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POST 2014 AFGHANISTAN: CHALLENGES TO INDIA'S SECURITIZATION

BY

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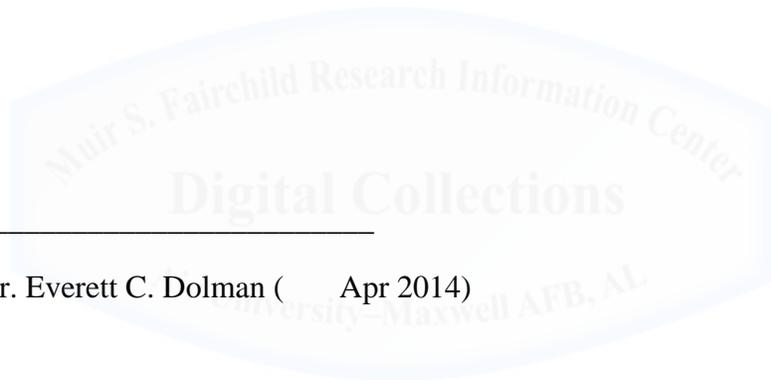
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Colonel Mark O. Yeisley, PhD (Apr 2014)

Dr. Everett C. Dolman (Apr 2014)



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The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US or Indian Governments, Departments of Defense, the United States or Indian Air Forces, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

This study comprises an analysis of the present security situation in Afghanistan. As US forces prepare for their drawdown at the end of 2014, the regional security environment could present huge challenges for India's securitization. The author assesses the importance of a stable Afghanistan in the regional security environment and uses Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex (RSC) Theory as the basis of this analysis. Afghanistan is found to no longer be a weak insulator state, as many political scientists have classified it. Rather, as one of the largest producers of terrorism and narcotics, Afghanistan has the potential to impact the core security concerns of all the RSCs that surround it: the Persian Gulf Region, the CAR Region and the South Asian Region. Next, the author uses Buzan's *Security Constellation* to analyze Afghanistan's impact on India's securitization at the domestic, regional, inter-regional and global levels. Afghanistan is critical to India's security at all levels, and as a rising regional power, India needs to exercise greater control over its regional security environment.

Since 2001 Afghanistan has risen from the ashes, under the US security umbrella and with tireless support from the international community. In the last twelve years, India has made remarkable contributions to the resurrection process of Afghanistan; the bilateral strategic agreement signed between India and Afghanistan in 2011 is an indication of India's long-term commitment to Afghanistan. As US forces move closer to their withdrawal at the end of 2014, India is mulling over its options vis-a-vis Afghanistan to ensure its security. Apprehensive over its western adversary, Pakistan, which relies on terrorism to further its anti-India policy, India is skeptical of increasing its engagement in Afghanistan. The author believes it is in India's long-term interest to engage proactively in Afghanistan. India should engage bilaterally with Afghanistan, regionally with Pakistan and Iran, and globally with the US to continue its Afghan policy. The US foresees greater engagement with India and it is in India's interests to increase its engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors to secure its interests in the region. As India currently stands at the cusp of greatness, it is time to take a leap of faith.

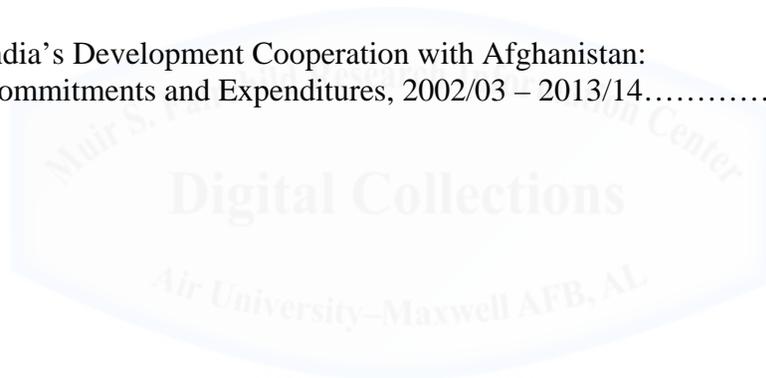
CONTENTS

| Chapter | | Page |
|---------|--|------|
| | DISCLAIMER | ii |
| | ABOUT THE AUTHOR | iii |
| | ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iv |
| | ABSTRACT | v |
| | INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 2 | AFGHANISTAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE | 10 |
| 3 | DESTRUCTION TO CONSTRUCTION: THE LONG MARCH BEGINS..... | 28 |
| 4 | THE AFGHANISTAN FACTOR IN INDIAN SECURITIZATION..... | 50 |
| 5 | POST 2014 AFGHANISTAN: INDIA'S OPTIONS..... | 93 |
| | CONCLUSIONS | 111 |
| | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 121 |

Illustrations

Figure

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Tribal Governance Triad | 31 |
| 2 | Disrupted Governance Triad | 32 |
| 3 | Afghanistan's Total Public Expenditures from 2006 to 2011..... | 46 |
| 4 | Survey Results of - 'what is the Biggest Problem Facing Afghanistan as a whole (2006-2012)?' | 47 |
| 5 | Annual Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan (Hectares) and Percentage of Global Cultivation, 1990-2013..... | 48 |
| 6 | India's Development Cooperation with Afghanistan: Commitments and Expenditures, 2002/03 – 2013/14..... | 94 |



INTRODUCTION

When the USAF went into action over Afghanistan in the fall of 2001, breathing fire on the draconian Taliban-Al Qaida terror network, Afghanistan's history came full circle. This land-locked nation of brave tribesmen, which lies at the crossroads of great empires of the old world, had been a witness to history for the last 2500 years. While the geographic centrality of Afghanistan had made it the prize great empires had fought over in the past, it was Afghanistan's isolation from the civilized world that ultimately caused it to be the focus of a modern superpower. A nation that had already been at war for more than two decades, first with the Soviets and then within its own borders, Afghanistan was drawn deeper into an abyss from which it was already finding it hard to emerge.

Although the foundation of a modern state was laid in 1747, Afghanistan has remained a consortium of tribes rather than a nation-state and the only common thread binding these tribes was their religion-Islam. Pride and honor were closely tied to their family, clan and tribe and beyond these there was very little to live or die for. Despite being the prize of many great powers throughout history, the minds and souls of these tribesmen have always remain unconquered; dying for their beliefs is itself a ticket to *jannat*— heaven, and as such is worth any earthly cost. While these tribesmen were never timid about rising up against each other, they would nonetheless always unite like the thickest of kin against a foreign adversary.

To quote from William Dalrymple's *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*, what Mirza Ata wrote after the 1842 Anglo-Afghan war remains equally true today: "it is certainly no easy thing to invade or govern the Kingdom of Khurasan [Afghanistan]".¹ While Afghanistan proudly claims its status as the nation that has never been conquered, and a graveyard for great empires, its checkered history has been a consequence of weak nationality, deep-rooted Islamic and tribal traditions, strong

¹ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. Alfred A Knopf, New York, 2013,p.448

resistance to modernization and a never-ending series of wars. Afghanistan has been a nation locked in a medieval time warp, centuries behind the rest of the world.

Afghanistan began its journey as a nation state in 1747. After the death of the Persian king Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali returned from Persia and laid the foundation of modern Afghanistan. However, to the Afghan people, who were their own masters and were willing to bow to no one, this sense of “nationality” was merely a compromise for peace rather than any patriotic awakening for their homeland. Amin Saikal in *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, identifies three primary factors which help explain Afghanistan’s weak nationality: royal polygamy power rivalries, foreign intervention and fundamental extremism.²

These three factors have been major causes of conflict throughout the history of Afghanistan. Many have attempted to reform the Afghan social fabric and connect it to the modern world; however, the strong barriers of Islamic fundamentalism, tribal traditions and lust for power were too strong for them to conquer. Time and again, the custodians of Islamic and tribal traditions have used these tools to withstand the pressures of change and prevented the rise of a unified, strong Afghanistan. Foreign powers have often used these internal weaknesses to further their own selfish interests in Afghanistan; however, anytime these interests have crossed the thin red line of *Pashtunwali*, the culture of many Afghan people, the consequences have been severe, not only for the foreign interventionists but for the Afghan people themselves.

Over the years, the world has largely remained detached from the lives of the Afghan people; so much so that many could not even locate Afghanistan on a world map. Afghanistan as a nation, which Barry Buzan defines as an ‘insulator’ state in *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, has had very little effect on the lives of their neighbors, let alone people living halfway across the globe.³ However, the Taliban regime, which came to power after a bloody civil war following the Soviet withdrawal,

² Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 3

³ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 41.

changed Afghanistan's status in the world order. Their Islamic fundamentalist rule led to the disintegration of the already fragile Afghan social structure. The *mullah* assumed the prime spot in Afghan society and with that, Islamic extremism became a defining characteristic of Afghanistan.

Radicalization or "Talibanization", as some would prefer to call it, connected Afghanistan to the jihadist *archipelago* of Al-Qaida and its messiah, Osama Bin Laden. The deadly nexus of Taliban and Al Qaida, and a never ending supply of fundamentalists from the madrassas of Pakistan, created a monster that could strike the civilized world, even halfway across the globe. The tremors of the horrific 9/11 attacks that shook the world were also felt in Afghanistan; with that began a new chapter in its war-torn history. For the people of Afghanistan, it was yet another foreign intervention, another war, and another period of pain and destruction.

As Operation Enduring Freedom made quick work of the Taliban and drove them into the caves of the Hindu Kush and tribal areas of neighboring Pakistan, democratizing Afghanistan appeared to be child's play. However, as time passed, it became evident that the complex, deep-rooted problems of Afghanistan had many local and regional features and solving them was going to be a painfully long process. Breaking the Al Qaida-Taliban nexus, eradicating the breeding grounds for Islamic fundamentalism and resurrecting the socio-economic fabric of Afghanistan has been a lengthy effort, even for well-armed US forces. More than three decades of war had disintegrated the social fabric of the country to such an extent that resurrecting Afghanistan and connecting its people with the rest of the world could take generations to accomplish. In a country where politics has become a personal affair, self-interest and self-preservation rule the roost; raising a sense of true nationalism is going to take a lot of patience, perseverance, hard work and economic assistance.

The road to reconstruction has been hard, long, expensive in both blood and money, and full of challenges. Nevertheless, the international community led by the US has been up to the task and has brought Afghanistan a long way forward in time. Many scholars have compared the US intervention to the Soviet intervention in 1979 and those

of the British before that; however, there is a strong fundamental difference: the ongoing reconstruction of Afghanistan. In the past, foreign powers have only aimed to use Afghanistan for their own interests at the expense of the Afghan people; this time the international community has devoted itself to resurrecting Afghanistan and turning it into a stable, sovereign and peaceful state. Some argue that the process of reconstruction is driven by the interests of the international community and is no more than a strategy for reversing the trend of Islamic fundamentalism and the drug menace that emanates from the safe havens of Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan. Yet it is also aimed at integrating the Afghan society into the modern world. This process aims to help the Afghan people jump-start the process of evolution that has eluded them for centuries; it is hoped that it will bring about a change of hearts and minds that makes them believe in living for what they cherish rather than dying for it.

The last twelve years have been perhaps the most challenging in the history of Afghanistan; it has been a period of tremendous internal turmoil for a divided and disintegrated society that struggles to break free from the shackles of darkness. The last twelve years of reconstruction have strengthened the social fabric of Afghanistan and the Afghan people are preparing for a historic democratic transfer of power in 2014; a few years ago this was merely a dream. Today, the 352,000 strong ANSF is capable of securing its own people, the economy is showing positive signs and moving, albeit slowly, towards self-reliance, and the Afghan society is showing signs of integration with the modern world.

While the Taliban menace may have been reduced to manageable levels and the foreign fighters seen to have moved elsewhere, the threat still remains large, especially with terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan remaining intact and vibrant.⁴ So far, the Afghan governance structure has been held together with the support of the international community. However, after 2014, as Afghanistan prepares to return to its status as a sovereign nation, whether it will remain so is a hard question to answer accurately. In 2014, Afghanistan is no doubt more capable and better placed than ever before to take

⁴ Paul, Christopher et al., *Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2013 relative to Insurgencies since World War II*. RAND Report, (Washington, DC:RAND, 2013), <http://www.rand.org>

this leap of faith, but without international assistance, the probability of falling short is very high.

While the international community has pledged its continued support to Afghanistan even beyond 2014, albeit conditionally, there is a need to cooperate at the local, regional as well as global levels to ensure sustained and coordinated progress.⁵ Nations perusing selfish interests at the expense of the Afghan people need to understand that their security, economic and political goals can be accomplished better through a stable Afghanistan rather than through an unstable one. Pakistan's anti-India policy or Iran's anti-US campaign cannot bear long-term benefits for them if Afghanistan itself continues to remain fragmented.

Once US-led forces leave, the regional players will have to shoulder greater responsibilities to keep Afghanistan stable. However, given the economic and military capabilities of the regional players, and their mutual relations, a purely regional solution is perhaps not viable. Further, given China's and Russia's reluctance to come forward and *own* the Afghan resurrection process, the US will have to remain a key player in Afghanistan's resurrection process. As much as Russia, China or Iran would like to see a complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan, they do realize that the US presence has been a stabilizing factor for other countries to contribute effectively in the resurrection process and to further their own economic and political interests in Afghanistan. India can also play a key role in stabilizing the region and in the bargain also advance its own political, economic and security ambitions of becoming a key player in the regional Asian politics.

Afghanistan and India

A stable and progressive Afghanistan with a legitimate and preferably democratic government is critical for India's securitization. An unstable Afghanistan presents difficult security challenges for India at domestic as well as regional levels. Incidents such as the Kandahar hijacking in 1999, the Mumbai attack in 2008 and innumerable terror attacks on Indians, both at home and abroad, not only impact India's internal security, but also have serious implications for India's prestige at the international level.

⁵ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, 8 July 2012". http://www.unodc.org/Afghanistan/en/Events/Tolyo_conference_on_Afghanistan.html.

Therefore, as a growing economy with regional and plausibly global ambitions, India needs to be more proactive in shaping its regional security environment.

Since the ouster of Taliban in 2001, India has rebuilt popular support in Afghanistan for its continued presence through its developmental engagements and constructive projects. The Indian strategy has been aimed at strengthening the Karzai Government and reversing the Taliban influence of Islamic fundamentalism, albeit under the US umbrella. As Pattnaik says, “India’s strategy to prevent the Taliban from returning to the centre stage of Afghan affairs had relied on America’s ability to militarily enforce stability and on the Karzai government’s capacity to provide effective governance”.⁶ While India’s engagement can by no means be classified as altruistic and is driven by its economic, political and security interests, it is India’s approach to furthering these interests that has been the key to its acceptance by the Afghan people as a true strategic partner, a nation which is genuinely interested in resurrecting Afghanistan and not merely using it to further India’s own interests.

In 2014, as Afghanistan stands at the cross roads of history, so does India. Any nation looking to expand its area of influence needs to possess the will and capabilities to do so, not only to safeguard its own interests, but also to provide assistance to the nations in the region it aims to influence. In the past two decades, India’s economic power has grown tremendously and is likely to continue to do so for some time to come. However, with greater powers come greater responsibilities; and how a nation approaches these defines its prestige at the international level. Therefore, Afghanistan provides India with an opportunity to enhance its international prestige and establish itself as a strong and dependable regional player; the capability exists, the *will* needs to be resolved. India’s parliamentary elections in April-May 2014 will delay any decisions from New Delhi until the next government takes office. Still, India needs to continue its engagement in Afghanistan and must consolidate the good work done over the past decade.

⁶ Pattnaik, Smruti S. “India in Afghanistan: Engagement without Strategy.” *IDSAs*, January 28, 2011. http://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiainAfghanistanEngagementwithoutStrategy_sspattanaik_280111

India's soft-power engagement with the local population with small-budget interventions even in Pashtun dominated areas, construction of roads, dams and infrastructure, medical assistance and Bollywood entertainment have been appreciated even in militant-controlled areas. The Taliban, though diffidently, has been forced to acknowledge India's constructive role in Afghanistan. Therefore, largely due to its humanitarian and constructive engagements, India does have the popular acceptability to play a key role in Afghanistan in the years to come.

The Big Question

As the US-led ISAF forces prepare for their drawdown by the end of 2014 and as Karzai continues to play games with the BSA for US troop deployment beyond that time, the world is watching very closely. Can Afghanistan sustain itself as a nation state or will it succumb to the pressures of Islamic fundamentalism and inter-tribe rivalries yet again? While Afghanistan struggles with its destiny, so does India. Standing at the cusp of greatness, India faces immense challenges from Afghanistan, challenges that could have far-reaching effects on India's security, economy and prestige. The implications of an unstable Afghanistan need no mention; the tremors of terror are felt first in India and the question for Indian strategists is how India should engage in Afghanistan to shape its security environment once US forces leave.

This paper aims to analyze how Afghanistan impacts India's securitization at the domestic, regional, inter-regional and global levels; it asks if Afghanistan is capable of sustaining itself as a nation-state after the US withdrawal and what India's strategy in post-2014 Afghanistan must be to best shape its own regional security environment.

Research Methodology

RSC Theory, formulated by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, forms the basis of this research. Barry Buzan's *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* laid the foundation for thinking about regional security in the context of a wider security agenda and a

securitization approach.⁷ Buzan and Waever define an RSC as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”.⁸

The basic assumption of this theory lies in geography. States which share a contiguous border do not have an option to disengage from each other whereas non-contiguous and distant powers do have that option. In the case of Afghanistan, the US, Russia and even China can distance themselves from the war-torn nation, but Iran, Pakistan and India cannot. The security situation in Afghanistan has a direct impact on the national interests of these nations, irrespective of the global order. Buzan’s theory highlights the fact that Afghanistan, due to its weak internal securitization, has served as an insulator to its neighboring RSC states for centuries. Yet the manner in which Afghanistan’s internal security situation impacts these states today is no longer weak; it has instead emerged as a zone of intensified contestation for political influence.

Chapter Two traces the history of modern Afghanistan from its inception as a nation state. It aims to highlight three main elements that have marred the history of this war-torn country: first, the lust for power and tribal hegemony that stems from royal polygamy, i.e., friction between royal brothers and half-brothers; second, the intervention by the great powers to further their colonial or Cold War interests; and third, religious extremism. Ironically, the only unifying factor for the tribal micro-societies that have persisted in Afghanistan is the ideology of *jihad* against any foreign *infidels*. As foreign interventions continued, jihad strengthened the roots of Islamic extremism among Afghans and helped destroy the basic fabric of Afghan society. Chapter Three analyzes the period of reconstruction between 2001 and 2014, and describes Afghanistan’s slow march towards democratization. It describes how the international community worked tirelessly to create an environment for Afghanistan to launch itself back into the modern world. The chapter also endeavors to explain how Afghanistan’s capability to sustain

⁷ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xvi

⁸ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 44

itself as a nation state has been strengthened since 2001, and whether Afghanistan is capable of continuing to sustain itself after the international forces complete their drawdown.

Chapter Four uses RSC Theory as a framework to highlight how Afghanistan is no longer a mere insulator state lying at the crossroads of strong Regional Security Complexes, and how it forms an integral part of the regional security environment. 'Descriptive RSCT' provides a framework to study the regional security pattern and how it impacts the domestic, regional, inter-regional and global securitization of a state. This security constellation framework is utilized to explain how Afghanistan has become a key element of India's securitization at all levels. Chapter Five identifies and evaluates the options available to India for securing its interests in Afghanistan. An unstable Afghanistan is not in the interests of India and presents grave security challenges, especially as a growing economy with regional and global ambitions. India needs to develop strategies for assuming greater responsibilities at the regional level to shape its security environment, lest the security environment will continue to shape its strategy.

Chapter 2

Afghanistan: A Historical Perspective

Lying at the crossroads of great civilizations, Afghanistan has been witness to much of the history of mankind. Because of its important geostrategic location, Romans, Persians, Mongols, Indians and Chinese have all held Afghanistan as a prized possession. Yet no one could conquer the ferocious and proud residents of this beautiful landlocked country. Only during the rule of Mahmud of Ghazni, an 11th-century conqueror who created an empire from Iran to India, did ancient Afghanistan exist as a kingdom closely resembling its present borders. Over a period of time all these empires left their mark on Afghanistan, eventually forming one of the most diverse societies in the world.

The uniqueness of Afghanistan lies not just in its location as the hub of great empires but also in its terrain, which in turn affects its people.¹ Since the first records of history, Afghanistan has been engaged in war either with foreign intruders or from within by local tribal factions which inhabit the demanding landscape. Afghanistan has been largely inhabited by tribes which still follow a feudal system and who prefer to die rather than be conquered or subjugated. While Afghanistan has been connected to the great civilizations which rose and fell around them, it also seems to have been frozen in time. The world around them has progressed to enjoy the comforts of modern life, but the people of Afghanistan still reel under the lifestyle of medieval times. To understand why Afghanistan *is* Afghanistan, it is imperative to understand the internal dynamics which create the fault lines and prevent it from escaping the abyss of poverty.

Amin Saikal highlights three primary variables which seem to impact the dynamics of this war-torn country. Royal polygamy power rivalries, foreign intervention and fundamental extremism have formed the core elements of the tormented wars that the country has witnessed at regular intervals.² A close look at the relationship between these variables clearly demonstrates that, along with such other factors as social divisions,

¹ Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the fall of the Taliban*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2009, p. 3

² Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 3

cultural mores and geographical location, they have been instrumental in determining the course of Afghan history.³ This chapter aims to analyze the history and dynamics of modern Afghanistan from the prism of these three variables and evaluate what *needs* to be done, or perhaps more pertinently, what *can* be done to help Afghanistan rise from the ashes and establish itself as a self-sustaining nation state which can provide health and happiness to its people.

Internal Power Dynamics, Foreign Intervention and Jihad

It was not until 1747 that the Afghanistan we know today was born from a group of tribes held together by force rather than mutual consent. After the death of the Persian King Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah seized control of the Shah's chest of Mughal jewels, including the Koh-I-Noor diamond, and used it to fund the conquest of Kandahar, Kabul and Lahore, then later launched a series of lucrative raids into India. Taking the title Durrani ("Pearl of pearls"), he created an empire that was built out of the collapsed remains of three other Asian empires—the Uzbeks to the north, the Mughals to the south and to the west the Safavids of Persia.⁴ He also changed the name of his tribe to the Durrani. Thus began a new chapter in the lives and history of the Afghan people.

Modern Afghanistan made a promising start under its founder, and for the next quarter of a century Ahmad Shah ruled with charm and vision. He not only crystallized Afghanistan as a political and territorial entity but also laid the foundation of critical political and institutional practices which strengthened the roots of central authority. He also expanded his empire from the Amu Darya in the north to the plains of Punjab in the east and Herat in the west. In 1772, Ahmad Shah was succeeded by his son Timur Shah, who successfully maintained the Afghan heartlands of the Durrani Empire his father had bequeathed to him, but lost the Persian and Indian extremities. It was Timur who moved the capital from Kandahar to Kabul to safeguard it from the turbulent Pashtun heartlands. Timur is remembered for more than just his efforts to sustain the Durrani kingdom; his

³ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 3

⁴ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, 2013, p. xiii

impact on the future of Afghanistan can perhaps be better related to the twenty-four sons he left behind, throwing the Durrani Empire into a chaotic civil war between brothers and half-brothers.⁵ In 1818, the Durrani were finally ousted by Dost Mohammad, the twentieth son of Barakzai tribe chieftain Payindah Khan, who had been murdered by Shah Zaman, a son of Timur. The killing of Payindah Khan began the blood feud between the Barakzais and the Sadozais which would cast a shadow over the region for half a century.⁶

As Saikal explains, “While the practice of polygamy had its roots in Islam, its use by Afghan rulers was fundamental to producing rival contenders for the throne and therefore inter-dynastic power intrigues and rivalries, which in the absence of institutionalization of politics and clear-cut leadership succession procedures invariably led to bloody fighting between various and half-brothers, and competing branches of successive ruling families.”⁷ Polygamous power plays were not unique to Afghanistan and have perhaps been a part of many dynasties around the world; however, the internal power fragmentation that resulted from these power games allowed the neighboring powers an opportunity to regain their lost ground or to control the destiny of the Afghan people for their own personal agendas.

The Anglo-Afghan wars

In the beginning of 1809 Shah Shuja, then king of Afghanistan, was pleased by the arrival of a British Embassy from the British East India Company. While the British had been a constant thorn in his flesh, the king was pleased to compromise with the British; a compromise he badly needed to retain his power and deal with the growing unrest at home. However, as William Dalrymple traces the history of the great game, he quotes:

The real reason behind the dispatch of this first British Embassy to Afghanistan lay far from both India and the passes of the Hindu Kush. Its

⁵ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, New York, 2013, p. xiii

⁶ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, 2013, p. xvi

⁷ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 232

origins had nothing to do with Shah Shuja, the Durrani Empire or even the intricate princely politics of Hindustan. Instead its causes could be traced to north-eastern Prussia, and a raft floating in the middle of the River Neman. Here, eighteen months earlier, Napoleon, at the very peak of “his power, had met the Russian Emperor, Alexander II, to negotiate a peace treaty following the Russian defeat at the Battle of Friedland on 14 June 1807. The stalemate was broken when the Russians were informed that Napoleon wished not only for peace, but for an alliance. On 7 July, on a raft surmounted by a white classical pavilion emblazoned with a large monogrammed ‘N’, the two emperors met in person to negotiate a treaty later known as the Peace of Tilsit. But amid all the public articles of the treaty, Napoleon included several secret clauses that were not disclosed at the time. These laid the foundations for a joint Franco-Russian attack on what Napoleon saw as the source of Britain’s wealth. This, of course, was his enemy’s richest possession, India.⁸

When news of this reached the British through their trusted spy networks in Russia, it raised alarm bells from London to New Delhi. Lord Minto, the British Viceroy, did not regard Napoleon’s plans as merely fanciful. A French invasion of India through Persia was not “beyond the scope of that energy and perseverance which distinguish the present ruler of France,” he wrote as he finalized plans to counter the “very active French diplomacy in Persia, which is seeking with great diligence means of extending its intrigues to the Durbars of Hindustan.”⁹

Driven by their colonial interests, the two great powers interacted dynamically within Afghanistan to establish control over the rulers of Kabul. In the nineteenth century the British fought two brutal wars with the Afghan people, the first (1839-42) resulted not only in the destruction of a British army, but is remembered today as an example of the ferocity of Afghan resistance to foreign rule.¹⁰ However, in the second Anglo-Afghan war in 1878-80, the British managed to gain substantial influence over the government in Kabul and from then on the British retained effective control over Kabul’s foreign affairs

⁸ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, 2013, p. 8

⁹ Dalrymple, William. *Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*. New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, 2013, p. 9

¹⁰ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 232

with a puppet ruler on the throne of Kabul. The Russians, weakened by their debacles in Crimea, restricted themselves to the central Asian states at the borders of Afghanistan.

Despite continuous interference from Russia and Britain, Afghanistan continued to survive as a fragile nation state. There were three reasons why neither Russia nor Britain wanted to conquer Afghanistan: first, Afghanistan had no immediate resources for the colonial tyrants to exploit; second, the Afghan's ferocious fighting spirit made them a difficult people to govern and third, total subjugation of the country by either side would have placed the two powers on a course of full military confrontation, which neither side seemed to wish to risk.¹¹ While the foreign colonialists fought for power at the behest of local tribes, whatever the ethnic divide between the various tribes, both British and the Russians were seen first and foremost as *kafirs*, against whom a holy war of *Jihad* was justified. Tribal Patriotism and Islamic faith united them against the foreign invasions. The *Jihad* against the "White Oppressor" had taken root in the tribal hearts of the ferocious Afghan warriors.

