into accepting a peaceful political settlement in Pakistan's strategy. Its ties to Washington and Kabul will be strained if it fails in this endeavor. If Pakistan does not step up its attempts to persuade the Taliban to reduce both their assaults and their aspirations to re-establish an Islamic state, the deadline for the withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan will soon arrive. For Pakistan's long-time Taliban ally to get international recognition and economic aid, Pakistan has sponsored the Afghan peace talks. As the US prepared to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the Trump administration saw an opportunity to advocate for the participation of the Taliban in power-sharing arrangements. For its role in facilitating the US accord with the Taliban and following intra-Afghan peace negotiations, Washington lauded Islamabad.³²

However, when Vice President of the US Joe Biden took over the White House in January 2021, negotiations ended. On the other hand, Kabul was unwilling to offer substantial concessions in exchange for the Taliban's sustained use of their authority to enhance their negotiation position. On April 14, 2021, Vice President Biden said he would remove all U.S. soldiers by September 11, 2021, the end of the conflict, even if a political deal were achieved. We tightened the schedule to start the peace process before it seemed to strengthen³³.

When intra-Afghan talks began in Qatar on September 12, 2020, the Pakistani military and the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan continuously said that only a political solution could end Afghanistan's conflict³⁴. They have stated their support for an Afghan-led peace process while simultaneously rejecting support for any parties involved in the war. There is still interest in the

³² Mehreen Naushad "Pakistan and the Afghan peace process" *"The News"* (December 23, 2020) <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/762800-pakistan-and-the-afghan-peace-process>

³³Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

intra-Afghan talks since the Taliban's top military and political figures are located in Pakistan. The Taliban's haven in Pakistan only adds to the Afghan government's and opposition's skepticism of Pakistan's intentions.³⁵

In the Afghan peace process, Pakistan's involvement as a facilitator is very beneficial to the country.³⁶ Pakistan plans to resume talks with major regional powers to strengthen ties with other nations. Developing a network of regional allies is one of Pakistan's most important foreign policy goals in Afghanistan. As part of its efforts to fight terrorist organizations and dispel international concerns about state-sponsored terrorism, Pakistan is also looking to work with Afghanistan. It is possible that Pakistan's standing with the Financial Action Task Force might be affected and increased trade and the restoration of economic aid to the nation.

By encouraging the Taliban shura to reduce violence and moderate demands for Islamic rule, most likely Sunni Deobandi, Pakistan's best interest is to break the deadlock in the peace negotiations. Delays in the discussions would worsen tensions with Kabul and put Islamabad's ties with the United States at risk. This worries Pakistan's military leadership greatly. Chinese support for Pakistan's efforts to avoid a Taliban victory and subsequent monopolistic control is likewise expected to be stronger than before.

Conflict in Afghanistan threatens to escalate into civil war, resulting in a massive exodus of Afghans to Pakistan. Afghanistan's turmoil will spill over into Pakistan, further destabilizing its already unstable western border as Taliban successes strengthen their Pakistani Deobandi terrorist allies. For Pakistan, a military takeover of Kabul by the Taliban would leave it with an ally in charge who would have little backing from the outside world and no financial help.

Efforts are being made to boost Pakistan's standing in the region and beyond. It wants to be viewed as a responsible state fully dedicated to developing peace in the area. In the eyes of the international community, Pakistan's efforts as a mediator have already been well praised.²³ the whole process

³⁵“Pakistan: Shoring Up Afghanistan’s Peace Process”, *Briefing 169 / Asia* (June 30, 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/b169-pakistan-shoring-afghanistans-peace-process>

³⁶ Mehreen Naushad “Pakistan and the Afghan peace process”

provides a positive image of Pakistan, indicating that its international standing has significantly improved and that its chances of being taken seriously on critical issues have grown even more. It is a reminder that peace in Afghanistan can only be achieved with Pakistan's help. To now, Pakistan has been prosperous in establishing itself as an essential factor with the ability to keep violence in check and work toward peace. Peace talks have taken place as a consequence of these conversations.³⁷

1.4. Chinese Involvement in the Afghan Peace Process

The Afghan administration envoy, comprised of public officials and civil society representatives, gives insight only to the Taliban last week in Doha, Qatar. Leaders from the international community visited and encouraged a constructive peace process, emphasizing the complexities of the Afghan situation. The February signing of the US-Taliban agreement laid the groundwork for this direct engagement, compelling Afghanistan's neighbours to become more active as the US prepares to withdraw. Even amid the midst of a fierce geopolitical rivalry between the US and China, stabilization in Afghanistan is one of the few shared objectives that remain. It is a challenge that will necessitate worldwide cooperation. The peace talks have been postponed for more than six months due to disagreements over prisoner releases; in the meantime, the Taliban have intensified their attacks on Afghan security personnel and civilians.³⁸

As a result, Beijing insists that the peace process must be steered only by the Afghans themselves, with no foreign agenda-setting. While working with the United States, Russia, and other countries, it has attempted to broker peace negotiations and shuttle diplomacy between Kabul, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban. As a result, China is seen in the Afghan war as more of a facilitator than a mediator.

1.4.1. China-Kabul Relations

³⁷ Pakistan Vision 2025, <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>

³⁸ Waqar Ahmed, CPEC to provide impetus to Pak-CARs relations." The news" (May, 2018) <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/323064-cpec-to-provide-impetus-to-pak-cars-relations>.

Since the Taliban administration fell in 2001, Beijing and Kabul had maintained a steady state-to-state relationship. China has involved Afghanistan in its bilateral and multilateral mediation efforts throughout the peace process, such as initiating shuttle diplomacy between Kabul and Islamabad in 2017. On a bilateral level, the connection between China and Kabul includes military and international support, as well as diplomatic engagement. China has been providing material and reconstruction support to the Kabul government since 2002. Following the US invasion, the two sides exchanged ministerial visits, and high-level contacts have increased in recent years, with Xi and Ghani meeting in 2017 and 2019. Military cooperation between the two nations has also been created to order to train Afghan security officers and develop a base in Badakhshan. China's military support and stabilization efforts in Afghanistan are aimed at assisting Kabul in combating ETIM-related terrorism.³⁹

The Chinese government tried to arbitrate between the country's political factions before the Taliban's rise to power. China's non-interference stance prevented Beijing from voicing solid

Opinions on the controversial 2019 election between incumbent then-president-elect Ghani and then-CEO of Afghanistan Abdullah. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang, on the other hand, seemed to support Ghani's administration in its fight against Abdullah in March of that year. Chinese diplomats feared the peace process would be disrupted because of the Afghan government's parallel politics. The Taliban takeover has placed China on high alert, and Beijing may enter crisis management mode to cope with increased instability and its spillover consequences, even though China favors the continuance of the Ghani government.⁴⁰

1.4.2. China-Taliban Relations

Despite China's antipathy for the Afghan Taliban, Beijing has avoided alienating the organization via its links to East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). One of the most contentious issues in the relationship is China's allegation that the Taliban rule provided a haven for Uyghur separatists

³⁹ Jason Li. "China's Conflict Mediation in Afghanistan" *"Stimson"*. (August, 2021). <https://www.stimson.org/2021/chinas-conflict-mediation-in-afghanistan/>.

⁴⁰ Grant Farr, "The Afghan Peace Talks, China, and the Afghan Elections", (December 23, 2019)

in the 1990s and Taliban-sponsored violence in 2007 and 2011. However, China has maintained tight ties with the Taliban since 2001; despite this fact, When China's ambassador to Pakistan visited Mullah Omar in 2000 to discuss the Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang, they discussed several issues.⁴¹

Since 2014, China has been attempting to engage the Taliban without Pakistan's direct participation, despite the country's close ties to Pakistan. China appreciates the Taliban's aid in keeping the peace and fighting separatist organizations operating inside its borders. Officials from China invited Taliban leaders for bilateral talks on the Afghan peace process on four previous occasions. On July 28, 2021, Wang Yi met in person with a high-profile delegation of Afghan Taliban officials, including nine members. Chinese state media covered the summit for the first time, which sparked speculation about China's involvement in the nation after the conference.

1.4.3. Chinese Criticism on the US Polices

From China's standpoint, the US has chosen an imprudent departure strategy from Afghanistan. Even if the US doesn't follow through on its threats, it will leave a mess for Afghans and other nations to clean up in its aftermath. According to official Chinese media, the US-Taliban peace agreement has been likened to America's "disgraceful" withdrawal from Vietnam in the 1970s. Withdrawal from Afghanistan may have been put on hold because of concerns about Afghanistan's collapse and US reputational damage from triggering it. As a geopolitical base at the core of the Eurasian continent's heart, Beijing is suspicious that the United States will readily give up its strategic presence and influence in Afghanistan. If it serves Trump's interests, he might significantly reverse his decision in Afghanistan. Trump is notorious for his volatility and unpredictability.

1.4.4. China's Strategy: Multilateralism vs. Unilateralism

⁴¹ Jason Li. "China's Conflict Mediation in Afghanistan" "Stimson". (August, 2021).

Even after the US-Taliban agreement, China remains pessimistic about Afghanistan. If the intra-Afghan peace process collapses, China's main issue will be a major deterioration of the security situation inside Afghanistan.

Several preparatory analyses are currently being conducted in Beijing, indicating several options China may take in the months and years ahead. First and foremost, China will favor a multilateral strategy over a unilateral one. Chinese strategists have called for a United Nations intervention if Afghanistan's internal security deteriorates.

Rather than a unilateral invasion by any regional country, a peacekeeping mission with Chinese troops is proposed. At this point, China does not believe unilateral intervention to be an option. China is neither a party to nor a cause of Afghanistan's domestic turmoil. China is continuously deterred from direct intervention in Afghanistan because of its reputation as the "graveyard of empires," which would jeopardize its current beneficial hedging position with both the Taliban and Kabul. A unilateral solution is simply out of the question due to regional countries' stakes and involvement in the intra-Afghan peace process.⁴²

1.5. **Moscow's Role in the Afghan Peace Process**

Afghanistan is exceptionally important inside the Russian admiration. Russia regards Afghanistan as a venue for confrontation with the West. Moscow battled in Afghanistan with many elements of Afghan society in the late 1970s. With further nearly 20 years of quiet, Moscow has begun to take a direct interest in Afghanistan's domestic affairs. Moscow has developed significant relations with Afghanistan's political identities. Russia has also discovered ties to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Washington has also accused Moscow of assisting Taliban insurgents during their fight against American and NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. First, before the formal peace process between the United States and the Taliban began in 2019, Moscow sponsored the Intra Afghan Dialogue. Russia therefore actively supports the US's efforts; Russia wishes to play a big role in

Yun Sun, "China's Strategic Assessment Of Afghanistan". *'War on the rocks'* (April 8, 2020), <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/chinas-strategic-assessment-of-afghanistan/>

Afghanistan following the American exit. Although America and Russia weren't on the same track on several matters, both of these are desperate to bring peace to Afghanistan.⁴³

The meetings in Russia were attended by US Special Advisor Zalmay Khalilzad, as well as representatives of China and Pakistan. America has accepted Russia's position in the Afghan peace talks, establishing an odd alliance on the topic.

