
TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN: IMPERATIVES HANDLING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

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INTRODUCTION

Security is an un-contested primary objective of individuals and states. Thus, the central question of study is: does the US exit strategy erode or enhance Afghanistan's security? The central question addresses the implications of security relationship at all the three levels: domestic, regional and international. The study is divided into four parts, Introduction incorporates relevance and significance of topic and theoretical framework. Part two consists of internal challenges to security in Afghanistan. Part three highlights external challenges and

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finally the conclusion.

Whether high level security i.e., of the state or low level security i.e., promotion of individual security is rooted in competing schools of thought. These are based on Hobbesian, Groatian or the Kantian traditions in IR literature. A new approach incorporating traditional and non traditional sources of security emerged through “Copenhagen School”. Barry Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde’s work: *On Security*, has shifted the focus of IR discipline from purely state security to human security.⁽¹⁾

Security in this study is defined thus as a human condition, empirically verifiable through the opinion polls that what people think of their security. In addition, the collapse of Soviet Union as a result of internal “Societal Security” dilemmas and the rise of non-state actors in the Post-Cold War prompted the incorporation of sub-state groups into security studies.⁽²⁾

‘Conditions under which mostly people are free to carry on with their lives and more around most of the time without having a fear of getting killed or injured in a terrorized act.’ According to Etzioni, instead of assuming that democratization begets security and helps in resolving conflicts, essentially it is security that drives democracy.⁽³⁾

Security First model focuses on basic security of not just western life but life simply, a respect for all lives.⁽⁴⁾ Recent post-conflict ‘nation-building’ exercises in Afghanistan, Iraq have been notable for a militarization of development projects, with remaining armed forces being redeployed to reconstruction tasks and, ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the locals. In 2004 when *Medicines Sans Frontiers* pulled out of Afghanistan, declared, ‘we refuse to accept a vision of a future where civilians trapped in the hell of war can only receive life-saving aid from the armies that wage it.’⁽⁵⁾

Etzioni's point of view is that intervention also should be limited to provide basic security rather than changing regime and troops should not be used for national-building and reconstruction purposes.⁽⁶⁾

REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

According to Barry Buzan a 'security complex involves a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot be realistically considered apart from one another. The regional states are interrelated in such a complex so that the security related domestic events in any member state has a major impact on the other.

The region and securitization can be glued together positively where the members have similar threat perceptions, and negatively, when the actors view each other as part of the problem. This gives rise to two kinds of patterns either of 'amity or 'enmity'. The distribution of power also ranges from unipolarity to multipolarity. The patterns of amity and enmity are influenced by such factors as history geography, culture and religion.⁽⁷⁾

The involvement of global powers is explained in terms of overlay and penetration. Another assumption of a Regional Security Complex is the 'location' occupied by one or more units referred to as 'insulator'. Insulator thus stands at the centre of a strong pattern of securitization and not at its edge. Therefore, it may not be confused with a buffer.⁽⁸⁾ The Regional Security Complex theory is related to four levels of analysis:

i. Domestic, that focuses on intra-state relations incorporating internal strengths and weaknesses. It deals with varying levels of

state-societal interactions.

ii. Inter-state relations. For example, relations between India, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.

iii. The region's interaction with the neighbouring regions. For example, Central Asia, South West Asia or the Middle East connected via the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.

iv. The interplay between powers at the systemic level and at the regional level.

Afghanistan seems to be the centerpiece or the insulator since security related domestic events have a major impact on the states located in this region. This brings us to the second part of this study which deals with the internal security challenges of Afghanistan.

INTERNAL SECURITY DYNAMICS OF AFGHANISTAN

A few challenges may be summarized as:

I. INSURGENCY

It is violent, organized and active and poses formidable challenges to normalcy of life and democracy promotion. Since 2001, the losses of foreign forces exceed 1,000 with over 600 for US alone. Afghan security forces have grown slowly and remain undersized. Police and border security forces have followed a similar trajectory.⁽⁹⁾

On 30% of Afghan army and 3% of existing Afghan police force rank in the top two tiers of combat readiness. Kidnapping is rampant and roads unsafe for foreigners as well as Afghan themselves. Taliban increasingly are able to disrupt normal commerce and movement. Afghan communities are destroyed on the basis of ethnic, linguistic and religious frictions. Due to the influence of local war lords who by

coercive and covert means have positioned themselves beyond the reach of state.⁽¹⁰⁾

