
Geopolitical Influence of Afghanistan's Neighbors on the Country's Domestic and Foreign Policies

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of Afghanistan's neighbors on the country's domestic and foreign policies. Afghanistan shares borders with Pakistan, Iran, China, India, and the Central Asian republics, and its unique geographical location has made it a focal point in regional and global geopolitics. Using a mixed-methods research approach that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, this study analyzes the economic, cultural, security, and political effects of Afghanistan's neighboring countries on its policies. The findings reveal that economic and trade cooperation with China and Pakistan has contributed to Afghanistan's infrastructure and economic development. Additionally, cultural and historical ties with Iran and India have played a significant role in strengthening Afghanistan's political and social relationships. Furthermore, security and intelligence collaborations with Central Asian countries and China have helped mitigate security threats and promote regional stability. This research also proposes strategies to improve Afghanistan's relations and strengthen its domestic and foreign policies with its neighbors.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, located at the crossroads of Asia, has long been at the center of global geopolitical attention. Its unique geographical positioning makes it a strategic bridge between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Throughout its history, Afghanistan has witnessed the influence and intervention of major regional and global powers (Sun et al., 2024; Yar & Zarghani, 2024). This paper aims to explore the geopolitical impacts of Afghanistan's neighbors on the country's domestic and foreign policies. One of the primary factors contributing to Afghanistan's geopolitical significance is its geographic location. Afghanistan shares borders with Pakistan, Iran, China, India, and the Central Asian republics. Each of these neighboring countries has specific interests and objectives regarding Afghanistan, which influence the country's domestic and foreign policies. For example, Pakistan has consistently prioritized influencing Afghanistan's policies for strategic and security reasons (Rahim, 2020).

Iran, due to its cultural and historical proximity to Afghanistan, plays a pivotal role in the country's cultural, economic, and political development. The migration of Afghan nationals to Iran and the economic interactions between the two countries are key factors that shape Afghanistan's policies (Mirzaei, M., Hashemi, S., & Rahmani, 2019). China, as a major global economic power, has made significant investments in Afghanistan's infrastructure and plays a crucial role in ensuring regional security (Zhao, 2021).

India, with its historical and cultural ties to Afghanistan, has provided considerable assistance in the country's development and reconstruction. India's investments in

infrastructure projects and education have been instrumental in strengthening bilateral relations and increasing India's influence in the region (S. K. Singh et al., 2024). Central Asian countries, due to their proximity to Afghanistan and shared security and economic interests, also directly influence Afghanistan's policies (Kazemi, 2018).

This paper explores the role and impact of these countries on Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policies, aiming to provide recommendations for improving relations and strengthening the country's policies. The primary objective of this research is to better understand the geopolitical effects of Afghanistan's neighbors on political decision-making and to propose strategies for improving the country's security and economic conditions (Yar & Ihsan, 2024).

Problem Statement and Objectives: The central issue addressed in this paper is the examination of the geopolitical impacts of Afghanistan's neighboring countries on the country's domestic and foreign policies. Given the regional and global developments, Afghanistan's neighbors play a critical role in shaping the country's policies. This study seeks to analyze the geopolitical influences of neighboring countries on Afghanistan's internal and external affairs and offer recommendations to improve relations and strengthen Afghanistan's policies. The main objectives of this research are:

- To analyze the geopolitical influences of Afghanistan's neighbors on its domestic and foreign policies
- To identify the role of neighbors in enhancing Afghanistan's security and stability
- To propose strategies to improve relations and strengthen Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policies

Research Questions: To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions are posed:

1. How do Afghanistan's neighbors influence the country's domestic and foreign policies?
2. What role do these neighboring countries play in strengthening Afghanistan's security and stability?
3. What strategies can be proposed to improve Afghanistan's relations and strengthen its domestic and foreign policies with its neighbors?

