

CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA POST 9/11: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN'S SECURITY

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Abstract

This article discusses the nature of conflict and cooperation in South Asia post 9/11 with special emphasis on the US partial exit from Afghanistan in 2014. Within this context, the paper stresses post 2014 scenario in the region and its implications for Pakistan's security. It argues that the primacy of Pakistan-India-Afghanistan triangular relationship along with the policy of the major powers such as the US, China and Russia have determined and will decide the nature of conflict and cooperation in the region post 2014 as well. The ongoing Indo-US strategic partnership, Pakistan-US informal alliance in the US war on terror post 9/11 and Pakistan-China strategic cooperation would play out in post 2014 Afghanistan, which is the gateway to Central Asia. All these developments would extend the new great game between the US, Russia and China from Central Asia to South Asia. Along with the new great game, Indo-Afghanistan strategic partnership in the regional theatre would have dire implications for Pakistan's security.

Introduction

Ever since the beginning of the Cold War era, South Asia has been a conflict prone region with modest movement towards cooperation. The region includes larger states such as India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, along with smaller states such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Instead of regionalism, security relationship between India and Pakistan has defined the nature of the region. Having fought three wars in the past in 1948, 1965 and 1971, India-Pakistan relationship has somewhat stabilized due to both countries' nuclear explosions in May 1998. Ever since the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon in Washington and Twin Towers in

New York, the US has been involved in the war on terror in Afghanistan. From 9/11 to present, new alignments have either been forged or are continuing in the region: Pakistan-US informal alliance in the US war on terror to combat Al Qaeda related terrorism on Pak-Afghan border from 2001 to present, Indo-US strategic partnership of 2005, Indo-Afghan strategic partnership of 2011 and Pakistan-China strategic friendship which has endured. In order to understand the nature of conflict and cooperation in the region, it is important to comprehend the nature of the great game in Central Asia and its impact on issues of war and peace in South Asia. In the region, this paper will stress the relationship between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan and examine its effect on Pakistan's security post 9/11.

The literature on South Asia can be divided into three categories. The first category comprises history and socio-political dimension of South Asia. The second category stresses the security dimension of South Asia. Its emphasis is on India-Pakistan security issues and on the conflict in Afghanistan. Matinuddin's *The Nuclearization of South Asia*¹, Durrani's *India and Pakistan: The Cost of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace*², Ganguly and Kapur's *India, Pakistan and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia*³, Sidhyu, Asifand Samili's *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*⁴, Iqtidar H. Siddiqui's *Hydro-Politics and Water Wars in South Asia*⁵ and Kapur's *India and the South Asian Strategic Triangle*⁶ represent India-Pakistan security issues well. Schofield's *Afghan Frontier: At the Crossroads of Conflict*⁷, Kai Adie's *Power Struggle over Afghanistan*⁸ and Rasul Bakhsh Rais' *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity and State in Afghanistan*⁹ represent another sub-classification. The third category emphasizes peace, democracy, regionalism, human security and gender issues in South Asia. Dossani and Rowen's (eds.) *Prospects for Peace in South Asia*¹⁰, Bailes, Goonaratne, Inayat and Ayaz Khan and Singh's *Regionalism in South Asian Diplomacy*¹¹ and Dr. Mavara Inayat, 'Human Security and Civil Society in South Asia'¹² represent this category well.

This paper stresses the new great game in South Asia and its implications for the regional security theatre as well as for Pakistan's security. Within this context, this paper is divided in the following three sections: 1) The New Great Game in South Asia post 9/11; 2) The Regional Theatre; and 3) Implications for Pakistan's security.

The New Great Game in South Asia Post 9/11

This section discusses the essential nature of the new great game in South Asia post 9/11 with special reference to the major contours which this game may assume post 2014. It argues that the major power rivalry in Central Asia has been extended to South Asia with Indo-US strategic partnership, US-Pakistan informal alliance in the war on terror, Pakistan-China strategic cooperation and Sino-Russian strong cooperation under the banner of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This new great game and the US strong support for Indo-Afghanistan strategic partnership at the expense of Pakistan's security would all have dire implications for matters of war and peace in South Asia.