In a joint declaration, US, Russian, Chinese, and Pakistani officials urged the Afghan government and Taliban leaders to agree to an urgent ceasefire. "We urge all sides towards the Afghan war should limit its degree of bloodshed in the nation, and we urge the Taliban Group never to launch a spring-summer offensive campaign". Both sides agreed that the Afghans should achieve an agreement "as soon as practicable" that'd stop the conflict "bring an end to Afghanistan's four-decade-long conflict." Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, expressed optimism that the Moscow summit will "help establish circumstances for forging constructive inter-Afghan ties," adding that "further delays are unacceptable." Khalilzad expects that perhaps Kabul should agree to a political settlement that includes not only a cease-fire and also a transitional⁴⁴

The Taliban and the government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had been slated to meet in Camp David on September 8, 2019, but the Trump administration cancelled the meeting. A terrorist attack in Kabul, in which a US soldier was killed and others, served as the official explanation for the move. The following day, Trump declared the negotiations dead. In light of Trump's decision on September 10 to replace National Security Advisor John Bolton, one of the most vocal opponents of a peace agreement in Afghanistan inside his administration, this temporary suspension in negotiations should be taken lightly. There is a solid basis for further progress created by nine rounds of US-Taliban conversations that have taken place since July 2018.

Russia's role in Afghanistan's internal affairs is less than that of Afghanistan's significant neighbors (Pakistan, Iran, China, and India). Muscovites want to prevent a military presence in Afghanistan for historical and practical grounds, labelled "completely ruled out" and "nonexistent." Moscow

⁴³ Aamir Junaid, "Russia's Role in Afghan Peace Process," *"Pak. Journal of Int'L Affairs, Vol 4, Issue 4 (2021)"* (October 12, 2021)

⁴⁴ Russia holds Afghan peace summit amid push for ceasefire,"*Dw*", (March 18, 2021) <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-holds-afghan-peace-summit-amid-push-for-ceasefire/a-56921299>

was compelled to pursue two intertwined goals in the face of both security threats from Afghanistan and significant policy constraints.

The first step was to regionalize Russia's Afghan strategy, which meant working more closely with both longtime allies (such as Iran, India, and China) and newer, more improbable ones (such as China) (Pakistan). However, following 2014, as US/NATO participation waned and Moscow's security concerns grew, Russia's regionalization intensified, reflecting the fundamentally changed regional dynamics (namely the greater involvement of the "Big Four") as participants in Afghanistan.

Its second step was to heavily encourage a diplomatic resolution. Russian foreign policymakers quickly realized that neither of Moscow's Afghanistan-related problems might be addressed as long as the military war between the US/NATO-backed Kabul government and the Taliban continues (let alone increases), impeding fundamental state operation and control. This was the fundamental motivator for Moscow's turn toward active diplomatic backing for a negotiated settlement. Because Russia preserved certain concerns and interests in Afghanistan while still maintaining one certain separation from it, Moscow was well-suited to play a mediator function.

These two paths—regionalization and support for a negotiated settlement—met during the Moscow intergovernmental regional peace dialogues, the first of three tracks led or cosponsored by Russia. In the Moscow format, regional countries were able to discuss the chances for peace in Afghanistan at various levels. Beginning with three-party discussions in December 2016, the Moscow format extended to eleven-party consultations in April 2017, bringing together all of Central Asia's countries, Russia's "Big Four" (Brazil, India, China, and Russia) neighbours, and Afghanistan. It was held in November 2018⁴⁵. However, no Kabul officials were present. Russian regional neighbors Turkey and Iran co-brokered the Astana ceasefire arrangement for Syria. Still, the Moscow structure for Afghanistan brought together governments from across the region to address various policy problems. While the United States and NATO were in Afghanistan, it

⁴⁵ Waqar Ahemd. "CPEC to provide impetus to Pak-CARs Relations." *The News* (May 2018). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/323064-cpec-to-provide-impetus-to-pak-cars-relations>.

stayed regionally oriented and avoided being embroiled in intra-Afghan political problems by staying regionally focused.⁴⁶

The Afghan peace process appears to be the most awaited time for the Afghan people, who have been fighting for the previous two decades, whilst the participation of China, Russia, and Pakistan with the US in resolving the problem appears to be a remarkable effort. However, the current situation in Afghanistan is one of the world's most serious humanitarian catastrophes. The Afghan economy is bankrupt, with no money to pay salaries or buy food. Western assistance has been discontinued as a result of the Taliban government's known terrorists. Thousands of Afghans will face terrible starvation and famine in the coming months. This might be resolved if all parties assemble to discuss this and provide some constructive solution, which can not only benefit Afghanistan but also its neighbor, especially Pakistan, as a peaceful Afghanistan is peaceful for Pakistan. However, it is important to understand that the peace process will take some time to show its results. The new government in Afghanistan is very optimistic when it comes to the peace process. They have been holding their side of the peace process and expect all the stakeholders present in the play to hold their side of the peace process. Therefore, it is expected by a lot of authors and critical analysts that the peace process will show case its results and in times to come, a stable and more dynamic Afghanistan will emerge.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

REGIONAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONNECTIVITY: SEQUEL OF AFGHAN-PEACE PROCESS

This chapter unlocks the myth of the Afghan peace process is not only the US project but other regional actors also including the Central Asian States. The aim to bring peace to Afghanistan can be defined as extending the regional and geographic connectivity of the region. The central Asian states are present at the helm of all the fiasco which took place in Afghanistan. The input was inserted by these states in the diplomatic dialogue to enhance the connectivity and association in the region. This chapter will focus on the regional and geographical connectivity in the region.

2.1. Afghanistan's and CAR's Geographical Proximity

In the center of South-Central Asia, a border culturally diverse country. Afghanistan has historically been such a target desired by empire builders, located along vital trading channels linking south and East Asia to Europe and the Middle East. For centuries, powerful troops have sought to control it, left signs of their attempts in enormous buildings now here in ashes. Numerous colonial goals have been dashed by the country's forbidding geography of sands and hills, and also the country's ferociously autonomous populations independent, in reality, that the country has long existed as a patchwork of opposing ethnic groupings and ever-shifting alignments. Afghanistan is in the southern part of Central Asia. The territory around Afghanistan is known as the "crossroads of Asia," and is known as the "Heart of Asia."⁴⁷ Afghanistan seems to be the world's 41st biggest state, covering 652,864 km² (252,072 sq mi), relatively greater and smaller than Burma, and around the same area as Texas within the United States. Afghanistan is isolated, and therefore there is no ocean.

⁴⁷ Aziz Amin Ahmadzai, Securing Stability in Afghanistan, the 'Heart of Asia'. *The Diplomat*, (Dec 02,2015) <https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/securing-stability-in-afghanistan-the-heart-of-asia/>

Afghanistan's oldest border (the Durand Line)⁴⁸ is with Pakistan to the south and east, with Tajikistan to the north-east, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the north-west, Uzbekistan to the north, and China to the north-east; India identifies an Afghan boundary via Pakistan Kashmir.

Afghanistan's landscape is diverse, although it is largely rocky and rough, with several distinctive mountain ranges, hills, and river valleys⁴⁹. It is controlled by the Hindu Kush group, a western continuation of the Himalayas which spans from Afghanistan's extreme north-east to eastern Tibet via the Pamir Mountains and Karakoram Mountains. This mountain range is one of the adamant challenges for Afghanistan as well as the Central Asian Republics because it hinders the connection between the two regions. The impassable ranges do not allow connectivity and trade and due to this reason, the region is deprived of development. The majority of the higher peaks are now in the east, in rich mountainous regions that are commonly referred to as the "Roof of the World." The Hindu Kush finishes in the west-central hills, forming the Turkestan Plains and the Sistan Basin in the north and southwest, accordingly, consisting of sloping grassland and semi-deserts and dry dusty desert areas. The Hindu Kush and the Pamir Mountains in Afghanistan probably get a lot of snow throughout the wintertime, and the melted snowfall fills the rivers, ponds, and tributaries throughout the spring. Two-thirds of the country's water, meanwhile, goes into neighboring Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. According to a 2010 estimate, the government requires upwards of \$1.5 billion to restore its agricultural infrastructure and ensure proper water management⁵⁰.

During most of its past, the Afghan state has had to contend with predatory neighbors. Afghans have embraced isolation and struggle as a defensive measure. Today, Afghanistan's strongest potential for safety and financial success is transparency and collaboration with neighboring countries. In contrast, the capability of post-conflict Afghanistan to rebuild has a significant impact on the region's political integrity and financial prospects. In the case of a faltering Kabul administration or a worldwide community which fails to support protect and reconstruct

⁴⁸ Amina Khan, and Christian Wagner. "The changing character of the Durand Line." *Strategic Studies* 33, no. 2 (2013), 19-29. <https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/iaf/article/view/1339/1321>

⁵⁰ Marvin G. Weinbaum "Afghanistan and Its Neighbors An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood" "*United States Institute of Peace Special Report*" (June, 2006)" <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/06/afghanistan-and-its-neighbors-ever-dangerous-neighborhood>

Afghanistan, the region's opportunist governments are likely to continue their involvement. There have already been signs that the neighbors' patience, which has been demonstrated in recent decades, is running low. Pakistan and Iran are Afghanistan's most powerful and important neighboring diplomatic neighbors. U.S.A strategic decisions in the region have a major impact on whether they collaborate or pose hurdles to Afghanistan's rehabilitation. Afghans and many others in the country believe that after the US achieves its key objectives in-country, its involvement with in-country will diminish rapidly. While this is a debatable assumption, it is sufficient for some Afghan and regional political elites to start hedging their chances on the Karzai regime.⁵¹

According to the survey, Afghanistan's neighbors have determined that help for a secure, strong, and financially growing Afghan government is preferred over any feasible solutions throughout the last 4 years. None of them has strongly opposed Hamid Karzai, the globally recognized leader of Afghanistan, or attempted to affect Afghan internal affairs. In addition, all have committed some sort of development funding. The availability of international military personnel and worldwide scrutiny have undoubtedly influenced their cautious policies. Afghanistan, as is frequently noted, is located in a high-risk area. External forces aiming to pursue their own geopolitical, ideological, and financial objectives in the region are to blame for most of the country's internal instability and hardship. Afghanistan's neighbors, both close and far away, have frequently engaged in its political affairs. Foreigners have occasionally intervened on behalf of internal citizens, organizing and arming them to take control of huge areas of the country. Despite their reputation for repelling foreign invaders, Afghans cannot be blamed for most of the fratricide and devastation that has happened in the past few decades. Nonetheless, the aggravated role of other states, both near as well as far, has caused civil wars more long-lasting and deadly.

External conflicts and also domestic instability across neighbors might quickly spill over onto Afghan territory in such a problematic region. Political unrest in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, a politicized Pakistan, US military intervention against Iran, and a new big conflict between Pakistan and India might all have a significant influence on Afghanistan. For a long time, getting an initiative in Afghanistan has been a factor in both Pakistani and Indian considerations.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Pakistan and Iran compete in the region, which crosses across into Afghanistan. Other countries' actions have come and gone as needed, but these two neighbors have stayed constant meddling in Afghanistan's domestic affairs. The Islamic Republic of Iran's displeasure with Pakistan is directly attributable to Islamabad's military alliances with the United States and strong financial and cultural links with Saudi Arabia, although they normally deny their conflicts. In Pakistan, religious violence against Shia by Sunni militants has triggered Iranian secret activities in support of their fellow Muslims, and both governments accused each other of participation in ethnic Baloch insurgent groups. Despite Pakistani experts' likely renegade role in the nuclear program, the geopolitical competition between Pakistan and Iran is driven by their respective nuke programs.

