AN ANALYSIS OF SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY COMPLEXES THROUGH THE PRISM OF REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY

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ABSTARCT

This research paper attempts to offer a broader analysis of South Asian security complexes through the prism of RSCT. Buzan and Ole used South Asia as a prime case for developing the Regional Security Complex Theory. According to them, South Asian states face multi-dimensional security challenges, mainly due to internal security dynamics, which are also linked with external factors. This factor makes the security scenario of South Asia more complex. The most dominant country in the region is India due to a growing economy, massive military spending, and a large population. Its dominance in South Asia makes it a unipolar region (where only one country dominates and faces no competition). At the same time, its hostile relations with Pakistan and vulnerability in case of any predicament make South Asian order bipolar. This research study has employed the qualitative method in which secondary sources of data have taken from existing literature, published and unpublished research works. One of the main findings of this research is that a strong partnership and cooperation between regional states, particularly between Pakistan and India, is vital to counter-terrorism and extremism. At the same time, an amicable solution to Afghan conflict is a must for regional peace and stability.

***KEYWORDS:** Afghanistan, Extremism, India, Pakistan, Security, South Asia, Terrorism.*

INTRODUCTION Regional Security Complex Theory is primarily based on the notion of security dynamics and regional models. According to Barry Buzan and Ole Waver, different regions are vital and integral parts of world politics. They developed a theoretical framework for analyzing the regional level as an independent subsystem, which includes distinctive, sturdy, and independent characteristics from the global level phenomenon. They developed this useful framework of 'Regional Security Complex Theory' for analyzing the regional perspective of security in the book 'Regions and Power: the Structure of International Security'(Barry Buzan, 2003). According to Buzan and waver, RSCT can penetratingly differentiate between regional and global level. Regional Security Complexes exist throughout the global system and "are defined by durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence. (Barry Buzan, 2003)" According to Buzan, with regional complex theory, global security and regional security can separately be analyzed based on something more realist and materialist than the constructivist concept of imagined political communities bound together by shared ideas and characteristics. First and foremost, the conceptualization of Regional Security Complex Theory requires clarifying several key definitions, namely, what is meant by the term 'region' and the term 'security.' Regional security complex is best to understand "outside-in" and "inside-out" security analysis as it

gives a clear view of security dynamics by distinguishing superpowers, great powers and regional powers. Superpowers are those who can maintain their hegemonic statuses at a global level, great powers are those who can go beyond two or more than two regions to pursue their interests, and regional powers are those who are influential in just their region. Regional security complex theory uses regional structures such as regional boundaries, anarchy-hierarchy, power polarity, discourses of peace, and hostility- securitization and desecuritization to evaluate essential changes in the region (Barry Buzan, 2003). It is a known fact that patterns of relations among regional states, whether it is friendly or hostile, because of conflicts or domestic factors shape the regional security dynamics. According to the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), to analyze the security of a region; RSCT requires analysis at four levels:

1.   The first level of analysis regional security is within the state or domestic level, where domestic security challenges, state's power structure, nature and vulnerabilities are analyzed to understand its security policies and challenges.

2.   The second level of analysis is the regional level, where relations among regional states are analyzed. This nature of relations among regional states forms the regional security complex.

3.   In the third level, intra-regional interactions have been analyzed because the relation of one region with other regions can significantly affect an RSC.

4.   Finally, the global level, where it examines the role of global powers in the region, and whether the superpower is influencing a region to pursue its interests and how it affects RSC.

Domestic Security Complexes South Asian states are experiencing an extreme level of poverty, deprivation, lack of primary education and health facilities, underdevelopment, and insufficient resources. Due to the economic crisis, all these problems have been aggravated. Due to this crisis, exports have been reduced, the unemployment rate has been increased, and foreign direct investment has dried up. The appalling economic circumstances, poverty, underdevelopment and lack of necessities in these countries present a fertile ground for extremism and intolerance. As a result of this situation, South Asia has developed a culture of religious, ethnic, communal, and sectarian intolerance. The rise in terrorism, religious extremism, violence, and militancy are few shreds of evidence of this intolerant culture in South Asian societies. A brief overview of threats to the internal security of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India are discussed below.

