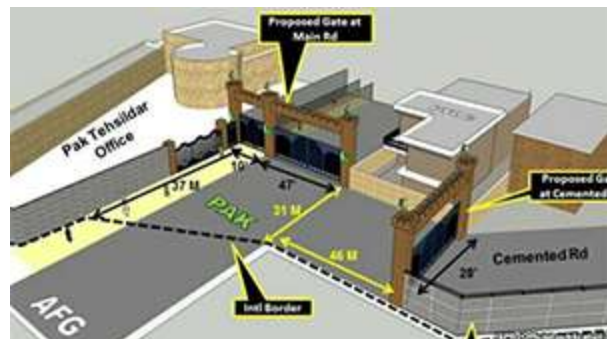


Opinion Piece on
**Pak-Afghan Relations:
Cross Border Firing & Current Scenario**

by Tahir Mehmood, Research Associate, MUSLIM Institute



In the recent conflict over the Torkham Border one Pakistani Major was martyred and 13 soldiers injured due to unprovoked firing by Afghan Security Forces. It has raised many questions; that who is behind this? Who would be the beneficiary of this conflict? Are Afghan forces capable to fight the Pakistan Army? Will Afghanistan survive without the support of Pakistan? etc. Current tension on the Afghan border arose when Pakistan intended to



safeguard the border, which is in the best interest of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, by constructing the gate which was removed due to construction of Torkham-Jalalabad road in 2004. According to an estimate about 200,000 Pakistani security forces are deployed on Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan has lost about 60,000 people in the terrorism due to its operations against militants after 9/11 mainly due to the open border, and it faced an additional loss of \$1.07 billion, but the world including US do not accord due acknowledgment to this fact. Pakistan can fence the Afghan border without the consent of Afghanistan, following the precedence

of US-Mexico border which is unilaterally fenced by US under the Secure Fence Act of 2006 and it is internationally lawful. The security measures on this particular border are necessary to stop the movement of terrorists across the border which causes instability.

On the other hand Durand Line, which is a legal border between Afghanistan and Pakistan under international law, is sometimes described as disputed border, but actually it is not so. Though “easement rights” have been given to various Pashtun and other tribes along the border which is misunderstood as facilitative of cross border movement at will and to everyone, however “easement rights” can only be exercised by the members of tribes divided by Durand Line and not by any other Afghan or Pakistan national.

India, since the creation of Pakistan, has seen Pakistan as adversary and did not miss any chance to damage Pakistan. Its role in the separation of East Pakistan is not hidden to anyone. In the current geo-strategic scenario, India looks to hinder the strategic and economic game changer project of CPEC. Initially it tried to make it controversial by raising questions on its passage through Gilgit Baltistan. After failure in this tactic, it tried to fuel insurgency in Pakistan to destabilize it so that it cannot materialise CPEC. Afghanistan’s land seems to India as an opportunity to carry out such operations in an easy way.

In Afghanistan, India is trying to build its own influence by different means, building infrastructure and on the other hand India is trying to invest in building dams which is again with one particular agenda to block the water flowing to Pakistan. Indian strategy is to isolate Pakistan not from eastern border but from the western border which has great potential for regional trade and economic boost. To fulfil these strategies, India has provided the Afghans a big market because India is second biggest exporter for Afghanistan. India is the first country which has signed Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with Afghanistan and also it is the biggest non-traditional donor for Afghanistan as written in Chatham House’s paper; India’s Policy towards Afghanistan *“India has pledged just under \$2 billion to Afghanistan, and spent around \$1 billion, making it the fifth largest bilateral donor after the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany and the largest non-traditional donor.”* Indo-Afghan trade stood \$ 680 million in 2013-2014 which is second highest trade volume following Pakistan that is \$ 2.4 Billion dollar. Under SPA India is also training the Afghan Security Forces but the clandestine purpose is to train them as spy and to use them against Pakistan. Though the arrest of Kalbhoshan (an Indian spy) has unveiled Indian designs, yet it is carrying on different tactics by using Afghan government for its vested interests.