Balance of power between the US, Russia and China has been combined with the 'integrationist and cooperative patterns in Asia'.¹³ It is a misnomer, however, to view the 21st century as the Asian century alone, which would inevitably lead to the rise of China along with other Asian states and the decline of the US and western powers. The US foreign and defense policies are already in place to check the undue rise of any substantial power in Asia that may have the potential to confront the US. The superpower has learnt its lessons of 'divide and rule' well from the great empires of yesteryears. Within Asia, the US already has its formal and informal alliances with various Asian states in order to contain China in the 21st century. These include 'US-India strategic partnership'¹⁴ which began in 2005, US-Japan strong military and economic ties ever since the end of the second world war, US relations with Southeast Asian states since the signing of South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the creation of 'ASEAN'¹⁵ in 1967 (whose membership has

expanded to ten now) along with 'US-Pakistan relations'¹⁶ from the 1950s to 2013 albeit with pauses in the 1970s and the 1990s. The US has understood well the division between pro-US South Korea and pro-China North Korea, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states who can be used against Iran or Iraq depending upon the balance of power equation in the region. Over the years, the US has realized that the fear of China exists in many of the above mentioned quarters. India's un-negotiated border with China and the memory of 1962 border conflict, India's willingness to strategically contain China, Japan's adversarial relationship with China, ASEAN states' disputes with China over islands in the South China sea, the conflict between two Koreas with China's support to North Korea and the US support to South Korea. All these developments, however, show that the balance of power is operating in the Asian region with the US, South Korea, Japan, ASEAN states and India on one side; and China, 'SCO'¹⁷ members, North Korea, Iran, Myanmar and Pakistan on the other. However, China's strong economic relationship across the regions, with other major powers and with the US needs to be stressed. Kevin Rudd, the former Prime Minister of Australia in Foreign Affairs wrote that it would be beneficial to develop:

A new framework for cooperation with China that recognizes the reality of the two countries' strategic competition, defines key areas of shared interests to work and act on, and thereby begins to narrow the yawning trust gap between the two countries. Executed properly, such a strategy would do no harm, run few risks, and deliver real results. It could reduce the regional temperature by several degrees, focus both countries' national security establishments on common agenda sanctioned at the highest levels, and help reduce the risk of negative strategic drift.¹⁸

This implies that as long as the strategic competition and economic cooperation would endure between the US and

China, balance of power would continue in South Asia leading to regional stability. Many relationships of South Asian states with the major powers, however, remain ambivalent. India has a strong economic relationship with China but strategic partnership with the US to contain China. Pakistan has strategic partnership with China, while maintaining amicable relations with the US from post 9/11 to present. Pakistan's relations with the US post 9/11, however, have remained uncertain due to the Indo-US strategic partnership, the US carrot and stick policy towards Pakistan in the war on terror, the 'US drone strikes'¹⁹ inside Pakistani territory raising questions of violation of Pakistan's territory along with Haqqani's interpretation that the US is unwilling to 'accept the Pakistani military's vision of Pakistani preeminence in South Asia or equality with India.'²⁰ What Haqqani and the US have got wrong is that it is not only Pakistani military's vision but it is also the Chinese vision for the region. Moreover, there is a great civil-military unity, which further needs to be strengthened, to protect and practice this vision. To the dismay of both Haqqani and the US strategic equality with India has already been achieved through Pakistan's nuclear status and Pakistan's strong strategic partnership with China. It is precisely for this very reason that Pakistan has shown its willingness to cooperate with India in the economic domain and to take the composite dialogue with India forward.

The US, nevertheless has its presence and military bases in place within Asia-Pacific region in order to combat any threat to its. Most importantly, in South Asia, the US has a relationship with three significant states in South Asia: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, the US has a strong presence in the Indian Ocean: South Asia, Middle East, Southeast Asia and Australia. China has initiated moves to have strong economic relations with all the above mentioned regions including Australia. In South Asia, China has a strong strategic partnership with Pakistan which would certainly maintain balance of power in South Asia leading to regional stability.

There has been a strong connection between the clash of US-Chinese-Russian security interests in Central Asia and South Asia which can be viewed within the context of prevailing multiple world orders in Central Asia. Tahir Amin's idea of simultaneously existing 'multiple world orders' in Central Asia²¹ has been essential to the understanding of the unfolding nature of politics in the region. The assertion that various world orders co-exist simultaneously does not negate the competition for supremacy between the US, Russian, Chinese and the Islamic world orders.