India India is a secular, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The social order is very complex as it composes of 2000 casts; dividing Hindu community into rigid hierarchical groups, eight main religions; Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc., and around 15 different local languages in different states of the country (Manor, 1996). India is the biggest state by area, population and economy in the region, with a diverse and complex society. India faces multi-dimensional threats such as ethnic clashes, religious conflicts, separatist movements, terrorist attacks and armed insurgency in Kashmir. The separatist movements based on ethnicity are gaining momentum in Assam,

Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram, demanding separation from the country (Varshney, 2007). The separatist movement in Punjab (Khalistan Movement) is based on both religion and ethnic grounds (Singh, 2000). The Hindu-Muslim religious clash is a major conflict in India (Varshney, 2001). There are several incidents of lynching of Muslims, but one major incident happened in Gujarat in 2002 when Narendra Modi was chief minister of Gujarat. A train of pilgrims was coming back from the destruction Ayodhya Mosque which was disputed. The train caught fire and fifty-seven pilgrims got burnt. Muslims were believed to be responsible for this incident and in reaction to that under Modi's watch, right-wing Hindus went burnt and killed 2000 Muslims in Gujarat and state police helped these mobs. (Majumde, 2011) The conflicts in the country are mainly ethnic and religious. Several other factors contribute to worsening the situation, such as underdevelopment, poverty, gender inequality, corruption, bad governance, and lack of basic health and education facilities.

In 2018, United Nations Human Rights issued a report on Human rights violations in Kashmir raised concern that there is an urgent need to address this issue as Indian security forces are involved in brutal killings, abductions, forced disappearances and rapes of Kashmiri men and women (Watch, 2018). According to Human rights organizations, in comparison to the year 2012, there was almost a 30 percent increase in communal violence during the general election in 2014 (Watch, 2014). According to the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, in the year 2013, almost 133 people died, and over 2000 got injured in almost 823 incidents of communal violence, and a total of 644 and 650 incidents of communal violence were reported in the year 2014 and 2015 respectively (T. E. Times, 2019b).

According to the report issued by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), these details were given by the ministry, and almost 1,227 incidents of communal violence were reported in the year 2014 only (Express, 2015). At the beginning of 2019, Dan Coats, Director of National Intelligence USA, told US lawmakers that the policies of BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have intensified communal conflicts in most of the BJP majority states (T. E. Times, 2019b). According to the Human Rights Watch report 2018, extreme violence has been continued against minorities, especially Muslims and Dalits (lowest cast in Hinduism) by Hindu extremist groups (Watch, 2018). The rise in Hindu extremism in the country, especially under the BJP government in recent years, has serious consequences. It is a major threat not only to the internal security of India but also to regional security.

Pakistan Pakistan is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. These social features make this society diverse but, at the same time, pose severe threats to its internal security and severe challenges to its governance. Since its inception, Pakistan has been suffering due to lack of political stability and incompetent governance, which has created serious challenges such as sectarianism, terrorism, religious extremism, intolerance, food, water and power shortages, and top of all economic instability. Underdevelopment, poverty, and inaccessibility of due share in the country's wealth are the root causes of

separatism in Baluchistan and various ethnic and sectarian conflicts among various groups. (Sahir & Qureshi, 2007)