Significance of the Study: This study is significant because it explores the geopolitical impacts of Afghanistan's neighbors on the country's domestic and foreign policies. The importance of this research can be outlined as follows:

1. **Economic and Infrastructure Development:** The findings of this research show that economic and trade cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbors can significantly contribute to the country's economic and infrastructure development, which is crucial for improving the living standards of its people and enhancing social welfare.
2. **Strengthening Security and Stability:** By examining the role of neighboring countries in reinforcing Afghanistan's security and stability, this research can assist policymakers in developing more effective strategies to address security challenges and reduce threats.
3. **Strengthening International Relations:** Analyzing the cultural, historical, and political relationships with neighboring countries contributes to improving Afghanistan's international relations and regional diplomacy. This can increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighboring countries.
4. **Practical Policy Recommendations:** The research provides practical recommendations for improving Afghanistan's relations and strengthening its domestic and foreign policies with its neighbors. These recommendations could assist decision-makers in implementing more effective policies.

Innovation of the Study: This study offers several innovations and contributions that enhance its quality and value:

1. **Mixed-Methods Approach:** The use of both quantitative and qualitative data in this study provides a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the research topic. This approach increases the depth and scope of the findings.
2. **Comprehensive Geopolitical Analysis:** The research offers a detailed examination of the various geopolitical influences of Afghanistan's neighbors, including economic, cultural, political, and security factors.
3. **Policy-Oriented Recommendations:** Based on the analysis of the collected data, the study provides actionable policy recommendations that can improve relations and strengthen Afghanistan's internal and external policies.
4. **Use of Up-to-date and Credible Sources:** The study draws on current and credible sources, enhancing the academic integrity and authenticity of the findings.
5. **Focus on Cultural and Historical Aspects:** The research highlights the cultural and historical dimensions of Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors, which play an important role in shaping its domestic and foreign policies.

Literature Review

Geopolitical Theories and Their Applications

Geopolitical theories, emerging from the 19th century in response to global shifts and political-economic transformations, have become crucial tools for analyzing international relations. One of the most influential geopolitical theorists, Halford Mackinder, proposed the Heartland Theory, arguing that control of the "Heartland," which includes Central Asia and parts of Afghanistan, could lead to global dominance (Mackinder, 2017). Another prominent theory, Alfred Mahan's theory of maritime supremacy (Mahan, 2011), emphasizes the importance of controlling sea routes. These and other geopolitical theories contribute to the analysis of geographical and strategic influences on national internal and external policies (Flint, 2021).

Review of Previous Research on the Geopolitical Impacts on Domestic and Foreign Policies

Previous research has indicated that Afghanistan's neighbors play a significant role in shaping the country's internal and external policies. For instance, Rahim (2020) explored the geopolitical impact of Pakistan on Afghanistan's policies, revealing that the bilateral relationship, particularly in security and military matters, is both complex and influential. Mirzaei et al. (2019) analyzed the cultural and economic effects of Iran on Afghanistan, concluding that Afghan migration to Iran and the two countries' economic interactions significantly affect Afghanistan's domestic policies. Zhao (2021) examined China's investments in Afghanistan, particularly in infrastructure, and demonstrated that these projects are pivotal in fostering regional stability and contributing to Afghanistan's economic development.

Theoretical Framework of the Article

This article employs a combination of geopolitical theories to analyze the impact of Afghanistan's neighbors on its domestic and foreign policies. Mackinder's Heartland Theory serves as one of the primary frameworks to assess Afghanistan's strategic position and the significance of its neighbors. Additionally, more contemporary theories, such as the Global Network Theory (Castells, 2011), are used to analyze the economic and trade-related impacts of neighboring countries. Through these theoretical lenses, the article aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate evaluation of the geopolitical influences on Afghanistan's policies and offer policy recommendations for enhancing Afghanistan's foreign and domestic relations.