The fluidity of the international system as witnessed through the historical successes of colonialism, imperialism and globalism rebels against Anaximander's natural law proving that competition ultimately leads to the supremacy of either one (unipolar world order) or two (bipolar world order) or many (multipolar world order). Which world order will succeed in Central Asia and South Asia and in what measure will be defined through a combination of factors: the subconscious of the Central Asians and South Asians which includes their unique religious and historical experience, the strength of competing powers' alliances with countries which have geographical proximity with Central Asia, technological edge, Machiavellian political strategies based on age old cunning, modesty in success and the blessing of the unforeseen forces. In Sun Tzu's terms, the winner is the master of the sword who lives in the moment and understands the energy of the moment. He knows how to surprise but is never surprised, remains modest in success, has the support of the crowd and the unforeseen forces. Sun Tzu implies that ultimately, it is the psychological edge which decides the winner. Given this context, the new great game has continued in Central Asia with each power checking the other's excesses and trying its best to attain the support of areas with geographical proximity to Central Asia such as Afghanistan. It is in this very geo-strategic context that South Asia has assumed significance in the current times.

As Central Asia blends into South Asia, it can be strongly asserted that the competition between the major powers and

by extension various world orders have also been evident in South Asia. In the post 9/11 era, there has been a strong contest between the US and Chinese security interests in South Asia. Regional organizations operating in Central Asia and South Asia have also shown the intense competition between the major powers in Central Asia with SCO representing Russian and Chinese interests in Central Asia and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) advocating the US and western interests in the region. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has included powerful observers such as the US, European Union and China. The major powers have been strongly competing in Central Asia and viewing South Asia as an important geo-strategic prize to be won over.

The Indo-US strategic partnership which was forged to contain the Chinese influence in both South Asia and Central Asia has led both the US and India to check the Chinese influence. India has supported the insurgency in Pakistan (in Balochistan) in order to pressurize Pakistan on Kashmir as well as to contain China in the Arabian Sea and South Asia. The US strong support for Indian influence in Afghanistan along with the US-Pakistan alliance in the war on terror have existed to mute the effects of China-Pakistan strategic cooperation. The US has, nevertheless, preferred India over Pakistan due to the US flawed assumption that Pakistan has been involved in global jihad. According to Bruce Riedel:

The future of the global jihad will be decided in Pakistan more than anywhere else in the world. As difficult as the mission remains, there is every reason for Pakistanis and Americans to transform what has long been a deadly embrace into a union of minds with a common purpose: to defeat the jihad monster.²²

Due to Pakistan-China strategic partnership and its own strategic competition with China, the US has been awaiting a Sino-Soviet split as witnessed during the Cold War era. The

split would enable the US to exploit Russia against China. For the moment, though, Russia has been aware of the contours of the new great game and has been playing one with China and showing its deep interest in the US and Europe simultaneously. China has been involved in trade with the US, Europe, Russia and South Asia. The new great game is being played on various chess boards. On the economic chessboard, everyone has been pursuing similar ends which appear to be a win-win game. On the political and strategic chessboards, however, a zero sum game is being pursued. It is against this backdrop that conflict and cooperation in South Asia need to be studied.

The Regional Security Theatre

This section argues that the nature of security relationships between three very important actors in South Asia, Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, have defined the regional security theatre post 9/11 and would do so more strongly in post 2014 scenario. Within this context, this section explores Pakistan-India, Pakistan-Afghanistan, India-Afghanistan along with Pakistan-Afghanistan-India triangular relations post 9/11 including a conjecture on matters of peace and conflict in South Asia from post 9/11 to post 2014.

Will India-Pakistan security complex exist beyond 2014 through the continuation of divergence in their national security interests or will the sharing of common development goals break the ice of earlier security interdependence between them? Put in another way, will nuclear deterrence enable them to either resolve or leave Kashmir on the backburner and proceed with enhanced trade and development goals which have the potential to change the destiny of the two states and the people? Will the post 2014 regional and global environment enable them to break their historical adversarial relationship? What likely shape will the composite dialogue between them assume? Will they believe more in regionalism via the SAARC process? Will the United States and other influential actors such as China, Russia and European states favor divergence and deterrence between the two traditional

adversaries or stress development goals which highlight human security? This task is especially difficult because the conjecture on the issue has to be projected on to the future. To be living in 2013 and imagining post 2014 situation is a hard task. However, the contours of the global, inter-regional and regional policies are beginning to appear on the horizon.