War on terror in Afghanistan is another factor that has severely affected Pakistan's internal security. America initiated it after the 9/11 attacks on the US by the members of the terrorist group Al Qaeda. In return for this terrorist activity, the US attacked Afghanistan, and Pakistan joined the U.S's war against global terrorism. Pakistan deployed its military troops in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administrated Tribal Areas (PATA) to maintain its hold. After removal of Taliban regime due to US-led invasion in Afghanistan, Taliban and their supporters were pushed to leave Afghanistan and find out safe places to hide in nearby places and carry out their terrorist activities, so they moved to adjacent tribal areas of Pakistan and carried out deadly attacks from Pakistan's soil. Due to Pakistan's military presence in those areas, the Taliban and other terrorist groups started attacking Pakistani security forces and civilians. In response, Pakistan's military launched several operations on a massive scale to curb the menace of terrorism. Unfiltered mobility at the Pak-Afghan border was the biggest challenge as there were direct terrorist attacks from Afghan soil on Pakistani civilians at public places and security personnel. Resultantly, it severely affected the overall socio-economic development of Pakistan. According to the official reports, the economic loss is estimated at around US$ 120 billion, and Pakistan has lost almost 70,000 civilians and security forces personnel in suicide bombings and terrorist attacks (H. Khan, 2013). Pakistan launched several military operations across the country to curb terrorism. When Army Public School in Peshawar was attacked by militants where they brutally killed innocent children and staff members, the Government of Pakistan developed a National Action Plan in 2015 to crack down on terrorism (Saffee, 2015). After the successful military operations of Zarb-e-Azb, Khyber I-IV, and Rad-ul Fasad, which were launched as a measure to counter terrorism under the National Action Plan, Pakistan has achieved progressive improvement in country's overall security. There is a significant decline in suicide attacks, bombings, and causalities.

A Sydney based research institute for Economics and Peace issued terrorism index report in 2017. According to the report, Pakistan has achieved significant success in combating terrorism, and there is a significant decline in terrorist incidents and causalities.("Impact of War in Afghanistan and Ensuing Terrorism on Pakistan's Economy,") Despite all these efforts, Pakistan continues to be the victim of state-sponsor terrorism from its neighbors. In March 2016, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies arrested one Indian spy named Kulbhushan Jhadav while entering into Pakistan at Pak-Iran border. Later on, he confessed that he is a serving Indian naval officer, and his objective was to create instability and unrest in Baluchistan and Karachi. In December 2010, Ahmed Shuja Pasha, former Director General Military Operations Pakistan, presented a report to the National Assembly member. According to the report, Baloch separatists are getting funding from Russia, UAE, and India to create insurgency in the province (P. Today, 2015). The unrest and conflict in Afghanistan are among the major hurdles in regional peace, security, and development.

Pakistan hosted millions of Afghan refugees, which has not only burdened Pakistan's economy but also created internal security threats as Pakistan is still facing terrorist attacks from militants hide-outs present in Afghanistan.

Under the National Action Plan, Pakistan's government decided to take serious actions against all terrorist groups and organizations operating from Pakistani soil and damaging Pakistan's image globally. In the wake of the Pulwama attack in Jammu and Kashmir 2019, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies arrested 44 members of different banned organizations, including son and brother of Masood Azhar, Chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad (Post, 2019). According to authorities, this crackdown is a part of the National Action Plan, and it will continue against banned outfits to curb terrorism and violence across the country. Current insurgency and conflict in Baluchistan and Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) against extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and abductions in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa pose serious threats to the internal security of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2018). Internal political and economic instability has extremely affected the overall development of the country.

Afghanistan Afghanistan is a mountainous and landlocked country bordered by China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Afghanistan has been the main battlefield for the USA and NATO forces since the 9/11 incident, which has caused the instability in the whole region but specifically in Pakistan as a front-line state in the war on terror. Decades of war have left Afghanistan, one of the poorest underdeveloped countries in the world.

War on terror in Afghanistan has become the longest war in America's history. Afghanistan's security situation has become worse as the Taliban is even stronger now than before, and attacks from the Taliban are bigger, deadlier, and more frequent. The USA has realized that there is no military solution for Afghan conflict as this conflict has damaged Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure and has become the costliest war for America. As Trump's administration decided to end this most prolonged and costly through negotiations with the Taliban, regional countries, especially Pakistan and China, welcomed the USA's decision. However, they want to make sure that this should be done in a very systematic way; otherwise, the country would be in more chaos, which is not favorable to China and Pakistan. Pakistan is facilitating USA-Taliban talks as a mediator (T. J. Times, 2019). India has shown its concern regarding the USA's sudden decision to withdraw from Afghanistan as it was enjoying an influential role in Afghanistan under America's Umbrella (Iqbal, 2018). Internal and external factors complicate the country's internal security environment because everyone wants a piece of Afghanistan because of its massive natural resources reserves. It is a gateway to Central Asia, which is also considered one of the most resource-rich regions.(SAREEN, 2018). Afghanistan's internal security situation has become one of the reasons for poverty, forced migrations to neighboring states (notably Pakistan), and internal displacements (Saghafi-Ameri, 2011). All state-building plans at different times in Afghanistan's history failed primarily because of its societal structure, which is complex, conservative, and tribal (Dasgupta, 2013). However, the main

challenge Afghanistan is facing is an absence of effective government, and the Taliban are getting stronger and aggressively betrothed in promoting their interests in the country.