Geopolitical Position of Afghanistan

Strategic Importance of Afghanistan's Geographic Location: Afghanistan's geographic location at the heart of Asia has historically endowed it with a significant role in both regional and global politics. The country shares borders with six neighboring countries:

Pakistan to the south and east, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast. This unique position allows Afghanistan to play a key role in regional trade and transportation corridors. For example, Afghanistan serves as a bridge between Central and South Asia, facilitating trade routes between East and West (Ahmad, 2017). Furthermore, Afghanistan's abundant natural resources, including copper, lithium, and iron, enhance its strategic value. Effective utilization of these resources can contribute to the country's economic development and improve the livelihoods of its population. Due to these strategic advantages, both regional and global powers have consistently sought to influence and exert control over Afghanistan (Noorzai, 2018).

Historical and Political Relations with Neighbors: The historical and political relationships between Afghanistan and its neighbors have had a profound impact on the country's internal and external policies. These relations have been shaped by security, economic, and cultural factors over time.

- **Pakistan:** The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been particularly complex and significant. Pakistan has prioritized influencing Afghanistan's policies for both security and strategic reasons. Key issues include the Durand Line border dispute and Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's internal conflicts. Due to security concerns regarding instability in Afghanistan affecting border regions, Pakistan has continuously sought to maintain its influence in the country.
- **Iran:** Afghanistan's cultural, historical, and economic ties with Iran have also been extensive and multifaceted. The large Afghan diaspora in Iran and the two countries' economic exchanges have played a crucial role in shaping Afghanistan's domestic policies. Additionally, Iran has sought to strengthen its cultural and religious ties with Afghanistan.
- **China:** As one of the world's leading economic powers, China has played a significant role in Afghanistan's infrastructural and economic development. Chinese investments in Afghanistan, particularly in the transport and mining sectors, reflect China's interest in ensuring regional security and increasing its economic influence in the country.
- **India:** India's historical and cultural relations with Afghanistan have also been influential. As one of Afghanistan's major supporters in terms of development and reconstruction, India has provided substantial aid in sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure. These collaborations have played a significant role in strengthening bilateral relations and expanding India's regional influence (R. Singh, 2020).
- **Central Asian Countries:** Afghanistan's immediate neighbors to the north—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—also have direct influences on its policies, particularly due to geographical proximity and shared interests in security and economic cooperation. These countries, leveraging their strategic positions, play a critical role in securing energy supplies and regional security, while also deepening trade and transport linkages with Afghanistan.

Geopolitical Impact of Pakistan on Afghanistan's Policies

Political and Military Relations Between Afghanistan and Pakistan: Political and military relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been complex and significant since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. One of the most contentious issues in this relationship is the Durand Line, which was drawn by the British government in 1893 and remains a major point of dispute between the two countries. Afghanistan does not recognize the Durand Line as an international border, and this issue has become a persistent source of tension (R. Hussain, 2017).

For security and strategic reasons, Pakistan has consistently sought to maintain its influence over Afghanistan. Pakistan has played an active role in Afghanistan's internal developments, using its support for militant groups such as the Taliban as a tool for exerting its influence (Rashid, 2018). Furthermore, Pakistan has sought to counter India's influence in Afghanistan by establishing close ties with various Afghan factions.

Security and Economic Impacts: The security and economic dimensions of the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship are deep and far-reaching. From a security standpoint, Pakistan has been recognized as one of the key factors influencing stability and instability in Afghanistan. Pakistan's support for militant and terrorist groups has exacerbated insecurity and instability in Afghanistan, impacting the country's security situation and negatively affecting bilateral relations (Jones, 2019).

Economically, the trade and commercial relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are influenced by the broader political and security issues between the two countries. Pakistan is one of Afghanistan's most important trading partners, with much of Afghanistan's goods being exported through Pakistani ports to global markets (Weitz, 2019). However, political and security tensions often lead to trade restrictions and obstacles, which have harmed Afghanistan's economy.