Independence and foreign relations

Abdur Rehman, the Amir of Kabul, was placed on the throne by the British in 1881 and ruled the country till 1901. He was succeeded by his son Habibullah in 1901. Although the Afghans sentiments against the British were growing, Habibullah's rule continued to be influenced by the British. During WWI, despite German enticements to revolt against their British oppressors, the Afghans remained neutral. However, the Afghan king's policy of neutrality was not received well by all tribal factions of the country and in 1919, members of an anti-British movement assassinated Habibullah. This brought Amanullah, the third son of Habibullah, to the throne. The ascendance of Amanullah Khan to the throne of Kabul marks an important chapter in the evolution of Afghanistan. Amanullah ushered in a new ray of hope, development and modernization and aroused the emotion of nationalism among the people of Afghanistan. As Saikal highlights, The Royal Manifesto published on the day of Amanullah's coronation (28 February 1919) is a revealing document in this sense:

¹¹Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 27

O nation, proud through the realization of its dignity! In the minute when my great people has placed this crown on my head, I announce with a loud voice to you that I shall accept the crown and throne only on the condition that you render me support in the realization of my plans and intentions. I have explained my ideas to you already, and I shall reiterate only most important of them now:

1. Afghanistan must become free and independent; it must enjoy all rights that all other sovereign states possess.
2. You will help me with all your strength to avenge the blood of the martyr my deceased father.
3. The nation must become free: no man should be an object of oppression and tyranny

This was the first time ever that an Afghan ruler claimed to seek legitimacy not so much in tribal politics or Islam, but in broad public acceptance. Nationalism, elements of popular respect for the traditional Pashtun values (the oath to punish his father's killers) undoubtedly constituted important parts of the new king's credo.

Unlike his predecessors, Amanullah's vision of Afghanistan was a vision of an independent, modernized and developed nation state. To launch Afghanistan on its path to freedom and development, it first had to be set free from the colonial shackles of the British. Domestic reforms became inextricably linked to foreign policy and vice versa; and by extension, failure in one domain would have serious implications for the other.

To defeat the British, Amanullah appealed to the Afghan people's religious and nationalist sentiment and honor, the only common thread which had united the micro-societies against a foreign adversary time and again. The use of the term *jihad* instantly provided instant results; it not only bolstered Amanullah's popular support, but also established his position as the supreme political-religious leader of the Afghan people.¹² . The war-weary British finally agreed to an armistice by signing the Treaty of Rawalpindion19 August 1919, a day celebrated by Afghans as Independence Day. This

¹² Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd,2004, p. 61

twentieth-century victory over the advanced unbelievers like the “Ingliz”, who flew airplanes in the country in 1919, contributed to the people’s belief in their ability to repel any and all who dared to invade their land.¹³

As Amanullah set out to reform and modernize a people embedded in the fabric of fundamental Islam and tribal culture, he was facing the challenge of his life. He had to walk a tightrope between reactionary *mullahs*, armed Islamist rebels, and regional warlords as he strove to build schools for girls, liberalize the country, and introduce a Western-style constitution. His policies had been inspired by his role-model Ataturk, who transformed the Ottoman Empire from a backward Islamic empire known as “the Sick rope” into a modern republic that eventually joined NATO.¹⁴ However, in the eyes of the religious leaders of the countryside, Amanullah had crossed a thin red line. His reforms, especially the un-veiling of women and co-education, were seen to be ‘un-Islamic’ and soon led to a fiery uprising against him. Ironically, the sentiments which had propelled his fight against the British were now the cause for the uprising against him. The rebellion spread around the country like wildfire and the mullahs, calling Amanullah’s outspoken queen Soraya a whore, led a powerful uprising against the modern king.

Riding this wave of Pashtun rebellion, a Tajik (Persian-Dari-speaking) rebel from the north named “Bacha- i-Saqao” (the Son of the Water Carrier) attacked the capital and chased Amanullah and his “infidel” queen out of the country. Bacha- i-Saqao gave himself the title “The Servant of the Messenger of God” and subsequently declared Sharia law in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Burning down the schools and stoning women who had dared to un-veil, the Tajik rebel snuffed all hopes for a modern Afghanistan with a flash. As Williams explains, “Although the Pashtun tribes approved of the overthrow of the meddling Afghan king and his “un-Islamic” practices, they rejected the rule of the Tajik usurper Bacha-i-Saqao. He was subsequently attacked by established the pattern of using

¹³ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 119

¹⁴ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 119

¹⁵ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 121

rear-area staging bases in the Pashtun lands of British India (present day Pakistan) to organize their forces. These Pashtun restorers of the Durrani dynasty then moved on Kabul and overthrew Bacha-i-Saqao, who was subsequently executed.”¹⁶

The Afghan people sent out a clear warning to all wanting to rule from Kabul that any rule which aimed at undermining their fundamental Islamic and tribal cultural beliefs would not be acceptable. If future leaders went too far, the tribes would legitimize their efforts to throw off Kabul’s rule by forming a *Jihad* against the ruler. Another important aspect of this power shift was the inter-tribal rivalry that is a defining characteristic of Afghanistan; the Pashtun majority is not willing to accept any non-Pashtun as the ruler of Kabul. Hence the trinity of tribal power play, foreign intervention (physical or ideological), and fundamental Islam/tribal culture has continuously trapped the people of Afghanistan in a medieval time warp.

Changing Regional and Geo-political Dynamics

The new king of Kabul, Zahir Shah, who was also a Durrani, also nurtured beliefs about modernizing Afghanistan, just as his predecessor, Amanullah, had desired. However, his attempts at modernization were rather tentative and lackluster as he tried to walk the fine line between modernization and fundamental Islamists in the country. Moreover, his rule was dramatically overshadowed by his uncles and powerful cousin, Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud. As Williams explains, “the King’s efforts to establish a parliamentary democracy and free women from the harsher aspects of *pardah* confinement met with some success, but in the end he failed to fundamentally modernize and liberalize his country.”¹⁷

While the new ruler could not make any significant progress in his domestic policies, the world around Afghanistan was undergoing a drastic transformation. The emergence of the US and USSR as the two superpowers, and the birth of a new neighbor,

¹⁶ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 121

¹⁷ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 120

Pakistan, propelled Afghanistan into another deadly spate of turmoil from which it has yet to recover. Zahir Shah balanced the two super powers delicately to benefit the land locked country; this brief period of development is explained by Williams:

From the 1950s to the 1960s, the Soviets were involved in developing the Afghan north while the Americans led the effort in the south. In the north the Soviets built factories, gas and oil wells, and the Salang pass over the Hindu Kush Mountains. They also helped the Afghan king modernize his army and shipped him T-35 tanks and MiG fighter bombers. For their part, although the Americans provided considerable help in constructing dams in Kandahar and Helmand Province in addition to airport, they did not find neutral Afghanistan worthy of arms plies. To build an army, Zahir Shah and his cousin Daoud were therefore forced to rely on the Soviets, who thus made inroads into the Afghan army. Their inroads were especially extensive among those Afghan officers who had been exposed to Soviet modernization while they were undergoing training in military academies in the USSR. Afghan officers who trained in the USSR were impressed by the country's modernity and dreamed of similarly modernizing their backward homeland.¹⁸

As Soviet ideology was making slow inroads into the educated and modernized classes of "urban" Afghanistan, Daoud's drive for a unified 'Pashtunistan' heightened tensions with its new Islamic neighbor, Pakistan. "On occasion this issue flared up and led to border closings, skirmishes, economic embargoes, and brinkmanship, but it never came to full-scale war."¹⁹ As Zahir Shah tried to balance the USSR, USA and Pakistan, the growing communist influence and tribal calls for a unified Pashtunistan, Cold War dynamics were slowly tightening a noose around Zahir Shah's rule. The growing voices of conservatism from rural Afghan areas began to clash with the liberal and secularist Afghans in the urban areas. One of the results of this balancing act was the creation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a party that was, despite its name, was in fact Communist and linked to Moscow.

Against the backdrop of growing ideological clashes between the Communist-secularists, who resolved to rip their country out of the Middle Ages by force, and the

¹⁸ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 121

¹⁹ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 121

Islamic-fundamentalist parties who vowed to maintain their religious faith and cultural identity, King Zahir Shah was engaged in a battle of his own with his cousin Daoud. In 1973, Daoud displaced his king brother from the throne while he was touring Italy for eye treatment and proclaimed Afghanistan a Republic, with himself as the president. In his five year rule from 1973-78, Daoud strengthened his army with Soviet weapons and executed any rebels, communists and fundamentalists alike; much like Soviet-style purges.

During this period of political fermentation, rural Afghans lived their lives as they had for centuries, devoid of any modern amenities with the Khans controlling the destinies of illiterate villagers. PDPA's resolve to sweep the country with reforms that would modernize the country in a speedy revolution led to a military-led coup on 27 April 1978, which overthrew and killed Mohammed Daoud. A communist government under Noor Mohammed Taraki took over, heavily supported by the Soviet Union. Taraki carried out a communist agenda involving land redistribution, secular education, marriage reform, and widespread repressions.²⁰ The Taraki reforms sowed the seeds of yet another jihad. The pace and nature of reforms upset both the tribal leaders as well as religious mullahs. Directly attacking the tribal and religious customs, the Taraki government was accused of blasphemy and hence worthy of *Jihad*. The agenda sparked popular unrest, which resulted in Soviet intervention and a popular uprising. Yet again, internal tribal dynamics, foreign intervention and Fundamental Islamic beliefs had not only succeeded in resisting Afghan modernization and change, but also prevented Afghanistan from breaking free from its medieval heritage.

Soviet Rule and Mujahedeen

The ousting of Taraki's communist government sent the country into another civil war and subsequent chaos; to control the situation, the Soviets marched into Kabul with 80,000 men (which would later increase to 100,000 during the next ten years of

²⁰ Malkasian, Carter. *War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Frontier*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 18

Soviet occupation) to restore order.²¹ Realizing that the Soviet-backed communist forces were not going to be defeated any time soon, the mujahidin organized themselves for war. The mujahedeen lived off the local economy and the tribal leaders were responsible for arming their men. Inferior in technology and inferior in numbers, the mujahedeen were not inferior in resolve and continued to fight the Soviet forces occupying their land.

While the Afghans suffered at the hands of yet another foreign oppressor, Afghanistan presented an opportunity to the US to convert this war into a “Vietnam” for the USSR. To quote Saikal, “With the Muslim world and most of the other members of the international community rallying behind the Afghan cause, the USA had plenty of justification now to adopt a counter interventionist strategy in support of the Afghan Islamic resistance to break the back of the Soviet power and eventually win the Cold War.”²² The Americans, only interested in offshore balancing against Soviet power, wanted to turn Afghanistan into a quagmire for their Soviet adversaries and prevent the spread of communism, age-old objectives of Cold War. Using Pakistan as a “middle agent”, the CIA-backed mujahedeen continued its struggle against the Russian oppressors. In the continuous bloody wars that engulfed the country for the next ten years, the only thing constant in the lives of the Afghan people was destruction.

Pakistan: The Launch pad for *Jihad*

Pakistan became an important element in the mujahedeen’s struggle. The mujahedeen fighters resided, trained, armed and operated from within the adjacent tribal regions of Pakistan. This frustrated the Soviets, who patrolled the border with gunships and shot at everything that drove into Afghanistan from across the border. However, it could not diminish the Afghan resolve to oust the Soviets from their land. When the Americans subsequently offered tens of millions of dollars to Pakistani leader Zia-ul-Haq to support the mujahedeen “freedom fighters,” he agreed to assist them, but with one key

²¹Malkasian, Carter. *War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Frontier*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 18

²² Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan a history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 235

caveat; the Pakistani ISI, not the CIA, would have to control the distribution of resources so as to prevent the jihad from being tainted in the eyes of Muslims.²³

President Zia-ul-Haq kept supporting the mujahedeen, yet it was of little concern for the US as they were only interested in bleeding the Soviet military. However, for Pakistan, it was a golden opportunity to shape events in Afghanistan so as to secure their national agendas of suppressing the Pashtunistan movement on either side of the Durand Line. Highlighting the role of Pakistan in the Afghan war, Williams states,

The Pakistanis did not want the distrusted Americans, who had recently sanctioned them for their nuclear weapons program, running covert operations from their soil unmonitored. And at the end of the day the Pakistanis' objectives were vastly different from the Americans'. The Americans wanted to turn Afghanistan into a quagmire for their Soviet adversaries and prevent the spread of Communism. But the Pakistanis wanted to weaken Pashtun nationalists in Afghanistan and create a fundamentalist neighbor door that might assist them in their wars with India. Forced to let the ISI act as the distributor for US funds and weapons, the CIA allowed the Pakistanis to support the most fundamentalist of the Afghan mujahedeen commanders, such as the Qadiriya Sufi *Pir* (master), Sayid Ahmed Gaylani, Sebghatullah Mujadidi (a leader of the Naqshbandi Sufi order), and Abdul Haq and Massoud, lost out in the race for arms and followers. Not surprisingly this led to a marked increase in radicalization among the mujahedeen as Hekmatyar, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf (a Saudi-funded Wahhabi), and Haqqani gained followers from the more moderate mujahedeen groups.²⁴

In furthering their own agendas, the Pakistan ISI carefully picked their pawns and armed them in accordance with the policy of spreading fundamental Islam, downplaying the Pashtunistan card. Hekmatyar's ascendance as the first choice for waging the proxy war was based on his fundamental Islamic beliefs like the Taliban. This assured the ISI that he would not backlash against a Muslim brother nation and hence would not further the cause of Pashtunistan despite being a Pashtun himself. For the very same reasons the

²³ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 148

²⁴ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 148

Pakistanis disliked Ahmad Shah Massoud, a liberal Tajik. The irony is that Hekmatyar used U.S. funds to create this fundamentalist enclave in Pakistan that still exists today.²⁵

The Civil War 1992-1996

The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving behind a weak communist government led by Dr. Najibullah which was soon replaced by the mujahedeen forces in 1992. For the first time in its history, Afghanistan was declared an Islamic state²⁶; a direct consequence of the fundamentalism that had taken primacy during the jihad against the Soviets. While all tribal factions were glad to see the back of the Soviets and the removal of the communist rule of Najibullah, the largely Pashtun population was not willing to accept a Tajik in control of Kabul. The situation was exactly the same as that had existed when Amanullah was dethroned by a Tajik from the north in 1926. History had repeated itself but with a subtle difference; this time Afghanistan would slump further into a civil war with no end in sight. As had been the case in the past, with the foreign intruders ousted, tribal and Islamic factions would prevent the country from breaking out of its medieval time warp.

With the Soviets humiliated and gone, there remained little US interest for Afghanistan and CIA funding came to a grinding halt. While US interests evaporated, Pakistani interests remained large. In the ensuing Afghan civil war, it became very evident that the ethnic and religious undercurrents in the anti-Communist Jihad were much more complex than what first met the eye. The Rabbani-Massoud led Northern Alliance government was neither acceptable to the Pashtun faction leader, Hekmatyar nor was it acceptable to Pakistan, who was not keen to have a moderate Islamic leadership in Kabul.

Hekmatyar, supported by ISI, targeted his guns at Kabul and thus began another intense bombardment; however, there was very little to destroy other than its population.

²⁵ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 147

²⁶ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York:IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 209

When Hekmatyar failed to dislodge the Northern Alliance government in Kabul, his mentors in Pakistan were forced to make two inescapable conclusions. “One was that Hekmatyar had become a serious liability for Pakistan and another was that now Pakistan lacked a viable Afghanistan policy to enable it to secure a receptive government in Kabul to settle once and for all the long-standing Afghan-Pakistan border dispute in line with Pakistan’s interests.”²⁷

Rise of the Taliban

Traditionally the word *Talib* means young children who are trained to recite the verses from the Holy Quran, yet it had a different meaning and role in the lives of the mujahedeen fighters.²⁸ This ultra-orthodox Sunni Islamic militia of young Pashtun students from both sides of the Durrand Line, who were brainwashed and taught to distrust women and enforce the strict *Shariah* law, would lead the fight into the Afghan heartland.²⁹

A common belief is that the Taliban were cultivated by the US to further their anti-Soviet interests. Nothing could be farther from the truth. While the US did not negate the cultivation of madrassas (schools of Islamic learning), the ideology of the Taliban warrior was a brain child of Pakistan’s ISI. Unable to further their interests through Hekmatyar, the ISI needed an alternative force to continue the war against the Northern Alliance. They found their answer in the Taliban who were being groomed in the chain of madrassas set up all along the Afghan border to support the combat spirit of Mujahidin fighters.³⁰

In 1994, the Taliban rapidly grew in popularity amongst the Pashtun tribal people, not because they were the best choice for Afghanistan, but because of their tough style of

²⁷ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 220

²⁸ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 178

²⁹ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 178

³⁰ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 221

frontier justice, uncorrupted governance and beliefs in conservative religious values that they shared with the villagers.³¹ The face of this movement was the one-eyed Mullah Omar. In the Taliban, the ISI not only saw a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul but also a stabilizing force which would help Pakistan further its economic goals in Central Asia over the land routes through Afghanistan; primarily regarding oil and gas.³² With Pakistani logistical support, the Taliban swept through the Pashtun south in 1994 and 1995. Gradually Taliban rule spread across the country and took the conservative beliefs of Pashtun tribes to a higher level of fundamentalism. The biggest sufferers were women who were subjugated to the level of cattle. The fundamental Taliban clampdown was even more horrific than the civil wars the Afghan people had become used to.

By 1998 the Taliban controlled more than 90% of Afghanistan; Rabbani was still considered the Afghan president and held a seat at the UN. Despite all the success of the Taliban in bringing peace and so-called stability to the tribal heartland, their government was not recognized other than in Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.³³ Though initially indifferent, by the late 1990s the US was openly critical of Taliban atrocities, especially against women, and soon became a major US political concern.

While the human right violations of the Taliban raised many an eyebrow around the world, apart from passive condemnation of Taliban, the world did little to stop the atrocities and terror. The turning point in Taliban's history came when their Arab 'guest' Osama Bin Laden connected them to the global vanguard of Islamic Jihad, Al Qaida. A veteran of the Afghan jihad against communist Russia, Bin Laden set up his first Al Qaida cell in Peshawar, Pakistan, essentially to help the Arab volunteers.³⁴ The organic alliance that Osama Bin Laden formed with Mullah Omar connected Afghanistan to the world. Connecting Afghanistan with the civilized world had been a long-cherished desire

³¹ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 179

³² Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 179

³³ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 179

³⁴ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan A history of Struggle and Survival*. New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 226

of Afghan visionaries. However this connection would be for all the wrong reasons, as the Afghan wars were going global very soon.

As Bin Laden began orchestrating his global *jihad* from Afghanistan, certain factions of the Taliban were opposed to having their war hijacked by a global jihad. Moreover, they were not keen to face a global retaliation that would only be a matter of time as Al Qaida upped the ante against the civilized world. Bin Laden paid back in cash and kind to his Afghan hosts and assisted them in their fight against the last standing warrior, the Lion of Panjsher, Massoud, who was being equipped with arms and ammunition by Tajikistan, India, Russia and Iran. Massoud desperately tried to muster international support, especially in the US, for his war against the terror network of Taliban-Al Qaida but his calls fell on deaf ears. As Williams describes the pre-9/11 situation in Afghanistan, he says,

“With his back against the wall, Massoud desperately struggled to get U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to support his war with the Taliban and Al Qaeda. But neither administration had the foresight to train and equip his anti-Taliban forces. In 2001 he warned: “If president Bush doesn’t help us, then these terrorists will damage the United States and Europe very soon and it will be too late.’ But his warning went unheeded. Some members of the CIA and Counterterrorism Chief Richard Clarke’s office circulated a memo from Massoud warning that Al Qaeda planned to “perform a terrorist act against the US on a scale larger than the 1998 bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.” But the CIA had its hands tied by the White House and the Department of State. Sadly on September 9, 2001, the famous Lion of Panjsher was assassinated by two Arab reporters who had a bomb hidden in their camera. Massoud’s death was a signal for the Taliban and Al Qaeda to launch a vast assault on his defensive positions.

In anticipation of the American retaliation in the aftermath of 9/11 attack on the US, Massoud was eliminated by Al Qaida. Anticipating a massive land offensive, Al Qaida prepared to draw the United States into the mountains of Afghanistan to transform it into a Soviet-style military, political and economic quagmire for the last remaining

“infidel” superpower.³⁵ Yet US forces made quick work of Al Qaida and Taliban in a matter of three months. The deadly combination of tribal power games, foreign intervention and fundamental Islam had combined yet again to keep Afghanistan stuck in civil unrest, poverty and inhuman existence in the midst of a modernized world.

Summary

While great powers have trampled over Afghanistan time and again, often to transit to greener pastures that lay on its other side, the world remained largely unaware of this tribal heartland until 9/11. The aerial strikes at the symbols of American power shook the world. It came as little surprise to some analysts that the terror plots had originated in Afghanistan. While for centuries Afghanistan had remained engaged in war, it had remained isolated from the civilized world which had only read about the great games of great powers and heard the stories of mujahidin valor against the Soviets; the 9/11 attacks shattered this isolation.

As a landlocked country with a people as ferocious as the terrain, not many were interested in occupying this tribal kingdom; many who dared to venture across the ‘graveyard of empires’ did so at their own peril. Nonetheless, all this could not have been made possible unless the internal dynamics of the country had not been weak and prone to infringement. Existing as a group of micro-societies with deep tribal cultural heritage and ethnic belongings, the people of Afghanistan have always found themselves trapped in a medieval time warp. Unable to break the shackles of royal polygamous power plays, foreign interventions and the fundamentalism of tribal and Islamic traditions, Afghanistan has detested and deflected any attempts at modernization and development.

Thus a lust for power, stemming from royal polygamous friction between brothers and half-brothers, interventions by great powers, and fundamental religious extremism (which ironically was the only factor which united the tribal micro-societies) were all primary causes of war for Afghanistan over the centuries. *Jihad* against the ‘infidels’ was the only common “language” tribal powers understood. Foreign intervention became

³⁵Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press,2012, p. 183

a regular feature of Afghanistan and strengthened the roots of fundamental Islam until it took the shape of modern terrorism.



Chapter 3

From Destruction to Construction: The Long March Begins

The horrifying attacks on US symbols of power on September 9, 2001 shook the world. Al Qaida's propaganda deed had more than the impact its mentor Bin Laden could have asked for. Bin Laden's strategic goal of dragging the United States into a horrifying quagmire in the heart of the Islamic world was about to bear fruit. As US forces set foot on Afghan soil on 07 Oct 2001, Afghanistan's dark and blood-spattered history turned a new leaf. The people of Afghanistan were sucked into the crossfire between two belligerents once again and the irony of the situation was that neither side engaged in the war truly represented the interests of the people. It was hard for the Afghan people to choose one and reject the other as the ramifications of that decision were far reaching and often unpleasant. As a consequence of this anarchic environment, the boundaries between war and peace had been blurred to such an extent that basic survival governed their loyalties and actions rather than any sense of nationalism or respect for rule of law. The Afghan people were once again deciding their own politics.

Afghanistan's journey through the twelve long years since 9/11 has been brutal and painful and even after huge investments of time, money and people, Afghanistan is still fragile, weak and apparently incapable of standing on its own accord. Despite a democratically-elected government, the country is still fragmented at all levels of society and the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, remains more of a "Mayor of Kabul" than the president of Afghanistan, as US Vice President Biden once remarked during a meeting with Karzai.¹ For most Afghan people, a peaceful and civilized way of life is a hazy distant past and for those born after the Soviet invasion in 1979, an unimaginable dream.

Displacing the Taliban from the seat of power in Kabul was perhaps the easier part of Operation Enduring Freedom. However, breaking the Al Qaida--Taliban links, retrieving Afghanistan from the claws of a barbaric civil war, and rebuilding the nation was going to be a long drawn battle even for well-equipped US forces. As the line

¹ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 68

between Al Qaida and the Taliban became more blurred, the war on terror became more of a counterinsurgency operation. ISAF forces are fighting a war on behalf of the Karzai government against the insurgent Taliban factions as well as against Al Qaida. Defeating the Taliban became a critical component of the war on terror. However, as Emile Simpson explains, “To characterize the war in Afghanistan as a ‘Taliban’ insurgency is a gross oversimplification of the local political driving factors”.²

Simpson elaborates further that while there is no doubt that in a nation where deep fragmentations between clans and tribes had been exploited by outsiders for centuries, “these central tensions of Afghan government -insurgency antagonism exist within a far more complex web of affiliations, and to see everything through a single, if pre-eminent, axis of tension is myopic. The key tensions are simply powerful magnets, which can work to repel and attract actors in the political kaleidoscope; the only truly consistent themes are self-interest and survival, the latter meant in both a political and a literal sense”.³ Even though violence and bloodshed has continued to define Afghanistan’s identity as a nation, the last twelve years have witnessed some critical and dramatic events in the history of Afghanistan, events which can prove to be the defining elements of Afghanistan’s future. As the ISAF readies itself for a pullout from Afghanistan, the challenges of security, economic development, reconstruction and good governance by the Afghans under the rule of law will test the will of Afghanistan and its people.

This chapter aims to analyze the war in Afghanistan over the last 12 years and how the situation in Afghanistan has changed since the ousting of the Taliban regime. While national forces prepare themselves to assume complete control of their nation, Afghanistan is still fragile and too weak to easily sustain itself on this path of self-governance and democratization. Afghanistan will need continued support from the international community for a long time before the Afghan government can sustain itself as a sovereign nation state.

² Simpson, Emile. *War from the Ground up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 53

³ Simpson, Emile. *War from the Ground up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 51

The Fragmented Social Fabric of a War-torn Country

In a land where tribal honor and traditions, rather than the ideology of a common nation-state, have been the drivers of the society, the national fabric has always been fragmented. For a country which has been at war for the last three decades, the scope of nationalism has become more restrictive and limited to the family, clan or tribe (based on the prevailing local threat). In an anarchic society where people have lost faith in any form of governance and where extreme poverty, illiteracy and low life expectancy are the predominant social defining factors, individuals have to safeguard their own interests and honor. Self-preservation has become the underlying theme of human existence. To quote Simpson, “At the local level, the most important motivation for the inhabitants is self-preservation. In light of self-preservation, the relative benefits of life under either side [government or Taliban] proposed by the competing narratives are peripheral: people become actors in their own right”.⁴

To understand how the basic fabric of the society has been fragmented, it is first imperative to understand tribal governance and its dynamics at the grass-root level and how they have been transformed or degenerated by continuous war, foreign interventions and Islamic fundamentalism. Traditionally, the governance at the tribal level has been the consequence of a healthy tension between three poles: the Khan or Jirga (the tribal leader or its elders) who forms the governing body, the Wali (the government intermediary or the representatives) which form the executive body and the Mullah (the representative of the Islamic religious establishment, the ‘Ulema Shura’) who acts as the judiciary. To quote Kilcullen, “The authority system was well adapted for maintaining social order and collective security in an inhospitable frontier environment that typically saw little, if any, government presence. Same as other forms of tribal organization, this was in essence a self-regulating social system for governance without government.”⁵ Each of the three segments of the triad had their own defined roles to play and the legislative segment of the Khan or the Jirga was not subservient to the religious Mullah. The tribal governance

⁴ Simpson, Emile. *War from the Ground up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 83

⁵ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 77

triad is explained diagrammatically by Kilcullen in his book, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, and is as depicted in the figure below:

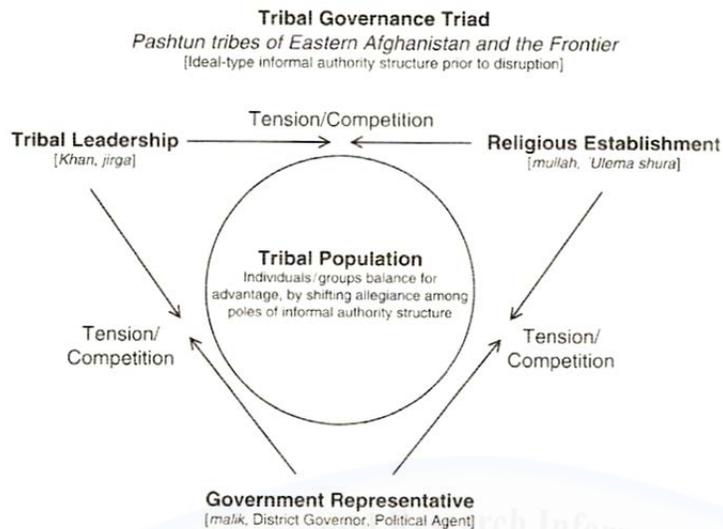


Figure1: Tribal Governance Triad

Source: *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big War*

Even across the Durrand Line, in Pakistan’s FATA region, the Pashtun tribes living there have a similarly eroded system of “three overlapping systems of authority (lineage-based authority, central government authority and religious authority)”.⁶ For centuries, these tribes in the AF-Pak region have governed their affairs using this governmental triad and have found little cause to unite as a common people and identify with a greater form of nationality- the nation-state of Afghanistan. While the tension between the three poles of governance had balanced them against each other without adversely influencing the traditional or religious way of life, in times of external threat religion seems to take a prime spot and becomes the very basis of tribal unity in the war against any foreign adversary.