Inter-State Security Complexes Inter-state security complexes mainly focus on relations between two states in their security perspective as well as the regional security. For that reason, the subsequent discussion attempts to discuss Pakistan's security relations with two important regional states; India and Afghanistan.

Pakistan-India Relations Muslims and Hindus of the subcontinent struggled for freedom based on separate religious identities. They got independence from Britain, and Pakistan and India came into existence in August 1947. Since independence, India, and Pakistan have been in hostile relations since independence, separate religious identities turned into a political and military conflict between India and Pakistan. The Pakistan-India antagonistic relationship shaped the foundation of the Regional Security Complex at the domestic and regional levels.

In 1947, when Britain decided to leave, it divided subcontinent into two states; Muslim State Pakistan and speculatively secular but practically Hindu State India on 14 August 1947 and 15 August 1947, respectively. This was the largest human migration world has ever seen, but it was not peaceful as riots broke out across the region due to various factors and caused violence. The disputed territory of Kashmir is a core issue between the two countries. In 1947 and the following year, Pakistan and India fought the first war over Kashmir. In October 1947, few tribesmen belonged to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) invaded in Kashmir, a Muslim majority state. When Kashmiri Muslims revolted against Hindu Maharaja and faced an external invasion, the Maharaja of Kashmir asked the Indian government to help in return for acceding to India. He handed over state control to the Indian government, but it was not confirmed that the Maharaja did this under pressure from the Indian government or took this decision freely. Indo-Pak's first War continued until the second half of 1948. Pakistan and India agreed to hold a referendum in the state, which is yet to be held. Currently, Pakistan holds one-third of the Kashmir, which is referred to as Azad (free) Kashmir. India holds the remaining two-third part referring to as Jammu and Kashmir State.

In 1965, both countries fought a second war over Kashmir (Historian). In 1971, Pakistan and India fought the third war, and this time over East-Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto refused to accept the results of the 1970's general election as Mujeeb-ur-Rehman's party won the majority seats. It was Pakistan's internal and political matter, but India got involved and supported guerilla war by Awami League workers against Pakistan's military. Pakistani military cracked down on Dhaka, and on India's involvement, Pakistani air force launched pre-emptive strikes on Indian airbases in the northwest part of the country. In response, India launched a combined air, sea, and land attack on Pakistan. Pakistan's military surrendered at Dhaka, and East Pakistan became an independent country as Bangladesh on 16 December 1971. In 1999, the Kargil war was the first armed conflict that took place after both countries became nuclear powers.

India blames Pakistan based religious organizations Jaish-e-Muhammad, which operates under Masood Azhar and Lashkar-e- Taiba, which operates under Hafiz Saeed for the terrorist activities in India. According to the Indian government, Masood Azhar; Chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad was the mastermind behind the attack on the Indian parliament in 2001, terrorist attack on Pathankot air force base, terrorist attack on army camps in URI and the terrorist attack on Central Reserve Police Force (CRFP) in Pulwama Kashmir (Post, 2019). The Indian government could not provide any actionable shreds of evidence against Pakistan. In 2016, Indian media stated that India had launched surgical strikes on militants in response to an alleged attack on its army base in URI Kashmir in which 19 Indian soldiers were killed. Pakistan denied allegations of any involvement in the URI attack. According to Indian media, 19 Pakistani soldiers died in surgical strikes, but Pakistani army denied the event and said it was not more than cross border firing at the line of control in which two Pakistani soldiers were killed, and nine were injured. (BBC, 2016)

Indian Government blamed Hafiz Saeed, co-founder of Lashkar-Taiba and Chief of Jama'at-ud-Da'wah (Islamic Organizations in Pakistan) for Mumbai attacks on November 26th, 2008, killing 164 people and several injured (Post, 2019). Elias Davidsson, a German Jewish author, wrote a book on the incident entitled: *The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence*. The author revealed through documented proofs and facts that Mumbai attacks were planned by the Indian Intelligence agency RAW and Israeli Intelligence agency Mossad along with the help of America to put external pressure on Pakistan. He further added that all India's institutions, such as government, parliament, bureaucracy, armed forces, Mumbai police, RAW, judiciary, and media, worked collectively to cover the truth behind this incident (McQueen, 2017).