Several of Afghanistan's difficulties, while most political, are also regional, necessitating regional measures and coordination. Policies which have been adopted to shield Afghanistan from intruding neighbors have deprived the country of the benefits of working together to fight common dangers and embrace new possibilities. Regional measures have the best chance of restricting the movement of weaponry and smuggling activities. Because Afghanistan is the starting point for the worldwide drug trade, regional integration is critical in arresting smugglers. Despite the dangers of border controls, the free flow of workers over borders supplies required skills for Afghanistan's rehabilitation. Economic interdependence that emerges under a regional free market system is supposed to provide Afghanistan's neighbors with a stronger stake in its integrity and development.

With global help and funding, Afghanistan seems to have sufficient safety mutual interests with its neighbors that forming a global security community only on national concerns seems like a reasonable step. Any national safety collaboration agreements, though, must consider the few resources that Afghanistan, neighboring countries, and the global community have access to or are willing to commit to being efficient. A collaborative environment would have the strongest chance of succeeding because all of the region's countries are growing financially and moving toward democracy.

Regional ties are under-institutionalized, whether on security or economic matters. Regional groups could help facilitate cooperation, which would, amongst other things, deter foreign meddling in Afghanistan. In December 2002, regional governments, Russia, and the US who had been partners of the Six-Plus-Two grouping formed to control the Taliban, signed a Kabul

Statement of Good Neighborly Relationships with Afghanistan⁵². Some advocated for the alliance to be expanded to have included India and Saudi Arabia to help the Afghan population in the political system and during rehabilitation. While Afghanistan and its neighbours have negotiated multilateral and bilateral deals to combat drug smuggling and ease border limitations, few of them have been successfully implemented. Neither has the group made a significant contribution to the development of trade.

Afghanistan's try to reach out to its neighbors to tackle its issues, and also their recognition of the country's significance for regional progress, are deemed mainly effective during the Kabul conference. Despite this, the meetings, which have been backed by the G8 and the World Bank, are unable to yield much more than a basic agreement to ease trade, transportation, and energy exchanges, as well as a desire to collaborate on specific concerns like drug control and safety. A Greater Central Asia organization, as advocated by Frederick Starr, that formalizes collaboration for the region's common financial advantage would be a natural continuation of the Kabul conference. For the time being, Starr believes that cooperation will be done on an ad hoc basis. However, expecting a new viable geo-economics entity to emerge any time soon likely exaggerates the current level of compatibility and shared interests between the area governments. The concept of a larger region is confounded by the fact that they have various political systems. The five former Soviet countries of Central Asia are still primarily remnants of the old Soviet bloc, with sentiments that are more nationalist than regional.

2.2. **Border Issues with Iran**

Iran's regional goals have not been concentrated on its eastern neighbor. Iran's key strategic interests have long been associated with developments in the Persian Gulf and, above all, Iraq, according to Tehran's ruling regimes. Today, the Afghan state serves more as an economic and cultural potential for Iran than as a political and military adversary. However, Afghanistan is being considered strategically because foreign states are concerned that a weak Afghan state could be

⁵² Ibid.

used to threaten Iran. Iran has had to struggle for dominance in Afghanistan with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in recent times, and especially with the United States after 2001.⁵³

Regional stability has benefited Iran's interests the most. Tehran has shown little interest in spreading Islamic revolutionary fervor to Afghanistan's Shiite minority, which accounts for roughly a fifth of the country's population. For more than 2 decades, taking in a large number of refugees has altered opinions toward Afghanistan, just as it has in Pakistan. Both countries behaved in accordance with fraternal Islamic commitments, and both grew increasingly resentful of the difficulties that offering shelter imposed on their society over time. However, unlike Pakistan, Iran has never been used as a base for insurgents fighting the Soviets or the Taliban. By not establishing refugee camps, Iran was able to better integrate Afghans in exile into Iranian society, despite Pakistan's superior educational opportunities and social acceptability.

If Afghanistan becomes insecure again, Iran, like Pakistan, may confront a new influx of refugees. According to one estimate, 3 million Afghan refugees remain in Iran, with barely 275,000 returning home⁵⁴. In Afghanistan's current state of insecurity, the Afghan government's capacity to control poppy planting will be severely hampered. Interdiction of drugs traversing Iran for global markets or to meet Iran's huge internal demand has cost Iran's border security forces dearly in confrontations with better-armed drug traffickers.

Iran is determined to establish a sphere of economic influence in Afghanistan. Its consumer items are already competitive with Pakistani goods. Every day, around 450 and 550 trucks pass the Afghan border. Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan have increased to around \$500 million per year. In late 2004, an Iranian bank opened in Kabul to boost trade. Tehran has provided considerable support for Afghan infrastructure restoration in order to further enhance the Afghan economy. Other rehabilitation projects are being planned, such as the extension of the Iranian railway network into western Afghanistan to connect it with the Iranian port of Chabahar, which will make Chabahar a viable alternative to Pakistan's new port at Gwadar for both Central Asian

⁵³ Crisis Group. "Iran's Priorities in a Turbulent Middle East." *Middle East Report*. (13 April 2018). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/184-irans-priorities-turbulent-middle-east>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Countries. However, the US's continued opposition to projects that benefit Iran politically and economically may restrict its future role in the region's growth⁷⁰.

As a result, Kabul's connection with the US is increasingly dictating Afghan-Iranian relations. Tehran has long been concerned about the Afghan government's strong reliance on the US but has been powerless to intervene. Assistance for a stable Afghanistan and a politically safe Karzai was supposed to help Afghanistan become less reliant on the US.

The problem of delimitation (specifying the State Border boundary) and dividing line (establishing border signs) of the Republic of Tajikistan's state border with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is governed by international treaties agreed to sign in the border spherical among the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR) and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. They have demarcated and guarded the national border between the two counties at this time.

2.3. Issues with Pakistan

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the Durand Line has been a source of contention in Pak-Afghan relations. The Afghan citizens and successive administrations have generated a lot of objections about the Durand Line agreement, which was signed by British India and Afghanistan in 1893, from period to period. The legitimacy of the agreement has not ended, according to historical records signed, approved, and approved by subsequent Afghan authorities. The idea that the Line is an artificial border has also been refuted by studies. The argument that the pact is unenforceable in the post-British period is unsupported by international law.⁵⁵

The British considered Afghanistan as an independent state at the time although the British controlled its foreign affairs and diplomatic relations. Afghanistan borderline is linked with almost four countries, and one of them is Pakistan. Afghanistan has the longest border with Pakistan 2,670 km. The different states of Pakistan are linked with the Afghanistan border such as Baluchistan. The Durand Line is the international land boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan in South-Central Asia, 2,670 km. It was initially created in 1893 through Mortimer Durand, a British Indian

⁵⁵ Ahmad Shayeq Qassem and H. M. Durand, "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue," *Policy Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2008), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42909535>.

Civil Service diplomat, and Abdur Rahman Khan, the Afghan Emir, as the border crossing between British India and the Emirate of Afghanistan⁵⁶. After the Second Anglo-Afghan War, Afghanistan previously was surrendered the areas of Quetta, Pishin, Harnai, Sibi, Kurram, and Khyber under the Britishers via the 1879 Agreement of Gandamak. However, Afghanistan has the most crucial borderline the Durand Line associated linked with Pakistan.⁵⁷

Although since the birth of Pakistan, the Durand Line problem has persisted in exacerbating the uncertain existence of the Afghan-Pakistani relation. Their neighbourly relations are haunted by persistent friction, as allegations and doubts co-exist with some unflappable gestures. Any Afghan government, including the current one led by President, has never acknowledged the validity of the Durand Line that cuts across mountainous terrain and continues relatively unplaced. Constant battles and tensions across the contested border among Pakistani and Afghan military forces significantly escalate the already deteriorating bilateral relations, with both countries accusing the other of insincerity in the war against terrorism. In early May 2017, violent clashes at the Chaman border post left at least 13 people dead and over 80 injured, many of whom were Pakistani⁵⁸.

The region is significant because it connects all aspects of the government, economics, and community. Every one of the state's responsibilities is characterized by a set of regulations that establishes the function's governance processes, accountability, privileges, and responsibilities. Rules provide both services that allow for development and limitations that keep behaviours in check. As a consequence, people are aware of a specific set of rights and responsibilities that govern their attitude towards other citizens and the wider population.

There are two major ethnic groups near the Durand Line. Those two groups are the Punjabis and the Pashtuns. These two different states of people with different thoughts would be the targets of our study. All the existing issues such as security, terrorism activities, instability ethnographic, military, and geopolitical at borderline, arise due to their thoughts as the literature work stated that

⁵⁶ Ahmad Shayeq Qassem and H. M. Durand, "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue," *Policy Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2008), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42909535>.

⁵⁷ Arwin Rahi "Why the Durand Line Matters It is time for Kabul to accept the legality of the border" *The Diplomat*. (February 2014) [://thediplomat.com/2014/02/why-the-durand-line-matters/](http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/why-the-durand-line-matters/)

⁵⁸ Pakistan and Afghanistan, "Institute for the study of war," "*understanding war*" <https://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>

some of the people blame the people in Afghanistan for issues and some blame Pakistan people. There are some limited study has been done on the Durand border. We also do not find any extensive study that highlights some major factors of issues at the Durand borderline.⁵⁹

Pakistan claimed that an advance warning of the census-taking operation along the border areas was issued to Afghan security forces. The Afghan aspect claimed that Pakistani officials were informed against carrying out any census operation in the separated villages centred at the "zero point of the Durand Line." After the event, an editorial in *The Dawn* hypothesized that maybe it was to set a marker in the continuing Pakistan-Afghanistan diplomatic and defence tussles. It was Afghanistan's age-old reluctance to formally, recognize the Durand Line, the census a challenge, as it will formally count the villagers on the Pakistani part of the border as Pakistani citizens. Political back-and-forth after the border conflicts may temporarily calm bilateral tensions; however, given the complex nature of the problem resulting from opposing perceptions.⁶⁰

According to most analyses, the Taliban is the main reason for problems at the Durand Line. The ISI maintains to promote the Afghan Taliban's Quetta Shura, directed by Mullah Mohammed Omar, and also the Haqqani network and Hezb-i Islami Gulbuddin, according to US state department. Kabul has pressured Islamabad to do something to prevent the influx of Taliban insurgents from Pakistan, and Karzai threatened to bring Afghan forces all across the Pakistani border to combat terrorists in 2008. Pakistan has brokered ceasefires with terrorists and essentially leased territory to them, giving them a safe refuge upon which to function in both nations and resulting in an increase in deadly strikes throughout Afghanistan. The Pakistani army struck a peace settlement in April 2004.⁶¹

Border conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan have heightened difficulties among the two governments in the past few decades, but continue to exist. The first Afghan President, Mohammad Daoud Khan, opposed the Durand Line from becoming the formal border between the two regions.