⁶ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 79

As Professor Akbar Ahmed, diplomat and former political agent of Waziristan, Pakistan has noted, “religious leaders tend to emerge and assume greater leadership roles and political prominence in times of external threat (from colonial forces, the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, or indeed today with the intrusion of external armed actors into tribal territory). Such behavior allows religious leaders to sideline both tribal leadership and central government authority”.⁷ Since the 1979 Soviet invasion, the Mullah has been promoted to the prime spot in the hierarchy and religion has been the pillar of strength for these ill-equipped, poorly trained but lion-hearted soldiers who have never been conquered by any foreign power. Thus, in more than thirty years of continuous conflict, Islamic fundamentalism, which had been subservient to the traditional ways of life earlier, now became the primary governing factor and displaced the tribal governance triad to look like what Kilcullen terms as a “Disrupted Governmental Triad”.⁸

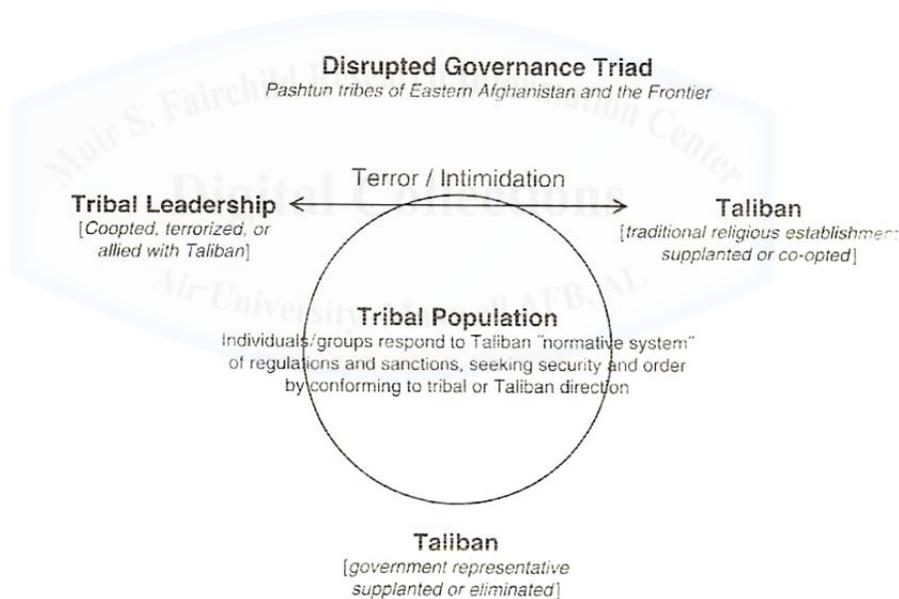


Figure2: Disrupted Governmental Triad

Source: *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big War*

⁷ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 79. Kilcullen quotes Professor Ahmed from a personal e-mail he received on August 2, 2008

⁸ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 82

As Kilcullen quotes a Pashtun:

The mullahs are approaching women to get their men to become more extremist. They tell the women to say that unless the men grow their beards [an outward symbol of radicalization] then the women will shave their heads. This would be more than an insult. Women come up with their jewelry and even their sons to [give them to] the mullah. The mullah is telling people in the Jirga what to do, giving the prayers and giving the orders—but he is just a village schoolteacher, not a leader! Pashtunwali has been neglected, because of radicalization: they don't know our code of life because they only know the madrassas and how to make more madrassas.⁹

The Taliban have infiltrated into the social fabric of the tribes and by marrying their daughters and breeding into their families, they have become an inseparable part of the tribal dynamics in many areas of Afghanistan. In a fractured society where self-preservation is the primary goal, the local people find it difficult to break away from these shackles of enforced fundamentalism where resistance amounts to fighting against their very own kin. Kilcullen highlights this point by quoting an Afghan governor he met in Afghanistan, “Ninety percent of the people you call ‘Taliban’ are actually tribal. They’re fighting for loyalty or Pashtun honor, and to profit their tribe. They’re not extremists. But they’re terrorized by the other 10 percent: religious fanatics, terrorists, people allied to [the Taliban leadership Shurain] Quetta. They’re afraid that when they try to reconcile, the crazies would kill them. To win them over, first you have to protect their people, prove that the extremists can’t hurt them if they come to your side”.¹⁰

Therefore, in such a disjointed political environment, unless this triad is rebalanced or a better system of governance is established, Islamic Fundamentalism will continue to drive the social fabric of Afghanistan. This rebalancing cannot be brought about by a revolutionary change, especially in a society which has relied on war to resolve its disputes; be it domestic or foreign. Therefore, this change will have to be reformatory in nature and small incremental changes will only resurrect the displaced

⁹ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 81

¹⁰ Kilcullen, David. *Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a big one*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 39

social structure of the society and provide it the strength to withstand such tremors of “Talibanization” in the future. And this change can only be brought about by the Afghan people themselves; foreign elements can only create the conditions for these changes to take root and internalize.

The War against the Taliban

What began as a fight against bin Laden and Al Qaida was soon transformed into a counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban factions fighting to regain power in Afghanistan. The initial surge of CIA followed by NATO and ISAF operations drove the Taliban and Al Qaida factions out of Afghanistan and into the bordering safe havens of the tribal regions of Pakistan. Once the Taliban had been ousted from power, Hamid Karzai was placed as the president of an interim Afghan government with an aim to establish democracy through presidential elections. However, without a credible and capable local government and diversion of international military efforts to Iraq in 2003, the war against the Taliban began to move in the opposite direction and by 2006 the Taliban had regained control of large portions of their Pashtun hinterlands in the south and southeastern part of Afghanistan. During the initial years of war, the focus of ISAF remained on “kill and capture” rather than on engaging with the population to shift the local allegiance towards government and counterinsurgency forces. However the Taliban actively engaged with the population to expand their sphere of influence in the rural areas of Afghanistan. As Johnson and Mason point out, the Taliban, unlike the Karzai government in Kabul, understood that the center of gravity lay in the population and controlling the population was the key to their success.¹¹

The Taliban employed a brilliant strategy. On one hand they infiltrated low-level fighters who intimidated the NGOs and other international organizations into withdrawing their representatives from the southern parts of Afghanistan while on the other hand they coerced the village elders and the population to accept their Islamic Fundamentalism. To quote Johnson and Mason again, “the Taliban Mullah travel to the villages to speak to the village elders and are fond of saying, ‘the Americans may have

¹¹ Johnson, Thomas H., and M. Chris Mason. *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*. Elsevier limited on behalf of Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2006, p. 86

the watches, but we have the time'. The simple message was to emphasize the fact that the Americans will eventually leave after five or ten years and when they do, the Taliban would come back and kill all those who oppose their rule or have befriended the Americans and the Karzai government".¹² In the absence of adequate protection from the Taliban and without any legitimate reason to extend their loyalty to the government in Kabul, the villagers either remained neutral or cooperated with the guerillas as the situation may have demanded. Eventually, it was all about self-preservation.

In Afghanistan, various sections of the warring society pursue varied goals; they range from political power games to accumulation of wealth through the drug trade to spreading Islamic fundamentalism. The insurgency is a more complex mosaic of varying interests and rivalries arising out of self-interests rather than merely a war for self-governance fought in the classical Maoist mode under the guidance of a vanguard party. Local warlords have attached themselves to the Taliban movement, not because they believe in Islamic fundamentalism but because it allows them to pursue their own self interests of either controlling the population in their areas or accumulating wealth from the blooming opium trade. Whatever be the reason for support, the Taliban capitalize on every such opportunity which allows them to expand their control over the population and its leaders. In the absence of a legitimate government, the Taliban run a parallel government which provides justice and security of interests. Simpson quotes from the February 2011 UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Report to emphasize on the nature of the insurgency that faces the US led forces in Afghanistan. The report recognized the insurgency as a franchise:

“For the purposes of propaganda, the Taliban is keen for the insurgency to be regarded as a unified movement under the banner of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which is ostensibly controlled by Mullah Mohammed Omar and the Rahbari Shura (Supreme Council). In reality, the Afghan insurgency is a mix of Islamist factions, power-hungry warlords, criminals and tribal groupings, all pursuing their own economic,

¹² Johnson, Thomas H, and M. Chris Mason. *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*. Elsevier limited on behalf of Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2006, p. 87

political, criminal and social agendas and interests, from local feuds to establishing a pan-Islamic caliphate. Three major groups operate under the banner of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: Mullah Omar's Taliban, the Haqqani Network and the Hizb-e-Islami faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. While the latter two sometimes cooperate with the Taliban Leadership, they are considered autonomous factions".¹³

Irregular warfare presents a unique challenge for the governmental forces fighting against insurgency. In a battle which is fought in the political domain (among the population) and not in the military domain (between armies of two states) victory cannot be defined by the number of enemy killed or the amount of territory controlled. What matters more is how the local population views this battle and therefore, as Simpson says, "the control of the political space is as important, if not more important, than controlling the physical space".¹⁴ The ISAF was unable to disrupt tangible support for insurgent Taliban; and in the absence of a demonstrated commitment and motivation on the part of the Afghan government and Afghan security forces, the Taliban were able to run a parallel government in the Afghan hinterland. The war on terror did not seem to be winning the political cause.¹⁵ The Afghanistan policy needed a change of strategy if peace were to prevail in the war-torn nation.

In a report submitted by US Army Lieutenant General Douglas Lute to President Bush on November 26, 2008, Lute found that there were far too many wars being fought in Afghanistan and at times these proved to be counterproductive as different elements of ISAF were fighting the battle according to self-designed benchmarks. Lute remarked, "We're not losing, but we're not winning either, and that's not good enough".¹⁶ As Lute

¹³ Simpson, Emile. *War From The ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. New York: Oxford Press, 2009, p. 52, Simpson quotes from the parliamentary report House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, fourth Report, The UK's foreign policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan (Feb 2011), Para 103

¹⁴ Simpson, Emile. *War From The ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. New York: Oxford Press, 2009, p. 6

¹⁵ Paul, Christopher et al.. *Counterinsurgency Scorecard -Afghanistan in Early 2013 Relative to Insurgencies since World War I*. RAND Corporation, Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013, Summary. <http://www.rand.org>

¹⁶ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 43

examined the situation there, he found about 10 distinct but overlapping wars in progress: the conventional force controlled by a Canadian general, the CIA's covert teams, the Green Berets, the Joint Special Operations Command, the Training and Equipment Command, the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Directorate for Security, and Afghanistan's CIA-sponsored intelligence agency were all fighting their own separate wars against a common enemy.¹⁷ As a consequence of this lack of cohesion, the war was not progressing in the right direction; leave alone at the right pace. Lute's review concluded that if the US and its allies were to prevail over the Taliban in Afghanistan; they had to address three critical problems. "First, governance had to be improved and corruption curtailed. Second, the opium trade was out of control. It fueled corruption and partially financed the Taliban insurgency and third, the Pakistani safe havens had to be reduced and eventually eliminated. If the United States didn't accomplish these three things, it could never claim to be done in Afghanistan".¹⁸

The change in US policy focus from Afghanistan to the AF-Pak region and the troop surge which followed the changing of the guard at the White House in 2009 changed the course of the Afghan war. Since the surge in 2009, properly resourced and well-coordinated local, regional and global efforts have worked towards reducing the Taliban influence in the region. By coordinating the *positive* foreign intervention of US-led ISAF forces and minimizing the *negative* efforts of Pakistan-based Taliban factions by expanding the war to the AF-Pak region, the COIN score started to show signs of improvement. Not only did the surge allow the allied forces to expand their operations into the Taliban safe havens in the FATA regions of Pakistan but also allowed the ANSF to strengthen their capabilities to increasingly play a greater role in the counterinsurgency operations. By coordinating and enhancing the positive foreign intervention (US-led ISAF) and downplaying the negative foreign intervention (insurgency supported from Pakistan) the war on insurgency has shown positive signs of progress and improvement. One article in the Washington Post on 28 Dec 2013 quotes a US government official: "By no means has the surge defeated the Taliban, but its stated goal was to reverse the

¹⁷ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 42

¹⁸ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 44

Taliban's momentum and give the government more of an edge. I think we achieved that."¹⁹

In the long war against the Taliban, the strategic priority has progressively shifted from defeating the Taliban to stabilizing Afghanistan, even if it amounts to enduring a latent insurgency. As is the case with any insurgency, negotiations form an integral part of CION operations and the war against Taliban is no different. However, a 2012 briefing paper by Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) highlights that while the Taliban regret their connections with Al Qaida, the connections with Al Qaida can only be severed by Mullah Mohammad Omar— and *only* him.²⁰

Some factions within the Mullah Omar-led *Quetta Shura* Taliban base have indicated that there is room for negotiating peace in return for a political future for the Taliban. The opening of a political office in Doha in January 2012 is a strong indicator of the Taliban political ambitions and as the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) report, indicates, “Even though it is not an internationally recognized representation of the Afghan Taliban, Doha has unofficially been the stage for attempts at confidence building between the US and the Taliban representatives”.²¹ Nevertheless, the mere existence of the political office does reflect a change in attitude and policy of both the Taliban and the US. Attempts to engage the Taliban in negotiating peace have failed to bear fruit for several reasons. First, the Taliban refuse to negotiate with President Karzai or his administration, which is seen as corrupt and weak. Secondly, outright acceptance of the present Afghan constitution is widely considered as a non-starter as some in the

¹⁹Ernesto Londoño, Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller. “Afghanistan gains will be lost quickly after drawdown: U.S. intelligence estimate warns.” *Washington Post*, December 28, 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/afghanistan-warns/2013/12/28/ac609f90-6f32-11e3-aecc-85cb037b7236_story.html (accessed 20 Jan 2014)

²⁰ Michael Semple et al. *Taliban Perspectives on Reconciliation*, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Briefing Paper, September 2012, http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Taliban_Perspectives_on_Reconciliation.pdf.

In July 2012, the authors of this report interviewed four senior Taliban interlocutors about the Taliban's approach to reconciliation. The primary objective was to draw them out on three key issues of International terrorism and the Taliban's links with Al-Qaida and other armed non-state actors, the potential for a ceasefire and parameters for conflict resolution and continuing presence of US military bases in Afghanistan. Full report available on www.rusi.org

²¹ Sheikh, Mona K., and Maja T. J. Greenwood. *Taliban Talks Past, Present And Prospects For The US, Afghanistan And Pakistan*, Danish Institute For International Studies (DIIS) Report, 2013:06, pg 10

Taliban leadership consider that this acceptance would be tantamount to surrender.²²

Although the Taliban fully understand that their strict and extremist policies of the 1990s need to be reoriented to suit the rapidly changing social environment of Afghanistan, the ideological clash on social issues make any hopes of a reconciliation disappear.

The DIIS report further states: “the preliminary talks were mainly about prisoner exchange; five Guantanamo detainees in exchange for one American soldier, Bowe Bergdahl. Since the US declined (according to the US because the Taliban refused to certify that the Guantanamo inmates would not re-enter the fight against US troops in Afghanistan, but also because this happened during the US election campaign when there was staunch resistance in the US Congress to the idea of prisoner release), the talks broke down in March 2012 and have since been on ice”.²³ As Kate Clark, Senior Analyst, Afghanistan Analysts Network (Kabul) is quoted in the DIIS report, “The war will continue until there is a negotiated settlement. Neither side can win militarily nor can any side lose, but admitting this and taking the next step is not necessarily easy”.²⁴ The war in Afghanistan will continue long after the US forces leave Afghanistan and while the Taliban influence may have been marginalized, they still possess adequate residual capacity to bounce back once the US-led ISAF forces withdraw completely from Afghanistan and the Afghan government assumes complete charge of the situation. For Afghanistan to be able to prevail over this insurgency, the local government and the ANSF elements need to remain strong, well trained and well equipped to continue this war on terror and prevent Afghanistan from regressing back into the dark ages.

Self-Governance and Reconstruction

In 2001, Hamid Karzai was appointed as the head of an interim government which was to fill the power vacuum left by the ouster of Taliban regime. For the citizens of the civilized modern world this may have seemed to be a trivial matter, but in the

²² Michael Semple et al. *Taliban Perspectives on Reconciliation*, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Briefing Paper, September 2012,

http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Taliban_Perspectives_on_Reconciliation.pdf, p. 3

²³ Sheikh, Mona K., and Maja T. J. Greenwood. *Taliban Talks Past, Present And Prospects For The US, Afghanistan And Pakistan*, Danish Institute For International Studies (DIIS) Report, 2013:06, p. 15

²⁴ Sheikh, Mona K., and Maja T. J. Greenwood. *Taliban Talks Past, Present And Prospects For The US, Afghanistan And Pakistan*, Danish Institute For International Studies (DIIS) Report, 2013:06, p. 24

history of Afghanistan this was the beginning of a revolution as critical as any other revolution in the history of the modern world. The presidential elections which followed in 2004 marked a milestone in the modern history of Afghanistan. As a record number of Afghan citizens came out to vote; they displayed their willingness to move away from the traditions of violence and anarchic chaos that had defined their existence in the past. As Mathew J. Morgan says in his book, *A Democracy is Born*, “Afghan Revolution of democratic governance, albeit aided and guided by international military and political powers, is thus one of the most historic events of our time”.²⁵

However, electing a government is but a drop in the ocean when it comes to defining democracy, and the new Afghan government was all but a drop in a dry ocean bed. In a country where rule of law is not regarded in the same manner as in the rest of the civilized world, and where the state is not the main source of restriction of citizen’s personal autonomy, establishing an environment for the rule of law, political freedom and civil liberties was going to be a Herculean task.²⁶ The problem was more complex than simply placing an elected local government in Kabul. The ethnic divide, a tattered economy, blooming drug trade, widespread poverty and illiteracy and the presence of powerful regional warlords were strong deterrents against democracy in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the long march to reconstruction had begun.

The pool of human resources available to the Afghan government was both insufficient and incompetent to establish a strong government. A largely illiterate and fragmented population which could only speak the language of the gun was far from what could be desired to resurrect an effective and efficient local government. In such a scenario, the government’s influence barely reached the outskirts of the capital and as Morgan says, “the limits of the Afghan government’s influence on its people lay at the heart of the problem of Afghan democratization.”²⁷ Since the first elections in 2004, the Afghan government has been strongly supported by the international community to not only fight the Taliban insurgency but also strengthen the Afghan government’s capability and capacity for good governance. Only when a strong Afghan government that

²⁵ Morgan, Matthew J. *A Democracy is born*. Westport, CT: Preager Security International Press, 2007, p. ix

²⁶ Morgan, Matthew J. *A Democracy is born*. Westport, CT: Preager Security International Press, 2007, p. 154

²⁷ Morgan, Matthew J. *A Democracy is born*. Westport, CT: Preager Security International Press, 2007, p. 154

represents the interests of the entire Afghan people displays the capacity to not only establish an environment of good governance but also display the capability to deal with its security concerns such as the Taliban insurgency can the prospects of a long term democracy appear to be healthy. Thus, supporting a strong central government is one matter that had become a delicate balancing act for both the United Nations and the American-led military forces in Afghanistan.²⁸

As Afghanistan goes to the polls in April 2014 to elect a new president, a lot has changed since the first time the country went to the polls ten years ago. The US-led ISAF forces, UN and other world communities have made immense contributions to the Afghan resurrection process to give Afghanistan its best chance of establishing a long term democracy. However, resurrecting the country can only be achieved by the Afghan people themselves and as the last 12 years have indicated, foreign intervention in the internal matters of the population is not welcomed at all by the Afghan people; no matter how noble the intention. Since 2001, when the interim government took office, Afghan local governmental structure has grown from a mere cosmetic component to an integral, responsible and capable structure of governance, albeit at the behest of massive international support led by the United States. The *DOD Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* for 2013 provides a comprehensive insight into the capabilities and functioning of Afghan governmental agencies as the local authorities continue to expand their influence over the population and ready themselves for assuming full control of the country once the US-led forces complete their withdrawal.

Self-Governance

As the DOD report highlights, “GIROA (Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) capacity to provide stable, representative, transparent, and responsive governance for the citizens of Afghanistan continues to develop, although progress is slow and uneven. However, these are hindered by multiple factors, including widespread corruption, limited formal education and skills, illiteracy, minimal access by officials to rural areas, lack of coordination between the central government and the Afghan provinces and districts, and uneven distribution of power among the branches of the

²⁸ Morgan, Matthew J. *A Democracy is born*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International Press, 2007, p. 148

Afghan government”.²⁹ Presently these gaps in governance are covered by international support, however once the international support is withdrawn, these factors could be exploited by the Taliban insurgents and other anti-national elements to reduce the influence and capacity of the governmental agencies over its population especially in the rural areas of the hinterland. “At the sub national level, official government services are largely restricted to provincial and district centers despite efforts to improve capacity and extend government services to rural areas”.³⁰

As the report further explains, “Among the three branches of the Afghan government, the executive branch continues to wield the most power and frequently directs legislative and judicial action. Constrained freedom of movement due to security concerns, however, impedes the expansion of rule of law, especially at the district level.”³¹ Formal disputes that drag in the judiciary, for extended periods of time, feed the perception that the government is ineffective and beyond the reach of many rural Afghan people. Although the Afghan people are represented by their representatives in the parliament and the provincial governors are appointed by the central government, they do not represent the people’s interests in the true spirit. Many forms of corruption stemming from self-interests, inter-tribe rivalries and fears of survival in the post 2014 scenario mar the government-people relationship. As Stephen Biddle says in an interview with Bernard Gwertzman: “Afghans who are skeptical about their own government read that to mean there's only a minimum amount of time left in order to extract as much money as possible from international aid and from the underlying economy, transport it out of the country to Dubai or someplace else, and create a nice exile for oneself after the government collapses and the Americans leave.”³² In a country which is rebuilding its tattered social,

²⁹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf

³⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, p. 91

³¹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf. 91

³² Council on Foreign Relations. “Ending The Afghan War.”, CFR. March 16, 2012
<http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/ending-afghan-war/p27668>(accessed on Feb 27, 2014)

economic and political fabric and where people live with the fears of a backlash once foreign support is withdrawn, self-help appears to be a very rational behavior.

Despite the fact that large scale corruption, bribery and nepotism are rampant at all levels of the government, it is extremely critical for the Afghan people to get used to a democratic form of government. Once democracy becomes a habit, reforms will follow their own natural course. As Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow with the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence in the Foreign Policy program at Brookings, said, “This year’s presidential election can provide a critical opportunity for a renewal of legitimacy, a boost in confidence and a start to correcting the ineffective and corrupt governance that characterizes Afghanistan”.³³ A successful presidential election will not only strengthen the democratic process in Afghanistan but also lay the foundation for sustained self-governance, development and security beyond the withdrawal of US forces. The people of Afghanistan need to display a strong political will to transition through this period of uncertainty and see Afghanistan sustain itself as a nation-state.

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

The Afghan National Security Forces, under the eyes of watchful US trainers and advisors, have expanded their capabilities rapidly since 2009 and today, as the DOD report assesses, “the Afghan security forces are now successfully providing security for their own people, fighting their own battles, and holding the gains made by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the last decade. This is a fundamental shift in the course of the conflict.”³⁴ As the report elaborates further, “During the 2012 fighting season, ISAF led the fight against the insurgency, helping to put the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) firmly in control of all of Afghanistan’s major cities and 34 provincial capitals. During the 2013 fighting season, the ANSF led

³³ Kashi, David. “Will Afghanistan Survive The Aftermath of Its 2014 Presidential Elections?” *IB times*, February 1, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.com/will-Afghanistan-survive-aftermath-its-2014-presidential-elections>

³⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013. http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf p. 7

the fight, and have consolidated GIRoA's control of Afghanistan's urban areas."³⁵

Gradually the ANSF have replaced ISAF in all major security activities being undertaken in Afghanistan and it now conducts 95% of all conventional and 98% of all special operations independently.

Milestone 2013, announced by ISAF and GIRoA on June 18, 2013, marked a red letter day for Afghanistan as the ANSF's assumed lead role in ensuring security for the entire country; a role so far performed by the ISAF. In a statement released by ISAF HQ in Kabul on June 18, 2013, General Joe Dunford, Commander of the NATO ISAF said, "I want to congratulate the people of Afghanistan on reaching Milestone 2013. [On] This historic occasion, the Afghan people take a monumental step forward as the Afghan National Security forces take the lead for security across the country. No longer are the Afghan people reliant on coalition forces to provide security. Afghan soldiers and police are now protecting fellow Afghans."³⁶ Since 2009, the ANSF has nearly doubled in size and as of August 2013, ANSF strength had reached 344,602, which is 98% of its authorized strength of 352,000 personnel.³⁷ Notwithstanding the enhanced capabilities of ANSF and its increased role in securitization of Afghanistan, the security situation in the country remains delicate. The ANSF, which relies heavily on significant advising and enabling support such as air support (kinetic and non-kinetic) from the ISAF, face a daunting task after ISAF withdraws by the end of 2014. As the DOD report says, "This enabling support will decline through 2014, and will be difficult for the ANSF to fully replace. ANSF capabilities are not yet fully self-sustainable, and considerable effort will be required to make progress permanent. After 2014, ANSF sustainability will be at high risk without continued aid from the international community and continued Coalition

³⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, p. 7

³⁶ ISAF Public Affairs Office. "ISAF Commander Congratulates Afghan People on Milestone 2013." [http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/transcripts/isafcommander congratulates afghan people on milestone 2013.html](http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/transcripts/isafcommander%20congratulates%20afghan%20people%20on%20milestone%202013.html)

³⁷ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, p. 9

force assistance including institutional advising.”³⁸ With the current status of the Afghan economy, the World Bank, the Afghan government, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reported that Afghanistan will likely need donor assistance to fund ANSF until at least 2021.³⁹

Foreign Assistance in rebuilding Afghanistan

Rebuilding Afghanistan has perhaps become the largest international humanitarian assistance program since the Marshall plan for rebuilding Europe in the aftermath of WWII. The international community of approximately fifty countries led by the United States and strongly supported by the World Bank and the United Nations has poured in millions of dollars to rebuild Afghanistan since 2002. As the SIGAR Quarterly report to the US Congress highlights, “To date, Congress has provided nearly \$93 billion to build Afghan security forces, improve governance, and foster economic development in Afghanistan.”⁴⁰ Although the Afghan economy has shown signs of growth, the expenditures have grown at a much faster rate and Afghanistan’s domestic revenues funded only about 10 percent of its estimated total public expenditures from 2006 to 2011. As the GAO report to Congressional Addressees states, “Domestic revenue grew from \$0.6 billion to \$ 2.0 billion from 2006 to 2011, an increase of over 230 percent. At the same time, Afghanistan’s estimated total public expenditures grew from \$5.8 billion to \$17.4 billion, an increase of over 200 percent, maintaining a gap between revenues and expenditures”.⁴¹ With its present economic capability, Afghanistan will need continuous financial support from the international community to sustain its developmental process for a long time to come. The graph below indicates the state of Afghanistan’s economic health and the role of international community in sustaining Afghanistan.