II. DEMOCRACY IN AFGHANISTAN

In 2004-05 elections the *Taliban* and *Pashtuns* were replaced by members of northern alliance. However, elections reveal the dominance of former *Mujahideen* group known as *Tanzim* and their control of armed factions. Both the *Jamiat-e-Islami* and *hazb-e-Islami* as well as *Shia Hazb-e-Wahdat* and the northern Uzbek and Turkmen based *Jumbesh-a-Mili* are highly personalized, factionalized and only partially committed to democratic values.⁽¹¹⁾

In 2009-10 presidential, provincial and parliamentary elections, warlords and *Pashtun* leaders won a large number of election seats. Allegations of fraud and rigging were leveled against the Karzai government. Dissident groups and *Taliban* increased their insurgent activities; further curbing peace and stability needed for one functioning of democracy in Afghanistan.

III. THE COURT SYSTEM

The court system is weak and only 20% of civil and criminal disputes come into the formal justice system. Court processes are tainted by corruption and inefficiency. There is continuing reliance on customary practices and even preference for the popularity of *Taliban*-Style courts in Afghanistan.⁽¹²⁾ This has resulted in the re-empowering of the warlords being defeated in 2001. The institutions of national-building, the executive (military and bureaucracy) legislative (judiciary and police) government (development and security) are not at par in large areas of Afghanistan. History of Afghanistan is such that *Taliban* invest in justice though not in institution building. Thus *Mullah* or a

Qazi is installed instantly though no money is invested in school.⁽¹³⁾

IV. DRUG TRAFFICKING, CROSS-BORDER INFILTRATION AND SMUGGLING

According to the estimates of UN office of Drugs and Crime, 2011 Afghanistan is the world's largest supplier of opium. The seven provinces in the north-west of Afghanistan where there are permanent *Taliban* settlements, cultivate and supply 98% of Afghanistan's opium. It is in the countryside that organized crime groups profit from instability and pose serious challenges to security, governance and stability in Afghanistan.⁽¹⁴⁾ In addition, smuggling of banned goods, drugs and weapons from Afghanistan severely damages Afghan-Pakistan-Transit Trade.

Drug traffickers exploit the deteriorating security situation in the trijunctional border area connecting Afghanistan's Helmand province with Iranian Balochistan and Pakistan's Balochistan province. It requires concerted efforts by the three physically connected states in the regional security complex through joint patrolling, sharing of information, industrialization and establishment of alternative development projects in poppy growing areas.

Afghan provinces like Kunar and Nuristan have become the 'safe havens' for terrorists, who as a matter of routine attack and target Pakistani security forces and innocent civilians. The relevance of regional security complex theory is established in the backdrop of 100 security check-posts being established all along the border by Pakistan Army due to challenges faced by domestic situation of Afghanistan. Indeed a 'low number of Afghan security posts and lack of security personnel are of the main reasons for increased terrorist infiltration in Pakistan. This has impacted the bilateral relations negatively.'⁽¹⁵⁾

CONSEQUENCES FOR PAKISTAN'S SECURITY

Unbalanced support of the US within region has eroded Pakistan's security vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India. Obama administration perceives Pakistan as a failing state and by attaching it with Afghanistan US has undermined Pakistan's efforts against terrorism.

The collapse of *Taliban* regime and triumph of Northern Alliance resulted in an increase in Indian government's activities along the Pakistan – Afghanistan border. Pakistan believes that Indian consulates behind their humanitarian aid are creating instability in Pakistan's already troubled areas in Balochistan through its intelligence agency RAW.⁽¹⁶⁾

A related spillover is the sectarian violence in Balochistan, *Taliban's* presence in northern part of province. Also politically and ethnically motivated target killings and cycles of violence that completely halted law and order situation in Karachi.

Domestic events in Afghanistan as an insulator state are the major cause of friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The issue of Arales and other foreign fighters using Afghani or Pakistani territory for their campaign against West is a great concern for both the states. Failure of law and order in Afghanistan is likely to have grave consequences for the security in the region.⁽¹⁷⁾

A cross border attack was launched from the territory of Afghanistan in Dir by some 300 to 400 militants who attacked villages and burnt schools in Une, 2011. Army chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani told a visiting European delegation that Islamabad will not accept a solution that undermines Pakistan's strategic interests.⁽¹⁸⁾

COIN: The Counter Insurgency Strategy adopted by Gen. Kayani, Zardari's government and the anti-terrorism bill 2010 introduced in the senate of Pakistan aims at flushing out the terrorists from Pakistan.