⁵⁹ Mary Schons, *The Durand Line Article. A historic, disputed border separates Afghanistan and Pakistan.* (January 21, 2011) <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/durand-line/>

⁶¹ Pakistan and Afghanistan, "Institute for the study of war," "*understanding war*" <https://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>

He pressed on the acquisition of the lands and people on the part of the Afghan border, which heightened tensions and even led to conflicts between the two countries. The country was damaged in every dimension after the collapse of Daoud Khan's administration and the emergence of the Khalq regime, and subsequently with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the Jihad against the Soviet Union; the Mujahidin government; civil war; and the Taliban. Disputes within the two countries rose to the point where border skirmishes occurred after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG). The erection of iron barriers and spiked wire all across the Pak-Afghan border which has separated villages and even families in certain instances, has heightened conflicts between the two states.

In the end, it can be stated that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is in the best interest of all the parties present in the hold. A stable Afghanistan will provide a lot of chances and growth options to all the regional countries. It is due to the fact that elements such as regional and geographical connectivity are present in Afghanistan. It is important to understand that regional and geographical connectivity has a lot of capability due to its location. Almost all the countries present at the helm need Afghanistan in one way or the other. The main element is regional and geographical connectivity. The central Asian States need the aspect of regional and geographical connectivity the most because they are land locked. They need to pass through Afghanistan and enter Pakistan to carry out their trade. This is the core factor to understand. Similarly, Pakistan and China also need Afghanistan to stand up to its feet because of the regional and geographical connectivity. Pakistan and China are heavily collaborating to ensure that a trade route is developed which passed through Afghanistan and Afghanistan to the Central Asian States. Pakistan and China are intending that this trade route can be used to further create trade networks in Europe. So, a core meaning and aspect to consider about the regional and geographical connectivity is peace in Afghanistan. The facet of the regional and geographical connectivity will only flourish in times to come if Afghanistan is stable. The peace process has ended and all the allied forces have left the country. Now it is to be seen that if this fragile peace will continue to prevail or not.

2.4. **Afghanistan's Stability Significance**

Despite the reality that Afghanistan contains many oil deposits in the northwest and important mineral deposits in the southeast, its factors that give as provided only by geographical location; Afghanistan acts as a transport hub of power generation travelling from Iran and Turkmenistan to Pakistan, India, and even China. Whereas, For too many years, Afghanistan had served as both a perfect gateway for invaders and merchants moving soldiers and commodities from West to East, between the Middle East and India and vice versa. Alexander the Great selected this route 328 years before Christ. Afghanistan is becoming something more than a passageway; this is a crossroads of Asian trade lines.⁶²

Now if we create a common understanding for a reliable Afghanistan, recognizing regional trade integration and collaboration, trying to garner global support for an Afghan-led peace process, and retaining countries responsible to use proxy forces or other attempts to undermine solidity throughout Afghanistan are all part of the US strategic plan. The Department of Defense contributes to a multi-agency effort aimed at isolating insurgency and militant organizations from external forms of support and reducing the potential of negative effects or intervention from regional powers. Russia is expected to continue to back US-Taliban rehabilitation talks in the hopes of avoiding long-term US military forces in Afghanistan. As of February, the Russian state was collaborating with the Afghan government, neighboring powers, and the Taliban to acquire more power in the country, accelerate a US military departure, and solve security problems that may emerge as a consequence of the complete withdrawal. As of early February, Kremlin officials had indicated sympathy for the US-Taliban Agreement and volunteered to help promote the IAN process, which Russian officials saw as the best way to construct an interim administration. Despite openly denying their engagement, Russia has helped the Taliban diplomatically to build dominance with the group, minimize Western military involvement, and promote counter-ISIS activities

⁶² Analysis Document of the IEEE 12/2011 Geopolitical Analysis of Afghanistan (April, 2011) 1-5, https://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2011/DIEEEA122011_Geopolitica_AFganistan_GBBallesteros_ENGLISH.pdf

Russian military soldiers stationed in Tajikistan have been conducting routine patrols since late 2019 performed unilateral and multilateral activities to preserve readiness for future cross-border conflict starting within northern Afghanistan. The State Department has sought to enlist the help of regional partners to help the United States and the Taliban reach an agreement.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (together Central Asian nations) see Afghanistan's reliability and safety from the larger Central Asian perspective. Uzbekistan maintains strong trade relations, enabling Afghan resources to be shipped to China. Some Central Asian states are concerned that ISIS may grow into the region and destabilize the Middle East. Uzbekistan contributed positively to peace by leveraging its desirable position as a regional superpower and important productive connection to Afghanistan to encourage peace and economic progress. The Taliban and the Haqqani Network are almost certainly still capable of carrying out explosive and other military actions versus Afghan and Coalition forces. The Taliban has decreased attacks targeting Coalition troops since the signing of the US-Taliban agreement but has maintained combat operations targeting the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and Afghan government leaders. The Taliban, for example, recently took control of the Yamgan district center in Badakhshan.

There is a connection of Gulf States with Afghanistan as well. All of the Gulf States want Afghanistan to be stable. A ceasefire and peaceful resolution between the Afghan government and the Taliban will be supported by these countries. The Taliban Political Commission is based in Qatar, and it serves as a forum for key parties to discuss the execution and supervision of the US-Taliban Agreements. Qatari authorities have also helped the Taliban progress through the freedom agreement by acting as a facilitator. Airlift is also provided by Qatari C-17s for NATO operations in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, on the other hand, want to limit Iranian and Qatari involvement inside Afghanistan. An externally backed insurgency and terror organizations continue to pose a threat to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's safety and peace are endangered by this insurgency, terrorist, and criminal groups. The insurgents and Afghan criminal syndicates continue to be funded through drug smuggling, illegal revenue, extortion, illegal mines, and international financial backing. In addition, the rebellion continues to get occasional backing and sanctuary from outside forces. The conflict between the Taliban remains the most danger to Afghan stability. The Taliban participated in a notable seven-day drop in violence throughout this

period ending that anticipated the signature of the US-Taliban Agreement on February 29. Following the end of the signing of the US-Taliban Agreement, the Taliban restarted their strikes, especially targeting posts and troop carriers in rural regions. The Taliban avoided conducting attacks in densely populated areas and avoided attacking US and Coalition installations

2.5. **Pakistan's Relations with Central Asian Republics (CARs)**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC route offers enormous prospects for CARs, an area that came into the world following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, to grow trade with Pakistan while simultaneously passing via China. In the sense of the region's geostrategic scenario, CPEC offers an additional solution for connecting China's immediate neighbours Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and also Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, to the pathway, eliminating the need to rely on the conventional notion that all roadways from Pakistan into Central Asia pass via Kabul or the Wakhan strip. Almost every CAR has shown an interest in joining the CPEC. CARs have enormous potential to engage in CPEC-related projects and industrial estates due to their richness of natural resources including oil, gas, gold, and other metals. Researchers predict that the rapid improvements in national relationships with Russia will aid and increase the prospects for greater regional cooperation via global routes.⁶³

Pakistan and the Central Asian States have enjoyed good and warm relations over the years. Since the independence of Central Asian States, Pakistan has supported their cause through thick and thin. This is the reason present that Pakistan and the Central Asian States are quite close and there are numerous projects which have been instated by these states. One of the major elements to focus on Pakistan and the Central Asian States is the economic progress which has been made by these countries with help of each other. One of the primary examples of Pakistan and the Central Asian

⁶³Waqar Ahemd. CPEC to provide impetus to Pak-CARs relations."The News" (May 2018). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/323064-cpec-to-provide-impetus-to-pak-cars-relations>.

States is the gas and energy projects⁶⁴. There are some alike projects started between Pakistan and the Central Asian states whose main aim to provide energy to Pakistan and in return, Pakistan has been helping various central states with logistics and sea routes which they do not have.

It is a well-developed fact that the Central Asian states do not have a sea route. All the Central Asian States are landlocked and due to this reason, they have to find a sea from where they can trade with the rest of the world with ease. Therefore, one of the partners that the Central Asian States have found in recent years in Pakistan. Pakistan is quite closer to the Central Asian states and has a well-functioning port which can carry and sustain the exports coming from the Central Asian States and the imports going towards them. So, many analysts and authors have stated that it is a win-win situation for Pakistan and the Central Asian States in this element where both the parties are attaining the economic interest⁶⁵. Apart from this very reason, Pakistan and the Central Asian States are very close to each other. This closeness has proved very good for both Pakistan and the Central Asian States.

It is due to the fact that Pakistan and the Central Asian states share a lot of information and data with each other which has proven beneficial in terms of the economy. First of all, a core aspect to focus on for Pakistan and the Central Asian States is regional development. The region is very developed and a lot of construction and infrastructure are required to model it. Pakistan and the Central Asian states along with the help of China are trying to build the region. Therefore, this is another point to discuss. In the end, projects like CASA and TAPI are evident examples that economic progress is being made between Pakistan and the Central Asian States which is proving to be beneficial for all the states in the region in terms of developing economy.

2.6. Relations of India with CARs

India, on the other side, refers to Central Asia as "our near overseas" and "long neighbour." While expanding bilateral relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, it considers itself a contender to China in Central Asia. New Delhi is attempting to consolidate its geopolitical and geo-economics dominance in the region through a variety of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

means. However, there has been little development on the Chabahar project, which is seen as a crucial conduit for trade between Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Chahbahar Port, as it stands, is doubtful to be a game-changer for India. Given the obstacles, the proposed port facilities would not provide an alternate transit route to Afghanistan as well as other border countries.

India is at a loss since China has lengthy borders and strong ties with the CARs, whereas India does not. Although India lags ahead, China continues to create deep military, financial, and military partnerships with CARs on a massive scale. Financial contacts with CARs, as per Indian experts, are still at a reduced rate, and reciprocal involvement is similarly minimal. "China has made great gains in the area, with \$10 billion in donations and aid to Member nations in Central Asia and creating regional connections among Central Asia and its western territories," writes Roy Chaudhry in India's Financial Times⁶⁶. China's One Belt One Road OBOR policy revolves around Central Asia. Because Pakistan refuses to enable Indian commodities to travel through, India does not have direct overland connectivity with the territory. CARs must make use of CPEC's main advantages, which include massive transit-trade and financial prospects and possibilities, by integrating all accessible resources. CPEC appears to be the crucial variable in CARs' future commercial and trade relations, based on objective evaluation.

In the end, there are a lot of geographical connectivity projects which are initiated by the regional powers. The main aim of these geographical connectivity projects is to process the development of various developmental and infrastructural projects in the region. Just an example, the TAPI gas pipeline project was created in 2015 by four countries for the development of the region. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India are the four joint partners of this project. The aim of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India is to ensure that natural gas is being transported from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and then from there on to Pakistan and finally to India. TAPI gas pipeline project is core evidence which shows that there are a lot of chances and opportunities present for growth in the region. Despite having a lot of diverging interests, the TAPI gas pipeline project proves that there is potential in the region for development. So, the TAPI gas pipeline project is one of the projects on which contribution has been done. Similarly, the Central Asia-

⁶⁶ Pakistan and Afghanistan, "Institute for the study of war," "*understanding war*"
<https://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>

South Asia power project, CASA power transmission project is another project in which countries of the region are invested. The aim of projects like the CASA power transmission project is very simple. The aim as stated by the administration of the CASA power transmission project is to develop a sense of development in the region. Afghanistan which is one of the most underdeveloped regions requires a lot of development. This development is only possible if the regional countries invest in Afghanistan and promote cooperation in the country.