³⁸ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, p. 7

³⁹ *Afghanistan: Key Oversight Issues*. US Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Congressional Addressees. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office, February 2013, p. 21 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652075.pdf>

⁴⁰ *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*. SIGAR report. Washington, DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, April, 2013

⁴¹ *Afghanistan: Key Oversight Issues*. US Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Congressional Addressees. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office, February 2013, p. 24 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652075.pdf>

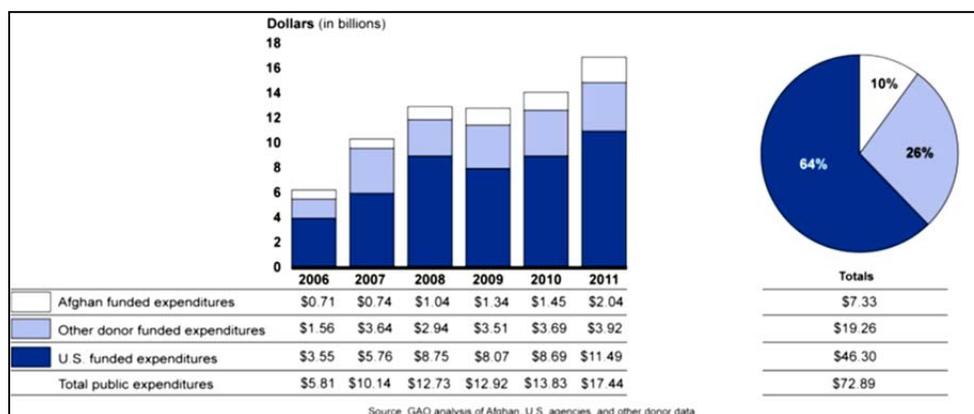


Figure 3: Afghanistan’s Total Public Expenditures from 2006 to 2011

Source: *Report to Congressional Addressees*. US Government Accountability Office (GAO), February 2013

At the July 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, the international community pledged more than \$16 billion for Afghanistan’s economic development through 2015. However, given the country’s ability to generate revenue even in the foreseeable future, Afghanistan is likely to be reliant on foreign aid through 2024 for its sustainment. At the Tokyo summit, the international community established a renewed stronger foundation for partnership to support sustainable growth and development of Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade (2015-2024).⁴² However, the biggest challenge that Afghanistan faces is from within. Unless the people of Afghanistan join the resurrection movement and propel their self-development and growth before the patience of the international community wears out, there is a strong possibility that the Afghan dream of democratization may slowly disappear into oblivion.

Future Challenges for Afghanistan

In sum, as Afghanistan prepares itself for its long march towards self-governance and self-realization, it faces four major challenges that need to be either solved or

⁴²United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). “Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, 8 July 2012” http://www.unodc.org/afghanistan/en/Events/Tokyo_conference_on_afghanistan.html

marginalized for Afghanistan to sustain itself as a sovereign state: a lack of security, lack of economic development, the booming drug trade and a lack of good governance. As the Afghan people return to the polling booths in April 2014 to elect their new President and a new government, these four challenges will be preying on their minds. The Brookings Afghanistan Index surveyed the Afghan people about what they viewed as the biggest problems facing Afghanistan as a whole. The graph below indicates the shift in people's fears as Afghanistan readies itself for its solo flight.

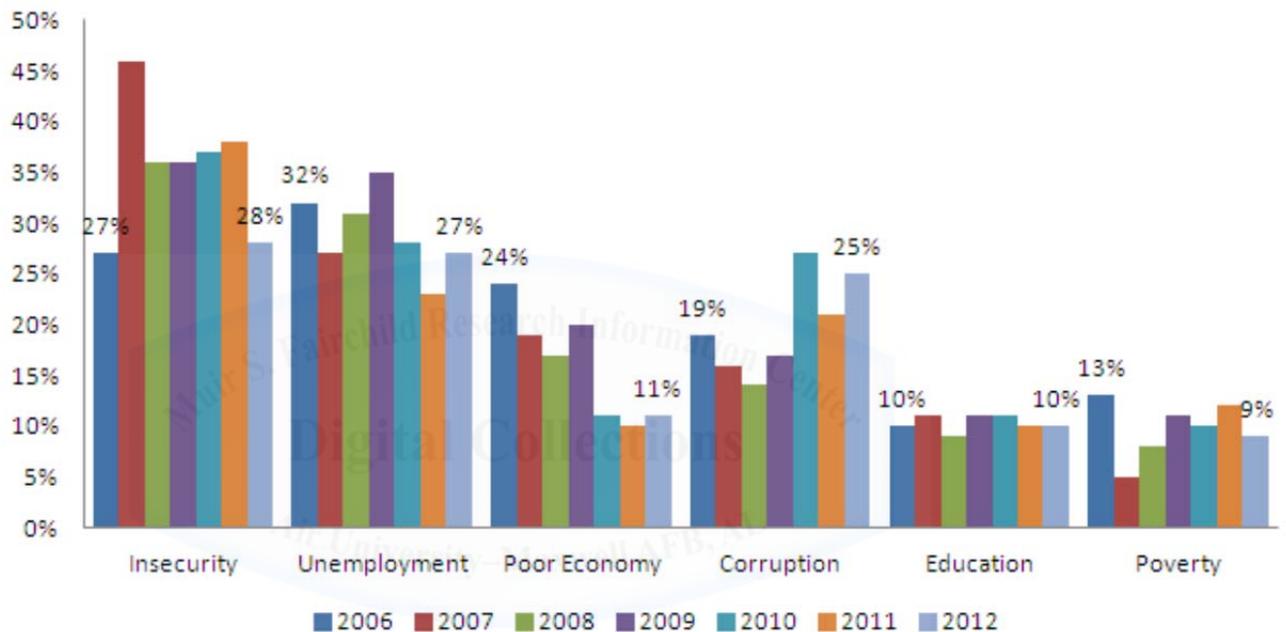


Figure 4: Survey Results of ‘What is the Biggest Problem Facing Afghanistan as a Whole? (2006-2012)’

Source: Livingston, Ian S., and Michael O’Hanlon. *Afghanistan Index 2014*, Brookings Institute, 10 January 2014

Insecurity at 28%, unemployment at 27% and corruption at 25 % clearly indicate that security, unemployment (which indicates the health of the economy) and good governance are the main challenges that face Afghanistan. In addition to these, Afghanistan faces the daunting task of not only destroying the drug trade mechanism but more importantly replacing it with alternate agricultural opportunities which can provide a means of livelihood to the poor people who are totally dependent on the land for sustenance. As indicated by the Brookings Institute Index, Afghanistan’s contribution to

the global opium trade was 63%. Although the figure is way below the 2007 figure of 82 %, the more alarming factor is the increase in opium plantations which has grown from 193 hectares in 2007 to 209 hectares in 2013. The pattern of opium cultivation from 1990 to 2013 is as indicated in the following graph.

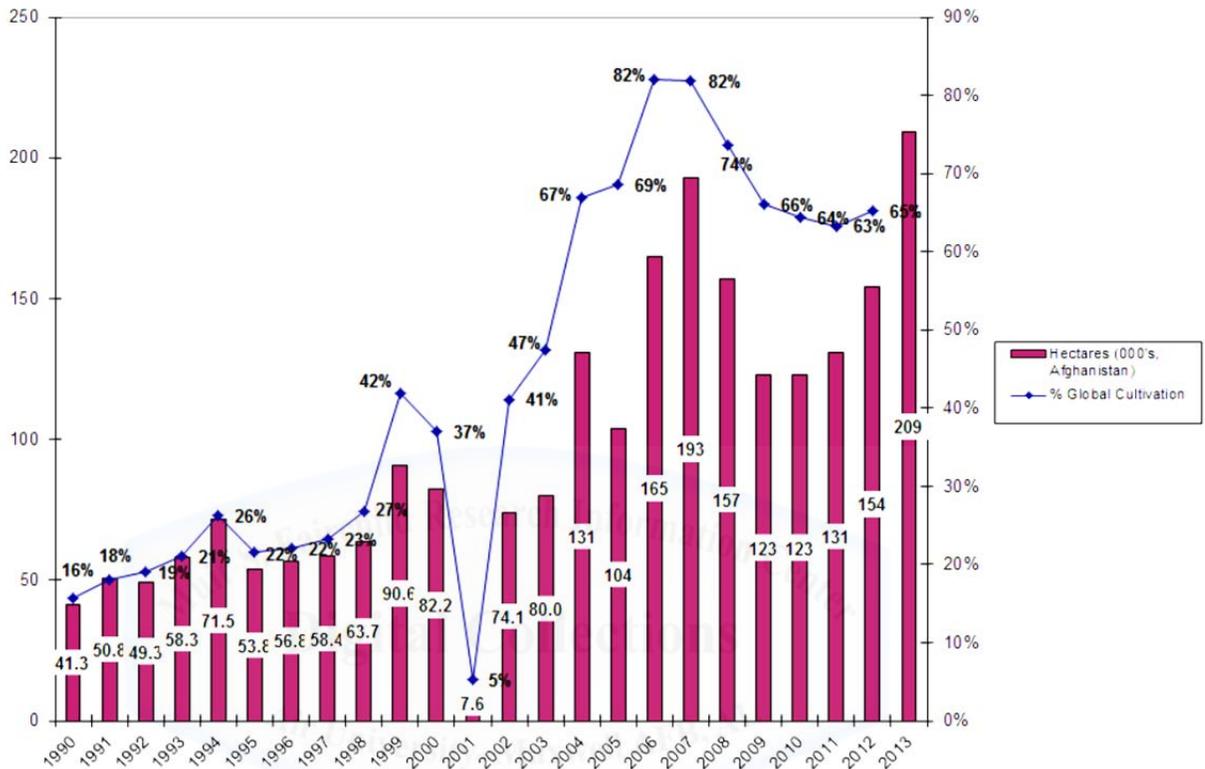


Figure 5: Annual Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan (Hectares) and Percentage of Global Cultivation, 1990-2013.

Source: Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O’Hanlon. *Afghanistan Index 2014*, Brookings Institute, 10 January 2014

Collectively these four challenges are the impediments to Afghanistan’s growth and prosperity as a self-governed sovereign state. The Afghan government has to overcome widespread corruption and nepotism and extend the fruits of good governance to its people across the country. Unemployment and poor governance are perhaps the most potent elements that fuel insurgency. With the Taliban down but not out of the fight there is a very strong probability of Afghanistan falling back into the hands of the radical Taliban regime and reducing Afghanistan to rubble once again. With the foreign sources

of funding coming under review, the drug trade has become the major source of funding for the insurgents and warlords who run their private states in some parts of the country.

While Afghanistan has moved towards establishing a democracy, it still faces huge challenges which can draw it back into the abyss of destruction, poverty and Stone Age living. Even though international patience seems to be running out, the international community needs to continue its financial and physical assistance to Afghanistan to allow the fruits of democracy to find root, right down to the lowest section of the society. Apart from the positive assistance that is flowing into Afghanistan, equal effort needs to be dedicated towards reducing the negative influence of radical factions operating from the safe havens of the neighboring regions. Only when the balance continues to tilt towards developmental assistance can Afghanistan hope to sustain its status as an independent sovereign state.

In the past 12 years the contributions of regional players have been minimal and often disruptive as the situation in Afghanistan has been used to further their own interests at the cost of the interests of the local people. While the regional players may not have had the economic and military capacity to take on complete responsibility of resolving the Afghan quagmire themselves, they can contribute in a big way toward reducing the negative influence and factors disrupting the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The support to the Taliban is largely regional and the drug trade finds its way out from the landlocked country through its neighboring states only. If the regional players can effectively suppress these two negative factors, the developmental process can move forward at a much faster pace. The regional players share the culture and religion of the Afghan people and therefore can contribute more effectively towards resurrecting the torn social fabric of the Afghan society; a role perhaps beyond the capabilities of the western world. Hence to resurrect Afghanistan and connect it to the civilized world, the global, regional and local players have to work in unison. Only then can perhaps the effort of the last 12 years pay its true dividends. The next chapter aims to highlight how Afghanistan matters to the world and why the regional and global players should be concerned about getting Afghanistan right.

Chapter 4

The Afghanistan Factor in Indian Securitization

Lying at the crossroads of great empires, Afghanistan has long played the role of 'buffer state' and absorbed the shocks of innumerable power games; be it between the great powers of ancient times or the superpowers of the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, as the world has moved from bipolarity to uni-polarity and is now transitioning to a multi-polar world, Afghanistan's status and internal dynamics have largely remain unchanged. As Barry Buzan and Ole Waever argue, more than global dynamics, regional dynamics shape the security situation of a region. In Buzan's views, a world can be divided into Regional Security Complexes (RSC) based on intra-regional enmity-amity, interests and polarity. States which lie at the periphery of these RSCs and have a weak interaction with the securitization of their neighboring RSCs are termed 'Insulators'¹. Afghanistan has been understood as an insulator between three regional security complexes (RSCs): South Asia, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

Today, however Afghanistan can no longer be classified as a mere insulator, a zone of weak interaction between the RSCs. With Afghanistan's emergence as a 'global player' in the fields of terrorism and drug trafficking, it has the potential to cause a major disruption in the security equations of any of the three RSCs it is connected to. Using Buzan and Waever's RSC Theory, this chapter aims to analyze how Afghanistan impacts the securitization of the three RSCs mentioned above, giving particular emphasis to the South Asian complex where India as the emerging regional power is looking beyond the region to expand its area of interest.

Regional Security Complex Theory

Barry Buzan laid the foundation for thinking about regional security in the context of a wider security agenda and a securitization approach.² The idea of RSC was originally

¹ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 41.

² Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xvi

Buzan's but has been worked on by Waever and is now a part of the Copenhagen School's collective theoretical approach to security.³ Refining their previous works, Buzan and Waever have formulated a new bottoms-up approach to analyze the interaction between regional and global security situations. Their theory explores the idea that in the post- WW II era of decolonization and Cold War, the regional level of security has become more autonomous and more prominent in international politics than it was perceived to be and the ending of Cold War has only accelerated the process.⁴

Buzan and Waever define RSC as "*a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another*"⁵

The basic assumption of this theory lies in geography. States which share a contiguous border do not have an option to disengage from each other whereas global and distant powers *do* have that option. In the case of Afghanistan, the US, Russia and even China can distance themselves from the war torn nation, but Iran, Pakistan and India cannot. The security situation in Afghanistan has a direct impact on their national security interests, independent of the global structure. As Buzan and Waever argue, this relative autonomy of regional security constitutes a pattern of international security relations radically different from the rigid structure of superpower bipolarity that defined the Cold War.⁶

The central idea in RSCT is that since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters, called security complexes. "Most states historically have been concerned primarily with the capabilities and intentions of their neighbors."⁷ The intimacy between these adjacent states has a greater impact on their security rather than

³ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xvii

⁴ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 3

⁵ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 44

⁶ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 3

⁷ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 4

the prevailing global world order; or for that matter even the adjacent RSC. These security complexes may well be penetrated by the global powers, but their regional dynamics nonetheless have a substantial degree of autonomy from the patterns set by global powers. Iran and Iraq fought with each other not because of their Cold War polarity but because of their inherent ideological conflicts. Similarly, the tensions between India and Pakistan were not rooted in the Cold War but were inherent in the regional security dynamics. Global power dynamics are an overlay and not the foundation of these security problems, hence a comprehensive understanding of these two independent yet connected levels of security is fundamental to developing a true picture of global security.

Another characteristic of regional dynamics is its durability vis-à-vis the world order. To quote from Buzan and Waever,

RSCT uses a blend of materialist and constructivist approaches. On the materialist side it uses ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power that are close to those in neo-realism. Its emphasis on the regional level is compatible with, and we think complementary to, neo-realism's structural scheme, but it contradicts the tendency of most neorealist analysis to concentrate heavily on the global level structure. On the constructivist side, RSCT builds on the securitization theory set out in our previous works (Buzan et al. 1998; Waever 1995c), which focus on the political processes by which security issues get constituted. It thus breaks from neo-realism by treating the distribution of power and the patterns of amity and enmity as essentially independent variables. Polarity may affect, but it does not determine, the character of security relations. The processes of securitization are essentially open, and subject to influence by a host of factors. RSCT offers a conceptual framework that classifies security regions into a set of types, and so provides a basis for comparative studies in regional security. It also offers a theory with some powers of prediction, in the sense of being able to narrow the range of possible outcomes for given types of region.⁸

RSC Theory adapts a mixed approach of Neo-realism and Constructivism wherein it retains the structural theory of interstate relationships to define the hierarchy and polarity within a region but leans on the constructivist approach to define the amity-

⁸ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Pg 4

enmity dynamics which impact the securitization within the RSC. From Buzan's regionalist perspective a key weakness of the neorealist and globalist approaches to security is that they overplay the role of the global level and underestimate the role of the regional level.⁹ The fact that the regionalist approach features a distinct level of analysis located between the global and the local is what gives RSCT its analytical power.¹⁰

Therefore anarchy, geographical diversity and distant effects create a pattern of regionally based clusters, where security interdependence is markedly more intense between the states *inside* the RSC rather than those among the states inside and those outside the RSC.¹¹ To quote Buzan,

In order to qualify as an RSC, a group of states or other entities must possess a degree of security interdependence sufficient both to establish them as a linked set and to differentiate them from surrounding security regions. Regions are not, as some argue, 'necessarily arbitrarily defined' (Khalilzad 1984: preface; B. Hansen 2000: 9). Within the terms of RSCT, RSCs define themselves as substructures of the international system the relative intensity of security interdependence among a group of units, and security indifference between that set and surrounding units.¹²

Hence, another feature of the RSC is that within the structure of anarchy, the essential structure and characteristics are primarily dependent upon the relationship of power (polarity) and amity-enmity (based on religion, history, politics and material considerations). Whether the RSC is based on conflict or cooperation is defined by the hatreds or friendships, threats or fears generated within the RSC. The European Union is perhaps an example of a RSC based on cooperation amongst the post-modern states of Europe whereas South Asia is an RSC defined by conflict revolving around the fear and animosity between the two nuclear powered states of India and Pakistan.

⁹ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Pg 30

¹⁰ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003,, Pg 27

¹¹ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Pg 46

¹² Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Pg 48

These Regions are separated by zones of weak interaction which defines a location occupied by one or more units where large security dynamics stand back to back. Turkey, Burma and Afghanistan fall into this category and are defined as *Insulators* by Buzan.¹³ This is not to be confused with a *buffer* state, which normally lies at the heart of a strong securitization rather than at the fringes of it.

Security Constellation

Another element of RSCT is 'Descriptive RSCT' which provides the most well-established function of RSCT. It provides a framework to study the regional security pattern and how it impacts the domestic, regional, inter-regional and global securitization of a state. The four levels as described by Buzan are:

1. **Domestic Stability** - Domestically in the states of the region, particularly their domestically generated vulnerabilities (is the state strong or weak due to stability of the domestic order and correspondence between state and nation (Buzan 1991b)? The specific vulnerability of a state defines the kind of security fears it has (Waever 1989) sometimes makes another state or group of states a structural threat even if it or they have no hostile intentions).
2. **Intra-Regional** - State-to-state relations (which generate the region as such).
3. **Inter-region** - The region's interaction with neighboring regions (this is supposed to be *relatively* limited given that the complex is defined by interaction internally being more important. But if major changes in the patterns of security interdependence that define complexes are underway, this level can become significant, and in situations of gross asymmetries a complex without global powers that neighbors one with a global power can have strong interregional links in one direction).
4. **Global Connection** - The role of global powers in the region (the interplay between the global and regional security structures).¹⁴

¹³ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003,p. 41

¹⁴ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003,p. 51

Buzan describes these four levels as the *security constellation* (Buzan et.al. 1998:21ff). Applied to any state, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the fears and threats experienced by a state and how that threat translates within the RSC, between the state and adjoining RSCs, and the state and global powers. By laying down the security constellation, RSCT asserts that all the levels are simultaneously active and at times the regional level dynamics assume the prime spot in defining the securitization of the region. Determining the balance between these levels is the key to understanding the causal factors of the security problem and thereby ascertains the point of application of countermeasures.

Afghanistan: The Insulator

While Afghanistan, due to its weak internal securitization, has served as an insulator to its neighboring RSCs for centuries, the manner in which Afghanistan's internal security situation impacts the adjoining RSCs is no longer *weak* but has rather emerged as a zone of intensified contestation for influence. A flourishing drug trade network and deep rooted Islamic fundamentalism in the backdrop of a weak national identity have put Afghanistan on the global map of terror. As a global player in the two lethal fields of drugs and terrorism, Afghanistan can no longer be ignored by its neighbors. The new 'great game' dynamic to shape and control Afghanistan's behavior is on once again. Although the core security concerns of each of these three regions have little to do with Afghanistan, their concerns nonetheless inform their engagement in Afghanistan, which then comes to reflect conflicts and cleavages specific to the region.¹⁵

Kristian Berg Harpviken, in his PRIO research paper "Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization" highlights that in order to understand Afghanistan's security significance, it is imperative to analyze the security dynamics of each of the three surrounding RSCs (Persian Gulf, Central Asian Region and South Asia) from within.¹⁶ Since the scope of this study is limited to the

¹⁵ Harpviken, Kristian, Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010, p. i

¹⁶ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010, p.

South Asian region, the impact of Afghanistan on the Persian Gulf and CAR regions is expressed briefly, with greater focus on South Asia in general and India in particular.

A Persian Gulf Perspective

The security dynamics within the Persian Gulf region have traditionally revolved around Iran, Iraq and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the Shia-Sunni fault line lying at the heart of the region; however, the status quo of this securitization was destabilized in a very fundamental way by the two wars the region has witnessed. The regime change in Iraq followed by a long standing US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan changed the securitization for these regional powers. While in Iraq, Iran pursued a twofold strategy: to establish a Shia government in a Sunni-ruled but Shia majority Iraq and instigate an anti-US strategy using the non-state actors of the region.

Prior to 2001, Iran had largely pursued an anti-Taliban policy to curtail Pakistan's influence in the region. Greater Pakistani influence in Afghanistan signals an enhanced threat from KSA as Pakistan is considered a strong ally of Saudi Arabia. As Harpviken suggests, "Somewhat ironically, the US and Iran have common interests in Afghanistan, and Iran contributed significantly to make the 2001 Bonn peace agreement possible, only to be rewarded by the US declaring Iran to be part of the— "axis of evil" a few weeks later."¹⁷ While Iran is keen to have a stable eastern neighbor who can stem the emerging threats of drug trade and Islamic extremism, its Afghan policy is driven more by its 'far enemy' , the US rather than the 'near enemies', Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

As a result, in Afghanistan, Iran continues to hedge its bets by maintaining relationships to multiple parties. Beyond the region, this has fostered an alliance of three countries – Iran, India and Russia – that over the past few years have seen sufficiently common interests to join hands in supporting the anti-Taliban

¹⁷ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010, p.7

Alliance.¹⁸ Hence from a Persian Gulf perspective, while Afghanistan does not play directly into the securitization of the region, events *within* Afghanistan impact the involvement of the region players from the Persian Gulf.

A Central Asian Perspective

The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 added five new states to the world and created a new security complex in the neighborhood of Afghanistan: the Central Asian Republics region. Emerging from Russia's hegemonic shadow, these states were looking to establish their own independent identity. A blend of Russian and Islamic ideologies gives this region a unique identity. While their Islamic beliefs connect them to the Islamic world to their south, their Soviet influence sways them away from the fundamentalism of Islam. However, three of the five states which border Afghanistan to the south face the perennial threat of drugs and unrest emerging from the Afghan soil.

As Harpviken highlights, "Among the Central Asian republics, there is not a strong sense of common security, and cooperation is mainly coming about through the roles of Russia and China. Uzbekistan aspires to hegemonic status within Central Asia proper, but is challenged by Kazakhstan, which has similar ambitions. Also in the relationship between the five Soviet successor states, there is little that is converted into an engagement in Afghanistan. There are relationships with various Afghan groups, but despite the common ethnic background of populations on both sides of the border, some 70 years of effective separation under Soviet rule has had a deep impact on networks, and it has also fostered rather incompatible political cultures."¹⁹ Therefore, while the security threats emerging from Afghanistan may be lesser in scope and size than they are for the Persian Gulf or South Asian region, they cannot be ignored. Beyond the region at the global level, US presence in Afghanistan and a perceived

¹⁸ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010.

¹⁹ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010.

westernization of Afghan forces is not at all comforting for Russia. Therefore Russia is keeping a close eye on the events unfolding in Afghanistan.²⁰ While the Russians are concerned about the ISAF presence in Afghanistan, they are skeptical about the US withdrawal as well and are not keen on a US pullout without stabilizing Afghanistan.

The core securitization of the Persian Gulf and CAR regions is not impacted by Afghanistan in a big way; however, they still have to monitor Afghanistan's internal dynamics more closely than they needed to in the past. The same cannot be said about the South Asian region. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1989, Afghanistan has come to play a very significant role in the securitization of South Asia. Not only have the internal dynamics been impacted by Afghanistan, the region's global connections too have been transformed over the years. Afghanistan today is no longer the peripheral element but rather is connected to the core of South Asia's securitization. To understand how Afghanistan impacts the securitization of South Asia, its role is analyzed from India's perspective using the *Security constellation* model as described earlier.

The South Asian RSC – The Indian Perspective

“Unity in Diversity” - this eternal mantra has been the force binding the contrasting cultures of India for centuries. India's rich cultural heritage and diverse and beautiful landscape has drawn many people to India. Continued interaction with different civilizations and cultures has progressively transformed India's national fabric and given it its unique and diverse identity. On one hand, this cultural diversity bonds the region into togetherness, while on the other hand it provides the fault lines along which many sectarian and regional conflicts have bloodied the social fabric of India.

What is unique about the South Asian RSC is that at some time in history, all the present nations have been a part of the Indian Empire. This adds to the complicated amity-enmity dynamics of the Subcontinent and has shaped and reshaped the borders between states throughout its history. Perhaps the greatest impact to the securitization of

²⁰ Pattnaik, Smruti, *Afghanistan and Its Neighborhood: In Search for a Stable Future*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2013, Analysis of Russia's role and interests in Afghanistan, p. 33-37

the subcontinent has been the division of India in 1947 and the creation of Pakistan as a consequence. Pakistan, created along religious fault lines, has not only changed the polarity in the Indian Subcontinent but also given a new spin to the inter-regional and global relation of this RSC - be it the Middle East, CAR, China, Afghanistan or USA. The fact that both India and Pakistan possess nuclear strike capability further complicates the securitization of the region. Therefore, the internal dynamics of this RSC have been the real drivers of regional securitization, rather than global dynamics as most realist theories would argue.

As Harpviken argues, “The basic dynamics of the South Asian complex was not altered with the end of the Cold War. Post-2001, however, one may see the seeds of change, as India’s economic success and relative political stability strengthens its position vis-a-vis Pakistan, a trend that has been reinforced by the US tendency to favor India, for example through opening up for collaboration on nuclear energy. Several analysts point to a possible disintegration of the Pakistani state, which is facing multiple internal threats from ethno and religio-political groups, as the factor that is most likely to upset the balance in the region (e.g. Cohen 2004).”²¹

India and Pakistan view Afghanistan through very different lenses and events in Afghanistan play a critical role in the South Asian Security Complex. While Pakistan’s concern in Afghanistan revolves around ‘strategic depth’ against India and the AF-Pak problem of Pashtunistan, India’s is more concerned with curbing and if possible reversal of Islamic fundamentalism, establishing cultural and economic ties with CARs and establish itself as a regional power.²² In that sense, Afghanistan is not merely at the periphery but instead connects to the core of the South Asian RSC.

The Kabul Connection - A Historic past, a Hopeful Future

India’s connection with Afghanistan dates back centuries. Apart from being India’s land connection to the central and west Asian civilizations, Afghanistan has been

²¹ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. *Afghanistan in a Neighborhood perspective: General Overview and Conceptualization*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) paper, 2010, p. 20

²² Mukhopadhyaya, Gautam. “India”. In *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?* Edited by Ashley J. Tellis and Aroop Mukharji, p.28. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010

an integral part of many great Indian Empires.²³ However, since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghanistan has come to define a new chapter in the history of India. Today as India stands at the cusp of launching itself as a regional player, Afghanistan offers a test of steel for India's growing regional ambitions. Using the Buzan model of security constellation, this chapter now aims to analyze how Afghanistan impacts India's securitization at the domestic, regional, inter-regional and global levels.

Domestic Security - India and Islamic Jihad

Since the arrival of the first Muslim invaders to North India in the 7th century AD²⁴, sectarian violence has been a part of the Indian subcontinent. For five hundred years the Muslims from central Asia continued their invasions to loot and slaughter in the Hindu hinterland. Many of the Hindukush Mountains in Afghanistan derive their name from these battles: Hindukush means the land of 'Hindu slaughter'. Even though some Muslims made India their home, atrocities against the Jahilliya²⁵ (non-believers- Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists) continued to cement the sectarian fault lines which led to many a battle between the Muslims and various other communities of India. Fault lines such as these were very cunningly exploited by European Colonists to conquer the Indian subcontinent in the subsequent years.