After the success of operations *Rah-e-Haq* and *Rah-e-Nijat*, operation *Khwak ba de Sham* (I will teach you a lesson) in Orakzai completed successfully in South Waziristan. An insurgent stronghold *Damadda* was also taken over by Pakistan's armed forces. To regain control over Orakzai and Khurram Agency destroying TTP leadership and to deny further safe havens by regrouping is vital for military's counter terrorism goals.⁽¹⁹⁾

Amid US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan peace talks with TTP top leaders and other militant groups across FATA have also started to take place. Karzai organized in June 2010 a grand peace *Jirga* in Kabul attended by 600 delegates including tribal elders, religious leaders and Afghan elders.⁽²⁰⁾

President Obama in a major speech on 27 March 2009 unveiled a new US strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. It required a standing, trilateral dialogue among the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This meant a 'Contact Group' to build better understanding and cooperation for providing regional security, by eliminating extremist groups and their safe havens.⁽²¹⁾

Obama administration perceives Pakistan as a failing state and by attaching it with Afghanistan in the context of Af-Pak Policy has ignored Pakistan's efforts against terrorism. However, on 27 January 2011 Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed on a joint commission for reaching out to Afghan *Taliban* and Kabul formally assigned the role of facilitator to Islamabad. The joint peace commission included diplomatic military and intelligence representatives of both countries plus the deputy chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council.

Handling international security challenges thus required joint efforts on the part of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The major objective of the high level delegation of Afghan Peace Council led by

Prof. Rabbani in January 2011 was to allow Pakistan the role of a peace maker by accommodating its genuine security concerns. Similarly, Afghan president stated that any decision about permanent US military bases in Afghanistan would be subject to the wishes of Afghan people and neighbours, particularly Pakistan, China and Iran.⁽²²⁾

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement of 28 Oct. 2010 signed in Islamabad has replaced the 1965 bilateral agreement that governed the transit of goods to land locked Afghanistan. After PM Gillani's Kabul visit in 2010 it has also been agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade from \$2billion to \$5billion by 2015.

Two events in September 2011, exposed the effectiveness of ISAF, Afghan national army and the US. On 13 September, 2011 terrorists attacked near the US embassy in the high security zone and ISAF head quarters that lasted over 20 hours. On 20 September, 2011, the former president of Afghanistan Prof. Burhan.ud.din Rabbani was killed by a terrorist posing as intermediary of the *Taliban*. Following the terrorist attacks in Kabul the US defense secretary Leon Panetta threatened Pakistan fails to take operation inside Pakistan Territory in North Waziristan against the Haqqani Network.⁽²³⁾

It is a misperception. Pakistan does not depend upon Haqqani a non-state actor's network for its defense. According to Siraj.ud.Din Haqqani's interview to reuters from an undisclosed location, he has reiterated the support of Afghanistan for their cause to get rid of the occupation forces. In the past US tried to strike deal with them by offering lucrative posts in the Afghan government. However, he

refused and belong to the Jadran tribe of Paktia in Afghanistan and feel secure among their own people.⁽²⁴⁾ By far, the coalition forces have not been successful in their efforts to counter insurgency. Each NATO country gives priority basically to their national interest first and alliance second. For example, while insurgency mounted in Kandahar, the NATO forces did not risk going into south. *Taliban* successfully exploited this and intelligently applied guerrilla tactics from their sanctuaries in tribal areas, south east of Afghanistan.⁽²⁵⁾

EXOGENOUS CHALLENGES TO SECURITY: US UNILATERALISM

The Bush administration in 2008 authorized secret CIA unilateral operations to carry out drone attacks inside Pakistani territory. Under suspicious of *Taliban* and al *Qaeda* hide outs such violations of Pakistani territory resulted in severe public back-lash and impacted Pakistan's domestic security.⁽²⁶⁾

A study conducted by New America by New America Foundation about drones in Pakistan showed 263 drone strikes in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa since 2004, including 50 in 2011. According to London-based bureau of Investigative Journalism, drone attacks killed 168 children in last 7 years. Only 4% of 2900 people killed so far were militants. Drone attacks are a serious “violation of international law and undermine rules designed to protect the right of life.”⁽²⁷⁾

45 people were killed in Data Khel area of North Waziristan. This was a deadly attack against a peace *jirga* in the aftermath of the release of Raymond Davis.⁽²⁸⁾

A severe blow to Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity of its military services was done on 2 May 2011 with US-led covert

operation in Abbottabad. Pakistan criticized it as ‘unauthorised unilateral action’. The brunt of the incident instantly fell on the Pakistani forces. A naval base came under siege by the TTP and Para military cadets were blown up as the revenge of Bin Laden.⁽²⁹⁾

Increased US involvement and presence in every sector of Pakistan has added to the mistrust. Following the inspection of records by the intelligence agencies in Pakistan, it was revealed that 414 non-diplomats were working in diplomatic capacity. ISI directorate officials already conveyed to be treated as allies and not satellites.⁽³⁰⁾

REGIONAL STATES: INDIAN INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IMPACT ON SECURITY.