Pakistan has many times raised with solid evidences the issue of Indian involvement in sponsoring terrorism through Afghanistan where it has established many consulates near Pakistan border for proxy war against Pakistan in form of insurgency and also to sponsor the terrorist activities in Baluchistan. The main agenda behind this remains to block the CPEC project as DG ISPR, Lt. Gen Asim Bajwa mentioned in his tweet that *“Hostile int agencies averse to this grand project specially Indian int Agency, RAW is blatantly involved in destabilising Pakistan/CPEC”*. It has



been said by Pakistani secretary for defence Mr Alam Khattak that *“RAW and Afghan NDS have launched joint secret operations against Pakistan by using three Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar e Sharif,”* and *“The three [Indian] consulates in Afghanistan are providing weapons, money, training and other logistical support to agents for subversive activities in FATA, Baluchistan and Karachi.”*

The government in Afghanistan established after the 9/11 was tutelage government, and same is the case with the current one which is totally unable to govern the state and could not sustain a day without foreign support and aid. Unfortunately in both of elections the majority of Pashtuns living in Afghanistan were not given due right to vote, by considering them security threat, but in real sense, Pashtuns are the majority population in Afghanistan. Afghan government is playing in the hands of India by considering that India is helpful in developing Afghanistan. There is no interest of India to stabilize Afghanistan, US is also one major factor which is there in Afghanistan for a broader agenda, and India is most suitable to US for accomplishing its agenda. Similarly India has also its own interests, among those, one of the major is to destabilise Pakistan. Instable Afghanistan is in the interest of both US and India because they can operate under cover activities from within Afghanistan more easily. On one hand India can launch terrorist activities in Pakistan and on the other hand it can put blame of instability in Afghanistan on Pakistan. And hence the combined agenda of US & India i.e. to block Pak-China Economic Corridor can be fulfilled.

The most important thing is 'Whole world want Afghan led and Afghan owned peace in Afghanistan' but India looks for 'Afghan led and Afghan owned terrorism & insurgencies in the region especially in Pakistan' and this can only be possible if there is vulnerable and weak structure of government in Afghanistan with less trained army and security forces (which are capable to use weapons but having no strategy). On one hand there is hostile attitude of Afghan government but at the same time Afghan government also requests Pakistan to allow the stay of Afghan refugees in Pakistan for four more years. But if Afghanistan considers India as more favourite then Afghanistan government's favourite India should give a symbolic succour to at least 100,000 refugees (which may be 2-3% of the total which Pakistan is hosting).



The present weak government of Afghanistan has almost no serious concern for stability and development of Afghanistan. Their stakes are to make money by any mean that is why corruption has become an accepted norm in Afghanistan. During past 13 years, high level of corruption and bad governance is reported; millions of dollars were misused or wasted. An ample proof is disappearance of \$1billion in 2010 from Kabul bank, many Afghan accused the then President of Afghanistan for the same. If we take a look at the capability of Afghan security forces, despite more than \$68 billion of U.S. funding for Afghan security forces over the past 14 years, they still can't plan security or even any worthwhile health or housing project for their populace. It is expected that an additional \$215 million will be spent on uniform and boots in the next fiscal year. Afghan National Army (ANA) appears to be increasingly weakened by corruption. Influential are promoted on good position for handsome salaries and in response to give payoffs to their loyal supporters. There is also one factor of ethnicity in the Afghan Army that it is more an ethnic force than a national force. Initially there was about 70% Tajik domination. There is minimal level of Pashtun representation as compared to their population ratio which further indicates the government's incompetency.

The capability of Afghan force to fight with one of World's best armies like that of Pakistan is simply none. Afghan forces are untrained and even incapable to fight within Afghanistan and defeat Taliban with dependent military on foreign aid and less equipped Afghan National Forces are failed to control terrorism in their country and now they are blaming Pakistan who is also suffering with terrorism and skilfully tackling this evil.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan has been very generous all the time, either it is the case of Soviet invasion when Soviets were bombing in Afghanistan; Pakistan not only helped them but also gave shelter to millions of refugees, when US and International community left them helpless. Pakistan has suffered a lot due to Afghan refugees by putting huge burden on economy. And Pak-Afghan border is the only border in the Asia which remained open for Afghans even without legal documents. Even Pakistan supported both the governments after the 9/11 with the dream of peaceful & prospering Afghanistan. Due to this Pakistan's foreign office stated that Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process will be supported by Pakistan.



Afghan government and forces should realize while making any policy towards Pakistan that Afghanistan will not be able to survive with the aid of India but Afghans' survival is possible if they are sincere to their natural and all time sympathizer and first neighbour Pakistan. Afghanistan government should keep aloof from Indian policies against CPEC and instability in Pakistan. It must also realise that Pakistan is not dependent on Afghanistan however Afghanistan cannot prosper without Pakistan. If Pakistan withdrew the support from Afghanistan perhaps there would be no one behind to support Afghanistan.