After independence from British Rule in 1947, India was partitioned to give Muslims their "pious homeland" (*Pak-pious, Stan-Land*); still, a large Muslim population decided to remain a part of their 'motherland' - India. Since then, sectarian violence between Hindus and Muslims has attempted to tear the Indian social fabric on many occasions. This has arguably been a consequence of economic or political divides rather than a purely ideological struggle; an *effect* rather than a *cause* in itself. While Internal sectarian conflicts led to neighbors killing neighbors on many occasions, the Indian

²³ Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the war against the Taliban*. Philadelphia, PA: DA CAPO Press, 2009.

²⁴ Hindupedia, the Hindu Encyclopedia. "Times under Muslim Rule: History of Islamic invasion India." Birodkar, Sudheer. http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Times_under_Muslim_Rule (accessed February 4, 2014)

²⁵ Qutb, Sayeed. *Milestones*. Dar Al-Ilm, Damascus, Syria, 1964. In this book Qutb explains how all non-believers of Islam belong to the *Jahilliya* and must either be converted or eliminated and until they do so they must pay the *Jaziya* tax to follow their own religion.

Muslim remained isolated from the Jihadist elements of the Islamic world. However, when Kashmiris picked up arms for self-determination in 1990, it drew the attention of the Muslim world and connected it to global Islamic extremism.

The 'home grown' militancy by Kashmiri Muslims in the northern Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir(J&K) had the blessings of Pakistan's Intelligence agency, *Inter-Services Intelligence* ISI from the very beginning and was trained and funded from across India's border.²⁶ After the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the militancy in J&K turned a new leaf and became more organized, trained and lethal and the terror camps being run in the Afghan heartland were exporting a much more potent and lethal force into the Kashmir valley than before. Terrorism in Kashmir became an international affair with foreign 'mercenaries' fighting alongside their Kashmiri brothers to 'liberate' Kashmir.

To quote the Chief Minister of J&K, Omar Abdullah from his recent conversation with Stephen Sackur on BBC-Hard Talk, "there is hard evidence to suggest that a systematic infrastructure exists across the Line of Control to infiltrate, support and direct terrorists into Kashmir. As against the initial stages where the militants were largely homegrown, today the militants in Kashmir are primarily foreign mercenaries. Terrorists from 16 nationalities such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Sudan and even US and UK have been caught or executed by security forces in Kashmir."²⁷ This foreign link to Kashmir is provided through the breeding grounds across the imaginary and porous Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

India never accepted the Taliban as a legitimate regime in Afghanistan and supported Ahmad Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance to indirectly curb the Taliban's influence in Kashmir.²⁸ Since the emergence of the Taliban and its connections with Pakistan based Anti-India terror outfits such as Lashkar-e-Tayiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Afghanistan has become an integral part of the domestic security game plan for India. By connecting with Al Qaeda, the global vanguard of Islamic

²⁶ Atran, Scott. *Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood and the (Un) making of Terrorists*. New York: Harper Collins Press, 2010, p. 229

²⁷ Sackur, Stephen, *In Conversation with Omar Abdullah*. BBC Hard Talk, BBC.UK, January 28, 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZdL_1cps-M (accessed on January 10,2014)

²⁸ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. University of Pennsylvania Press,2012, p. 139

fundamentalism, terrorism in Kashmir began to spread beyond the Kashmir valley and into the Indian heartland. The Afghan connection to terrorism in India is highlighted further by presenting some specific examples.

The Hijacking of IC 814- Kathmandu to Kandahar

On Christmas Eve 1999, Indian Airlines Flight IC 814 took off from Kathmandu, Nepal, on its way to New Delhi, India and was hijacked en-route. After some dramatic moments at Lahore, Pakistan and Dubai, UAE where the terrorists released 27 passengers, the plane landed at its final destination of Kandahar with 178 passengers and crew. The terrorists' initial demand of 36 terrorists locked up in Indian jails along with \$200 million was finally negotiated by Indian officials to an exchange of three lethal militants for the remaining hostages."²⁹ While the Indian negotiating team had been accompanied by a crack commando team to storm the plane if possible, any military operation was ruled out due to the Taliban's offensive cordon around the hijacked Indian Airlines Airbus 300.³⁰

"There has been an agreement for the release of all the hostages in exchange of three militants namely Maulana Masood Azhar, Ahmed Omar Sayeed Sheikh, a British national and Mushtaq Zargar," said former national security advisor (NSA) Brajesh Mishra.³¹ Although all but one hostage were recovered safely back home, the price of their return was only to reveal itself two years later. Azhar launched a new terror faction, the JeM, from the safe haven of Pakistan and masterminded the December 13, 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi. Omar Sayeed, who was the key financier for the 9/11 attacks on US, was later caught in Pakistan for the murder of the American journalist Daniel Pearl. The terror emerging from the safe havens of an instable and

²⁹ Sharma, Maya. "The Hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814." *NDTV.com*, August 30, 2009 <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/the-hijacking-of-indian-airlines-flight-ic-814-7755>

³⁰ YouTube. *Air Hijack: IC 814*. National Geographic documentary on hijack of IC 814 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mIUOZsrIUc&list=PLAF6F4F9B75840495>

³¹ Sharma, Maya. "The Hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814." *NDTV.com*, August 30, 2009 <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/the-hijacking-of-indian-airlines-flight-ic-814-7755>

fractured Afghanistan has the potential of shaking the foundations of not only the Indian subcontinent but also the entire world.

Mumbai Attacks- India's 9/11

The brutal terror attack on Mumbai on 26 Nov 2008 has come to be known as India's 9/11. The 60-hour siege of India's financial and entertainment capital and a symbol of modern India left more than 170 people dead. While India, a regular target of terror and "a sponge for the west"³² as some experts call it, has faced bigger attacks in the past, this direct attack on Indian freedom had many unique characteristics. As highlighted in the RAND report on Mumbai attacks, "some aspects of this attack were significant, namely, its audacious and ambitious scope, the complexity of the operation, and the diversity of its targets."³³ While evidence suggests that the Pakistan-based LeT was responsible for the terror attacks, its connection to the "global insurgent archipelago"³⁴ of Islamic extremism was the most disturbing element of the Mumbai crisis. To quote from the RAND report again, "The masterminds of the Mumbai terrorist attack displayed sophisticated strategic thinking in their choice of targets and tactics. The attack appears to have been designed to achieve an array of political objectives. This indicates a level of strategic thought—a strategic culture—that makes this terrorist foe particularly dangerous."³⁵

³² US Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. *Lessons from the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*. January 28, 2009, p. 8. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Full_hearing.pdf

While analyzing the threat from LeT, Tellis highlights how "India has unfortunately become the "sponge" that protects us all. India's very proximity to Pakistan, which has developed into the epicenter of global terrorism during the last thirty years, has resulted in New Delhi absorbing most of the blows unleashed by those terrorist groups that treat it as a common enemy along with Israel, the United States, and the West more generally."

³³ Rabasa, Angel et. al. *Lessons from Mumbai*, RAND Occasional paper, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009, p. 11 <http://www.rand.org> (accessed on 15 January 2014)

³⁴ Mackinlay, John, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, Columbia Press, 2012 - The author highlights how the vanguard party, Al Qaida uses propaganda of the deed (POTD) to incite the Accidental Guerilla (Kilcullen) and recruit aggrieved 'imaginary kin' for Jihad.

³⁵ Rabasa, Angel et. al. *Lessons from Mumbai*, RAND Occasional paper, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009, p. 31 <http://www.rand.org> (accessed on 15 January 2014)

The Jihadist ‘Axis of Evil’ - United States, Israel and India

“Since Israel and India are viewed as part of the detestable “Zionist-Hindu-Crusader” axis that includes the United States, it is not surprising that LeT has long engaged in a variety of subversive activities aimed at attacking American interests.”³⁶

While LeT is primarily linked to the Kashmir Insurgency, the nature of attacks on India’s symbols of pride, such as the Parliament attack in 2001 and Mumbai in 2008, are aimed at furthering the global Jihadist agenda of “freeing the world from Jahilliya”. The South Asia Terrorism Portal (www.satp.org) quotes Lashkar-e-Taiba’s ideology this way:

The LeT’s professed ideology goes beyond merely challenging India's sovereignty over the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Lashkar's ‘agenda’, as outlined in a pamphlet titled *Why are we waging jihad* includes the restoration of Islamic rule over all parts of India. Further, the outfit seeks to bring about a union of all Muslim majority regions in countries that surround Pakistan. Towards that end, it is active in J&K, Chechnya and other parts of Central Asia. Hafiz Saeed, a scholar of Islam, has said that the purpose of Jihad is to carry out a sustained struggle for the dominance of Islam in the entire world and to eliminate the evil forces and the ignorant. He considers India, Israel and US to be his prime enemies and has threatened to launch Fidayeen (suicide squad) attacks on American Interests too. The Lashkar-e-Taiba does not believe in democracy and nationalism. According to its ideology, it is the duty of every 'Momin' to protect and defend the interests of Muslims all over the world where Muslims are under the rule of non-Muslim in the democratic system. It has, thus chosen the path of Jihad as the suited means to achieve its goal. Cadres are drawn from the Wahabi School of Thought. Jihad, Hafiz Saeed said during the All Pakistan Ulema Convention held on July 17, 2003, at Lahore, is the only way Pakistan can move towards dignity and prosperity.³⁷ The LeT has consistently advocated the use of force and vowed that it would plant the 'flag of Islam' in Washington, Tel Aviv and New Delhi.³⁸

³⁶ US Senate, *Lessons from Mumbai: Congressional testimony to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States*. Ashley Tellis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 28, 2009

³⁷ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute of Conflict Management. “Lashkar-e-Toiba : the army of the pure.” South Asia Terrorism Portal. <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist-outfits/lashkar-e-toiba> (accessed on 18 Jan 2014)

³⁸ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute of Conflict Management. “Lashkar-e-Toiba : the army of the pure.” South Asia Terrorism Portal. <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist-outfits/lashkar-e-toiba> (accessed on 18 Jan 2014)

The same assessments resonate in the prepared testimony of Ashley J. Tellis, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate on 28 Jan 2009.³⁹ To quote Tellis from his Congressional Testimony,

Of all the terrorist groups present in South Asia—and there are many—LeT represents a threat to regional and global security second only to al-Qaeda. Although LeT is linked in popular perceptions mainly to the terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, the operations and ideology of this group transcend the violence directed at the Indian state. Being an Ahl-e Hadith adherent of Sunni Wahabism, LeT seeks to establish a universal Islamic Caliphate with a special emphasis on realizing that dream through the gradual recovery of all lands that were once under Muslim rule. The strategic objective of inaugurating a universal Caliphate has made LeT a strong ideological ally of Al-Qaeda, while the emphasis on recovering “lost Muslim lands” in Asia and Europe has taken LeT to diverse places such as Palestine, Spain, Chechnya, Kosovo and Eritrea.⁴⁰

Indian intelligence today estimates that LeT maintains some kind of terrorist presence in twenty-one countries worldwide with the intention of either supporting or participating in what Saeed has called the perpetual “jihad against the infidels.” Viewed in this perspective, LeT’s murder of the six American citizens during the November 2008 attacks in Bombay—a bloodbath that claimed the lives of close to 200 people, including 26 foreigners of 15 nationalities—is actually part of a larger war with the West and with liberal democracies more generally, and only the latest in a long line of hostile activities—most of which have remained *sub rosa*—affecting U.S. citizens, soldiers or interests.⁴¹

Al Qaida Woos Indian Muslims

With Indian Muslims largely eluding the calls of Jihadist groups, the recent Jihadist discourses have renewed their efforts to woo the Indian Muslim into global Jihad. Transnational militant Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates seem to be

³⁹ U.S. Senate. *Lessons from Mumbai: Congressional testimony to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States*. January 28, 2009. Testimony presented by Ashley Tellis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Full_hearing.pdf

⁴⁰ U.S. Senate. *Lessons from Mumbai: Congressional testimony to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States*. January 28, 2009. Testimony presented by Ashley Tellis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Full_hearing.pdf

p. 2

⁴¹ U.S. Senate. *Lessons from Mumbai: Congressional testimony to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States*. January 28, 2009. Testimony presented by Ashley Tellis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Full_hearing.pdf p. 5

desperately attempting to attract India's sizeable Muslim population to global jihad. As Animesh Roul writing for International Relations and Security Network ISN , Zurich analyzes, "In June 2013, Maulana Asim Umar, a senior Al Qaeda ideologue, released "*Why there is no storm in your ocean*", a video that calls on India's Muslims to join the global jihad. Two months later, Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri issued specific guidelines for Jihad and Dawa that endorsed the right of militants to fight Indians in Kashmir. The messages were released against a backdrop of growing Islamist extremism in India spearheaded by the Indian Mujahedeen (IM). Worse still, the captured leader of IM recently revealed to interrogators his organization's plans to join ranks with Al Qaeda for operations inside India."⁴²

If Al Qaida and LeT's ideology is some indicator of how global Jihadists view India, then India needs to be concerned with the spread of Islamic extremism and engage effectively and constructively in all efforts to reverse the trend of this growing monster. While India's large and growing Muslim population of more than 170 million has mostly rejected the calls of Jihadist groups, Islamic extremism poses a huge challenge to India's securitization. Local radicalization is a major goal of the terrorists and will remain a major political and social challenge for India.⁴³

During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, anti-India activists found a congenial breeding ground for sustaining the Kashmir militancy. The Taliban-Al Qaida link internationalized the Kashmir struggle with "imaginary kin", brothers connected through religion rather than blood, from as many as 16 countries including US and UK joining their brothers' fight in Kashmir.⁴⁴ Moreover the continuous attempts by the Islamic extremist organization to tear into the Indian social fabric are a continuous threat to India's securitization. A Mullah Omar-led Taliban government in Afghanistan with a strong leaning towards Islamic extremism only rings danger bells for New Delhi. India is a growing economy with a fast-growing middle class desirous of competing with the best

⁴² Roul, Animesh. "Al Qaeda's Latest Bid to Woo India's Muslims" International Relations and Security Network ISN , Zurich, 17 October 2013 <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=170939>

⁴³ Rabasa, Angel et. al. *Lessons from Mumbai*, RAND Occasional paper, 2009, Pg31 <http://www.rand.org/> (accessed on 15 January 2014)

⁴⁴ Sackur, Stephen, *In Conversation with Omar Abdullah*, BBC Hard Talk, BBC.UK, 28 Jan 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZdL_1cps-M (accessed on January 10, 2014)

on the world stage; any disruptions in its internal security will have a direct impact on not only India's internal harmony but also its national prestige. A degraded security environment would lessen the faith of foreign investors, impact India's economic security and draw India back into the marshlands of mediocrity from which the country is attempting to break away. Therefore, a stable Afghanistan which denounces Islamic extremism and combats the drug trade is critical to India's security and in a broader sense, India's future as a whole.

Intra-Regional Dynamics - India and Its Neighbors via Afghanistan

The South Asian Complex presents a very unique security situation as compared to the rest of the world. In South Asia, India, the largest state in size, population and economy, lies at the center of the complex both literally and figuratively, and is therefore most affected by the securitization dynamics both from within the complex and from outside. As described earlier, all the countries which form a part of this complex have at some point in time been a part of India. Even today all nations of this RSC either share a contiguous border with India or are separated by sea with no landmass between them (Sri Lanka and Maldives). Cultural and historical connections between these states and India fuel the amity-enmity dynamics of the region.

India and Pakistan

“The South Asian RSC, like most other postcolonial security regions, came into being as a conflict formation. India and Pakistan were born fighting each other in 1947 when what had been a societal security problem of religious conflict between the Muslim League and the Congress party was transformed into an interstate, military-political one between Islamic Pakistan and a secular, multicultural, but dominantly Hindu India”.⁴⁵ In recent times, the economic, military and political gap has widened between India and Pakistan with India galloping away in all walks of life; yet, a nuclear Pakistan still holds an important place in the securitization of the RSC. This section aims to analyze the relationship between India and Pakistan with specific focus on Afghanistan. How these

⁴⁵ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 101

two countries pursue their interests in Afghanistan not only impact the future of Afghanistan but will also govern the future of the RSC per se.

Partition of India into an Islamic Pakistan and a secular India was expected to resolve the sectarian issues between the two most dominant religious communities of the Indian subcontinent. However, border disputes, the Kashmir conflict and Islamic extremism have driven the two nations to four wars in less than seven decades of independent existence. Pakistan sees India as an existential threat, even though its internal conflicts and its links with Islamic fundamentalism seem to be driving it into a self-designed abyss. Despite other major threats to its very existence as a nation state, its policies, social, political and economic dynamics seem to revolve around India. To quote General Kayani, from Woodward, "I'll be the first to admit, I'm India-centric,"⁴⁶ "His training, exercises, maps, intelligence focus and the bulk of Pakistani troops were directed toward India. This was part of a Pakistani officer's DNA. It was hard, perhaps impossible, for a Pakistani general to put his binoculars down, turn his head over his shoulder, and look west to Afghanistan."⁴⁷

On the other hand, India sees Pakistan more as an irritant rather than an adversary and is keen to expand beyond South Asia in pursuit of its growing economic and political aspirations. However, constant attacks on Indian soil against its civil population by ISI-backed jihadists have been testing India's patience. After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, India showed great restraint in its response; however, the same may not be possible the next time terror emerges from Pakistan to target Indian citizens. To quote Bruce Riedel, Chairman of Interagency Policy Review: Afghanistan in 2008, "[If] Pakistan attacks India again, either directly or indirectly - Mumbai redux. What are we going to say to the Indians this time? We admire your Gandhi-like self-restraint? I think we've probably reached the threshold in India. The next attack will get a military response. And that means you're talking about the potential for nuclear war."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 366

⁴⁷ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 366

⁴⁸ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster Press, 2010, p. 108. While discussing the Af-Pak strategy with President Obama, Riedel refers to Mumbai attacks and how another attack could instigate a conventional war between two nuclear states.

In Afghanistan, both India and Pakistan are pursuing very disparate agendas to safeguard their own interests. India's interests in Afghanistan go beyond its rivalry with Pakistan and are more focused towards curtailing and if possible reversing the trend of Islamic extremism that emanates from the Pashtun heartland. Moreover, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is critical for India's growing economic and energy needs which can be facilitated by a stable Afghanistan providing safe passage to the CARs' markets and energy flow from the CAR and Middle East region. As a RAND paper highlights, "Although Delhi's goals for Afghanistan certainly involve minimizing Islamabad's influence in the country, Indian policy toward Afghanistan endeavors primarily to advance India's broader domestic and regional interests independently of its rivalry with Pakistan."⁴⁹

On the other hand, Pakistan's strategy and goals in Afghanistan are a result of its complex self-interests, fears and ideological dilemmas. Some experts such as Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh argue that Pakistan's Afghan policy is primarily India-centric. To quote Tadjbakhsh, "In Islamabad's Afghanistan calculus, protecting Pakistan against Indian encroachment takes precedence over pursuing Pakistan's broader geopolitical and economic goals. Part of the reason for this strategic orientation is the preeminent decision making role played by the Pakistani military, which emphasizes security matters over virtually all other elements of foreign policy. So long as India is viewed as an existential threat, and so long as the military plays a central role in setting Pakistani policy, it is unlikely that there will be a fundamental shift in this policy bias."⁵⁰

William Dalrymple quotes General Kayani from one of speeches in 2001: "Strategically, we cannot have an Afghan army on our western border which has an Indian mindset and capabilities to take on Pakistan."⁵¹ However, other experts such as Smruti Pattnaik from the Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi argue that this is not tenable, as it ignores the fact that the two countries have other

⁴⁹ Hanauer, Larry, and Peter Chalk, *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region*, RAND, Occasional Paper, 2012, p. 11 <http://www.rand.org>

⁵⁰ Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou. *South Asia and Afghanistan: the Robust India-Pakistan Rivalry*, (PRIO paper. Oslo, PRIO, 2011, p. 21–22.

⁵¹ Dalrymple, William. "Deadly Triangle: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan". *Brookings Essay*, June 25, 2013 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

concerns and interests beyond the Indo-Pak rivalry and that such analyses fail to take into consideration Pakistan's own concerns regarding the Durand line, the demand for Pashtunistan raised earlier by Afghan rulers, or Afghanistan's desire to open trade routes and emerge as a regional hub.⁵²

Whether primary or secondary, Pakistan's goals in Afghanistan *do* have an anti-India spin to them. Pakistan desires to have an Islamabad-friendly government in Kabul which will provide it the desired 'strategic depth' against an Indian invasion and also provide safe havens for anti-Indian proxies. It also aims to undermine Delhi's influence in Afghanistan, prevent Indian power projection in the broader South/Central Asia region, and obstruct attempts by India, if any, to support separatists in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan.

This conflict of interests and rivalry between the South Asian nuclear powers has provided them a new battle ground. To quote Ahmed Rashid, "Kabul had suddenly become the new Kashmir—the new battleground for the India–Pakistan rivalry"⁵³ and Dalrymple terms it as "the deadly triangle - India, Pakistan and Afghanistan"⁵⁴. The series of bomb attacks on the Indian Embassy and guest houses which killed a few Indian security officials including an Indian Army Brigadier and many innocent Afghan civilians have been attributed to Pakistan's ISI. In the case of the 2009 attack on Indian embassy, American officials went public with details from phone intercepts which they said revealed the involvement of the ISI.⁵⁵ Therefore as India and Pakistan pursue their contrasting goals in Afghanistan, any clash of interests between them in the "new Kashmir" has the potential of initiating a direct conflict between the two nuclear powers

⁵² Pattnaik, Smruti, *Afghanistan and Its Neighborhood*, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Pg 10
Pattnaik is a research fellow at IDSA and specialized on South Asia, see more at
<http://www.idsa.in/profile/sspattanaik>

⁵³ Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos*. New York: Penguin Group, 2008, p. 110.

⁵⁴ Dalrymple, William. "Deadly Triangle: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan". *Brookings Essay*, June 25, 2013 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

⁵⁵ Dalrymple, William. *Deadly Triangle: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan*. Brookings Essay, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, June 25, 2013
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

of the South Asian RSC. Afghanistan is thus no longer an insulator on the periphery of the RSC and is perhaps closer to the core of South Asian Securitization than ever before.

India, Nepal and Bangladesh

India is surrounded by poor, weak and volatile neighbors and often the socio-economic conditions in these countries are exploited by anti-India elements. After the 1999 hijack of Indian Airlines IC 814, India suspended all air operations from Kathmandu. These operations resumed six months later with Indian authorities conducting strict and independent checks for all flights travelling from Nepal to India. India's porous border with Nepal has been an entry route for Islamic extremists and Nepal's inability to check these activities has been an issue of concern. It is not necessarily an intended activity but merely an outcome of Nepal's inability to prevent its soil from being used as a transit base. Citizens from either side travel without a passport and India is a big employment zone for the Nepalese people, Indian Army's Gurkha regiment being one of them. As India walks the tight rope between Indian security and Nepalese sovereignty, there is potential for souring relations between the two neighbors.

Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) was liberated in 1971 with India's intervention. As an Islamic state it has the potential of becoming a satellite base for Anti-India Islamic extremism. In the past Bangladesh has hosted training camps for Anti-India terrorists along the border with India. While these activities have diminished in recent times, Islamic extremist factions such as *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh* (HuJI-B) established in 1992 and led by Shawkat Osman (alias Sheikh Fari) are still active. "HuJI-B aims to establish Islamic *Hukumat* (rule) in Bangladesh by waging war and killing progressive intellectuals. It draws inspiration from Osama Bin Laden and the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan. At one point the groups issued a slogan, *Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan* (We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan). HuJI-B recruits are indoctrinated in the mold of radical Islam."⁵⁶ Through its camps that it maintains in the hills of Chittagong bordering India,

⁵⁶ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute of Conflict Management. "Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B)" South Asia Terrorism Portal <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm>- Objectives and Ideology

“the HuJI-B cadres allegedly also infiltrate frequently into the eastern corridor of India to maintain contacts with terrorist and subversive outfits of the region. HuJI-B has been found to be responsible for a number of terrorist attacks orchestrated in Indian urban centers in recent years.”⁵⁷ Another potential haven for Islamic extremism on its border is the last thing that India wants.

Hence Afghanistan lies at the core of India’s securitization and cannot be ignored as a distant problem. Similarly Pakistan, which has a porous contiguous border with Afghanistan, has major concerns for its internal security connected with events in Afghanistan. However, the fundamental difference between how India and Pakistan are furthering their agendas in Afghanistan lies in their approach. While India’s approach is more constructivist, though not altruistic by any means, Pakistan’s approach is more realist in nature. When viewed from Pakistan’s ‘India-centric’ approach, its strategy in Afghanistan appears rational, however torn between Pakistan’s own self-interests and that of its superpower ally, USA, Pakistan’s approach could be detrimental to its very own existence. The lawlessness in semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) regions is a time bomb which could explode in Pakistan’s face and India, the ‘sponge’ lying on Pakistan’s eastern border, will perhaps have to absorb the biggest shock.

India and the Neighboring RSCs

As a growing regional power with a growing economy and a faster-growing need for energy, India’s interests have grown beyond the region. Relationships with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and the Middle East, which were defined more by the cultural and historical ties of the past, now have a more materialistic overlay on them. Afghanistan, which provides the only land route for India to connect with these two regions, is hence a critical link in India’s economic and security chain.

⁵⁷ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute of Conflict Management. “Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B)” South Asia Terrorism Portal <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm>- Objectives and Ideology

India and the Middle East

The Middle East region impacts India's securitization in more ways than one; it not only is the largest supplier of energy to India but is also a big source of employment for the Indian population. Further as the nucleus of the Islamic world, it connects directly with the large Indian Muslim population. India had been long accused, although incorrectly, of subjecting its large Muslim population to atrocities and India's relationship with the Islamic world had largely revolved around this general assessment; however in recent times India's relationship with the Middle East region has shown a positive trend. India's constructive involvement in Afghanistan using its 'soft power' has only added to India's prestige in the region as a Muslim friend and a victim of terrorism. In that regard, how India engages in Afghanistan is viewed very closely by the Islamic World and impacts India's status as a friend or a foe.

In recent times, India's relations with the Middle and West Asian Islamic countries have been remained a source of challenge for the Indian policymakers. India's hostile relationship with Pakistan, India's friendly ties Israel - a country whose arms export to India is second only to Russia, domestic compulsions and even the global power dynamics have added to the complexities of India's ties with the region. As a result, since its independence, India has attempted to follow a policy of "equidistance" with various states in the region and the focus has been on building bilateral relationships.⁵⁸

While India has craftily engaged bilaterally with the states in the region to further its interests; for reasons stated earlier, India cannot afford to displease the Muslim population in the Middle East. Therefore, in Afghanistan, as India cautiously treads a thin line between intervention and assistance, India's involvement could have a strong impact on its image in the Muslim world, as an infidel linked to USA and Israel, as Al Qaida and Lashkar-e-Taiba define India; *or* as a Muslim friend which is engaged in reconstruction of a brother Muslim state, Afghanistan.

⁵⁸ Dahiya, Rumel. *Developments in the Gulf region: Prospects and challenges for India*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press in association with IDSA, 2014, p. xxv

India, Gulf Cooperation Council and Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has become a major trade partner for India and bilateral trade has increased from approximately US\$ 5.55 billion in 2000–01 to US\$ 158.41 billion in 2012–13.⁵⁹ Even after taking into account the inflation index, this still indicates a surge in bilateral ties between India and the Middle East region. Today, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia are among the top five trading partners of India.⁶⁰

India has a large Muslim population in the world⁶¹, second only to Indonesia; however, India does not feature as a member state in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Although many member states including Saudi Arabia have no objection to accommodating India as an observer in the 57 member strong organization⁶²; India's attempts to join the OIC have been blocked by Pakistan on the pretext that the governing rules of the organization do not allow warring states to be a part of the organization.⁶³ Nevertheless, India's ties with the region have seen a remarkable improvement in the last decade or so. Hence while trade has seen an upward trend, the relations on the ideological front have a long march forward.

Although India's connections to the Middle East are defined more by its socio-economic dependence on the region as a source of energy, employment and ideology, the major theme that connects India to the Middle East is its securitization against Islamic terrorism. While terror outfits enjoy huge backing in terms of finances, manpower and popular support in the Arab world; at the grass root level, the Middle East region is as much a victim of terrorism as is India. Although the breeding grounds of Islamic extremism may lie in the AF-Pak region, the core of the problem lies in the Middle East.