In the Post-Cold War era India’s interest and presence in Afghanistan is all about India’s ability to emerge as an extra regional power moving towards great power status. India’s engagements in Afghanistan have been broadly focused in the area of security, economy, politics and culture.⁽³¹⁾

SECURITY IMPERATIVES.

India’s concerns are related with the terrorist hide outs in the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the spillover of terrorism into India. A strong stable and democratic Afghanistan would reduce the ‘dangers of extremism and violence, destabilising the region.

Indian objective is to secure its outer periphery and to forestall anti-Indian elements in the new Afghan Political Security setup. As the member committee of peace building mission it has provided 85,000 troops, civilian police for peace keeping operations and millions of dollars.⁽³²⁾

India has deployed Into-Tibetan Police Force (ITPF) as well as army commandos to protect its embassy in Kabul, Consulates in Herat, Jalalabad and other key Indian installations and personnel.⁽³³⁾ India has also constructed hydro-electric project in Herat, and the Zararij-Delaram road connecting Ring Road in Afghanistan to the Iranian Port in Chahbahar. India has also sanctioned Rs. 361.87 Crores for Salma Dam Power Project in Herat. It has established medical missions, opened schools, 400 buses for public transport, and given 3 aircrafts to Afghanistan's airline Ariana. India views Afghanistan as bridge between Indian and Central Asia.⁽³⁴⁾

Despite Pakistan's repeated denials India and the Karzai government have been accusing Pakistan of sponsoring cross-border terrorism and harbouring terrorists on its soil. Pakistan on the other hand expressed concern regarding the opening of four Indian Consulates besides the embassy in Afghanistan. Particularly in Kandahar and Jalalabad along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. Though, India is the fifth largest donor in Afghanistan's reconstruction work, yet President Karzai at times tries to balance the relationship diplomatically with both India and Pakistan. He once stated, India is a good friend', while Pakistan is a 'cojoined' twin of Afghanistan.⁽³⁵⁾

IRAN

Persia's historical claims to Herat were of long standing, as shown in the British foreign office document. It had been the capital of Eastern Khorasan and geographically was not separated by any natural barrier from *Mashhad*.⁽³⁶⁾ Thus US intervention in Afghanistan is viewed with apprehension in Iran. It was the CIA that had helped creation in Pakistan so-called madrassas of extremist Wahhabi teaching in early 1990's.⁽³⁷⁾

Insurgency in Balochistan likewise has serious repercussions for security in neighbouring Iran.

CHINA

US increased presence in every sector of Pakistan makes it easier for them to monitor Chinese and Iranian presence. US views China as a competitor and a potential threat in the region. Pakistan and China reached an agreement under which Pakistan will have fifth Chinese-build nuclear reactor, a deal which alarms the US.⁽³⁸⁾

Similarly Iran is a neighbor and a strategic partner of Pakistan in the region. The US policies aimed at bringing about regime change and Washington has put Iran under more sanctions targeting its energy sector. These sanctions have negative impact on Pakistan's energy interests as well.⁽³⁹⁾

Then, the US military base at Ganci in Kyrgyzstan is at a stone's throw from China. China understands US physical presence as its encirclement. It has also presented the objective to revive the old silk route connecting China's Xinjiang with the Persian Gulf. It is a Muslim majority province of China comprising Uyghur Muslims having historic cultural and religious links with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Xinjiang is thus vulnerable to penetration of extremists from Afghanistan. Therefore, China has a keen interest in the stability of Afghanistan. More so, as it has invested heavily in the Aynak copper fields in Afghanistan that has raised its stakes in countering insurgency in Afghanistan.