In February 2019, a Kashmiri young man attacked buses in Pulwama Kashmir carrying CRFP personnel. According to the reports, almost 45 army men killed, and many were severely injured. The Indian government blamed Jaish-e-Muhammad and Pakistan for the attack and claimed that Jaish-e-Muhammad was responsible for the attack, which Pakistan has denied. The attack on CRFP in Pulwama led to the most serious conflict escalation between the two countries in recent years (Post, 2019). India breached Pakistan's sovereignty by entering Pakistan's airspace on 26 February 2019 and dropping bombs in an empty area near LOC, claiming it an attack on Jaish-e-Muhammad's training camp. Pakistan denied Indian claims, and on 27 February 2019, Indian airplanes again entered Pakistan's air space, and this time Pakistan shoot down India's two fighter planes. The international community asked both countries to de-escalate the conflict as both countries are nuclear powers. America, UK, France, and Israel supported India's move, but Pakistan's response was shocking for the international community.

China supported Pakistan by saying that India should stop blaming Pakistan for Kashmir uprisings as the Indian government itself responsible for the uprisings in Kashmir due to wrong handling (T. E. Times, 2019c). France, with US and UK backing, made a move to declare Masood Azhar a global terrorist under the United Nations sanctions regime, but for the fourth time, China blocked the move (T. E. Times, 2019a). The USA and other member

states of UNSC showed their concern that blocking the move to declare Masood Azhar as a terrorist is not the right decision and not in favor of regional peace but according to China, it will not eliminate the root cause of the issue but will affect the regional security adversely(B. Today, 2019). On May 1st, 2019, China lifted its objections over the move and the UN added Masood Azhar to its global terrorists (AlJazeera, 2019).

On August 5, 2019, India revoked Kashmir's constitutional status and violated its previous agreements by scrapping Article 370 and 35A. This article allows Kashmir to have its administrative government and constitution capable of making decisions for all matters except foreign affairs, defense, and communications. Abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A which allows the citizens of other places to buy land in Kashmir, secure government local jobs, scholarships and settle there permanently would change the demography of the region which is also against the UNSC resolutions over Kashmir and also Simla Accord which Pakistan and India signed in 1972 according to which India cannot take any decision regarding Kashmir unilaterally. After the abrogation of Article370 and 35 A, the Indian Government put Kashmir under security lockdown and cut off the lanes of communication, the Internet, mobile phones, and landlines. Top Kashmiri politicians have been house arrested. The move has increased tensions between India and Pakistan. Pakistan has taken this matter to the UNSC, where permanent members of the UNSC had an urgent meeting over Kashmir on Pakistan's request. Pakistan suspended its trade and diplomatic relations with India, and India's high commission was sent back to India. While giving an official statement, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said China does not accept India's unilateral action as Kashmir is a historical dispute and should be resolved according to UNSC resolutions (Shabbir, 2019) .

Other than Kashmir, both countries accuse each other of supporting separatists and militants to create unrest in their respective countries. India accuses Pakistan of supporting the Khalistan separatist movement in Indian Punjab. The Indian government accuses Pakistan intelligence agencies of supporting Kashmiris in their freedom movement and backing Masood Azhar and Hafiz Saeed to create unrest in the country. At the same time, Pakistan alleges India for training terrorists and providing them financial and weaponry assistance to create instability and unrest in Pakistan. In 2016, during his speech on Independence Day, the Indian Prime Minister openly expressed his support for Baloch nationalists (India, 2016). In March 2016, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies arrested one Indian spy named Kulbhushan Jhadav while entering into Pakistan at Pak-Iran border. Later on, he confessed that he is a serving Indian naval officer, and his objective was to create instability and unrest in Baluchistan and Karachi (Dawn, 2016). In December 2010, Ahmed Shuja Pasha, former Director General Military Operations Pakistan, presented a report to the member of the National Assembly. According to the report, Baloch separatists get funding from Russia, UAE, and India to create insurgency in the province. (P. Today, 2015).