⁵⁹ Export–Import Data Bank. Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. In Dahiya, Rumel. *Developments in the Gulf region: Prospects and challenges for India*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press in association with IDSA, 2014

⁶⁰ Dahiya, Rumel. *Developments in the Gulf region: Prospects and challenges for India*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press in association with IDSA, 2014, p. 3

⁶¹ The Pew Forum. “Pew Research Religion and Public life project: The Global Religious Landscape.” December 18, 2012 <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-muslim/> (accessed Feb 2014)

⁶² Organization of Islamic Cooperation. “About OIC.” [http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/about OIC](http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/about%20OIC)

⁶³ Organization of Islamic Cooperation. “Principles for member states under the OIC charter” [http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/about OIC/ principles for member states under the OIC charter](http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/about%20OIC/principles%20for%20member%20states%20under%20the%20OIC%20charter)

The Arab World has been a major source of both material and human resource for organizations like Al Qaida and LeT and it would be in order to suggest that via AF-Pak region, some of it reaches the Indian soil as a finished product of Islamic extremism. Therefore, as a prime target of Islamic extremism, India needs to engage positively with the Middle East to curb this growing menace.

India and Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, which supplies a quarter of India's crude oil demand, is home to the largest Indian expatriate population in the region and the pious cities of Mecca and Medina are critical players for India. In recent times the relations between the two nations have seen an upward trend. The historic visit of King Abdullah to India in 2006 resulted in the signing of the 'Delhi Declaration', imparting a fresh momentum to the bilateral relationship. The visit provided the framework for cooperation in all fields of mutual interest. The reciprocal visit by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Saudi Arabia in 2010 raised the level of bilateral engagement to 'Strategic Partnership' and the 'Riyadh Declaration' signed during the visit captured the spirit of enhanced cooperation in political, economic, security and defense realms.⁶⁴

The Riyadh declaration signed between India and Saudi Arabia during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Riyadh in 2010 has signaled a long strategic partnership in India's relation with the Gulf region. The Riyadh Declaration has been termed as "a new era of strategic partnership", identifying areas of mutual concern which need to be addressed.⁶⁵ As Prasanta Kumar Pradhan indicates, "Riyadh Declaration condemned terrorism and extremism, agreed to enhance cooperation in the exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, money laundering, narcotics, arms and human trafficking, and to develop joint strategies in combating these threats, further strengthen defense cooperation and to develop a broad-based economic partnership, including energy, and

⁶⁴ Embassy of India, Saudi Arabia. "Riyadh Declaration: A New Era of Strategic Partnership" <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=849>, Embassy of India in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, last updated on January 21, 2014

⁶⁵ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Riyadh Declaration: A New Era of Strategic Partnership", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, March 1, 2010 <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=58617> (accessed March 12, 2014).

enhancing bilateral trade.⁶⁶ Thus, India has made its intent clear that it is going for a long-term engagement with the kingdom.”⁶⁷

To quote from the Riyadh Declaration,

The two leaders renewed condemnation of the phenomena of terrorism, extremism and violence affirming that it is global and threatens all societies and is not linked to any race, color or belief. The international community must, therefore, resolutely combat terrorism. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, money laundering, narcotics, arms and human trafficking, and develop joint strategies to combat these threats. They welcomed the signing of the Extradition Treaty and the Agreement for Transfer of Sentenced Persons. And,

The two leaders discussed the situation in Afghanistan and called for the preservation of Afghanistan’s sovereignty and independence. They expressed their full support for the efforts aimed at helping Afghanistan to develop its infrastructure and achieve social and economic development. They supported the efforts of the people of Afghanistan to achieve stability and security, protected from exploitation by the terrorist organizations, while upholding the values and principles of the Constitution of Afghanistan.⁶⁸

Although it is evident from the Riyadh declaration that the two countries have listed terrorism and reconstruction of Afghanistan as challenges and vowed to work together towards fighting terrorism and enhancing peace and stability in Afghanistan, India needs to continuously engage with Saudi Arabia to address its concerns regarding Islamic extremism. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have close ties, and Riyadh’s interests in Afghanistan seem to be similar to Islamabad’s although the similarities appear to stem less from strategic coordination than de facto common interests such as the advancement

⁶⁶ Embassy of India, Saudi Arabia. “Riyadh Declaration”

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Riyadh%20Declaration.pdf>

⁶⁷ Pradhan, Prasanta Kumar. *India and the Gulf: Strengthening Political and Strategic Ties*. Developments in the Gulf region edited by Romel Dahiya, 2014, p. 14

⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia. “Riyadh Declaration” , The Riyadh Declaration issued jointly by the Prime Minister of India and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud during the Indian PM visit to Riyadh in Feb-Mar 2010.

<http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/india/EN/AboutHostingCountry/SaudiRelations/Pages/Riyadh-Declaration.aspx>

of basic national interests and Sunni Muslim foreign policies.⁶⁹ Hence India's engagement in Afghanistan, especially when viewed against the backdrop of Pakistan, can impact not only India's relationship with Saudi Arabia but also impact India's securitization through Afghanistan.

India and Iran

India's relations with Iran, which span centuries, have been marked by meaningful interactions. The two countries shared a border until 1947 and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions. In recent times, relations have taken a setback with India voting against Iran at the IAEA under US pressure. However, India's relations with Iran are critical to India's securitization as much as it is to India's growing energy needs. To quote from the ministry of External Affairs, India's official foreign relations portal,

The two countries have in place several bilateral consultative mechanisms at various levels which meet regularly. Foreign Offices of both countries also hold regular consultations on bilateral and regional issues. Foreign Secretary of India Smt. Nirupama Rao visited Tehran in July 2011 for the 9th round of Foreign Office Consultations at the invitation of her counterpart, Dr. Mohammad Ali Fathollahi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia & Oceania Affairs. Besides holding the Foreign Office Consultations, she called on Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Saeed Jalili. During the meetings views were exchanged on combating global terrorism, energy security, North South Transport Corridor, developments in Afghanistan and regional security.⁷⁰

In the context of Afghanistan, there are incontrovertible reasons for India to work together with Iran. Both India and Iran do not subscribe to a Taliban-led government which would not only be close to Pakistan but also foster Islamic extremism. In the early 1990s, the two countries, along with Russia and Tajikistan, had supported Ahmad Shah

⁶⁹ Boucek, Christopher. *Saudi Arabia*. In *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan*. Edited by Ashley J. Tellis and Aroop Mukharji, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; 2010
<http://www.CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs>.

⁷⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. "Iran Bilateral Brief" MEA, Government of India
http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_Iran_Bilateral_brief (accessed January 2014)

Massoud's Northern Alliance in their struggle against Taliban and did not recognize the Taliban regime even after Taliban routed Massoud's forces to the northern mountains of Panjsher valley.⁷¹ Moreover, Iran's growing drug addiction, perhaps the largest in the world⁷² and its 2 million Afghan refugees are a huge burden on a strained economy. Iran is keen and perhaps desperate to have a stable neighbor on its eastern border which can curb these societal ills of drugs and terror and become strong enough to reduce its refugee burden. Hence both countries share a convergence of interests in Afghanistan; for India, Iran provides a critical land route into Afghanistan through the port of Chabahar which India has been developing to facilitate its connectivity with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is permitted to import wheat from India through the Karachi post; however, Pakistan's continued reluctance to permit this has forced India to use the costlier Iran route. As Pattnaik points out, "Keeping in mind the distance and time factor to send goods to Afghanistan through Iran, India had to convert wheat into fortified biscuits to prevent it from rotting during transportation. Moreover, India had to move five mega transformers for Salma Dam project by air."⁷³ Thus, Afghanistan is a critical link in furthering the India-Iran relationship, which as per some experts in the west is yet to blossom fully; and for India's endeavors in Afghanistan, Iran remains a crucial link especially with Pakistan's hostile stance against India's involvement in its backyard.

Similar views resonate from within Iran as an article in Tehran Times suggests, "Strategically, it is important for India to maintain a close relationship with Teheran. India and Iran oppose a Taliban government in Kabul and could coordinate their political positions to prevent it. Iran is India's only corridor for land access to Afghanistan through which most of Indian assistance to Afghanistan could be transported".⁷⁴

Therefore, in sum, the Middle East region holds an important key to India's

⁷¹ Williams, Bryn Glyn. *Afghanistan Declassified*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania press, 2012, p. 139

⁷² *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.. Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2010
<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2010/index.htm>.

⁷³ Pattnaik, Smruti. "Iran factor in India's Afghan Policy." *IDSA*, August 24, 2012
http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IranfactorinIndiasAfghanPolicy_sspattanaik_240812

⁷⁴ Editorial. "India overtaking Pakistan in Iran Ties." *Tehran Times*, December 25, 2013
<http://tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/113050-india-overtaking-pakistan-in-iran-ties-journalist>

securitization and its battle against Islamic extremism. Afghanistan, the Insulator, now holds a key position in India's relations with the Middle East region. How the Islamic world views India can be shaped by India's constructive engagement in Afghanistan and that in turn will govern their support for India in its fight against terrorism. Therefore Afghanistan no longer loosely connects India to the Middle East; rather it is an important arena for India's growth, prosperity and security.

India and the Central Asian Republics (CARs)

The six republics of Central Asia (or CARs) have become a region of international interest in recent decades. For India, the region has long standing historical, economic and cultural ties dating back to the times when the Silk Route connected the distant civilizations and aided the translation of Buddhism to Central Asia. Today the CAR region is seen by India as a potential region to explore its wider energy options in the form of hydrocarbons, hydro-electric power and uranium reserves. While the region connects deeply with India's growing economic interests, it has been vital to India's securitization especially with respect to the threat emerging out of Afghanistan.

In order to reduce the influence of the Taliban in instigating the spread of Islamic extremism, India joined hands with Iran, Russia and Tajikistan to covertly support the Ahmad Shah Massoud-led Northern Alliance in its struggle against the Taliban. Although it is an open secret that India supported the Northern Alliance militarily, there is considerable opacity surrounding the extent of India's support. If journalistic reports are to be believed, India's support ranged from supplying high-altitude equipment worth \$8 Billion to training and advising Massoud's army and even supporting its struggle with medical assistance. To quote from an article by Rahul Bedi in *Frontline*, one of India's major news magazines, "India established and manned a 25-bed hospital at Farkhor (Ayni), Tajikistan for more than a year that aided the Alliance. In fact, when Massoud was attacked by al Qaeda suicide bombers on September 10, 2001, he was rushed to this hospital by helicopter where he succumbed to his massive injuries."⁷⁵ Similar claims

⁷⁵ Bedi, Rahul, "India and Central Asia," *Frontline* 19, no. 19 September 14-27, 2002, <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1919/19190600.htm>.

resonate in some other reports; Christine Fair, an assistant professor at Georgetown University, wrote in the Washington quarterly, “The US is working with India, Iran, and Russia ‘in a concerted front against Afghanistan’s Taliban regime.’ India is supplying the Northern Alliance with military equipment, advisers, and helicopter technicians and both India and Russia are using bases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for their operation” (Jane's Intelligence Review, 3/15/2001).⁷⁶

Whatever the extent of India’s support to the Northern Alliance during the Afghan Civil war in the 1990s, what cannot be denied is that India *did* extend military support to Massoud’s army through Tajikistan. CAR region is critical to any *proxy war* that India might have to fight in the future against a Taliban regime which targets India’s assets whether at home or abroad. In terms of securitization, India and CARs do find common ground and have face similar problems emerging from Afghanistan: drugs and Islamic extremism.

India and China: Part of the Regional Security ‘Super-complex’

Returning to Buzan’s RSC Theory, China as the great power in Asia has the power to influence the securitization of its adjacent RSCs. When securitization of adjoining regions get connected due to the presence of a great power or a super power in the neighborhood it expands the security complex into what Buzan terms as a “Super-complex”. To quote from Buzan,

Having great powers scattered through the international system creates two possibilities other than centered complexes: great power regional security complexes, and *super-complexes*. Both possibilities are most clearly visible in Asia. Great power RSCs have to be treated differently from ordinary RSCs for two reasons. First, their dynamics directly affect balancing calculations at the global level in ways that one would not expect from a standard RSC. Second, because great powers are involved, one would expect wider spillover into adjacent regions, in other words, a higher intensity of interregional inter-action than would normally be the case. Great power RSCs are hybrids of the global and regional level. The

⁷⁶ Fair, C. Christine. “Under the Shrinking U.S. Security Umbrella: India’s End Game in Afghanistan.” *Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2011) The essay has been derived from a report the author drafted for the Century Foundation. <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq11springfair.pdf>

clearest example here is China, which during the Cold War played not only into the great power RSC in Northeast Asia, but also into the standard RSCs in Southeast Asia and South Asia. China plays into South Asia as an ally of Pakistan and an opponent of India, meaning that India has to divert substantial energies to balancing China.⁷⁷

As a rapidly growing great power, China is not affected by the securitization of the South Asian complex; however, the South Asian securitization can deeply be influenced by China. China's thoroughly realist strategy in South Asia revolves around keeping India from shifting the bi-polar dynamics to a uni-polar dynamics and thereby preventing India from expanding its influence in regions beyond South Asia. China supports Pakistan to keep India engaged within the internal dynamics of South Asia and thus prevent trouble for China. While relations between India and China have remained 'correct and cool'⁷⁸, as Buzan terms them; India and China do have long standing border issues which are a source of continued tensions between the two growing regional powers. Moreover, China's growing influence in Pakistan, which could see further growth in the aftermath of US withdrawal from Afghanistan, is also a security concern for India. China's recent acquisition of Gwadar port, west of Karachi in Pakistan, signals alarm bells for India.

While China aims to encircle and isolate India, it simultaneously aims to cut off India's economic interests in the other neighboring regions. India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy' which was supposed to bolster New Delhi's economic and security concerns in the CARs has seen some major setbacks in the recent times as India has been sidelined in four of the five Central Asian Republics. India's revamped Central Asian initiative which was partly directed at balancing China's influence in the region does not seem to be bearing the desired fruits. Russia has been outmaneuvering India's military influence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and China has moved ahead to grab the energy deals in

⁷⁷ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 60.

⁷⁸ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 110

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.⁷⁹ If India is desirous of expanding its economic influence in the CARs then Afghanistan is a very important link in the chain.

Even though China and India seem to compete for economic and political goals in Afghanistan, they have converging security interests in Afghanistan. China's Xingjian Autonomous Region has a large Muslim population which is engaged in its own struggle for independence from *Imperial* China as some Uyghur would advocate. Xinjiang shares borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), some of which have minority communities of Uyghur. Because of the Uyghur's' cultural ties to its neighbors, China has been concerned that Central Asian states might back a separatist movement in Xinjiang.

To keep Central Asian states from fomenting trouble in Xinjiang, China has cultivated close diplomatic ties with its neighbors, most notably through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, SCO. The SCO was created "to ensure the support of Central Asian states" and to "prevent any emergence of linkages between Uighur communities in these countries and Xinjiang."⁸⁰ While China seeks to strengthen Pakistan against India, it is also deeply concerned with the increased instability in the AF-Pak region; a lethal source of Islamic fundamentalism which can fuel the violent separatist movements in China's Xinjiang province. Thus, in terrorism emanating out of Afghanistan, China and India could find convergence of interests rather than a conflict of interests. Even as China expands its military presence and influence in Pakistan, it envisions a stable Pakistan which is not engulfed by Islamic fundamentalism.

SCO and Afghanistan

At the SCO, China reigns supreme. While the primary aim of the SCO was related to terrorism, separatism and extremism targeted against China, the scope and design of the organization has broadened to impact not only the regional but inter-regional and

⁷⁹ Michael Tanchum. *India's Central Asia ambitions outfoxed by China and Russia*, East Asia Forum, October 12, 2013

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/10/12/indias-central-asia-ambitions-outfoxed-by-china-and-russia/>

⁸⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. "Backgrounder: Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region." CFR .

<http://www.cfr.org/china/uighurs-chinas-xinjiang-region/p16870> (Accessed Jan, 2014)

global economic and political power plays. The SCO has emerged as a mechanism for China to flaunt its regional supremacy by which it can pressurize various governments to restrict the separatist activities of Uighurs and Tibetans as well as other anti-Chinese activities. In return for their support on key policy issues, China provides SCO members with lucrative investment deals, particularly in the burgeoning Central Asian energy sector.⁸¹ The instability in Afghanistan has a direct relation to the core issues of SCO- terrorism, separatism and extremism and this led to the SCO including Afghanistan in its sphere of influence.

In 2005, the SCO signed a protocol with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with an aim to stabilize and assist Afghanistan in curbing the menace of terrorism and drug trade which impact the SCO members. To quote from the Afghanistan protocol, “Cooperation with Afghanistan is conducted on the basis of the joint Protocol between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the creation of SCO – Afghanistan Contact Group signed in 2005 in Beijing.”⁸² In the special conference on Afghanistan, Secretary-General of the SCO, Bolat Nurgaliev highlighted the importance of a stable Afghanistan and its relation to the SCO member states. To quote from his speech at the conference,

Dear participants of the Conference,

The SCO is working to produce a common systemic approach to countering the threats caused by instability in Afghanistan. Cooperation with Afghanistan is conducted on the basis of the joint Protocol between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the creation of SCO – Afghanistan Contact Group signed in 2005 in Beijing. The Contact Group debates issues of assisting the protection of stability on the territory of Afghanistan, the measures on socio-economic rehabilitation, as well as joint response to terrorist and narcotic threats, which pose a serious danger to Afghanistan and all other states of the region alike.

⁸¹ Editorial. “China in Central Asia: Rising China, sinking Russia” *The Economist*; September 14, 2013 <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21586304>

⁸² The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. “Protocol of the Establishment of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group.” SCO <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN123/> (accessed on Mar 31, 2014)

The SCO member states are the immediate neighbors of Afghanistan. Historical, cultural, economic and political links between our countries and peoples are closely intertwined. The staging in Moscow of the Special Conference reaffirms the unconditional solidarity of the SCO states with the efforts of the international community to restore law and order in every part of Afghanistan, put this long-suffering country on the road to steady progress, ensure due regard for the state sovereignty of the IRA and the right of the Afghan people to choose their own way of development.⁸³

Whatever the overlaid economic and political interests that China and Russia may have in Afghanistan, SCO is concerned about Islamic extremism and drug trade emerging from an instable Afghanistan. India faces the same challenges in Afghanistan and SCO provides a platform for cooperation in achieving the goals of securitization in the region. India joined the SCO in 2005 as an observer state. Apart from addressing the critical issue of securitization, India's economic and political interests are also boosted by engaging the SCO and India is keen to play a greater role in the SCO as a member state rather than an observer state. India's outlook towards SCO was clearly highlighted by India's then External Affairs minister, SM Krishna in his address to the 12th SCO summit. Excerpts from his speech are given below,

India 'admired' the grouping which comprised China, Russia and Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. India, on its part, has been participating constructively in all SCO meetings open to the Observers. By doing so, we have shown our strong willingness to be meaningfully associated with this grouping." He further highlighted India's stance and stated, "We believe the SCO can potentially play a much larger role in the future both for the security and prosperity of our region. "The most important security challenge we face today relates to Afghanistan, which lies in the heart of Asia and is a bridge, connecting not just Central and South Asia but also Eurasia and the Middle East. The SCO provides a promising alternative regional platform to discuss the rapidly changing Afghan situation," he said. On the anti-terrorism front, Krishna spoke about the need for greater cooperation between India and the Regional Anti Terrorist Structure which is currently confined to members of SCO.⁸⁴

⁸³ Nurgaliev, Bolat, Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Address. Special Conference on Afghanistan on 27 March 2009. full text at <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN123/>

⁸⁴ Krishna, S.M., External Affairs Minister, Government of India. Address. The SCO Summit, June 12, 2012. <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/read-sm-krishna-s-speech-at-the-sco-summit/20120613.htm>

India's bid to become a member state of SCO has been supported by Russia but has apparently been stalled by China. Most regional experts support India's initiative to join SCO as it provides a platform for India to further its goals in the CAR and get greater opportunity in the Eurasian region. SCO also provides a platform for India to engage China and Pakistan more constructively to strengthen its securitization in the region; however, some experts such as Mena Singh Roy are skeptical of China's endgame in allowing India a membership to SCO. Roy states, "Given China's domination of the SCO, India's ability to assert itself will be minimal. India will also have to contend with China's use of the SCO for enhancing its own role not only in the Eurasian region but also in Southern Asia. In return for granting India full membership in the SCO, China may seek full membership in SAARC. What are the implications of China's entry into SAARC? Moreover, India will have to deal with the China-Pakistan nexus in the SCO, especially given the complementarities in Chinese and Pakistani interests in the Central Asian Republics."⁸⁵

Whatever the challenges, India must engage with the SCO member states and continue its efforts to gain full membership as an opportunity to engage more constructively with regional states that pose a threat to India - China and Pakistan. Apart from addressing the securitization issue, SCO allows India to further its economic, political and social ties with Afghanistan and beyond - India's long term strategic interests. Hence even at the super-complex level, Afghanistan impacts India's securitization and provides it an opportunity to engage with its hostile neighbors in a constructive manner.

Global - India and the United States

Since India's independence, the relationship between India and the United States has been more cold than hot and it is only in the last decade or so, especially post 9/11, that India's relations with United States have moved in the right direction. Whether

⁸⁵ Roy, Mena Singh. "Dynamics of expanding the SCO," *IDS*, 04 April 2011
http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/DynamicsofExpandingtheSCO_msroy_040411

viewed from a realist's lens or from a constructivist's perspective, the US, the oldest democracy and India, the largest democracy in the world, have so much convergence in thoughts and goals that there is more to gain from friendship than the cold and dry relations which had dominated a large part of 20th century.

India's non-aligned stance, its Soviet friendship and the US desire to have a strong foothold in South Asia to counter communism led the US to befriend India's arch rival in the subcontinent, Pakistan; a country which thrives on anti-Indian sentiments. However, the end of the Cold War, India's economic and political progress, Pakistan's double game in furthering Islamic extremism while supporting the global war on terrorism have provided India with another opportunity to connect with the United States in a very constructive manner. Today as the geopolitical scenario changes with China rising as a great power, Russia flexing its muscles to regain its place on the global stage and Afghanistan and Iraq limping back to a semblance of a state, India stands at the cross roads of history. Its policies and engagements with the great powers of the world will govern India's further progress and prestige at the world stage.

To understand how Afghanistan impacts India's securitization at the global level, it is prudent to understand how the US intervention and presence in Afghanistan has impacted India's securitization at the domestic and regional levels. The US war on Islamic extremism in Afghanistan has not only globalized India's fight against terrorism but also highlighted the role of Pakistan in nurturing jihadists and allowing their country to be used as a safe haven. While India has continued to face the brunt of Islamic extremism, the US presence in Afghanistan has provided an umbrella for India to not only further its economic and political goals to regions beyond Afghanistan-CARs and Iran but also allowed India to strengthen its political and cultural base in Afghanistan. It has also provided India with an opportunity to not only curb and reduce the expansion of Islamic extremism emerging from Afghanistan but also to disconnect the India's internal sectarian issues from the global archipelago of Al Qaida.

India's Domestic Security

In the mid-1990s, terrorism in Kashmir was not only beginning to strengthen its roots in the Kashmir valley but also spreading its fangs deeper into the Indian heartland. The foreign connections of the terror factions were making them more lethal with each passing day. In an attempt to disconnect the umbilical cord between the Kashmiri terrorists and their vanguard, Al Qaida in Afghanistan, India joined Iran and Russia to engage in a proxy-war against the Taliban. Fearing a surge in jihadist activities on Indian soil, India fought a losing battle supporting Massoud's Northern Alliance. India's fears of Taliban's extremism were realized in its true horror when IC 814 was hijacked to Kandahar by Kashmiri militants.

9/11 changed that world view and the US invasion of Afghanistan, that followed was a boost to India's war on terror. As a sideshow to the war against terror, especially in the FATA regions of Pakistan, groups targeting India were also facing the brunt of the American war. Apart from impacting the foreign element in the Kashmir valley, the war also brought to light the role of Pakistan in harboring and training terror outfits. After nearly two decades of fighting in Kashmir, the terrorist activities have shown a decline and the situation is showing signs of progress. While this has largely been due to the internal efforts of the Indian administration and armed forces, the role of US forces is not only eliminating terrorists being trained for India in the AF-Pak region but also working with Pakistan to curb these activities. Post withdrawal of US led forces from Afghanistan; some think tanks in India expect a surge in the terrorist activities in India and particularly in Kashmir.⁸⁶

Regional Security – India and Pakistan

The biggest threat to India's securitization in the region has remained from Pakistan, a country of the same stock of people as India but thriving on anti-Indian sentiments largely due to its military dominant political society. While India chose a path

⁸⁶ Tactical Knowledge for Strategic Development. "US withdrawal from Afghanistan will impact situation in Indian Kashmir." TACSTRAT. September 30, 2013
<http://tacstrat.com/content/index.php/2013/09/30/us-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-will-impact-situation-in-indian-kashmir/>

of non-alignment and self-reliance, Pakistan was quick to attach itself with the regional and global powers of China and United States. It is the United States' continued economic, political and most crucially, military aid to Pakistan that was really a thorn in Indo-US relations. As the US's closest ally outside NATO, Pakistan, a member of CENTO, used US aid very effectively to further its strategic ties with China, its national interests in Afghanistan, and against India. Pakistan's nuclear program, which was heavily dependent on Chinese assistance, was clandestinely funded by aid received from the US. As Harsh Pant highlights in his essay *The Pakistan Thorn in China—India—U.S. Relations*, 'the Pakistani nuclear weapons program is essentially an extension of the Chinese one'⁸⁷ and he quotes arms-control advocate Gary Milhollin who aptly noted that, "If you subtract China's help from Pakistan's nuclear program, there is no nuclear program."⁸⁸ To quote Pant again, "Although China has long denied helping any nation attain a nuclear capability, the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, acknowledged the crucial role China played in his nation's nuclear program when China gave 50 kilograms of weapon grade enriched uranium, drawings of nuclear weapons, and tons of uranium hexafluoride for Pakistan's centrifuges."⁸⁹

9/11 and the war on terror in Afghanistan allowed the US to tread deeper into the structural dynamics of the terror network that ISI had been nurturing for the past two decades, ironically with the blessings of the CIA. ISI's continued support for Taliban factions which target US forces in Afghanistan not only strained US-Pakistan ties but also brought about a change in the US strategy in tackling terror emerging from the AF-Pak region. When President Obama transformed his Afghan strategy into an AF-Pak strategy, it put Pakistan on the global map of terror and forced it to take a stance against the Taliban; much to the dislike of the Pakistani military, especially ISI. The situation forced the Pakistani Army to target the very people it had been nurturing and when the Pakistan Army entered the FATA regions the blowback was devastating. While the shift

⁸⁷ Pant, Harsh V., "The Pakistan Thorn in China—India—U.S. Relations", *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2012) p. 83-95, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2012.642294>

⁸⁸ Pant, Harsh V., "The Pakistan Thorn in China—India—U.S. Relations", *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2012) p. 83-95, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2012.642294>

⁸⁹ Smith, R. Jeffrey, and Joby Warrick. "Pakistani Nuclear Scientist's Accounts tell of Chinese Proliferation." *Washington Post*, November 13, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/12/AR2009111211060.html>.

in strategy turned Pakistan upside down and brought it to the brink of collapse, it had a strong message embedded in it for the people of Pakistan, 'you play with fire, and you are bound to get burnt'. The Pakistani government's *inability* to safeguard the population mobilized the people against the military dictatorship of Musharraf.

To quote Brian Williams, "As the Pakistanis pointed out the irony of US efforts to build democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq while supporting a military dictator in their own country, many started to criticize the Americans for putting all their eggs in one basket. Why not allow Bhutto and Sharif to return to Pakistan and contest Gen Musharraf's rule in an election they asked."⁹⁰ Tied by their ideological principles and in an effort to bolster their ally's democratic credentials, the US finally encouraged Musharraf to let Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif return to Pakistan in the fall of 2007.⁹¹ Even though the transformation to a democratically elected government may have come about as a side effect of the war in Afghanistan and played little role in a country which is run by the military-industrial complex irrespective of the ruling authority⁹², it has important implications for regional stability.

