

# **RELATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND INDIA:**

## **PAST AND PRESENT**

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The British Colonial government safely retreated after the partition of Indian subcontinent in August 1947 leaving behind the legacy of disputes in the region, like the problem of Kashmir and Durand Line, which are still lingering on, creating hurdles between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. All the three countries have a history of hostility due to these unresolved problems jeopardizing the regional security and economic integration. The issue of Kashmir led to full-fledged wars between Indian and Pakistan. The Afghan government also has more often than not blamed Pakistan of infiltrating rough forces in Afghanistan to have a clout against India and to keep the issue of Durand Line at bay. Since Afghan War, Pakistan has tried its best to have a Pakhtun government in Afghanistan. However, even the Taliban, considered to be Pakistan's

boys, refused to recognize Durand Line as an international boundary. If history is any thing to go by these proxies instead of serving the interests of their masters have proved to be Frankenstein monster, creating problems for all the three states and the regions in the forms of militancy and terrorism.

Pakistan's Chief of Army staff (COAS) General Raheel Shareef's recent visit to Afghanistan amid the report published by US Pentagon is a welcome gesture. Certainly if it carries any sincerity, it might assuage the decade long acrimony between the two countries arising out as a fall out of the war on terror. The US report has alleged Pakistan of playing a negative role by supporting proxies in Afghanistan and India. In its report running into more than 100 pages, the Pentagon further added that "...Such groups continue to act as the primary irritant in Afghan-Pakistan bilateral relations". The report added fuel to the fire as Pakistan ties with both Afghanistan and Indian historically, as well as in recent times have been very fragile. Afghanistan and Pakistan both allege each other of harboring militants on their respective soil. In the same way Pakistan's relations with its eastern neighbor, India is also tense due cross border firing along the Line of Control and Working Boundary.

Despite commonality of interests relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan relations between the countries have often been sour. The two countries have had bad relations on the onset of Pakistan's emergence in 1947. The *cause belli* which hurt the relations was the utopian concept of Pakhtunistan espoused by Abdul Ghaffar Khan also known as Bacha Khan, the leader and founder of the Khudai Khidmatgars Movement. Afghanistan not only supported Pakhtunistan but also declared the Durand Line, drawn in 1893, null and void claiming the very Pakhtunistan areas as its own, a glaring self-contradictory position. The very issue of Pakhtunistan resulted,

albeit among other factors, in Afghanistan's tilt toward the then Soviet Russia and Pakistan leaning towards USA. The issue of Pakhtunistan to a great extent resulted in the arrival of Soviet forces in Afghanistan in December 1979.

The subsequent events and fall out of that interference is now part of Afghan and world history. However, still the saga continues. The emergence of Taliban in 1994, al-Qaeda and Tahreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in 2007, is the outcome of that mistaken notion called Pakhtunistan. The war on terror by default is the extension of this acrimonious relationship between the two states. Both the countries have suffered a lot due to their misguided policies in the past. Pakistan drafted the faulty theory of strategic depth to counter Afghanistan and Indian influence in the region. Hardly there is any day goes by without any suicide bombing or any other untoward incident in both Pakistan and Afghanistan and potential threat to India's security.

To have a win-win situation all the three countries should shun the *Kautalian* policy that enemy of one is the friend of other rather to embrace the concept that the enemy of one is the enemy of the other. Therefore, they need to design a joint mechanism to defeat the common enemy. Afghanistan must assure Pakistan that its soil will not be used by states or organizations inimical to Pakistan's interests. On the other hand Pakistan needs to devise a strategy that assuages Afghanistan's fears and concerns viz-a-viz Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has once remarked that no two countries in the world share so much in common as Pakistan and Afghanistan do.

The way forward will be a comprehensive approach and serious regional commitment which can only be achieved if the three countries put their rivalries behind and work out collectively. The best strategy for both the countries is to declare Pakistan and Afghanistan as sister countries. The volume of trade must increase. In the field of education Pakistan needs to

accommodate more Afghan students in Pakistani colleges and universities. In the post draw down of the international forces Pakistan, India and Afghanistan must strive for shining and bright future of their posterity. The decade long war on terror must be taken to a logical conclusion by all stakeholders. All three countries have to cooperate to tackle the problem of militancy and terrorism through a cohesive strategy for the future of peaceful South Asia, Central Asia and the whole region. Economic cooperation should increase among these three countries and other countries in the region especially China. This region has a special importance and the potential to serve as a trade necules for the South Asian countries and also for the energy rich Central Asia.