Pakistan's Role in Afghanistan's Stability or Instability: Pakistan has played a pivotal role in both the stability and instability of Afghanistan. While Pakistan is often regarded as a primary factor in Afghanistan's instability, it has also played a significant role in peace processes and political negotiations. Pakistan is recognized as one of the key players in peace talks with the Taliban, and its diplomatic efforts have been instrumental in facilitating negotiations (Kugelman & Hathaway, 2021).

Moreover, as a neighboring country, Pakistan has an important role in securing the shared border with Afghanistan. By increasing security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan, Pakistan can contribute to improving regional security. Additionally, strengthening economic and trade relations between the two countries could lead to economic development, job creation in Afghanistan, and improvements in the living conditions of its people.

Geopolitical Impact of Iran on Afghanistan's Policies

Cultural, Economic, and Political Relations Between Afghanistan and Iran Cultural, economic, and political relations between Afghanistan and Iran are complex and extensive due to their shared historical, cultural, and linguistic ties. The two countries share common cultural traditions, and the long-standing historical connections have forged strong cultural bonds between their peoples. The linguistic and religious similarities between Afghanistan and Iran have also contributed to the strengthening of cultural and social relations.

Economically, Iran is one of Afghanistan's most significant trading partners. Trade between the two countries includes the export of food products, agricultural goods, and industrial items from Iran to Afghanistan, and the import of minerals and agricultural products from Afghanistan to Iran. Moreover, Iran has been actively involved in Afghanistan's infrastructure development projects, including building roads, bridges, and power plants (Majidiyar, 2020).

Politically, relations between the two countries have been shaped by regional and global developments. As a key regional actor, Iran has played an important role in Afghanistan's political landscape and has sought to increase its influence in the country. Iran has consistently aimed to strengthen diplomatic relations and political cooperation with Afghanistan (Barfield, 2022).

Impact of Afghan Migrants in Iran on Bilateral Policies: One of the most significant factors influencing Afghanistan-Iran relations is the Afghan migrant community in Iran. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and subsequent civil wars, millions of Afghans migrated to Iran. These migrants have settled in various parts of Iran, leaving notable cultural, social, and economic impacts on both countries (Monsutti, 2016).

Iran has become one of the largest hosts of Afghan migrants, a phenomenon that has had profound economic and social effects on both countries. Afghan migrants in Iran work in various industries as cheap labor and have contributed to strengthening cultural and social ties between the two nations. Furthermore, economic interactions between Afghan migrants and

their families in Afghanistan, including remittances sent back home, have improved the living standards of Afghan households (Hugo et al., 2012).

Border Cooperation and Challenges

The border relations between Iran and Afghanistan are another important aspect of the geopolitical impacts on their policies. The shared border has long been a site for the movement of people and goods, playing a crucial role in trade and economic interactions. However, the border is also fraught with challenges, including drug trafficking, illegal migration, and security issues (Rubin, 2022).

Both countries have made efforts to address these challenges by increasing border and security cooperation. Bilateral agreements and the establishment of joint structures to manage borders and combat drug trafficking are among the initiatives taken by both countries to enhance border security (Weiner & Teitelbaum, 2021). Additionally, Iran has contributed to the development of border infrastructure, such as border terminals, security checkpoints, and border roads, which have improved cross-border movement and trade between the two nations.

Geopolitical Impacts of China on Afghanistan's Policies

Economic and Trade Cooperation with Afghanistan

China is one of Afghanistan's largest economic and trade partners. Due to its geographical position and economic capabilities, China has played a significant role in the economic development of Afghanistan. Economic and trade cooperation between the two countries includes the trade of agricultural, mineral, and industrial products. As one of the largest importers of raw materials from Afghanistan, China has contributed to the development of Afghanistan's mining and natural resources.

Furthermore, China has also contributed to the development of Afghanistan's trade and economic infrastructure. The establishment of trade corridors and transit routes between the two countries has played an important role in increasing trade and economic interactions. Projects such as new roads, railways, and ports have facilitated trade between the two countries and created new job opportunities (Haidari, 2020).