While the realists in India may draw strength from Pakistan's internal disharmony, a failed state on India's border is not a desirable situation. A stable government in Pakistan which can manage its internal affairs, look beyond an India centric foreign policy and forge policies to grow together rather than burn together is what India desires. From a strategic point of view, the democratic transition in Pakistan in 2008, and the completion of a full term by a people's elected government for the first time since Pakistan's creation are healthy signs for India; a move in the right direction for establishing regional peace and prosperity.

Therefore, the US engagement in AF-Pak region has had a positive impact on India's regional securitization when viewed from a long term strategic perspective.

⁹⁰ Williams, Bryn Glyn, *Afghanistan Declassified*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 214

⁹¹ Williams, Bryn Glyn, *Afghanistan Declassified*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 214

⁹² Siddiqa, Ayesha. *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. University of Michigan: Pluto press, 2007. This book explains why it will be so difficult to persuade the Pakistani military to renounce political power and return to the barracks.

Hillary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, assured Indian officials during her visit to India on July 19, 2011 that the Obama administration won't ease pressure on Pakistan to combat extremists or allow the Taliban to regain power in Afghanistan upon the withdrawal of American troops.⁹³ "We are allies in the fight against violent extremist networks, and homeland security is a high priority and a source of increasing partnership", she said.⁹⁴

This is a significant shift from the previous strategic narratives for AF-Pak region that were being transmitted to India. As Bhadrakumar highlights, "When we discuss the 'Af-Pak strategy', we tend to emphasize a regional approach. The argument goes that for stabilizing Afghanistan, you need to stabilize Pakistan; for stabilizing Pakistan, you should push India to take steps to alleviate Pakistan's threat perceptions and sense of insecurity; and, this, of course, means addressing Kashmir issue."⁹⁵ C Raja Mohan writing in the *Washington Quarterly*, April 2009 also highlights the shift in Indo-US partnership. He writes, "One of the main reasons for the dramatic transformation of Indo-U.S. relations has been Washington's policy of treating India and Pakistan on their own merit and in separate boxes. The premises behind the two policies were indeed different. While Pakistan holds the key to the success of the U.S. war on terror in Afghanistan, India seems to be the natural partner for the United States in managing the Asian balance of power and a range of other global challenges as a rising power."⁹⁶

The US umbrella in the AF-Pak region has had a stabilizing impact on India's securitization and addressed India's concerns at the domestic and regional level even though they might have been a byproduct and not the direct output of the war in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of US withdrawal from Afghanistan, any resurgence of extremism in Afghanistan is not a healthy sign for India and with US out of its backyard;

⁹³ Newser. "US Vows to Help India Fight Terrorism: Hillary Clinton On 3-Day Trip to India A Week After Mumbai Attacks Killed 20." *Newser.com*, Jul 19, 2011. <http://www.newser.com/story/123784/hillary-clinton-in-india-us-secretary-pledges-support-for-counterterrorism.html>

⁹⁴ Newser. "US Vows to Help India Fight Terrorism: Hillary Clinton On 3-Day Trip to India A Week After Mumbai Attacks Killed 20." *Newser.com*, Jul 19, 2011. <http://www.newser.com/story/123784/hillary-clinton-in-india-us-secretary-pledges-support-for-counterterrorism.html>

⁹⁵ Bhadrakumar, MK. "Afghanistan and the Age of Obama", *Arian News*, December 01, 2009 <http://www.e-ariana.com/ariana/eariana.nsf/allDocsArticles/FA2A39651FCC85068725767F005A6293?>

⁹⁶ Mohan, Raja C. "How Obama Can Get South Asia Right." *The Washington Quarterly* (April 2009) <http://www.cfr.org/world/washington-quarterly-obama-can-get-south-asia-right/p19835#>

Pakistan once again gets a free hand to further its anti-India goals through the terrorist havens of Af-Pak region. While India rejects any third party interventions in its bilateral issues with Pakistan, the attacks on Indian Embassy in Kabul in 2008 and the Mumbai carnage in 2008 indicate that India will need to work with regional and global players to address its securitization at the domestic and regional levels. Therefore the US presence and influence in the Af-Pak region may prove to be a critical factor in addressing India's security concerns and subsequent progress as a regional power.

Summary

This chapter highlights the importance of Afghanistan in India's securitization and that Afghanistan can no longer be treated as an insulator on the periphery of the South Asian RSC. Barry Buzan's RSC Theory provides a framework to analyze how regional security dynamics often dominate the securitization of a region rather than the neo-realist outlook of world order wherein the global power dynamics dictate the bandwagoning and balance of power tactics of different states based on their security interests. While global and distant powers have an option, the regional players often do not have an option and the amity-enmity of the regional players is the primary factor that governs their securitization. Buzan's Security Constellation formula when applied to Afghanistan and India provides an in-depth analysis of how Afghanistan impacts India's securitization at all levels of domestic, regional, inter-regional as well as global levels. India can no longer allow the security and stability of Afghanistan to take its own desired course; that would be akin to surrendering to destiny India's aspirations of becoming a regional power.

The rich history of the Indian Subcontinent is a good indicator of how complex the amity-enmity lines are drawn and a comprehensive regional approach is needed to resolve the securitization of the RSC. The Indian Prime Minister's liberal views on regional harmony reflect the complex dynamics of India's northwestern neighborhood. To quote from his speech at the FICCI Annual General Meeting on January 08, 2007,

I sincerely believe . . . that the destiny of the people of South Asia is interlinked. It is not just our past that links us, but our future too. India cannot be a prosperous, dynamic economy and a stable polity if our neighborhood as a whole is also not economically prosperous and politically stable. Similarly, our neighbors cannot prosper if India does not do so as well. There are enormous opportunities for promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in South Asia. To exploit these opportunities, the nations of South Asia have to work sincerely to control the scourge of terrorism and extremismI dream of a day, while retaining our respective national identities, one can have breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul. That is how my forefathers lived. That is how I want our grandchildren to live.⁹⁷

Given the present regional circumstances, Dr. Manmohan Singh's liberal views may appear to be a little farfetched but unless that vision is established as the ultimate goal, regional stability will always be dictated by tension-filled compromises. Even when viewed from a realist perspective, stability in Afghanistan has far-reaching impact on India's security, economic and political growth and hence it is only in India's interests to engage proactively in Afghanistan to further its national interests that lie between India and its rightful place in the world order. While Afghanistan's geography seems to highlight its importance in the security dynamics of the region, Afghanistan today provides an opportunity for the regional players to work together at the regional as well as global level to resurrect not only Afghanistan but the future of the region as a whole.

⁹⁷ Singh, Dr. Manmohan, Prime Minister of India. Address. FICCI Annual General Meeting, New Delhi, January 8, 2007. http://www.pmindia.nic.in/speech/content4print.asp?id_486.

Chapter 5

Post 2014 Afghanistan: India's Options

India in Afghanistan: September 11, 2001 to present day

Since September 11, 2001 the historically strong relations between India and Afghanistan have become even stronger with India progressively increasing its footprint in Afghanistan's developmental process. Since the turn of the century, Afghanistan has been the second largest recipient of Indian development assistance, with India's official US\$2 billion dollar commitment far exceeding Indian commitments to any other country except Bhutan.¹ India is currently the fifth-largest provider of development assistance to Afghanistan and for 2013/14 alone it totals approximately US\$120 million (fig-1).² As the report of the Joint Working Group of RUSI and the Vivekananda International Foundation, *Towards a Stable Afghanistan*, highlights, "The cumulative level of Indian assistance amounts to US\$2 billion, out of which a total of US\$1,229,793,372 has been allotted to various development projects. For a country like India, which is not a traditional donor, this is a significant contribution".³ India's developmental efforts are further highlighted in the *Report to US Congress on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2013 as, "India supports a variety of high-visibility projects and initiatives in Afghanistan. Indian assistance is primarily focused on major infrastructure projects (Salma dam, Parliament building), power infrastructure, and road construction projects. In a broadening of its focus from development to investment, India's Steel Authority of India (SAIL) Consortium was awarded 75 percent of the rights at Bamyan Province's Hajigak iron ore mine in November 2011. India is also active in

¹ Mullen, Rani D. "India Development Cooperation Research Bilateral Brief: The India-Afghanistan Partnership" *Centre for Policy Research*, May 16, 2013. <http://idcr.cprindia.org/p/afghanpartnership.html>

² Mullen, Rani D. "India Development Cooperation Research Bilateral Brief: The India-Afghanistan Partnership" *Centre for Policy Research*, May 16, 2013. <http://idcr.cprindia.org/p/afghanpartnership.html>

³ *Towards A Stable Afghanistan: The Way Forward*. A report by the Joint Working Group of RUSI and the Vivekananda International Foundation. Whitehall, London: RUSI, , January 2012 <http://www.rusi.org>

regional forums, such as the Istanbul process, and has organized private sector conferences to boost investment in Afghanistan.”⁴

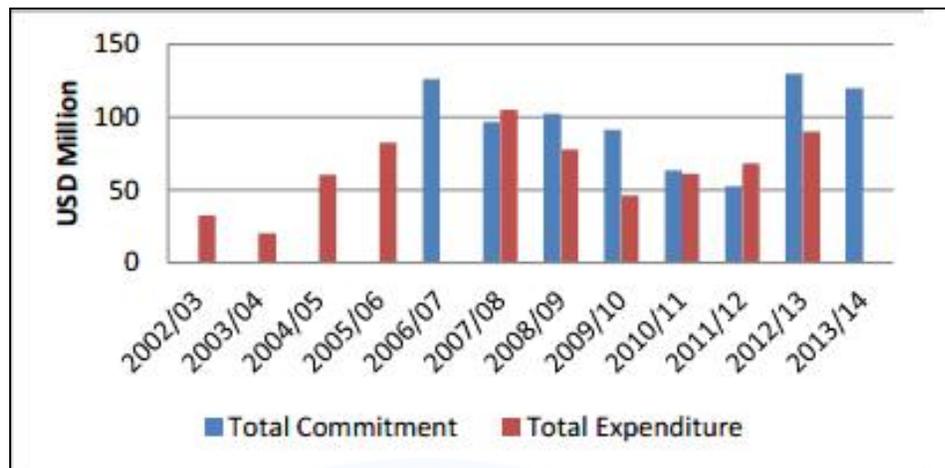


Figure 6: India’s Development Cooperation with Afghanistan: Commitments and Expenditures, 2002/03 – 2013/14

Source: International Development Cooperation Research (IDCR) based on respective Outcomes Budgets, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Government of India Budget

In 2011, India’s commitment to the development and stability of Afghanistan reached a new milestone when the two governments signed an agreement for strategic partnership. The bilateral strategic agreement highlighted India’s commitment to continued support for Afghanistan through economic, humanitarian and developmental assistance in the fields of education, health, infrastructure development, bilateral trade, economic cooperation and, training of military and security personnel in India. As the Indo-Afghan bilateral strategic agreement states,

“Cooperation will, among other areas of focus, concentrate on the agriculture, mining and health sectors, reflecting Afghanistan’s priorities; and India further commits to expand ongoing Small Development Projects (SDPs) for grass-root level development in the remote and rural areas. As part of its capacity building support for the Afghan government, India will

⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013. p 121
http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf

continue and expand technical, training and other capacity building support to the various departments in the three branches of government, including the Executive, Judiciary and the Parliament. In response to Afghanistan's need to strengthen its administration and governance at national and sub-national levels, India offers its experience of governance at the national, state, district and local body levels, and technical assistance in setting up a permanent, career-based civil service suitable for Afghan realities".⁵

After the signing of the strategic agreement on October 4, 2011, Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said, "Our cooperation with Afghanistan is an open book. We have civilizational links, and we are both here to stay. We have to live and work together in times both good and bad." He further stated that, "India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume the responsibility for their governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014".⁶ The message from the Prime Minister is clear; Afghanistan is a key element in India's political, economic and security dynamics and India is willing to walk the extra mile to help Afghanistan stabilize as a sovereign nation state, a state which adds value not only to the region but the world as a whole.

Since 2011, India has also been training ANSF personnel in Indian Military training establishments, and has progressively increased the military to military contact with ANSF. While these military ties have raised strong protests among the Pakistani political and military circles, India's military contribution has been welcomed by the US and the rest of the world. During a trip to Afghanistan and India in June 2012 then-U.S. Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, issued the U.S. government's starkest criticism yet of Islamabad, stating that Washington was "reaching the limits of [its] patience" with

⁵ Office of the President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. "Agreement on Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of India."

<http://president.gov.af/en/documents/category/strategic-agreements> (accessed 24 March, 2014)

⁶ The Hindu. "Statement made by Prime Minister at the end of signing of first-ever Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan." *The Hindu*, October 5, 2011.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/statement-made-by-prime-minister-at-the-end-of-signing-of-first-ever-strategic-partnership-agreement-with-afghanistan/article2513967.ece>

Islamabad and its refusal to crack down on terrorist safe havens in its territory.⁷ Panetta further noted India's positive contributions to Afghanistan's economic and commercial development and, more significantly, expressed support for Delhi's training of the country's nascent armed forces and encouraged it to continue with this security assistance mission. Panetta's nod to Indian military engagement in Afghanistan represented a significant shift in U.S. policy away from Pakistan and an acknowledgment that Delhi could contribute significantly to Afghanistan's internal stability".⁸

While India is committed to furthering its involvement in Afghanistan, it is skeptical about the reactions from its western adversary, Pakistan, a neighbor that views India's increasing influence, especially military influence in Afghanistan, as a strategic security loss. Pakistan constantly works towards reducing India's influence in Afghanistan, by sponsoring hostile attacks against India's projects in Afghanistan. While Pakistan vehemently denies its role in anti-India activities in Afghanistan, the ISI's involvement in anti-India activities has been confirmed by US officials. As K. Alan Kronstadt of the Congressional Research Service writes, "In mid-2008, US officials apparently concluded that ISI elements were involved in the July car bombing of India's embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan."⁹ Considering Pakistan's geographical advantage vis-à-vis India, Pakistan is able to influence the events in Afghanistan much more effectively than India and to prevent its assets and interests in Afghanistan, India's post-2014 engagement in Afghanistan will have to include a rapprochement with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, within the operating space provided by the coalition, India has been actively garnering support for international investments in Afghanistan to not only develop it as a regional hub for trade and commerce but also to strengthen Afghanistan economically to sustain itself on the path of development. "India has also extended support to the development of Afghan human capital through scholarship programs to

⁷ Jim Garamone. "U.S. reaching limit of patience with Pakistan on Safe Havens." *American Forces Press Service*, June 7, 2012. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116656>

⁸ Hanauer, Larry and Peter Chalk. *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and The Region*. RAND Occasional paper, p 22. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012. <http://www.rand.org>

⁹ K. Alan Kronstadt, *Terrorist Attacks in Mumbai, India, and Implications for U.S. Interests*. Congressional Research Service Report P.5.. Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service, December 2008. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R40087.pdf>

Indian universities (more than 1,000 scholarships per year), agricultural training programs, and other vocational training activities and since 2010, the U.S. and India has been undertaking joint projects to provide Afghans agricultural training and vocational skills”.¹⁰ The people to people contact has allowed India to be accepted by the Afghan people as a friend in need and public opinion surveys continue to show that Afghans have a favorable view of Indian involvement in their country. In the last ten years, India has laid a strong foundation to launch itself towards undertaking greater regional responsibility as well as expanding its influence in the region to shape the regional security environment. Inpost-2014 Afghanistan, India will have to shoulder greater responsibilities to ensure a safe and peaceful environment for its growing economic and security needs.

Options for India: Post-2014

As the situation in Afghanistan takes interesting turns in 2014, so does the situation in India. Parliamentary elections are due in April-May 2014, and in a democracy defined by coalition politics, India’s decision-making process is likely to be slow. Nevertheless, whatever past local opinions about India’s engagement in Afghanistan may be (especially towards cooperation with the United States), there appears to be a shift towards greater involvement for India in Afghanistan. The Indian course of action in post-2014 Afghanistan, however, would largely be governed by three factors: the strength of the government that takes office in New Delhi after the upcoming Parliamentary elections, US stance and engagement in Afghanistan after the 2014 Afghan elections and Pakistan’s future Afghan policy. The balance between these positive and negative factors will have a great impact on whether India continues its engagement in Afghanistan or cuts its losses and withdraws into its shell once again.

As the RAND occasional paper states, “Although New Delhi has much to gain by increasing its involvement in Afghanistan, not least in terms of regional power projection, it is not at all clear whether the [Indian] government would want to assume the roles that

¹⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013. p 121
http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf

the United States is relinquishing in Afghanistan. Not only would such an effort require large amounts of money and manpower, it may also inspire Islamabad—which would almost certainly view increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan as a strategic defeat—to strike back at India as a result”.¹¹ In August 2009, the commander of NATO’s ISAF and U.S. Forces–Afghanistan, General Stanley A. McChrystal, made this precise point, “While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India.”¹² Therefore, the important issue facing New Delhi is whether the benefits of continued constructive engagement in Afghanistan outweigh the costs of sustaining such a policy.

India’s options in Post 2014 Afghanistan

As stated earlier, India stands at the crossroads of history; how India engages in post-2014 Afghanistan will govern the trajectory of India’s growth and acceptance as a regional and global power, a state capable of safeguarding its own security interests beyond its borders and outside its immediate neighborhood. The options for India vary from ambivalence to a complete engagement (to include the Indian military) on a graduated scale. The various options available to India are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

Ambivalence

As US forces withdraw from Afghanistan, India could also cut its losses and retreat from Afghanistan and join the group of fence-sitters who are concerned about the problem but are hesitant to contribute towards the solution. So far, India has benefited from the US presence in Afghanistan and with the US withdrawal there will be a power vacuum that would be difficult to fill for any single power; whether it is China, Russia or

¹¹ Hanauer, Larry and Peter Chalk. *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region*. RAND Occasional paper. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012. p 24
<http://www.rand.org>

¹² Hanauer, Larry and Peter Chalk. *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region*. RAND Occasional paper . Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012. p 24
<http://www.rand.org>

even India. Therefore, India cannot afford to be ambivalent in its approach towards Afghanistan. Moreover, India has gone well beyond the stage where it could stay on the sidelines and expect someone else to take charge of the situation and in the bargain dictate terms for India's securitization. India's prestige as a regional power has grown tremendously along with its economy; therefore India cannot allow the security situation in its neighborhood to take its own course, as the possible backlash of such a policy could prove to be very severe.

Balance of Power: Supporting Anti-Taliban Factions

India does not approve of a Taliban regime at the helm of affairs in Kabul, especially the Quetta Shura faction led by Mullah Omar. During the period of Taliban rule in the 1990s, Indo-Afghan relations were at their worst and India supported the Northern Alliance (consisting of Non-Pashtun tribes) in their war against Taliban, a government India had not recognized. However, Taliban representation in a future Afghan government cannot be entirely ruled out.

While India's soft power engagements in Afghanistan have earned India immense goodwill at the grass-root levels of Afghan society (recognized even by the Taliban), India lacks a political strategy to allow for a possible return of the Taliban regime. If the Taliban return to power and resume an anti-India policy, then India will either have to rekindle its links with the non-Pashtun minorities that formed the nucleus of the Northern Alliance during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s. This is difficult, considering that in the last ten years or so India has been supporting a Pashtun-led government. India's support to the Karzai government has been to support the process of democracy rather than as support of one tribe against the other; however, it may be difficult for India to garner the same acceptability from the non-Pashtun minorities that was available to India from the Northern Alliance in the 1990s. Therefore, if India does not develop a strategy to allow for the return of the Taliban in a future Afghan government, its options to address security concerns emerging from Afghanistan could be limited.

One of the major security concerns that continue today is the possibility of terrorist attacks emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The main terror groups which

can have a significant impact on the escalation of violence *in* Afghanistan as well as *from* Afghanistan—the Quetta Shura, the Karachi Shura, the Haqqani Network and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP); all operate from the safe havens in Pakistan; there is thus very little control that India can exercise over these groups. If India has to have a workable strategy to further its political, economic and security concerns in Afghanistan, then its strategy needs to involve Pakistan; mere balance-of-power tactics may not provide the desired environment for a continued Indian engagement in Afghanistan. Therefore India needs to develop a strategy for a continued engagement in Afghanistan even in case of a Taliban return.

Continued Engagement in Afghanistan: The Best Way Forward

The power vacuum that will be created after the withdrawal of the US-led ISAF factions will be hard to fill. While a small US contingent will remain in Afghanistan to continue its training of Afghan forces and conduct surgical operations, the scope and content of this force is yet to be finalized as president Karzai refuses to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement between the US and Afghanistan that defines the scope and extent of US presence in the region. While India has argued that any future troop reductions must be situation-based rather than calendar-based, the fact that future international engagement in Afghanistan can be accomplished only with an increased involvement of the regional powers cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, it is in India's interests to not only continue its engagement in Afghanistan but also increase its engagements with regional and global players to ensure continued *positive* support for Afghanistan while minimizing *negative* support to the Taliban.

Bilateral Engagement with Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, India faces a challenging task. While India is skeptical about the capability of an elected Afghan government to sustain any Taliban onslaught, India has continued to support the process of democratization in Afghanistan and is engaged in strengthening Afghanistan economically, politically and militarily. However, it is apprehensive about making further investments as it is not sure of the political

configuration that may emerge in the future. “It is plausible that the Taliban may not replicate their old regime, but there is a possibility of political instability that may offset India’s economic presence”.¹³ Nevertheless, the best way forward for India is to continue its support to democratic processes in Afghanistan, and work with the nations bordering Afghanistan to allow the war-torn nation to sustain its journey on the path to development and self-sustenance.

In a recent visit to Afghanistan in Feb 2014 to inaugurate an agricultural university built with Indian aid, the Indian External Affairs minister, Salman Khurshid, reiterated India’s commitment to Afghanistan and said, “Afghanistan is very special and until now wherever they felt they need (something), we have been giving them”.¹⁴ He also stated that India would be supplying Afghanistan with helicopters and would also refurbish their transport aircraft. This statement was made two months after the Afghan president requested lethal weapons from India during his visit to New Delhi in December 2013. India’s decision to provide military equipment to Afghanistan is an indication of India’s commitment to Afghanistan’s capability building even beyond 2014. Khurshid also added, “I think it is consistent with our approach - building capacity, providing training. That seems to be going well. Ultimately it is what we mutually agree and is within our capacity to supply. India is ‘not reluctant’ about assisting Afghanistan as it has a very clear policy the world over to build capacity.”¹⁵ In a response to India’s assistance

¹³ Pattnaik, Smruti, “India in Afghanistan: Engagement without Strategy”, IDSA Comment, January 28, 2011

http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiainAfghanistanEngagementwithoutStrategy_sspattanaik_280111

¹⁴ All India Press Trust of India. “India to provide helicopters to Afghanistan soon: Salman Khurshid.” *NDTV.com*, February 15, 2014. <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/india-to-provide-helicopters-to-afghanistan-soon-salman-khurshid-483956>

¹⁵ All India Press Trust of India. “India to provide helicopters to Afghanistan soon: Salman Khurshid.” *NDTV.com*, February 15, 2014. <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/india-to-provide-helicopters-to-afghanistan-soon-salman-khurshid-483956>

Karzai told reporters, "I am not disappointed. I am rather happy and grateful to India for its assistance," he said. "India's response has been good."¹⁶

Nevertheless, India must also open a channel for dialogue with the Taliban factions willing to take a moderate approach to furthering peace and stability in and around Afghanistan. While India is averse to engaging with Mullah Omar (who has no intentions of negotiating with India either), India must engage any factions of the Taliban that seek political reconciliation rather than continued Islamic extremism, death and violence. "India needs to take proactive steps to mobilize other countries of the region that have similar concerns regarding the reconciliation and reintegration of hardcore Taliban elements".¹⁷

India and Pakistan in Afghanistan

Pakistan's Afghan policy is India-centric. Although Pakistan has other concerns related to its demands for Pashtun homeland and economic passage to the CAR region through Afghanistan, its anti-India policy seems to be the driving force behind its Afghan policy. It does not want to allow any increase in India's footprint, even if it comes at the cost of Afghan stability. As Lisa Curtis states in her testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Committee on Foreign Affairs (United States House of Representatives on October 29, 2013): "Pakistani officials publicly voice support for a stable Afghanistan, but the truth is they want to ensure that their own proxies remain influential in the country to prevent India from making further inroads into Kabul. Pakistan's concerns about increasing Indian influence and presence in Afghanistan over-ride its desire for a stable Afghan neighbor. This leaves U.S. policy in a conundrum in which American officials acknowledge the need to work with Pakistan on encouraging a peace process in

¹⁶ All India Press Trust of India. "India to provide helicopters to Afghanistan soon: Salman Khurshid." *NDTV.com*, February 15, 2014. <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/india-to-provide-helicopters-to-afghanistan-soon-salman-khurshid-483956>

¹⁷ Pattnaik, Smruti, "India in Afghanistan: Engagement without Strategy", IDSA Comment, January 28, 2011 http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiainAfghanistanEngagementwithoutStrategy_sspattnaik_280111

Afghanistan, but also recognize that Pakistan has different regional goals than the U.S., making it an unreliable partner”.¹⁸

Pakistani fears of being engulfed by India may have had some justification in the initial years of its existence, but now after almost seventy years and four wars, Pakistan’s fears vis-à-vis India are more a created myth of the Pakistani military spin doctors who wish to retain power in Pakistan.¹⁹ As a consequence of its anti-India policy, Pakistan differentiates between militant groups, opposing those fighting the Pakistani Army in the FATA region, while offering support or turning a blind eye to those groups that direct violence against India, Afghanistan, the United States, and other targets outside Pakistan.²⁰

For some in the Pakistani military top brass, terrorism is a necessary tool for dealing with its formidable eastern adversary, especially in the aftermath of four defeats in conventional conflicts. “For them, Afghanistan is a critical battleground for conflicting Indo-Pakistani interests. By providing sanctuary to Afghan militants, they believe they can influence events in Afghanistan, particularly after international forces withdraw”.²¹ As long as the Pakistani military largely remains an independent entity, Pakistan’s Afghan policy will remain anti-India and allow little room for mutual trust and cooperation. If India wishes to continue its Afghan saga, then managing Pakistan’s paranoia has to be a part of the calculus.

¹⁸ United States House of Representatives. *After the Withdrawal The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Part II)*: Testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Committee on Foreign Affairs. October 29, 2013. <http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2013/10/after-the-withdrawal-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan-and-pakistan-part-ii>

¹⁹ Siddiqa, Ayesha. *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. University of Michigan: Pluto press, 2007 Ayesha in her book explains how Pakistan’s armed forces end up dominating the economy? After 1947, when Britain departed and Pakistan separated bloodily from India, the perceived external threat from India, and the dispute over the province of Kashmir (left unresolved by the British), kept the military front and center in Pakistan.

²⁰ Richard L. Armitage et al. *US Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan*. CFIR Independent Task Force Report No. 65 p. 20. Washington, DC: CFIR, 2010. http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/uzsz-strategy-pakistan-afghanistan/p23253?cid=rss-asia-u.s._strategy_for_pakistan_and-111210

²¹ Richard L. Armitage et al. *US Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan*. CFIR Independent Task Force Report No. 65 p. 20. Washington, DC: CFIR, 2010. http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/uzsz-strategy-pakistan-afghanistan/p23253?cid=rss-asia-u.s._strategy_for_pakistan_and-111210

In 2013, Pakistan witnessed a historic democratic transfer of power. Although the Pakistan military still remains a powerful entity, a democratic government allows a better platform for furtherance of bilateral cooperation. The Nawaz Sharif government is showing enthusiasm in improving its ties with both Afghanistan and India and is willing to place economic interests ahead of bilateral and regional differences. While this may not be sufficient assurance for India to feel secured, it is a ray of hope, and provides a small window of opportunity. Afghanistan provides an opportunity to downplay Pakistan's paranoia and gradually rebuild confidence between the two nuclear states. It is in the interests of both nations to cooperate in furthering peace and stability in the region and allow their people to progress and grow economically, socially and most of all peacefully. Differences will remain but there are better ways to resolve them rather than through conflict.

Kashmir has been a primary source of conflict between the two neighbors; however, every element of India-Pakistan relations cannot be viewed through the Kashmir lens and Indo-Pak engagements in Afghanistan need to be considered independently. As the days of US drawdown approach closer, terror activities in India's J&K region have been on the rise; they all have their link to the fundamentalists operating from the AF-Pak region. An unstable Afghanistan is a breeding ground for terror outfits; hence, a stable Afghanistan is critical for peace and stability in the region. Pakistan understands this perhaps even better than India, as Pakistanis also facing the onslaught of terror that it helped to create.