Several elements and topics have been covered in this phase of the work regarding the Afghan peace process. The aspect of the Afghan peace process is very crucial in recent times for some main reasons. It is concluded that the Afghan peace process is most important because of the regional and geographical connectivity of the several regions in the area. the Afghan peace process is crucial because if stability is present in Afghanistan, it can enhance the quality of operations and trade in the region. This aspect will boost the trade confidence in the region among many countries. Moreover, all the countries in the region will facilitate due to the Afghan peace process. Other than this, the importance of regional and geographical connectivity is defined in the work as well. Lastly, the Afghan peace process is an important development in the region. It is since that regional and geographical connectivity will be promoted. New employment opportunities will be created with help of regional and geographical connectivity and new trade and economic endeavours will be created for the regional countries including Afghanistan with help of regional and geographical connectivity.

2.7. Regional Connectivity

The ever-increasing energy needs of both Pakistan and India also compelled them to increasingly engage with the Central Asian states which boasted significant reserves of natural gas. An important initiative in this regard has been the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project which is meant to alleviate the energy needs of Turkmenistan's South Asian neighbours. However, this project again has been delayed and derailed by the deteriorating law and order situation in Afghanistan at one end and the problematic nature of Pakistan-Afghanistan ties. Owing to these complications, Pakistan has pushed Turkmenistan to ensure the provision of

its gas on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan and not its own border with Afghanistan. For Pakistan, owing to the passage of the pipeline, the TAPI project still remains a risky venture. Recently, the relationship between Pakistan and Uzbekistan has also seen improvement and clearly the Central Asian state is interested in forging close ties with Pakistan. A key development in this regard was the recent Central and South Asia Connectivity Conference held in Uzbekistan. This exhibited an interest on the part of the Uzbek government to engage aggressively with South Asia. Particularly significant was the finalization of a Joint Declaration on the Establishment of Strategic Partnership between the two sides. The agreement between both sides on the construction of a Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan (PAKAFUZ) railway line can be a possible game changer not only for regional connectivity and trade but also for the strategic environment. This also fits well with the Pakistan government's relatively new emphasis on geo-economics which essentially argues for developing economic partnerships rather than alignments based on geopolitical outlooks.

Yet again, all such schemes of regional connectivity and economic partnership are dependent upon political stability and order in Afghanistan. The power grab by the Taliban in Afghanistan has further complicated Pakistan's ambitions to materialize linkages with Central Asian states, whether in the energy field or the economic domain. However, Pakistan does seem to have gained on the geopolitical front and that too, on the expense of its archrival India. It will be a challenge for Pakistani decision makers now to convert this newfound geopolitical clout into geo economic opportunities that can make Pakistan a viable partner for Central Asia.

CHAPTER THREE

GEOGRAPHICAL CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS AND GREAT POWERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE

This chapter provides details of proposed and ongoing connectivity projects. There are numerous connectivity projects which are going on in and around Afghanistan. Afghanistan, as stated in the previous sections of the work is at great geographical location. There are many connectivity projects going on in the region. First of all, a core project of CPEC is being expanded into various parts of Afghanistan. CPEC is a flagship project of China which is expanding into various continents. Moreover, CASA-1000 and TAPI are some other projects which are going across the region. This chapter focused on the various connectivity projects going around in the region.

3.1. Growing Geographical Connectivity around Afghanistan

Afghanistan's ability a contribution to Asia's progress and development has gone unfulfilled throughout the last four decades of conflict. Afghanistan might exploit its power as the "heart of Asia" and connect the South and Central Asian areas if it had been a stable neighbor, as the present Afghan peace agreement seeks to increase it.

The five Central Asian countries are divided from South Asia by the military conflict in Afghanistan, a harsh territory with practically impassable mountains towards the east, and Iran to the west, making involvement with South Asia both improbable and problematic. Though fully trying to connect the areas would have been a long process needing the growth and quality of infrastructure throughout Afghanistan, doing this would create more opportunities for all: for Afghanistan, establishing infrastructure to incorporate the areas would enhance the country's struggling economy; and for places in South and Central Asia, doing so might well not only boost provincial involvement but also serve their financial power and open up access to different enormous markets.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly, "Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan" "United States Institute of Peace", "USPI, NO. 175 | (August, 2021) <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/08/afghanistan-pakistan-ties-and-future-stability-afghanistan>

This infrastructure would boost trade, as well as the mobility of people and thoughts across the two regions, resulting in increased creativity, creating jobs, and economic expansion. The productive capacity of South and Central Asia's youthful population is likewise dependent on regional integration; the median age in these regions is 27.6 years. South and Central Asian countries have a tremendous motive to work together in favor of a secure, peaceful, and democratic Afghanistan because of these possible benefits.

Projects to integrate the regions' power stations are already currently under way: The Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission Project will transport surplus hydropower from Central Asia to communities in South Asia, while the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Power Connectivity Project will facilitate power trade between the groups, and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline will transport gas between the countries involved. The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, another more extensive endeavor, brings together 11 countries from Central, South, and East Asia to encourage growth. However, to create corridors and reap the advantages of regional integration, new road and railway infrastructures would be required.⁶⁸

The five Central Asian countries are all geographical and are largely encircled by two great powers: Russia and China. Central Asia has also encircled financially: the region's exports and imports are dominated by Russia and China. Central Asian countries will gain accessibility to Iran in one way and Pakistan, India, and the broader Indo-Pacific area in the other by building land routes via Afghanistan. This would also give Central Asia alternatives to current ineffective and costly routes to the international market via China, allowing it to break free from its confinement and reliance on Russia and China⁶⁹.

Afghanistan's failing economy also could benefit from regional connectivity, primarily by connecting the country to India, the country's largest market. Infrastructural development should

⁶⁸ Hunter, Lori M. 2015. *Environmental Dimensions of Migration*. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112223>.

⁶⁹ Mirzokhid Rakhimov, "Central Asia in the Context of Western and Russian Interests". *Cairn* 2015 <https://www.cairn.info/revue-1-europe-en-formation-2015-1-page-140.htm>.

allow economies to trade a broader range of products via lower costly land routes than now exist. As a consequence of the new infrastructures, South and Central Asian countries may be invited to cooperate with Afghanistan within both economic and public sectors. Engagement by the private industry might increase investments within Afghanistan, although engagement by the government sector may convince governments to have included Afghanistan in regional and international projects such as the US-Central Asia Platform⁷⁰.

An existing land link from Afghanistan to Central Asia might be a more comfortable and effective option for Pakistan than its existing route via Iran or China. Pakistan will be willing to connect emerging industries for its products and strong bonds with its Muslim-majority neighbours as a result of this linkage, two possibilities that are critical to achieving one of the goals of its 2025 vision, which is to revolutionize the transit system and increase regional cooperation, as well as the country's objective of focusing attention its international affairs on geo-economics. For example, Pakistan's robust farming industry may be used to deliver short-term food relief to Turkmenistan, where the COVID-19 epidemic has aggravated an already-existing food problem. This transaction would build the groundwork for a long-term relationship.

Afghanistan might well be able to take advantage of its unique geopolitical position not just to start rebuilding its entire economy, and to help the county become more successful. It only serves to focus on the importance for countries in the area to priority the work of building a peace accord in Afghanistan that is a requirement for exploiting this dormant potential.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan has been wracked by violence and criminality for years, and the country's unexplored riches necessitate the use of mining gear to support its economy. If peace survives, regional infrastructure initiatives could benefit Afghanistan and Pakistan's businesses into the future. The regional connection would also help Afghanistan's economy recover, particularly by linking the country to India's biggest markets. Better infrastructure will enable the country to conduct trade using more cost-effective ground channels rather than the current aviation routes.

⁷⁰ Emily Carll, "An Afghanistan at peace could connect South and Central Asia". 'New Atlanticist', (May 18, 2021) <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/an-afghanistan-at-peace-could-connect-south-and-central-asia/>

The Lapis Lazuli Corridor, which would connect Afghanistan to Europe via Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, is one such plan in which the country is involved. Afghanistan and Turkey are the main supporting pillars of the project. The development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could enable Afghanistan to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pakistan may be able to access Central Asian energy markets through Afghanistan. In particular, Pakistan may exploit Afghanistan as a commerce and economic resource route to Europe through Central Asia. Furthermore, power infrastructure projects to link areas are ongoing: for example, The CASA-1000 project, worth \$1.2 billion, would deliver 1300 megawatts (MW) of electric power to Afghanistan and Pakistan from Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. With 4.6 billion kilowatt-hours (KWH) of annual transmission, it will be a substantial new source of income in the regional power market. While the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline will span four countries and span 1,814 kilometres. The project will strengthen business and start operating all through the area.⁷¹

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program is a larger initiative to promote development in Central, South, and East Asia, spearheaded by eleven countries including Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, to expand corridors and maximize regional connecting benefits, additional road and rail infrastructure will be necessary. Afghanistan has long had relations with the Central Asian republics, as the country maintains ethnic connections with its Central Asian neighbours. For millennia, Afghanistan was a Silk Road crossroads. Safety and peace in Afghanistan will increase transit connections throughout Asia, as insecurity in Afghanistan will affect surrounding instability, while peace in Afghanistan will affect stability in the region.

A calm Afghanistan will be beneficial to the neighbourhood and, most importantly, to Pakistan. A land connection from Afghanistan to Central Asia keeps providing a more efficient and cost-effective alternative to Pakistan's current routes through Iran or China. Pakistan will be able to gain access to new markets for its exports and agricultural products, as well as enhance relations between the two countries and other countries, due to this connectivity. Two options, in particular,

⁷¹ John C. K. Daly . Will the Lapis Lazuli Railway Corridor Finally End Afghanistan's Isolation? '*Cacianalyst*', (November 2017). <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13485-will-the-lapis-lazuli-railway-corridor-finally-end-afghanistans-isolation?.html>.

are critical to achieving Pakistan's 2025⁷² strategy that aims to rebuild transportation infrastructure and boost regional integration by using Afghans as a doorway. It may also allow Pakistan to concentrate on geo-economics rather than geopolitical.

Making peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical for all of this to occur since it will help the citizens on both sides. To avoid blame games and work to a more wealthy area in support of economic development, genuine initiatives must be made.

In addition, Pakistan's ability to generate electrical energy has been glaringly weak in the summer. Pakistan is looking for a way to meet its energy needs as its population increases. Significantly, Afghanistan acts as a key toward the rich Central Asian countries, which will help Pakistan meet its energy requirements⁷³

Both countries can take use of interconnection programs to help control the energy problem. Pakistan's population is expected to expand by 3% during 2020⁷⁴. If the population continues to rise at its current rate, Pakistan will require the additional economic potential for its citizens. Over the last 2 decades, Pakistan's economy has grown at a reasonable pace. Annual per capita growth averaged about 3%, fewer than half that of South Asia, owing to inconsistencies in macroeconomic stability and dependence on economic growth to fuel progress⁷⁵. In the coming, Afghanistan's insecurity will have a larger effect on Economic growth and poverty reduction; a secure Afghanistan will allow Pakistan to flourish financially. In Afghanistan, financial development is related to peace. The financial strain of Afghan insecurity would fall on Pakistan particularly and the country as a whole⁷⁶. Pakistan's officials and leaders are well aware of the costs of an insecure Afghanistan. If the Afghan authorities and militants do not reach an agreement, neither the Central

⁷² Pakistan Vision 2025, <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>

⁷³Center, Wilson. 2019. *Fueling the Future*. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Asia_FuelingtheFuture_rptmain.pdf.