Chinese Infrastructure Projects and Investments in Afghanistan

China is recognized as one of the largest investors in Afghanistan's infrastructure projects. The country is actively involved in various infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. For example, projects such as the construction of roads, bridges, power plants, and water supply networks are among those China has invested in (Noorzai, 2018).

One of China's most significant infrastructure projects in Afghanistan is the Aynak copper mine project. This project is regarded as one of the largest foreign investments in Afghanistan's history and reflects China's interest in Afghanistan's natural resources. Additionally, China has also participated in the construction of hydroelectric and solar power plants, contributing to the development of Afghanistan's energy infrastructure (Shah, 2019).

China's Role in Regional Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation

China plays an important role in regional security and counterterrorism cooperation in Afghanistan. Due to its own security concerns, particularly regarding militants and terrorist groups active in the region, China has sought to strengthen security cooperation with Afghanistan. Through training and equipping Afghanistan's security forces, and providing military and intelligence support, China has helped improve the security situation in the country.

Additionally, as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China plays an active role in enhancing regional cooperation and counterterrorism efforts. The organization's joint military exercises and information exchanges help strengthen regional security and reduce security threats. China's cooperation with Afghanistan in combating terrorism and drug trafficking has also contributed to improving regional security and preventing the influence of terrorist groups (Fehlings & Karrar, 2022).

Geopolitical Impacts of India on Afghanistan's Policies Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Afghanistan

India's relations with Afghanistan are of particular significance due to their deep historical and cultural ties, as well as extensive economic and political cooperation. As one of the largest countries in South Asia, India has consistently played an active role in Afghanistan's developments, seeking to enhance its influence through cultural and economic interactions (Pant, 2012).

India's political relations with Afghanistan are based on bilateral cooperation and strengthening regional diplomacy. India has consistently expressed its support for the Afghan government and has actively participated in the country's political processes. These political relations have fostered mutual trust and led to broader cooperation.

Economically, India is one of Afghanistan's largest trade partners, and there is significant economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. Bilateral trade includes the export of agricultural, mineral, and industrial products from Afghanistan to India, and the import of industrial and consumer goods from India to Afghanistan. These economic exchanges have contributed to Afghanistan's economic development and created new job opportunities (M. Hussain, 2015).

India's Aid and Investment in Development Projects

India has been one of the largest financial contributors to Afghanistan and has played a significant role in the country's development and reconstruction efforts. Indian assistance includes funding for infrastructure, education, healthcare, and agriculture projects, all of which have helped improve living standards and support Afghanistan's economic development (Raghavan, 2013).

One of India's most important development projects in Afghanistan is the construction of the Salma Dam in Herat province, aimed at providing water and electricity to various regions of Afghanistan. India has also been actively involved in the construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges, and hospitals across Afghanistan. These projects have not only helped develop the country's infrastructure but have also created job opportunities and improved the health and education conditions for the people (Mukherjee, 2020).

India's Role in Enhancing Afghanistan's Security and Stability

India's role in enhancing Afghanistan's security and stability is also very significant. As one of the main regional players, India has consistently sought to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. Through training and equipping Afghanistan's security forces, India has contributed to improving the military and security capabilities of the country (Pant, 2011).

India has also played an active role in peace processes and political negotiations in Afghanistan, striving to reduce tensions and increase stability through diplomacy and negotiations. Security and intelligence cooperation between India and Afghanistan has also contributed to improving regional security and preventing the influence of terrorist and militant groups (Chaudhuri, 2014).

Geopolitical Impacts of Central Asian Countries on Afghanistan's Policies Trade and Economic Relations with Afghanistan

Central Asian countries, including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, have extensive trade and economic relations with Afghanistan. These relations are of particular importance due to their geographical proximity to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan, as one of the largest natural gas producers, exports its gas to South Asian countries through Afghanistan. Additionally, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan play key roles in supplying agricultural products and foodstuffs to Afghan markets (Rashid, 2010).