South Asian countries are deprived of countries and facing severe challenges. Both Pakistan and India face severe challenges such as poverty, underdevelopment, illiteracy,

unemployment, etc., and there is a dire need to solve their bilateral disputes, especially the Kashmir issue with peaceful means. India has ignored UNSC resolutions on the Kashmir issue, and Indian armed forces violate human rights in Kashmir. India-Pakistan water Dispute is also associated with the Kashmir issue as India has violated the agreements under Indus-Water Treaty (IWT) by building a large number of dams which has affected the flow of water to Pakistan. The legal battle regarding violation of the Indus-Water Treaty between India and Pakistan at many international forums also proves a lack of trust between these countries.

In 1998, Pakistan successfully conducted nuclear tests and emerged as a seventh nuclear state in the world. Since Pakistan and India both became nuclear states, the nuclear dimension has become important and prominent in the discussion of South Asian security. According to many security experts in Pakistan, India is the major destabilizing factor in South Asia, and all the major powers like the US, France, UK, and Israel are supporting India, which became a primary security concern for Pakistan. U.S is supporting India in arms and nuclear build ups and supports its aspirations to attain a permanent membership at UNSC and NSG. In this situation, prospects of regional security are not favorable, and the chances of escalating tensions are very high.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations After India, Pakistan shares the second largest border estimated at 2430 kilometers (1510 miles) with Afghanistan. Pakistan's western provinces Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and tribal areas share a border with Afghanistan's Southern and North Eastern provinces of Konar, Nuristan, Khost, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimruz, and Badakhshan. Pak-Afghan border was an open border due to which there were frequent movements between the two countries. One reason for these massive movements was the landscape of the area, which makes it difficult for the security forces to monitor; secondly, people on both sides of the border belong to the same ethnic group. Torkham, between Peshawar and Jalalabad and in Spinboldak between Kandahar and Quetta, were main border crossings between Pakistan and Afghanistan. After 9/11, due to massive attacks on Pakistan from Afghan territory, Pakistan's army decided to fence the Pak-Afghan border to restrict the terrorists. According to the sources, the project will be completed by the end of 2019 (T. E. Tribune, 2018).

Undoubtedly, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are very critical as any new development that takes place in Afghanistan can affect Pakistan's internal security and stability directly. Afghanistan has been facing severe inter and intrastate conflicts for the last thirty-five years. The problems Pakistan is facing due to instability in Afghanistan includes cross border movements of terrorists, settlement of Afghan refugees, drug and human trafficking, smuggling of arms and other goods. The frequent cross border movements of militants to create unrest in both countries were the leading cause of the trust deficit between the two states. Due to a lack of trust, both countries could not develop a firm counter-terrorism strategy and a framework to resolve other problems related to Pak-Afghan border security. Afghanistan's weak power structure, unpredictable political future, cross border suicide attacks, India's increasing role under the umbrella of American forces were the major

factors that affected Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in the post 9/11 period. Due to the safe havens for militants in both countries, militants became more vigorous, and it increased their vulnerability (T. Masood, 2016). The US killed Mullah Mansoor in a drone strike in Noshki, and it severely affected Pakistan's honest efforts in the Quadrilateral Contact Group (QCG) in an attempt to find an amicable solution for the Afghan conflict.

Trump Administration and its western allies realized that by ignoring Pakistan, they would not find an amicable solution for this long-armed conflict as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated and Taliban are as strong as they were before. Pakistan is now playing a significant role as a facilitator between the Afghan Taliban and the United States of America to stabilize this war-torn state. US Special envoy for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Taliban were negotiating on the issue with the help of Pakistan (T. J. Times, 2019) and on February 29, 2020, Taliban and the US signed an agreement to end Afghanistan war.