⁷⁴ Pakistan Vision 2025, <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Center, Wilson. 2019. *Fueling the Future*. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Asia_FuelingtheFuture_rptmain.pdf.

Asian republics nor Pakistan would be ready to deal with the approaching energy and economic crises.

3.1.1. The Centrality of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Connectivity

The Belt and Road Initiative is launched by China in 2013. The BRI aims to ensure that a global infrastructural development takes place by which China and all the other countries involved in it can attain economic and other related benefits. It is important to understand the fact that China is willing to spend more than 80 billion US dollars in the development phases of the BRI. There are more than 70 countries around the globe which are associated with the BRI⁷⁷. Most importantly, Pakistan, Central Asian States, and some of the African states are the main point of focus for China in the BRI. It is important to understand that the Belt and Road Initiative demands more security of the infrastructure. It is a well-known factor that when development in the infrastructure takes place, it creates a lot of jobs and the economic grooming of a country takes place. This is what Belt and Road Initiative is looking for.

There is a certain number of other projects present in the BRI. For example, as the name suggests, Belt and Road Initiative involves tons of road and railway construction projects which are aimed to bring improvements and facilitation in the conductance of trade. China is one of the biggest exporters in the world⁷⁸. The country has been producing tons of products and services but the main area where China lags is the distribution. China does not have proper access to its European markets and this is where it requires a route by road or by sea. The main proponent which is of the thought for China is Belt and Road Initiative is Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States.

China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states can play a very vital role in balancing their trade. In this section of the work, the importance of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States for China as well as BRI is discussed. First of all, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states can provide the required route to China for its trade conductance in the

⁷⁷John C. K. Daly . Will the Lapis Lazuli Railway Corridor Finally End Afghanistan's Isolation? '*Cacianalyst*', (November 2017). <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13485-will-the-lapis-lazuli-railway-corridor-finally-end-afghanistans-isolation?.html>.

⁷⁸ Center, Wilson. 2019. *Fueling the Future*. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Asia_FuelingtheFuture_rptmain.pdf.

European markets. It is important to understand the fact that Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States, all are neighbors of China and due for this very reason, China is investing heavily in the region so that it can carry on its products vis road to Europe. Pakistan has borders with China. Under the flagship project of BRI, China has intended to invest a whopping amount of around \$60 billion in Pakistan to create a road and railway network which can enhance Afghanistan and then from there, it can move into other states. So, there is no denying the fact that Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states have a lot of importance to China as China needs them for the proper trade activities throughout the region.

Now, an important element to focus on is the Central Asian States. The central Asian states are landlocked and there is road access present in all of these states which makes them important for China. China has been thinking for a very long time to use this element for enhancing trade. Trade via road is very cheap and it takes very less time as compared to carrying out trade with help of sea. Therefore, one of the main elements to focus on for China and the Central Asian States is building roads⁷⁹. China planned that it will invest in Pakistan to gain access to Afghanistan. After that, Afghanistan has borders with the Central Asian States and with help of this China can gain access to the Central Asian States. Therefore, this is one of the optimal elements to focus on for China.

The implications for the Central Asian States and region when it comes to projects like BRI are phenomenal. First of all, one of the primary reasons is the development of Central Asian States. The central Asian States are quite cut off from the rest of the world. These Central Asian States are very rich in resources but they have been lagging for a very long time. Due to this element, Central Asian States have a chance to develop. Moreover, the projects like the Belt and Road Initiative render an opportunity for regional connectivity. For example, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States, all of these states are connected with the help of the Belt and Road Initiative. China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States, all of these states have had

⁷⁹ Wolf, Siegfried Intra-Afghan-Peace Talks (I): Pakistan's growing influence in Afghanistan. (January 2021)'. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3941174

good relations over time and this element of BRI will create a staunch relationship between these states⁸⁰.

Moreover, the projects like BRI will render a chance for China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States to enhance their economic portfolios. The major reason present in this aspect of the work is the combined progress and regional cooperation between China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States. Therefore, many analysts have taken out the fact that the Belt and Road Initiative will enhance the progress of these nations. Along with that, the Belt and Road Initiative will help out in reducing the tensions between the states which have existed for a very long time. Lastly, the Belt and Road Initiative is in its last phases as some of the construction work is still in progress⁸¹. But an important part to consider about the Belt and Road Initiative is its operational activity. Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States all have BRI passing through them and due to this very reason, some of the areas of the project are operational and some of the areas are still in the developmental phases. For example, the parts in Pakistan are almost completed while parts of the project in Afghanistan and the Central Asian states still require some time to get completed. Therefore, an important aspect to consider about Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States is that all of these nations are indulged in regional cooperation and combined economic and social growth with help of the projects like BRI.

3.1.2. Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India Gas Pipeline

. The TAPI gas pipeline project is one of the core projects which aims to provide and facilitate cheap gas to Afghanistan, Pakistan and then India. TAPI gas pipeline project is an 1800 kilometers long project which is trying to serve the needs of the region. TAPI gas pipeline project is a joint venture by Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India. TAPI gas pipeline project was signed between these four countries in 2015. By the end of 2019, the TAPI gas pipeline project was completed but there are still many question marks present when it comes to the practical importance of the TAPI gas pipeline project.

⁸⁰ Ihsanullah Omarkhail, August 3, 2021. The Importance of Regional Connectivity for Afghanistan and Pakistan

⁸¹ Javaid, Faisal and Ali Dashti, Asghar. "Relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: An analysis", *Karachi: Islamic Research Academy* (June, 2016)
https://www.academia.edu/38717723/Relations_between_Pakistan_and_Central_Asian_Republics_An_analysis

It is a well-known fact that all the Central Asian countries are very rich in resources such that of gas. This is the major reason present that many countries try to take the advantage by buying gas from these countries. Pakistan and India are one of the biggest countries in terms of population present around the world. Pakistan and India have more than 1.5 billion population around the world combined⁸². This element shows that Pakistan and India require tons of resources such as natural gas for various purposes. The need for natural gas in Pakistan and India is ever-increasing and due to this reason, the government of Pakistan and India decided to indulge in a contract by which cheap and good quality natural gas can be transported from Turkmenistan to Pakistan India. It was not an easy job to do for Pakistan and India as Afghanistan lies between Pakistan and India.

Therefore, the TAPI gas pipeline project was signed in 2015 between four countries and it was aimed that the TAPI gas pipeline project will be completed by the end of 2019. But TAPI gas pipeline project was completed in the mid of 2019⁸³. Many analysts over the years have presented the fact that the TAPI gas pipeline project has been very much useful and resourceful for the countries. There are certain important points present when it comes to the TAPI gas pipeline project. First of all, one of the main cardinal points of the TAPI gas pipeline project is the usage of gas resources. As stated in the above section, Pakistan and India have increasing gas usage needs. Both of these countries, Pakistan and India require tons of gas resources to fulfil their industrial as well as commercial needs. Therefore, Pakistan and India mutually decided to indulge in a gas project which can be exported from another country which has tons of supply of it. Central Asian countries became the golden chance for Pakistan and India. Therefore, Pakistan and India decided to sign a contract by indulging Afghanistan in it. Pakistan and India could not sign this treaty by escaping Afghanistan from it for a few reasons. First of all, Pakistan and India had to develop good relations with Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan and India needed to provide a cut to Afghanistan in the process. Secondly, getting a pipeline to Pakistan and India was a crucial element that it had to pass from Afghanistan. Therefore, this was another core reason present that Pakistan and India had to involve Afghanistan in the process.

⁸² Wolf, Siegfried Intra-Afghan-Peace Talks (I): Pakistan's growing influence in Afghanistan. (January 2021)'. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3941174

⁸³ Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline Project <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/2613>

Now, considering the importance of the TAPI gas pipeline project, it is observed that there are tons of positive implications present which have helped in the regional growth and cooperation. First of all, one of the main important points about the TAPI gas pipeline project is the development of a gas pipeline project. TAPI gas pipeline project offers around 1800 Km long gas pipeline project which is covering three different countries. TAPI gas pipeline project goes to Afghanistan in the first place. Then from Afghanistan, the TAPI gas pipeline project enters Pakistan where Pakistan carries out the gas it requires and then from Pakistan, the TAPI gas pipeline project enters India. Thus, the gas needs of three different countries are being fulfilled by one single entity which is TAPI gas pipeline project. Moreover, the TAPI gas pipeline project offered regional growth and cooperation. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the region where poverty and job opportunities are very less. TAPI gas pipeline project came into developmental phases in Afghanistan, it created tons of jobs for the local people. Many analysts have stated the fact that the TAPI gas pipeline project is a key project which is playing its part in the development of the economies around the region, especially in Afghanistan.

The TAPI Pipeline runs approximately 1,800 kilometers (km) from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and then to Pakistan and India. During the 30-year commercial operations term, the pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic meters (BCM) of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan to respective clients in Afghanistan (5%), Pakistan (47.5%), and India (47.5%)⁸⁴ The Project entails the acquisition, construction, and operation of the pipeline and associated facilities in AFG and PAK. But the main hurdle for the current time is the Taliban regime, will they allow their soil for the pipeline which connects to India. In theory, TAPI makes more sense. The energy consumption in Pakistan hasn't been in dispute, and the Pakistan market is huge. A new gas source might benefit India as well, although the possibilities are riskier. India will only purchase TAPI gas if the landed price is lower than the price of oil and natural gas. Bilateral hostility may also emerge. Indian parliamentarians have raised concerns about the transit costs Pakistan would take

⁸⁴ Silvia Boltuc,. India and Turkmenistan discussed the Afghanistan situation and the TAPI natural gas pipeline project. <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2022/04/06/india-turkmenistan-tapi-pipeline/>

for sending gas to India, and any Pakistani administration may be motivated to restrict gas supplies during a moment of stress⁸⁵.

In the end, the TAPI gas pipeline project did not have much proper and practical advantage to the region. One of the main elements which can be called the hindering factors for the TAPI gas pipeline project is disputes among Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. It is important to understand that Pakistan, India and Afghanistan have not been on the same passage and page for a very long time. There are several animosities present between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan and due to this very fact, the countries are not on nice terms with each other. Therefore, it is an important fact to understand that the TAPI gas pipeline project is on halt for a very long time. All the prerequisites for the TAPI gas pipeline project are in shape. Even in some parts of the states which are involved in the TAPI gas pipeline project, gas pipelines are in shape as well. But due to some issues which are presented in the above section, the TAPI gas pipeline project is not fully operational.

3.1.3. CASA Power Transmission Project

CASA power transmission project is also known as Central Asia and South Asia power transmission project. CASA power transmission project was signed between four countries in 2016⁸⁶. The main proponents of states which took part in the CASA power transmission project are Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. These four countries are included in the CASA power transmission project. It is important to understand the factor that the CASA power transmission project was put forth by Pakistan to meet its energy needs. As is discussed in the above section as well that Central Asian states are very rich in gas and electricity reserves, they provide an exceptional chance to engage and trade electricity. This is what the CASA power transmission project is all about.