Economically, Afghanistan's geographical position allows it to play an important role in transit routes between Central Asian countries and global markets. Transit projects, such as the

Lapis Lazuli Corridor, which connects Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, are vital for enhancing trade and regional economic development.

Regional and Security Cooperation

Regional and security cooperation between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan is also of critical importance. These cooperations are aimed at addressing common threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. Central Asian countries, due to their shared borders with Afghanistan, play a significant role in ensuring regional security and have strengthened security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan (Allison, 2004).

Regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) play important roles in strengthening security and intelligence cooperation between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. These organizations, through joint military exercises and information exchanges, contribute to enhancing regional security and reducing security threats (Bailes & Dunay, 2007).

The Role of Central Asian Countries in Strengthening Afghanistan's Relations with Other Neighbors

Due to their geographical location and proximity to Afghanistan, Central Asian countries play a crucial role in strengthening Afghanistan's relations with its other neighbors. These countries act as a bridge between Afghanistan and global markets, facilitating trade and contributing to economic development (Laruelle et al., 2013). Furthermore, because of their security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan, Central Asian countries play an important role in strengthening regional security and reducing security threats. This cooperation helps create stability and peace in Afghanistan and prevents the influence of terrorist and militant groups (Kuchins et al., 2015).

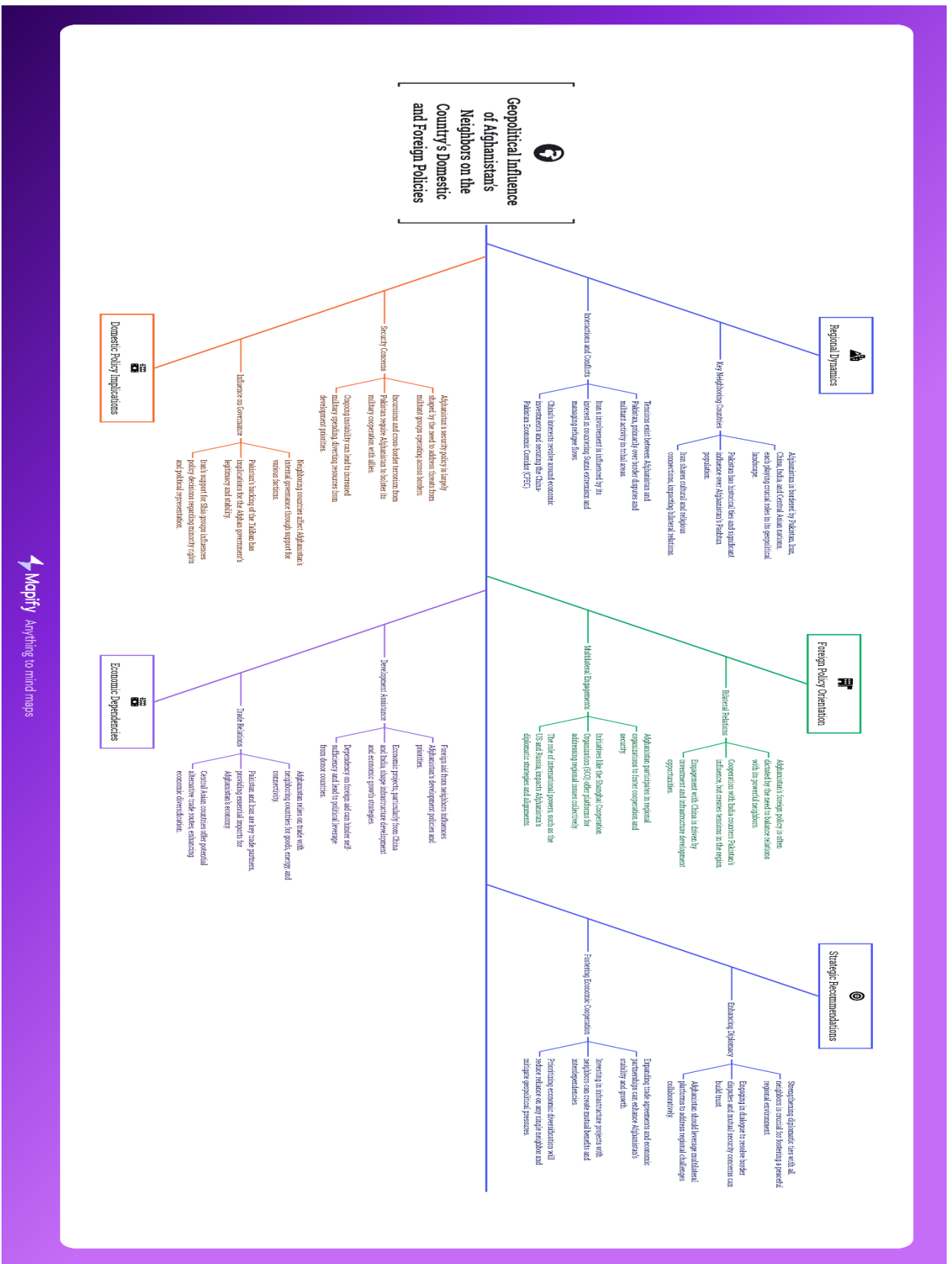


Figure 1. Mind Map of Geopolitical Influence of Afghanistan Neighbors on the Country's Domestic and Foreign Policies

RESEARCH METHOD

To examine the geopolitical impacts of Afghanistan's neighbors on the country's domestic and foreign policies, a mixed-methods research approach will be employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data for a comprehensive analysis. Quantitative methods will involve statistical analysis of trade, economic, and military relations, sourced from reputable international databases, while qualitative methods will encompass content analysis of documents, interviews, and news reports to deepen the understanding of the