It is a fact that the good relations between the two states will help in countering terrorism and extremism. It will not only in favor of both countries but also for the whole of South Asia. As both countries share cultural and religious affinities, they can enhance cooperation in socio-cultural and politico-economic spheres. Till 2015, Afghanistan was making the maximum trade with Pakistan, and Afghanistan was the second-largest market for Pakistan's exports. Afghanistan's current situation is not in favor of Pakistan and regional imperatives such as receiving economic benefits compelling Pakistan to establish friendly and close relations with Afghanistan because Afghanistan is a gateway to resource-rich Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, Pakistan is a way to get access to the Arabian Sea because Afghanistan is a landlocked country (Chandio, 2014). In this context, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will be equally advantageous for the entire region.

Intra-Regional and Global Security Complexes In the Cold war era, Pakistan joined the US bloc, and at the same time, it established close relations with China. As Pakistan and India were rivals, India joined the USSR bloc and received massive military assistance from the Soviet Union, but in the 1980s, there was the suspension of military aid from Soviets for a brief time of period. During the 1990s, the Soviet Union restored the transfer of military technology to enhance India's military capabilities, but as Pakistan initiated its nuclear and missile program, its relations with America fell to the lowest point. (Jones, 2004)

After the 9/11 attacks, America and Pakistan came closer once again and Pakistan became a front line state in the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan was apprehensive over the growing Indo-US strategic partnership. The US increased its interest in developing close strategic ties with India as India aspired to become a regional power (Javaid & Fatima, 2012). It affected Pakistan's relations with the US as Pakistan believed that the US's transfer of technology to India would increase instability and marginalizes its role in South Asia. However, after 9/11, Pakistan and China have consolidated their strategic relations and at the same time, India and China also strengthened their bilateral

relationship through negotiations over a border dispute, economic cooperation, and signing various MOUs to minimize hostility between the two countries (Jones, 2004).

The US defense support to India helped it have the upper hand in defense capabilities over Pakistan, which disturbed the current balance of power in the region. However, in the past, along with supporting India, the United States has also acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices and efforts to fight against terrorism to balance its relations with both countries. U.S relations with any of the countries depend on its agenda and national interests in the region. Presently, Indo-US strategic partnership is growing, and there are high chances of strong collaboration between the two countries in different areas of their strategic interests in the future (Jones, 2004).

Needless to say, that Post 9/11 period has been witnessing re-alignments and re-adjustments in bilateral and multilateral partnerships among global powers and between major powers and developing states as well. In South Asia, India has developed close partnerships with most of the major powers, especially with the US, Japan, and Australia, resulting in the expansion of Pakistan's strategic partnership with China. These developments complicate the regional security scenario of South Asia as the USA is supporting India in its conventional and nuclear arms buildup, which is compelling Pakistan to enhance its capabilities.

India's Hegemonic Designs The main aim of any country is to achieve hegemonic status and expand its influence over its neighboring states and beyond creates instability and insecurity in the respective region. In South Asia, India enjoys a dominant status due to its large area, the second largest population of the world, growing economy, and a strong military, and it creates insecurity among other small countries of the region and India's aggressive policies to control the region is intensifying this insecurity. India's attempts to achieve its objective are certainly not in favor of regional peace and creating threats to South Asian security (Hanif, 2010).

In May 1998, India acquired a nuclear state status by conducting successful nuclear tests. This development was indeed a disturbing factor for other regional states, especially Pakistan. In response to these five nuclear tests, Pakistan conducted six nuclear tests at the same time to maintain the balance of power, nuclear deterrence and to guarantee its security against India's conventional and nuclear capabilities. After India's proactive Cold Start's strategy, Pakistan's military establishment decided to improve its nuclear doctrine and force posture with major developments at the technological end, such as induction of low yield ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles, etc. China is cooperating with Pakistan to reduce its vulnerability to India (Abdullah, 2018) which is a great concern not just for India but also for the USA as Pakistan's dependence on the USA for sophisticated defense supplies is reducing due to China's defense cooperation. Presently, India is enhancing its defense capabilities by purchasing sophisticated defense supplies not only from its old ally Russia but also from the USA, France, and other western countries. India is quite successful in balancing its relations with its old strategic partner Russia and the USA. India signed an S-400 missile

defense system deal with Russia worth US$ 5.43 billion (T. E. Times, October 5, 2018). It was a significant strategic move by India, which has multiple dimensions.