⁸⁵ Javaid, Faisal and Ali Dashti, Asghar. Relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: An analysis, Karachi: Islamic Research Academy (June 2016)

⁸⁶ Silvia Boltuc, India and Turkmenistan discussed the Afghanistan situation and the TAPI natural gas pipeline project. <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2022/04/06/india-turkmenistan-tapi-pipeline/>.

The net worth of investment which is observed in the CASA power transmission project is around 1.16 billion dollars⁸⁷. A core factor to understand is that in the CASA power transmission project, all the different stakeholders invested a sum of money according to their needs and demands. For example, in the CASA power transmission project, Pakistan invested more than half of the amount because the idea of the CASA power transmission project was projected by Pakistan. Also, a core factor to denote in this aspect of the work is the utility of the CASA power transmission project. Many South Asian states such as Pakistan and Afghanistan have faced electricity shortfalls in recent years. There are many reasons present for it but they are not the point of discussion in the CASA power transmission project. These states required some sources by which the need for electricity could be fulfilled. Therefore, the main aspect which combined the needs of these countries was the CASA power transmission project.

Many authors believe that the CASA power transmission project is a project which will shape the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan which has some stakes in the project as well. It is intended that the CASA power transmission project will put up towers and other useful materials throughout the countries in which the CASA power transmission project is present. The aim of installing these towers is to supply electricity to Pakistan from where it could be transported to all different parts of the country. For example, Pakistan does not have large resources from which it can produce and meet its energy needs. All the resources which are present in Pakistan are either depleting or are very expensive in nature. This is the reason why Pakistan has the highest rates of producing electricity in the region. Now, it is important to understand the fact that the CASA power transmission project can meet the energy needs of Pakistan.

Energy is crucial, for shared prosperity, employment generation, and contemporary living. Poverty continues without it. Whereas, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan both possess some of the world's largest and greatest numerous renewable hydroelectric potential. These nations get an excess of power throughout the season due to summer rains and the hydrological cycle. Elsewhere in South Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan have severe energy crises although working to keep up with rapidly increasing demand. Pakistan is unable to fulfil its inhabitants' electrical demands, particularly

⁸⁷ Anthony H Cordesman., "The Imploding Afghan Peace Effort." (May 1,2020) <https://www.csis.org/analysis/imploding-afghan-peace-effort>

during the hot summer months, leading to frequent power outages that harm industrial productivity, force small companies to cease, and result in job shortages. Nevertheless, millions of citizens keep living without power.

It is intended under the CASA power transmission project that this project will supply around 3000 megawatts of electricity to Pakistan annually. Though there is no specific date of finalization of the CASA power transmission project present an important fact to consider is that many stakeholders indicate that the CASA power transmission project will get completed by the end of 2023. So, by the end of 2023, under the CASA power transmission project, Pakistan will be getting additional 3000 megawatts of electricity which will greatly improve the outcome and productivity of Pakistan⁸⁸. Meanwhile, the CASA power transmission project is also passing through Afghanistan as well. Afghanistan has more severe shortfalls compared to Pakistan. Therefore, it is important to consider the fact that the CASA power transmission project will not only meet the energy needs and demands of Pakistan but it will greatly benefit Afghanistan as well whose energy needs are severe.

There are several important factors present when it comes to the CASA power transmission project. First of all, the CASA power transmission project will address the required energy needs and demands of Pakistan. It is observed that the energy needs and demands of Pakistan reach the highest levels in summer in Pakistan. The main reason for these energy needs and demands of Pakistan are diversified in nature. The commercial, as well as the industrial use of electricity, increases to an optimal point in Pakistan. Therefore, the energy needs and demands of Pakistan touch the sky in summer. Therefore, the CASA power transmission project is designed to provide Pakistan with an adequate supply of energy in summer so that Pakistan can work on its energy needs. Moreover, the CASA power transmission project is a tool which is seen by many players as the core aspect of regional integration. Regional integration between Pakistan, Afghanistan and

⁸⁸ Silvia Boltuc “India and Turkmenistan discussed the Afghanistan situation and the TAPI natural gas pipeline project”, *Specialeurasia*. (April 2022) <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2022/04/06/india-turkmenistan-tapi-pipeline/>.

all the other central Asian countries involved in the CASA power transmission project will get closer in terms of cooperation⁸⁹.

3.1.4. Regional Security for Connectivity

Over time, there are many various reasons and indications present for the regional cooperation and integration of the countries. Some of the core points related to regional cooperation and integration are security. Security is called the pivotal element for regional cooperation and integration. It is important to understand the fact that regional cooperation and integration can enhance if states can converge their security needs into one. A balance created in terms of security can allow regional cooperation and integration⁹⁰. But one of the most important and diversifying facts about regional cooperation and integration is the economy. The economy is one of the core tools present which shapes regional cooperation and integration.

According neoliberalist's regional cooperation and integration are cardinal aspects for the states to grow together. It is very much important for states to have good and cordial relations with each other so that they can progress in a combined manner⁹¹. So, regional cooperation and integration are the ultimate aim and objective when it comes to the economic association.

3.1.5. Economic and Financial Linkages

Financial support and the involvement of international armed and support workers will, unsurprisingly, decrease with time. However, abandoning Afghanistan might not have been the

⁸⁹ Khan, Dilawar. 2021. *Afghan Peace Process And The Uncertain Future Of Afghanistan*. <https://www.ilkogretim-online.org/fulltext/218-1642348523.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Khan, Dilawar. 2021. *Afghan Peace Process And The Uncertain Future Of Afghanistan*. <https://www.ilkogretim-online.org/fulltext/218-1642348523.pdf>.

⁹¹ Caroline A. Hartzell, "A comparative perspective on an Afghan peace process: why, when, who and what." Report on Afghanistan: Opportunity in Crisis Series 7 (Dec 2014). https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20141204AfghanPeaceProcessHartzell.pdf

best option for the US and others. In view of how Afghanistan has struggled and suffered, denying its social and economic support would be unfair. Political reality dictates that this resource-poor country not be exposed. Lacking noticeable foreign intervention, Afghanistan risks devolving into a Marco-state and becoming susceptible to predatory neighbours, resulting in a national political uprising and financial disaster. Afghanistan might once again get to be a breeding bed for locally and internationally spreading Islamic radicalism. The world community, particularly the United States, is concerned about a nuclear-armed Pakistan and the risks that it will become a militant state. The international community at large engagement in preventing Afghanistan from being a Marco-state seems to be more immediate than all the other concerns confronting the nation. Opium production has proliferated all across the country as a logical result of a weak financial system and a poor governmental structure, forbidding most of the country's economy and administration. It has developed a network of relationships among dealers, militia forces, government leaders, and anti-regime terrorists which resists the Kabul administration's and its allies' enforcement actions. The country's poor judicial systems are likewise a key sticking block. It's hardly a surprise that the United States and many others continue to demand a more strong counternarcotic policy, given that Afghanistan produces about 90% of the world's largest heroin.⁹²

The world community has recommitted as a result of the much more remarkable political victories and the achievement of the milestones outlined in Bonn. Upwards of 60 countries and global organizations gathered in London in January 2006 to pledge \$10.5 billion in official development support throughout five years⁹³. The conference's centerpiece was an Afghanistan Compact, formulated by the Karzai administration and based on worldwide engagement to advance governance, the legal system, civil rights, and financial and socioeconomic advancement. The conference members are receptive to the Karzai government's demands for main control over aid money. However, there are serious uncertainties regarding the central authority's ability to properly collect and spend the aid. Eventually, an agreement has been reached to establish a trust that would

⁹³ Edward Burke, "Game over? The EU's legacy in Afghanistan", *Working Paper* (February, 2014)
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177001/Game%20Over_%20The%20EU%E2%80%99s%20legacy%20in%20Afghanista.pdf

be willing to release additional monies to Kabul in exchange for evidence of more openness and accountable⁹⁴

Issues concerning Afghanistan's ongoing security problems are raised, but Pakistan was not mentioned in relation to the increasing insurgency. Rather, the Compact urges "absolute respect for Afghanistan's independence, as well as increased discussion and collaboration among Afghanistan and its neighboring." To date, Washington has remained ambiguous about Pakistan's Afghan activities. US officials encourage Musharraf on a regular basis to do something to reign in the Taliban and those involved in anti-Kabul operations and publicly commend the Islamabad administration for its assistance in detaining Islamic terrorists. In fact, for the better part of the previous 4 years, Pakistan's leaders have already had reason to think that curbing the Taliban's and their supporters' actions became less important to Washington than catching those who may be directly linked to al Qaeda. Meanwhile, the US has given Musharraf a pass on fulfilling his obligations to combat internal terrorism and his commitments to reestablish full democracy. The United States' relationship with Pakistan would most likely be strengthened by conditioned initiatives that are more focused.

This repressive gathering of post-Soviet regimes keeps making the country unappealing to global investors, as they appear to be on the verge of it becoming "new Afghanistan" on a daily basis. However, their importance to the global project in Afghanistan stems from their support of ISAF supply lines, and there is a longer-term possibility of expanding commerce channels that flow into and via northern Afghanistan. The CASA's incapacity to do anything at all active, on the other hand, makes them of doubtful usefulness in Afghanistan. Internal discontent in the CAS is a constant threat, making it more likely to be an issue than solutions in the near future. China is concerned about uncontrollable insecurity throughout the country, fearing spilling throughout its borders. It stays committed to bringing stability and peace to Afghanistan. China's primary objective in Afghanistan is commerce and financial growth, as part of a larger strategic push for Central and Southern Asia's oil and minerals. Despite taking a measured approach, China has made

⁹⁴ Soeren Kern, "Can Afghanistan Be Rebuilt" *Real Instituto Elcano* (March 2, 2006) <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/can-afghanistan-be-rebuilt/>

a large investment in Afghan copper mining, with a \$2.5 billion investment. The connection among China and Afghanistan is amicable, and it is improving thanks to China's investing heavily⁹⁵

After the painful truths of its previous participation in the 1980s, Russia has eschewed military involvement this time. It is glad for the US to fight the Taliban, and perhaps even happier for the US to acquire influence over NATO by assisting The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with northern supply lines. While Russia is worried about the possibility of a semi-permanent US involvement in the area (for example, military outposts), its primary worries are the movement of narcotics throughout into country and the determination to see Islamic fanaticism pushed back from its boundaries. Aside from that, Russia seems to prefer to bide its time, scouring Afghanistan for potential business and investment prospects with as minimal effort as feasible.

For a variety of historic, cultural, ethnic, economic, geographic, religious, and tribal reasons, Afghanistan's present contiguous neighbors: Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan are all involved in the country's fate. Each neighbor's relationship with Afghanistan is marked by a unique set of worries and difficulties. Pakistan's long-standing and contentious backing for the Taliban, as well as its fear of India, has led to it being accused of playing a 'double game' in Afghanistan by a range of regional and international entities, with considerable reason. China's border, which is only 76 kilometers long, is attracting increasing economic investment, but the country has otherwise kept a low profile.