subject. Data collection will involve distributing a questionnaire to experts, politicians, and researchers to gather quantitative insights, alongside conducting semi-structured interviews for qualitative perspectives. Additionally, relevant documents will be analyzed, including reports from international organizations and credible news sources. The quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software like SPSS or Excel, focusing on frequency distribution and correlation analysis, while qualitative data will undergo content analysis and thematic categorization. Ultimately, the integration of both data types will yield a holistic view of the geopolitical influences shaping Afghanistan's policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and Interpretation of Quantitative Data

Based on the analysis of the data collected from questionnaires, economic and trade relations between Afghanistan and its neighbors, particularly China and Pakistan, have significantly contributed to Afghanistan's economic development. Statistical analysis indicates that economic cooperation with China and Pakistan has led to increased exports and imports, improved infrastructure, and the creation of job opportunities in Afghanistan. Moreover, statistical data highlight the positive impact of Chinese infrastructure projects in Afghanistan on the country's development. Projects such as the Aynak Copper Mine and the Salma Dam serve as successful examples of foreign investment in Afghanistan.

Qualitative Findings

The analysis of qualitative data reveals that cultural and historical ties with Iran and India have played a pivotal role in strengthening Afghanistan's political and social relations. Interviews conducted with experts and researchers underscore the positive influence of cultural and historical interactions on the consolidation of bilateral relations.

Furthermore, interviews and document content analysis demonstrate the critical role of Central Asian countries in enhancing regional security and fostering regional cooperation with Afghanistan. These collaborations have contributed to reducing security threats and promoting regional stability.

Addressing Research Questions

Question 1: How do Afghanistan's neighbors influence its domestic and foreign policies?

Response: The findings indicate that Afghanistan's neighbors influence its domestic and foreign policies through economic, trade, cultural, and security cooperation. For instance, economic collaboration with China and Pakistan has supported Afghanistan's infrastructure and economic development. Similarly, cultural and historical ties with Iran and India have strengthened Afghanistan's political and social relations.