RUSSIA

Russia has keenly encamped for investing in Afghanistan and restoring old ties. Russia wrote off 93% of Afghanistan's Soviet era debts to

strengthen bilateral relations. These seems to be a revival of frequent diplomatic visits particularly from the Afghan side and Moscow reopened its consulate in *Mazar-i-Sharif*. Moscow has expressed its readiness to rebuild war torn Afghanistan and is reconstructing the 142 facilities built by the Soviet Union the country. Russia is also eager to resume cooperation in aiding the military and offering military technical supplies.⁽⁴⁰⁾

CONCLUSION

The details of the endgame in Afghanistan are still not finalized as yet. It remains to be seen how stable the post-exist Afghan set-up would be, even in a partial withdrawal. Seth Jones, an advisor to the special operations forces in Afghanistan submitted a plan before the senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2011. The possible scenarios are small, medium and large troop withdrawals. The Pentagon's preference is for fair troop's presence in Afghanistan.⁽⁴¹⁾

The three scenarios by Andrew E. Axum as Afghanistan 2011: Three Scenarios, Centre for New American Security, Washington D.C.

THE FIRST SCENARIO

US WITHDRAWAL: RETURN OF TALIBAN

If the Vacuum is filled by the defeated party then insurgencies, regional instability and sectarian violence would increase it seems to be the worst case scenario having the experience of *Taliban* intransigence Pakistan has realized that Post-Cold War period world has changed. Therefore, Pakistan also needs alliance with non-*Taliban* elements in Afghanistan.

THE SECOND SCENARIO

US-LIMITED ENGAGEMENT: INTENSIFICATION OF THE PROXY WAR.

The most probable outcome, with troops limited to protect key cities. A (FID) foreign internal defence model.⁽⁴²⁾ Countryside be open to *Taliban's* influence. In this case the present geo-political competition and support for proxies would continue. In this case there is the possibility of the balkonisation of Afghanistan into spheres of influence. Indian can continue with its aid and development strategy in the north and west. India would like to protect aid-project in Afghanistan.⁽⁴³⁾

THE THIRD SCENARIO

LONG TERM BUILDING ON AFGHAN – STATE CAPACITY.

It involves additional resources for training troops and institutional building by US. Such achievement is difficult when US is hard pressed economically with a diminished public support.

Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid argue that Afghanistan's problem could be resolved through the regional solution to first address the outstanding disputes of Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Lisa Curtis in her testimony before the subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, U.S House of Representative on 31 March 2009 stated that transformation of Pakistan – Afghanistan ties can only take place in an overall context of improved Pakistan – Indian relations. A peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of both India and Pakistan⁽⁴⁴⁾

Indo-Pak peace dialogue seems to be a step towards confidence building. For a stable and prosperous future of this region the three stake holders need to devise cooperative policies that accommodate

the genuine interests and address the security concerns.

HOSTILITY OF NORTHERN ALLIANCE TOWARDS PAKISTAN

Wali Masood the Afghan ambassador in London and the brother of Sher e Panjsher, Ahmed Shah Masood stated that: “The Pakistani Government and the ISI had been responsible for backing *Taliban* and Osama bin Laden, even attributed the assassination of Ahmad Shah Masood to be *Taliban*- Pakistan nexus. The point to be realized is the overfly independent nature of the *Taliban*.⁽⁴⁵⁾

PASHTUN FACTOR

All *Taliban* are pashtuns though, all pashtuns are not *Taliban* to the existence of “Pashtun wali Code” that allows active protection to individuals seeking shelter or refuge even at the risk of one’s life, hospitality – bravery.

The custom provided refuge for tribal pashtuns and their political sympathizes an excuse for sheltering and protecting *Al Qaeda Taliban* renegades. It is a cause of conflict between Panjsheris of Northern Alliance and Pashtuns. Pakistan’s ambassador has made efforts to reach out to non-pashtun and invested in developmental projects in Northern Afghanistan. Pakistan’s Afghan policy is therefore no longer Pashtun specific.⁽⁴⁶⁾

As regards another irritant between Afghanistan and Pakistan i.e. Kabul River Waters, the construction of dam is definitely going to influence the flow of water in the Indus River. It needs renegotiation of 1921 water treaty between Kabul and Islamabad.

Keeping in the view the history, culture and politics in the region peace will not emerge automatically. It is foremost upto the Afghans to decide what form of government best suits them. All the

stakeholders should be represented in any peace initiative to hammer out the solution and accommodate the genuine security concerns of the regional states. Without adopting an approach based on ‘regional security complex’ it will not be possible to maintain peace and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Afghanistan has been carved out on the basis of former British colonial designs for the region during their geo-politics of great game with Russia. They invented the Afghan state by putting together territories severed from the weaning Persian Empire. Afghanistan never proved to be working in the context of genuinely founded nation state. The ills of situation however, disallow any remedy that is not based on a genuine state-building process in that country. Afghanistan needs to address the centrifugal forces that drive various ethnicities apart and find accommodation among components so as to form a genuinely designed federalism. ❖

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