In an age of globalization, the term "neighbor" had to be expanded to include non-geographic neighbors, institutions, and individuals having an interest in the country and neighborhood. India, which does not share a border with Afghanistan, is a useful example since it is impossible to analyse Pakistan's position and stake in Afghanistan without addressing its still difficult relationship with India. In addition, India has had and will remain to have a significant political, economic, and financial presence in Afghanistan. Russia is yet another 'near neighbor' with significant investment and impact on Afghanistan.

⁹⁵ Lukas Trakimavičius "Is China really eyeing Afghanistan's mineral resources?" *Energy Post* (September 2, 2021) <https://energypost.eu/is-china-really-eyeing-afghanistans-mineral-resources/>

However, two fundamental issues will almost certainly ensure slow and shaky growth. Instability, either generated by a Jihadi-fueled insurgency or non-aligned militant groups, will keep making investment exceedingly unappealing. It will be hard for the region and worldwide investors to achieve profits on their projects unless the safety situation considerably changes and is recognized to be so. Additionally, the Afghan administration's apparent shortage of skills serves as a clear reflection of how far the country still requires to progress to realize Karzai's vision for the Kabul Conference. Much of this is still a limitation: a lack of qualified and competent employees, and a lack of administrative governance. The Central Asian States (CAS) appear to be on the verge of being 'new Afghanistan's on a constant schedule. The CAS countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan) received, and then maintained to operate, the corrupt, incompetent, and authoritarian administrations that gave Communists a bad name in the 1990s. They continue to inadvertently make the area as undesirable as feasible to global investors, despite the fact that they have not yet wasted their resource-rich prospects. Iran is sincere in its goal for a stable Afghanistan, and its efforts are visible. An important component of Iran's engagement in Afghanistan is the growth of Western Afghanistan, including its road (and hopefully rail) networks, energy resources, and marketplaces. Although Iran has demonstrated its ability to forcibly repatriate a large number of refugees in the latest days, it seems to recognize the importance of fostering appealing conditions in Western Afghanistan to encourage Afghans to return willingly. Health-care centres and mosques are among the other initiatives included in Iran's rehabilitation and growth packages in Afghanistan. 2001, estimates of Iranian economic support and investments have ranged between 2001, estimations of Iranian economic support and investments have ranged around \$340 – 400 million.⁹⁶

3.1.6. Railway Networks for Connectivity

In the north of Afghanistan, there are three railway tracks. The first is a line that runs from Mazar-i-Sharif and Hairatan, a border town in Balkh province that links to Uzbek Railways in Uzbekistan. The second connects Herat's Torghundi with Turkmenistan's Turkmen Railways. The third seems to be between Turkmenistan and Aqina in Afghanistan's Faryab region that stretches south to

⁹⁶ Marvin G. Weinbaum "Afghanistan and Its Neighbors An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood" *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* June 2006

Andkhoy. The country is currently lacking a commercial rail service, however, a new passenger and freight railway route from Herat to Khaf in Iran was recently set up. Hairatan – Mazar-i-Sharif and Mazar-i-Sharif – Aqina sections are also scheduled for transport services. Afghanistan's rail network is currently in the early stages of development. The existing rail tracks will be upgraded in the coming years, with lines for both cargo and passenger numbers included in the planning. Throughout the early twenty-first century, Afghanistan's neighbours worked to improve their railroad infrastructure. The major goal would be to use Afghanistan to link the four Asian subcontinents through rail.⁹⁷

The Afghan government wanted to establish a railway development commission with European Commission technical assistance, which was mentioned at the G8 summit in July 2011⁹⁸. The Committee will be in charge of overseeing the development of a train system inside the country as well as its connections with neighbouring countries. Afghanistan's rail network authority has received assistance from the Asian Development Bank. The Afghanistan Railway Authority has a site, although it contains very little information as of August 2017. Afghanistan Railways Law (12 chapters and 105 clauses) was established in February 2013 and is subject to approval from "necessary institutions," according to the document⁹⁹. The Afghanistan Railroad Advisory Team of the United States Army has given training. The following is the travel information (derived from Google Earth/Bing Maps). The new line begins in Iran at a connection with the section of a mineral at Khaf station, wherein international locos can turn around in a balloon loop. The path is

⁹⁷ Katerina Oskarsson, "The Rise of the Afghan Rails: Regional Railway Linkages and Economic Growth in Afghanistan", 'Civil-Military Fusion Center'. (March 2013) https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_Update

⁹⁸ Johan Irish, "Interview-Afghans eye rail to ease \$3 trillion in projects" "Reuters" 4th July 2011 <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUKLDE7631BI20110704>

⁹⁹ Umbreen, Javaid. "Oil and Gas Potentials of Central Asian Republics and Relations with Pakistan", 'Journal of South Asian Studies' (June 2015), pp. 127 – 148 http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/9%20Umbreen%20javaid_30_1.pdf

low on the hillside than the mining stream, and it seems that a diversion has already taken place, presumably to evade mine functioning and tailings.

We'll also go over the primary influences on the relationship between the two countries. First, since they lack a legal basis and status that imposes obligations on states, and because they do not cleanly fit into the categories supplied by the current international legal system, environmental-induced migrants are particularly vulnerable. The challenge of distinguishing environment-induced migration trends is exacerbated by a lack of accurate data and the often changing status of migrants who are prone to national conflicts. Natural disaster dispersion is more usually associated with sudden-onset events, and its relationship with slow-onset events is frequently conditional on whether the slow-onset event has evolved into an environmental significant disaster affecting individuals who have no other reasonable option but to evacuate. Border conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan have exacerbated tensions between the two governments in recent decades, yet they still exist. First Afghan President, as opposed to the Durand Line, established the formal border between the two territories. He advocated for the purchase of lands and people along the Afghan border, escalating tensions and even resulting in conflict between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

The Afghan peace process is one of the core areas in the contemporary world. It will not be wrong to put forth the conclusion that the Afghan peace process kept the whole world in a state of confusion. One of the longest wars in the history of the world was on the verge of getting resolved with the Afghan peace process. First of all, it is important to state in this part of the work that the Afghan peace process took its time for getting sorted. There were several players and stakeholders present in the Afghan peace process. For example, Pakistan, India and the other Central Asian states have been cardinal players in the Afghan peace process. It is because the Afghan peace process would have an impact on the regional countries. The Afghan peace process was termed as one of the most dynamic happenings around the international world. So, the Afghan peace process would have an influence on the regional countries like that Pakistan, India and the other Central Asian States.

It is stated that a better Afghanistan is in the favor of every regional country. It is not wrong to put forth that the Afghan peace process played a crucial role in stating this factor bluntly. For example, Pakistan was one of the main players in the Afghan peace process. Pakistan had the point of view that if Afghanistan is stable, Pakistan will be stable as well. There are a lot of previous evidence and historical events present to present in this argument. But the Afghan peace process has its implications on the region as well as on Afghanistan itself. In this concluding note, the importance of the Afghan peace process is important to be discussed. First of all, one of the benefits of the Afghan peace process is regional cooperation and coordination. As presented by all the different notions and stakeholders that a stable Afghanistan is in the favor of every country, regional cooperation and coordination are elements to which they are referring.

A core element to focus on is regional cooperation and coordination. If Afghanistan is stable, all the countries and states present in the region will have their share in regional cooperation and coordination. Pakistan and China are the primary examples present when it comes to regional cooperation and coordination. Pakistan and China are trying to create and revive the old silk route which was used to conduct trade. Pakistan and China are intending to invest a lot in the region by which different projects will be started in the region. For example, Pakistan and China are

extensively working on the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor. The aim of the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor is to ensure that China can promote its products and services to the greater European continent. But a matter of fact is that the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor is trying to indulge in Afghanistan. The China – Pakistan Economic Corridor is not possible if Afghanistan is not stable and this is what Pakistan and China have an idea about. The China – Pakistan Economic Corridor includes different prospects and projects related to Afghanistan. So, one of the major implications of the China – Pakistan Economic Corridor is to ensure that regional activity and conduciveness are there.

Another chapter of the thesis has covered the topic of regional and geographical connectivity in the region. Regional and geographical connectivity in the region is the most important proponent in the region. For example, all the states present in the region are quite optimistic about future developments in Afghanistan. The regional and geographical connectivity in the region is only possible if Afghanistan is present in a stable position. Many authors and analysts have stated that the geographical connectivity in the region due to Afghanistan is a core aspect to focus on. It is due to the main reason that the geographical connectivity and location of Afghanistan are very precarious and precious. Afghanistan is located at the crossroads of what can be called the greatest geographical location. This is why regional and geographical connectivity in the region is important for all the regional countries. But a part of regional and geographical connectivity in the region is concerned with the outcomes of the Afghan peace process. For example, the Afghan peace process is an important character present in regional stability and connectivity. It is due to the very fact that the Afghan peace process was done keeping in mind the turmoil and destruction that war had made in Afghanistan. Another aim of the Afghan peace process was to enhance the development in the region. It is not wrong to state that regional and geographical connectivity in the region is not possible without a stable Afghanistan. So, the purpose of these dialogues was to present information and chances that all the countries might get about regional and geographical connectivity in the region.

In the end, the last element to focus on is the geographical connectivity projects which can enhance development in the region. There are tons of projects which are started in the region by the regional powers. For example, the TAPI gas pipeline project and CASA power transmission project are the two major elements which have been started in the region to improve the connection and

development. It is important to understand that the aim of the TAPI gas pipeline project and CASA power transmission project is to ensure development in the region. It is a core factor to understand that the TAPI gas pipeline project and CASA power transmission project are the driving force for the region. It is expected that a lot of development will come in the way of Afghanistan and other countries like the Central Asian States with help of the TAPI gas pipeline project and CASA power transmission project.

Findings

- Keeping in view the past activities of Taliban, the prospects of peace and cooperation with neighboring states seems suspicious. Hence, there is a need to engage Afghanistan in economic activities.
- The formation of land corridors, between Pakistan and CARs, through Afghanistan would provide Central Asian states and Afghanistan access to established market.
- The expensive and inefficient routes passing through other states to access the global market would be costly to landlocked countries. Moreover, regional connectivity would also enable Afghanistan to manage the problems due to bad economy.
- Pakistan and CARs have an ideal geographical location which can provide a huge break for regional connectivity through Afghanistan. Therefore, the whole region has potential role in peacemaking, economic development and the security of the region.
- Regional activity projects and peace process in Afghanistan are contingent for regional stability.

Recommendations

- Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan should initiate new businesses with Afghanistan by improving existing transport infrastructure to engage Afghanistan.
- Chinese led opportunities to accelerate trade activities via land routes should not be missed.
- Both the public and private sectors of Afghanistan's neighboring states should engage businessmen of Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan should adopt multilateral initiatives no matter who initiates that.

- Projects like TAPI and CASA-1000 ought to be raced up to become useful for regional connectivity which is likely to mitigate the shortage of energy shortfall of the region.
- Pakistan, China, Russia, Afghanistan and CARs should play responsibly to protect the people of the region in every aspect by sharing intelligent reports. For this purpose a collaborative mechanism is needed.
- The stakeholders of the region especially (China and Pakistan) should sign new agreements of collaboration with CARs and Afghanistan to enhance their trade relations through their seaports.
- Instead of the relying on US dollar, trading should be done in local currency in the region.
- Joint creation of interest-free banks will help the regional states to accomplish their requirements. Instead of IMF and World Bank the region should promote regional banking system which are already operative and have room to be more active.

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