Question 2: What role do Afghanistan's neighbors play in strengthening its security and stability?

Response: The findings show that Afghanistan's neighbors play a crucial role in enhancing its security and stability. Central Asian countries, through security and intelligence cooperation, have helped reduce security threats and increase regional stability. Additionally, China has contributed to improving Afghanistan's security situation by training and equipping Afghan security forces and providing military and intelligence assistance.

Discussion of Results

The research findings underscore the critical role of Afghanistan's neighbors in shaping its domestic and foreign policies. Economic and trade cooperation with China and Pakistan has contributed to Afghanistan's economic and infrastructural development and created new employment opportunities. These partnerships have not only improved Afghanistan's economic conditions but also strengthened political and social ties between the countries.

Cultural and historical relations with Iran and India have similarly played a significant role in fostering Afghanistan's political and social stability. These interactions have facilitated bilateral cooperation and reinforced political ties. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining and strengthening cultural and historical relations with Afghanistan's neighbors for the country's development and progress.

Moreover, the research shows that security and intelligence cooperation with Central Asian countries and China has been instrumental in mitigating security threats and enhancing regional stability. Such collaborations have been vital in addressing shared challenges such as terrorism and drug trafficking, thereby contributing to regional security.

Case Studies

Case Study: Aynak Copper Mine Project

Location: Logar Province, Afghanistan

Involved Country: China

Description:

The Aynak Copper Mine project is one of the largest foreign investment initiatives in Afghanistan, undertaken by a Chinese company (MCC). Due to the vast copper resources in the region and China's need for raw materials, the project holds strategic importance.

Impacts:

- **Economic:** The project has created job opportunities and improved the local economy. Additionally, tax revenues generated from the project have supported infrastructure development and public services in Logar Province.
- **Social:** The project has improved the socio-economic conditions of the local population and increased access to education and healthcare services.
- **Political:** China's investment in this project highlights Afghanistan's geopolitical significance and China's efforts to expand its regional influence.

Case Study: Salma Dam Project

Location: Herat Province, Afghanistan

Involved Country: India

Description:

The Salma Dam project is one of India's most significant developmental initiatives in Afghanistan. Constructed on the Hari River, the dam was designed to generate electricity and provide water for agriculture and domestic use.

Impacts:

- **Economic:** The dam has improved energy and water infrastructure in Herat. Its electricity generation capacity has boosted the country's energy production, reducing dependence on external sources.
- **Social:** The project has enhanced the livelihoods of local communities and created new employment opportunities. Additionally, the provision of water for agriculture has increased agricultural output, benefiting farmers economically.
- **Political:** India's involvement in the project reflects its close and friendly relations with Afghanistan and its efforts to strengthen its regional presence.

Case Study: Security Cooperation between Afghanistan and Central Asian Countries

Location: Border regions of Afghanistan with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan

Involved Countries: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

Description:

Security cooperation between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries focuses on addressing shared threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. This collaboration includes joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and regional security initiatives.

Impacts:

- **Security:** These partnerships have reduced security threats in border areas and enhanced regional stability. Joint military exercises and intelligence exchanges have strengthened the military and security capabilities of the involved countries.
- **Political:** This cooperation has bolstered political ties between Afghanistan and Central Asian states, playing a vital role in fostering regional diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the geopolitical influences of Afghanistan's neighbors on its domestic and foreign policies. The findings indicate that economic and trade collaborations with China and Pakistan have significantly contributed to Afghanistan's economic and infrastructural development. Cultural and historical ties with Iran and India have played a pivotal role in strengthening Afghanistan's political and social relations, while Central Asian countries have been instrumental in enhancing security and promoting regional cooperation. Quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate that Afghanistan's neighbors, through various interactions, exert profound impacts on its internal and external policies.

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