Firstly, it shows that India will not abandon its oldest strategic partner Russia because of US pressure and not afraid of sanctions from the USA under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). As India believes that acquiring the S-400 anti-aircraft defense system will help them to keep balance against China as previously China signed S-400 deal with Russia as well. US-supported India's stance by stating that CAATSA is not for destroying the defense capabilities of our allies. (T. E. Times, October 5, 2018) It also shows that India is successfully influencing America's policies towards South Asia and has leverage over the US.

Secondly, Russia was trying to maintain a good relationship with Pakistan after India's tilt towards the United States; it created a fear in India that Russia can drift towards Pakistan and establish a Strategic Partnership. To counter this threat, India has engaged Russia through a successful S-400 deal as India knows that Russia is a cash-starved country, and defense technology is the major exportable commodity that Russia owns. By engaging Russia successfully, India has restricted Pakistan's political potential. In 2018, India conducted a test of its supersonic interceptor missile with a 5,000 km range (T. E. Times, July 14, 2018). According to Pakistani officials, India's such moves are disturbing the balance of power in the region, and of course, it compels Pakistan to continue upgrading its defense capabilities (T. E. Times, July 12, 2018).According to security experts, India's hegemonic plans are against Pakistan and as well as china centric. Indian Army Chief Bipin Rawat said that the Indian army is ready and capable of fighting two-front wars against Pakistan and China. In a personal Interview with Imtiaz Gul, an expert on Pakistan's defense policies and Executive Director of the Centre for Research and Security Studies expressed his views regarding the issue. He stated: "America's principal interest is to contain and restrict China through India. India uses the US in its strategy towards Pakistan, but For USA target is not Pakistan.

On the other hand, India's target is not China and it is not capable of fighting against China, and in fact, there is no possibility of any large scale conflict between India and China. The main target is Pakistan, and Pakistan needs an out of box thinking to deal with this existential conflict with India as India is far ahead in utilizing its media and lobbying tools for its interests and Pakistan is lacking in these skills and is not successful to show the real picture of India at the global level."(Gul, PersonalCommunication October 29, 2018)

The natural inequalities between India and other South Asian states have created different policy aims. In order to deal with India and its hegemonic attitude, the South Asian countries have adopted different approaches, such as multilateral diplomacy and alliances with external powers. However, India is determined to achieve its objective to expand its influence and achieve hegemonic status. Kishore Dash explained this situation by stating that India's grand strategy splits India's relations with other states into the following three categories:

1.   Immediate Neighbors: Countries that share borders with India. India wants to dominate these states and does not want to accept interference from external powers.

2.   Extended Neighborhood: Other countries in the South Asia region and littoral states of the Indian Ocean where India is challenging other powers for its dominance and protection of its own interests.

3.   Global circle: India is trying to attain a major power status at global level to influence global affairs and politics. (Dash, 2008)

To respect sovereignty and freedom of other countries by all the regional countries is the foremost step towards regional peace and security. However, India's non-cooperative attitude towards other regional states and hegemonic attitude is not helping to promote peace and security in the region as smaller states cannot ensure stability until and unless India will not change its attitude (Z. Khan, 2005). India's hegemonic attitude, discrimination against other small South Asian states, and its policies for attaining great power status pose serious security threats to South Asia. Since 9/11, South Asia has been witnessing the process of Realignment as the hegemonic attitude of India forced most of the South Asian states to align themselves with China.

Conclusion South Asian states face multi-dimensional traditional as well as non-traditional security threats that are interlinked and have an aptitude to affect the world security environment. Extra-regional powers such as the USA, China, Russia, and other western powers are also involved in regional affairs to promote and save their strategic interests. This sort of global engagement further complicates the regional security environment. For the regional peace and security, it is imperative to resolve conflicts between India and Pakistan. An amicable solution on peace Afghan conflict and promote trade among regional states are equally important to stabilize the region.

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