Some experts in India argue that Pakistan's anti-India activities are likely to increase in the wake of US withdrawal from Afghanistan; the growing number of terror incidents in the Kashmir valley point to that. However, many others believe that given the revelations about Pakistan's engagement with Taliban and its economic and internal security environment, it will become more difficult for Pakistan to engage in destabilizing activities in Afghanistan. Either way, Pakistan remains critical to finding a long-term solution to the Afghan problem and as Pattnaik says, "The truth of the matter is that Pakistan remains central to the success of the process of reconciliation and

reintegration”.²² In the words of Pakistan’s Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, “nothing will happen without us, because we are part of the solution.”²³ Therefore, India needs to negotiate with Pakistan to further their common economic and security interests in Afghanistan as crucial issues such as Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism that plague India also threaten Pakistan.

While India has strongly opposed any third party intervention in its bilateral relations with Pakistan, in the context of Afghanistan, such an intervention may prove helpful. Over the last decade, Pakistan’s dual policy in the war on terror has negatively impacted the US cause in Afghanistan; the Bin Laden raid in Abbottabad indicates that bilateral relations between the US and Pakistan have ebbed more than ever. As the US looks towards India to shoulder greater responsibility in Afghanistan, its influence and involvement in Pakistan would be crucial in allowing India working space in Afghanistan. To quote Curtis again, “Moving relations forward with a country that is both hurting and helping in the fight against global terrorism has proven challenging. But cutting off relations with Pakistan altogether is a risky option. The U.S. instead should pursue policies that build up the economy and support Pakistani civil society, while conditioning military assistance on Pakistani cooperation with U.S. counterterrorism goals”.²⁴

India and Afghanistan’s Neighbors

All of Afghanistan’s neighbors are preparing for a post-2014 Afghanistan and none of these states is comfortable with the idea of a Taliban government. The Chinese-dominated SCO, Iran, the CARs and India have common interests; however, they follow

²² Pattnaik, Smruti. “India in Afghanistan: Engagement without Strategy.” *IDS*, January 28, 2011 http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiainAfghanistanEngagementwithoutStrategy_sspattanaik_280111

²³ Pattnaik, Smruti. “India in Afghanistan: Engagement without Strategy.” *IDS*, January 28, 2011 http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiainAfghanistanEngagementwithoutStrategy_sspattanaik_280111

²⁴ United States House of Representatives. *After the Withdrawal The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Part II)*: Testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Committee on Foreign Affairs. October 29, 2013. <http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2013/10/after-the-withdrawal-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan-and-pakistan-part-ii>

different policies either due to relations among themselves or with the US. Iran and India share a common interest in ensuring a stabilized, self-sustained Afghanistan with a people's government that is not dictated by the whims and fancies of Islamabad (and more particularly the ISI). While India is keen on a continued US presence in Afghanistan, Iran is eager to see the US out of the region. With Iran-US nuclear negotiations currently thawing, India can rekindle its historic relations with Iran to work together not only in Afghanistan but expanding to regional and global levels. Although India's engagement with Iran is viewed with skepticism in the western world, India can help coax Iran to engage more effectively in strengthening the regional security environment. As Secretary Kerry stated in his visit to India in 2013, "We completely understand the relationship that India has [with Iran]. We [also] believe that, hopefully, India, with its relationship, could help urge the new Iranian leadership..."²⁵ In post-2014 Afghanistan, Iran can play a crucial role in the reconciliation and reintegration of hardcore Taliban elements. Therefore, India must engage with Iran to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The Chinese-led SCO has grown to be a major player in regional dynamics; in post-2014 Afghanistan, the SCO will have a key role to play in shaping the regional security environment. Therefore, India should continue its engagement with China and other SCO members for increased cooperation in Afghanistan. China as an 'all weather' ally of Pakistan could also be effective in shaping the behavior of Pakistan and helping reduce the negative influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan.

Whatever the interests of the regional powers, Afghanistan is crucial for India's securitization. While India is not a neighbor in the real sense, as the leading power in the South Asian Security Complex and desirous of expanding its sphere of influence, India needs to take the lead in engaging countries that border Afghanistan. It should therefore step up its engagement with regional and global powers to shape its regional security

²⁵ Embassy of the United States, New Delhi. "Remarks: Secretary of State John Kerry and Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid." Embassy of the United States, June 24, 2013. <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/sr-06242013.html>

environment. The role of regional powers is as critical, if not more critical, than global players that have largely dictated the flow of events in Afghanistan. While US-led ISAF has provided a positive influence in controlling the environment, negative influences still stem from the disparate goals of other regional players. The irony of the situation is that the impacts of such endeavors are also felt by the neighbors themselves. Therefore, India must continue its engagement with regional players to promote greater cooperation in assisting Afghanistan.

India and the United States

Promoting shared prosperity, preserving peace and security, strengthening democratic governance and human rights—these are the responsibilities of leadership. And as global partners, this is the leadership that the United States and India can offer in the 21st century.²⁶

President Barack Obama

In the last decade or so India's relationship with the US has moved forward by leaps and bounds. While this has largely been shaped by India's rise as a regional power, it has also been complemented by the double game played by the US "ally from hell"—as Jeffrey Goldberg coins it - Pakistan.²⁷ Regardless of the reasons, the two great democracies converge in values and interests far beyond those dictated by the Realist perspective of offshore balancing and can work together to enhance not only their mutual interests at the regional and global levels but also shape the security environment at many levels.

US Secretary of State John Kerry stated during his visit to India last year, "As we go about the much-talked about "Asia rebalance," there's no more important partner for the United States in the region than India. The growing convergence of our interests and outlook has brought about unprecedented cooperation on regional and global security, economics and trade, education, science and technology, clean energy, health, and

²⁶ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. "U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue: a Defining Partnership in The 21st century." June 17, 2011 <http://www.State.Gov/Documents/Organization/168999.Pdf>

²⁷ Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Ally from Hell." *Atlantic*, October 28, 2011.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/12/the-ally-from-hell/308730/>

counterterrorism. Our governments have worked hard, especially in the last decade, to broaden and deepen this cooperation for the benefit of our citizens of our two great democracies”.²⁸ Extending the vision to Afghanistan, Kerry added, “The reality is that Afghanistan’s fortunes are tied to the region, just as the future of the region is tied to an increasingly stable, secure, prosperous future for the Afghan people. This is at the very heart of the *New Silk Road* vision, which I look forward to working with India to advance”.²⁹

In the Cold War era, India maintained a non-aligned stance. However, as a growing regional power facing stiff competition from China, its larger and more powerful northern adversary, India will have to rethink its foreign policy. Just as the US has a lot to gain from India’s increased engagement in Afghanistan, so too does India from US engagements in the region. The US influence in South Asia has largely been shaped by Pakistan’s geographic importance in the region and often led to souring of bilateral relations between India and US. A renewed US policy for South Asia can help India and Pakistan look beyond a zero-sum relationship with the US and further political, economic and security cooperation.

Should India deploy military troops to Afghanistan? This is a key question that has divided India’s policymakers, with the majority favoring restraint. While India does maintain a small contingent of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and trains ANSF personnel in India, it is not comfortable with the idea of troop deployment abroad; especially outside the UN charter (Chapter VI/VII). In Afghanistan, this policy is also strongly influenced by India’s desire to keep Pakistan’s apprehension under wraps. However, this policy could change in the future, but it all depends upon how Pakistan views India’s role in Afghanistan. For this shift to occur US influence on Pakistan (to prevent it from pursuing its anti-India policies, especially through terrorism) will prove to be a crucial factor; thus a US presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014 is most desirable from all perspectives: local, regional and global.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State. “Remarks on the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: John Kerry, Secretary of State.” <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/06/211013.htm>

²⁹ U.S. Department of State. “Remarks on the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: John Kerry, Secretary of State.” <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/06/211013.htm>

Afghan President Karzai has thus far refused to sign the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) for defining the size and scope of US contingent in Afghanistan beyond 2014; yet this is a critical requirement for regional security. India's stand on the issue has been that US withdrawal should be situation-based rather than timeline-based and India must continue to use its relations with Afghanistan to further this agenda and help increase the Afghan acceptability for sustained US presence in Afghanistan. Until Afghanistan is completely capable of sustaining itself without external support, US presence in the region is essential to suppress any resurgence of Taliban- A remote possibility no doubt; nonetheless a possibility given the economic capability of Afghanistan.

Summary

As a growing regional power, India has a lot to gain from a stable Afghanistan and India's efforts in the past decade or so have paid rich dividends for India as well as Afghanistan. While India has committed itself towards continued support for Afghanistan even beyond 2014, the situation requires cooperation from regional and global players for Afghanistan to continue its resurrection process. Although the ANSF have displayed competency in managing Afghanistan's security environment, the huge economic gap between state income and expenditure indicates that Afghanistan cannot sustain itself without continued international support for some time to come.

Afghanistan forms a critical component of India's regional security dynamics and as a growing regional power, India needs to assume greater responsibility in shaping its security environment; an ambivalent attitude towards Afghanistan is no more an option. Since 2001, India has built a strong base of acceptability in Afghanistan and the popular local support for Indian commitment and goods is a strong indicator of India's commitment and capacity for assisting Afghanistan. However, as all of Afghanistan's neighbors prepare for a US drawdown at the end of the year, India must take the lead to garner regional cooperation, especially with Pakistan and Iran, to reintegrate the Taliban factions and suppress the Islamic Fundamentalism that remains a huge threat to India's security. Considering the present status of the Taliban, a small Taliban representation in

the Afghan government or even the return of a Taliban regime cannot be ruled out completely. Therefore India needs to develop a strategy for a possible Taliban return to power. India's continued assistance to ANSF indicates that India is committed to a long term association with Afghanistan and willing to accept greater responsibility however, India is not comfortable with troop deployment in Afghanistan especially outside the UN Charter and more so to downplay Pakistan's paranoia that could lead to increased tensions among the nuclear rivals. However, this policy could change in the future, but it all depends upon how Pakistan views India's role in Afghanistan.

The biggest barrier for India's Afghan policy is the hostility that stems from the tribal areas of the AF-Pak region and Pakistan's selective use of this force against India. This can provide adequate rationale for India to cut its losses in Afghanistan and withdraw. While this may appear to be beneficial in the short term, in the long run it could prove to be a huge strategic loss for India. For continued engagement in Afghanistan, Pakistan's apprehensions need to be suppressed and India perhaps is not in a capacity to do that alone. Nevertheless, India must continue its engagement with Pakistan and work together towards greater cooperation and combined economic growth regardless of their differences. Every aspect of Indo-Pak relations cannot be connected to Kashmir. While India has traditionally opposed third party intervention in its bilateral affairs, in Afghanistan, there may not be too many options. The Indo-US strategic partnership can help create the security environment for India to continue its engagements in Afghanistan and suppress Pakistan's apprehensions to stop its anti-India activities on either side of its borders.

Afghanistan presents difficult challenges in the future and considering its political, economic and military status, it is still a long journey for Afghanistan before it reaches a self-sustaining status. The security challenges for India are immense and as India expands its area of influence, it will have to shoulder greater responsibility in shaping its regional security environment. This leaves India with little choice but to engage more proactively in Afghanistan. This will no doubt be a challenge, but it is a challenge which India can perhaps no longer avoid.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Lying at the crossroads of great civilizations, Afghanistan formed an integral part of the history of the great civilizations that have risen and fallen around it. Because of its important geostrategic location, Romans, Persians, Mongols, Indians and Chinese have all held Afghanistan as a prized possession of their great empires. While the land was associated with various empires at different times in history, the hearts and minds of these ferocious and proud tribesmen have remained unconquered. The uniqueness of Afghanistan lies not just in its location as the hub of great empires but also in its terrain, which in turn affects its people.¹ Since the first records of history, Afghanistan has been engaged in war either externally with foreign intruders or internally between local tribal factions that inhabit the difficult and demanding landscape of Afghanistan.

In a land where tribal honor and traditions, rather than the ideology of a common nation-state, have been the drivers of society, the national fabric has always been fragmented. However, the never-ending series of wars has given rise to an anarchic society where people have lost faith in any form of governance. In a nation where extreme poverty, illiteracy and low life expectancy are the predominant social defining factors, individuals have to safeguard their own interests and honor; self-preservation has become the underlying theme of human existence. While the Taliban regime can be held responsible for this radicalization of the Afghan society, its seeds were perhaps sown when the Talibs from the Madrassas in bordering areas of Pakistan infiltrated the Afghan society to bleed the Soviet occupants. While the mujahedeen did make Soviet occupation painful and forced their withdrawal, the impact on the people of Afghanistan itself was devastating. The Taliban regime that took power after the civil war in the early 1990s perhaps inadvertently triggered the rise of a new Afghanistan. Afghanistan would no longer be an insulator state separating strong Regional Security Complexes; instead it became a nation that could disrupt the regional and global security environment.

¹ Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the fall of the Taliban*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2009, p. 3

The terror strikes on America's symbols of power on September 11, 2001 shook the world. While Taliban atrocities had failed to mobilize an armed response, 9/11 unleashed the superpower's fury almost instantaneously. Since 2001, breaking the Al Qaida-Taliban nexus, eradicating the breeding grounds for Islamic fundamentalism and resurrecting the socio-economic fabric of Afghanistan has been the primary goals in what has become a long drawn-out war.

Resurrecting a country so devastated as Afghanistan was never an easy task, even for the American superpower. Afghanistan needed to be rebuilt socially, economically, politically and militarily; and that too amidst an ongoing war against an enemy as lethal as the Taliban. Nevertheless, the US-led ISAF has done a commendable job of pulling Afghanistan out, literally from hell; giving the Afghan people a ray of hope. The war-torn nation has been given its best opportunity to break the shackles of misery; whether Afghanistan continues its journey on the path to progression or sinks back into the miseries of hell is largely dependent upon the people of Afghanistan.

Building Afghan Capability: government and military

In 2001, Hamid Karzai was appointed as the head of an interim government which was to fill the power vacuum left by the ouster of Taliban regime. The presidential elections that followed in 2004 marked a milestone in the modern history of Afghanistan. As a record number of Afghan citizens came out to vote; they displayed their willingness to move away from the traditions of violence and anarchic chaos that had defined their existence in the past.

A largely illiterate and fragmented population which could only speak the language of the gun was far from what could be desired to resurrect an effective and efficient local government. The Afghan government's influence barely reached the outskirts of the capital. Only when a strong Afghan government displays the capacity to not only establish an environment of good governance but also deal with its security concerns, such as the Taliban insurgency, can the prospects of a long term democracy appear to be healthy. Thus, supporting a strong central government is one matter that had become a delicate balancing act for both the United Nations and the American-led

military forces in Afghanistan.² As Afghanistan goes to the polls in April 2014 to elect a new president, a lot has changed since the first time the country went to polls ten years ago. The US-led ISAF forces, UN and other world communities have made immense contributions to the Afghan resurrection process to give Afghanistan its best chance of establishing a long term democracy.

Despite the fact that large scale corruption, bribery and nepotism are rampant at all levels of the government; it is extremely critical for the Afghan people to get used to a democratic form of government. Democracy in Afghanistan is delicate and fragile; the people of Afghanistan will need to display a strong political will to transition through this period of uncertainty and ensure that Afghanistan sustains itself as a nation-state.

Milestone 2013, announced by ISAF and GIROA on June 18, 2013, marked a red letter day for Afghanistan. The ANSF assumed the lead role in ensuring security for the entire country; a role so far performed by the ISAF. Since 2009, the ANSF has nearly doubled in size and as of August 2013, ANSF strength had reached 344,602, which is 98% of its authorized strength of 352,000 personnel.³ Gradually the ANSF have replaced ISAF in all major security activities being undertaken in Afghanistan and it now conducts 95% of all conventional and 98% of all special operations *independently*.

Although the ANSF has grown in stature to secure its people; beyond 2014, ANSF sustainability will be at high risk without continued aid from the international community and continued Coalition force assistance including institutional advising.”⁴ With the current status of the Afghan economy, the World Bank, the Afghan government,

² Morgan, Matthew J. *A Democracy is born*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International Press , 2007, p. 148

³ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf,p. 9

⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 2013.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, p. 7

and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reported that Afghanistan will likely need donor assistance to fund ANSF until at least 2021.⁵

Foreign Assistance in rebuilding Afghanistan

Rebuilding Afghanistan has perhaps become the largest international humanitarian assistance program since the Marshall plan laid out for rebuilding Europe in the aftermath of WW II. The international community of approximately fifty countries led by the United States and strongly supported by the World Bank and the United Nations has poured in millions of dollars to rebuild Afghanistan since 2002. At the July 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, the international community pledged more than \$16 billion for Afghanistan's economic development through 2015. However, given the country's ability to generate revenue even in the foreseeable future, Afghanistan is likely to be reliant on foreign aid through 2024 for its sustainment. At the Tokyo summit, the international community established a renewed stronger foundation for partnership to support sustainable growth and development of Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade (2015-2024).⁶

In sum, as Afghanistan prepares itself for its long march towards self-governance and self-realization, it faces four major challenges that need to be either solved or marginalized for Afghanistan to sustain itself as a sovereign state: lack of security, lack of economic development, a booming drug trade and lack of good governance. While Afghanistan is well placed in capability to continue its fight against these challenges, the economic capacity is still lacking; the Afghan people will have to show greater resolve in resurrecting their nation. With the world standing by their side, the Afghan people have their task made simpler; nevertheless, beyond 2014, the determination of the Afghan people will ultimately decide their destiny.

⁵ *Afghanistan: Key Oversight Issues*. US Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Congressional Addressees. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office, February 2013 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652075.pdf>

⁶ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, 8 July 2012" http://www.unodc.org/afghanistan/en/Events/Tokyo_conference_on_afghanistan.html

Afghanistan: A Factor in India's Securitization

Afghanistan is no longer a mere weak insulator state at the crossroads of strong RSCs; it is now an integral element of the regional security environment. Afghanistan's relations with Islamic extremism and booming drug trade make it capable of adversely impacting the security dynamics of any or all of its neighboring RSCs: the Persian Gulf region, CAR region and the South Asian region. Hence, regional players can no longer ignore Afghanistan; a stable Afghanistan is a critical requirement, not only for their own security but also the security of their respective RSCs.

India and Pakistan have been the defining poles of the South Asian RSC. However, India's economic and political rise in the recent past has shifted the regional dynamics to a more uni-polar structure rather than a multi-polar structure. India, the largest state in size, population and economy, lies at the center of the RSC, both literally and figuratively. Therefore, India is most affected by regional securitization dynamics, both from within the complex and from outside.

As a growing regional power and a constant target of Islamic jihad, India cannot ignore developments in Afghanistan. Terrorist outfits such as LeT that target India with ruthless regularity operate from the safe havens of the AF-Pak region. The more unstable the AF-Pak region, the greater the threat to India's internal security. India's constructive engagement in Afghanistan can reverse the trend of Islamic extremism in the region. The 1999 Indian Airlines hijacking and the Mumbai carnage in 2008 have made deep impacts on India's security environment and prestige; India cannot afford to have a repeat of such events, either at home or abroad.

India and Pakistan

Pakistan's Afghan policy is defined more by its India-centric policy, rather than by other concerns such as the demand of a unified Pashtunistan or economic passage to the CAR region through Afghanistan. Pakistan does not want India to broaden its already

increasing footprint in Afghanistan, even if it comes at the cost of Afghan stability. For some senior Pakistani military officers, terrorism is a necessary tool for dealing with India, especially in the aftermath of four defeats in conventional conflicts. Some Indian experts argue that Pakistan's anti-India activities are likely to increase in the wake of US withdrawal from Afghanistan; the growing numbers of terror incidents in the Kashmir valley are strong pointers. However, others believe that given Pakistan's engagement with the Taliban and its economic and internal security environment, it will become more difficult for Pakistan to engage in destabilizing activities in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan relies on Islamic fundamentalism to further its anti-India policy, Afghanistan remains crucial to India's regional security.

India and the Middle East region

The Middle East region impacts India's securitization in more ways than one; it not only is the largest supplier of energy to India but is also a big source of employment for the Indian population. Further, as the nucleus of the Islamic world, it connects directly with India's large Muslim population. India's constructive involvement in Afghanistan using its 'soft power' has only added to its prestige in the region as a Muslim friend and a victim of terrorism. Therefore, in Afghanistan, as India cautiously treads a thin line between intervention and assistance, its involvement could have a strong impact on its image in the Muslim world.

India and China

As a rapidly growing great power, China is not deeply affected by securitization of the South Asian complex; however, South Asian securitization can be deeply influenced by China. China's realist strategy in South Asia revolves around keeping India from shifting the bipolar dynamic to a uni-polar one and thereby preventing India from expanding its influence in regions beyond South Asia. In Afghanistan, despite their economic competition, India and China have converging security interests. As China expands its influence in the region, the SCO has emerged as a mechanism for China to

flaunt its regional supremacy; it can then pressure other regional governments to restrict the separatist activities of Uighurs and Tibetans within their borders, for example.

The instability in Afghanistan has a direct relation to the core issues of SCO--terrorism, separatism and extremism; this led to the SCO including Afghanistan in its sphere of influence. The SCO provides a platform for India to engage with China and Pakistan more constructively and exercise greater control over its regional security environment. While India will have to deal with the China-Pakistan nexus in the SCO, especially given the complementarities in Chinese and Pakistani interests in the Central Asian Republics, India should continue its efforts to connect with SCO in Afghanistan.⁷ A subordinate role is better than no role at all and India cannot allow the China-Pakistan influence to define its security environment. Hence Afghanistan is critical for India's securitization vis-à-vis China as well.

India and the United States

Since 9/11, India's relations with the US have grown enormously and have now taken the shape of a strategic alliance. The US war on Islamic extremism in Afghanistan has not only globalized India's fight against terrorism but also highlighted the role of Pakistan in nurturing jihadists and allowing their country to be used as a safe haven. While India has continued to face the brunt of Islamic extremism, the US presence in Afghanistan has provided an umbrella for India to not only advance its economic and political goals to regions beyond Afghanistan-CARs and Iran, but also allowed India to strengthen its political and cultural base in Afghanistan. It has also provided India with an opportunity to curb and reduce the expansion of Islamic extremism emerging from Afghanistan and disconnect India's internal sectarian issues from the global archipelago of Al Qaida.

When viewed from a long term strategic perspective, the US engagement in the AF-Pak region has had a positive impact on India's regional securitization. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton assured Indian officials during her visit to India on July

⁷ Roy, Mena Singh. "Dynamics of expanding the SCO", *IDSa: IDSa comment*, April 4, 2011
http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/DynamicsofExpandingtheSCO_msroy_040411

19, 2011 that the Obama administration won't ease pressure on Pakistan to combat extremists or allow the Taliban to regain power in Afghanistan upon the withdrawal of American troops."⁸"We are allies in the fight against violent extremist networks, and homeland security is a high priority and a source of increasing partnership", she said.⁹ Afghanistan has provided the crucial platform for the two great democracies to develop a long overdue strategic partnership, a partnership that can allow India to address its security concerns at domestic, regional and global levels.

India's role in rebuilding Afghanistan

Since September 11, 2001 the historically strong relations between India and Afghanistan have become even stronger, with India progressively increasing its footprint in the developmental process of Afghanistan. Since the turn of the century, Afghanistan has been the second largest recipient of Indian development assistance, with India's official US\$2 billion dollar commitment far exceeding Indian commitments to any other country except Bhutan.¹⁰In 2011, India's commitment to the development and stability of Afghanistan reached a new milestone when the two governments signed an agreement for strategic partnership. The bilateral strategic agreement highlighted India's commitment to continued support to Afghanistan through economic, humanitarian and developmental assistance in the fields of education, health, infrastructure development, bilateral trade, economic cooperation and training of military and security personnel.

In 2014, as the situation in Afghanistan takes interesting turns, so does the situation in India. Parliamentary elections are due in April-May 2014 and in a democracy defined by coalition politics, India's decision-making process is likely to be slow during these months of historical change. Nevertheless, whatever maybe the past local opinions

⁸ Newser. "US Vows to Help India Fight Terrorism: Hillary Clinton On 3-Day Trip to India A Week After Mumbai Attacks Killed 20." *Newser*, July 19, 2011. <http://www.newser.com/story/123784/hillary-clinton-in-india-us-secretary-pledges-support-for-counterterrorism.html>

⁹ Newser. "US Vows to Help India Fight Terrorism: Hillary Clinton On 3-Day Trip to India A Week After Mumbai Attacks Killed 20." *Newser*, July 19, 2011. <http://www.newser.com/story/123784/hillary-clinton-in-india-us-secretary-pledges-support-for-counterterrorism.html>

¹⁰ Mullen, Rani D. "India Development Cooperation Research Bilateral Brief: The India-Afghanistan Partnership" *Centre for Policy Research*, May 16, 2013. <http://idcr.cprindia.org/p/afghanpartnership.html>

about India's engagement in Afghanistan (especially towards cooperation with the United States), there appears to be a shift towards greater involvement for India in Afghanistan. The Indian course of action in post-2014 Afghanistan, however, would largely be governed by *three* factors: the strength of the government that takes office in New Delhi after the upcoming Parliamentary elections, US stance and engagement in Afghanistan after the 2014 Afghan elections and Pakistan's future Afghan policy. The balance between these positive and negative factors will have a great impact on whether India continues its engagement in Afghanistan or cuts its losses and withdraws once again.

Post-2014 Afghanistan - India's Options

The power vacuum that will be created after the withdrawal of the US-led ISAF factions will be hard to fill. While a small US contingent will remain in Afghanistan to continue training Afghan forces and conduct surgical operations, the scope and content of this force is yet to be finalized as President Karzai refuses to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US. How India engages in post-2014 Afghanistan will govern the trajectory of India's growth and acceptance as a regional and global power, a state capable of safeguarding its security interests beyond its borders and outside its immediate neighborhood. The options for India vary from ambivalence to complete engagement (to include the Indian military) on a graduated scale. Considering India's existing efforts in Afghanistan, ambivalence is no longer an option.

India does not approve of a Taliban regime at the helm of affairs in Kabul, especially the Quetta Shura faction led by Mullah Omar. If the Taliban return to power and resume their anti-India policy, then India may not have many options to pursue its current interests in Afghanistan. Therefore, India must develop a strategy to address the possible return of the Taliban in a future Afghan government and support efforts to direct these Taliban factions into the mainstream of Afghan politics. All of Afghanistan's neighbors are preparing for a post-2014 Afghanistan and none of these states is comfortable with the idea of a Taliban government. Whatever the interests of the regional powers, Afghanistan is crucial for India's securitization. While India does not share a

contiguous border with Afghanistan, as the leading power in the South Asian RSC and desirous of expanding its sphere of influence, India needs to take the lead in engaging countries that border Afghanistan. Therefore, India should step up its engagement with regional and global powers to enhance cooperation at all levels.

The US will remain the key player in Afghanistan. The US umbrella is a critical element for the international community to continue their Afghan assistance and further their own interests. As a growing power, India will have to shed its traditional non-aligned stance and engage more effectively with the US. The last ten years indicate that US presence in the region is not only crucial for the region, but for India as well. The opportunity to work with the US to balance the China-Pakistan alliance can have major implications for India's economic, political and security concerns.

Despite a small presence of ITBP personnel in Afghanistan, India's policy on troop deployment is strongly influenced by India's desire to keep Pakistan in check. This policy could change in the future; however, it all depends upon how Pakistan views India's role in Afghanistan. For this shift to occur future US influence on Pakistan (to prevent it from pursuing its anti-India policies, especially through terrorism) will prove to be a crucial factor; thus, a US presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014 is most desirable from local, regional and global perspectives.

For India, a country that stands at the cusp of greatness, Afghanistan presents many challenges. India's engagement in Afghanistan will govern its future status in the world order. Moreover, as a growing regional power, India cannot afford to allow its regional security environment to shape its strategy; rather it must develop a strategy to shape its regional security environment. The situation in Afghanistan is precarious and will need assistance from the international community to prevent Afghanistan from descending into the abyss again. India's growing economic, political and security needs dictate that India should continue its constructive engagements in Afghanistan. The road is not easy and success is not guaranteed; however, for India, it is time to take a leap of faith.

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