India-Pakistan Relations

India-Pakistan relations have been complicated due to their geo-historical and strategic relations, both of which are interconnected with each other. Historically, the genesis of the Kashmir question rested in India's defiance of both the geographical and demographic principals of partition regarding around 562 princely states in the sub-continent. Kashmir, being geographically contiguous to Pakistan as well as demographically being a Muslim majority area was to form a part of Pakistan. Most importantly, all the western rivers to Pakistan flow from Indian held Kashmir. That is why certain scholars such as Robert Wirsing have called the Kashmir dispute 'Indus Water Dispute'.²³The historical Kashmir dispute between the two states has been deeply linked with Indo-Pakistan wars of 1948, 1965, 1971 and with low scale conflicts such as Siachen, Kargil and Indo-Pakistan military stand-off among others. Strategic equality became pronounced between India and Pakistan with first India and then Pakistan's nuclear explosions in May 1998. Ever since, Pakistan's strategic competition with India over conventional and non-conventional weapons including missiles has continued due to the persistence of the Kashmir dispute between the two adversaries. Nevertheless, India and Pakistan decided to simultaneously indulge in 'US facilitated peace process'²⁴.

Pakistan-India composite dialogue which emerged in 1999 with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in power in Pakistan and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has had a checkered history. It emphasized that both adversaries should address all issues including the Kashmir dispute through holding a bilateral dialogue. Among others, the areas of the

dialogue included Siachen, Sir Creek, Wullar Barrage, Kashmir, conventional and nuclear confidence building measures (NCBMs), combating terrorism and drug trafficking as well as the promotion of CBMs and friendly exchanges. Due to 1999 Kargil conflict and Musharraf's takeover in October 1999, the peace process suffered a setback. In January 2004, however, at the annual SAARC Summit, the dialogue was revived. From 2004-2013, the peace process has continued albeit with pauses due to certain events such as November 2008 Mumbai blasts. So far, the composite dialogue has been unable to resolve the Kashmir dispute, which has been central for building fruitful cooperation between India and Pakistan. Other issues such as Siachen, Sir Creek, water issues have also remained unsettled. Nevertheless, certain measures regarding military and NCBMs can be appreciated. On the whole, however, the composite dialogue has failed to be the key with which the lock of strategic insecurity of the two states can be opened. In the post 2014 situation, the composite dialogue must address the Kashmir dispute in order to achieve peace and prosperity in the region.

Another forum which offered prospects for peace in South Asia was SAARC. The Association emerged in December 1985 with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka as its members representing the phenomenon of regionalism in South Asia. In early 2007, the membership of SAARC was expanded with Afghanistan as its eighth member further problematizing cooperation in the region. Effective regionalism anywhere has had geographical, historical, sociological and anthropological roots. In the case of South Asia, the success of regionalism rested on the primacy of India-Pakistan security relationship, which was marred by historical dispute of Kashmir as well as by their strategic rivalry which culminated in three wars in 1948, 1965, 1971 and other small scale conflicts over Siachen, Kargil, 2001/2002 India-Pakistan military stand-off and November 2008 Mumbai blasts. Regionalism could not be very fruitful because being post-colonial states, both India and Pakistan guarded cautiously their sovereignty and independent identity.

Further, the complexity of India-Pakistan-Afghanistan triangular security relationship harmed the spirit of regionalism due to the development of India-Afghanistan strong security relationship. SAARC could not rise beyond the limitations which the security relationships of its members imposed upon it. Pakistani decision makers have feared that India and Afghanistan would gang up against Pakistan whether the matter relates to economic, technical or water related issues.²⁵ Within this very context, the areas in cooperation among SAARC members have largely remained socio-economic and technical in nature. Unlike the 'European Union'²⁶ (EU), fruitful economic cooperation in the shape of free trade, free movement of people, goods and services, the formation of common market, a common customs union and a common currency could not be achieved. Meager developments included South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), which non-tariff barriers, bureaucratic red tapism and the lack of political will largely impaired. Despite the presence of observers in SAARC such as the US, EU, Japan, South Korea and China, SAARC, largely due to its being an inter-governmental organization, believes in gradualism.

Despite the inherent pessimism in regionalism due to adverse India-Pakistan relations, 'human security introducing the concept of human security requires some explanation and sources would be useful) and civil society'²⁷ are important matters which have the potential to bridge the gap in India-Pakistan relations. Both countries have not been able to achieve freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from discrimination, freedom of choice and basic human rights for the majority of their populations. With the prevalence of fear of inter-state, intra-state and domestic violence, widespread poverty, unemployment, underemployment, lack of access to education and health facilities, gender-caste-class disparities, both states have ranked low in human development index. These commonalities in human insecurity beg for India-Pakistan cooperation to develop an insight beyond mere strategic concerns and move towards a new era of peace and cooperation where humans are valued above conventional weapons and nuclearization of the region. Civil society, which

emerges as a result of the rise of the middle class in a given society, becomes the advocate of human security. The civil society groups comprising artists, lawyers, judges, students, teachers and others of the two countries can work together for the betterment of their respective societies. India-Pakistan strategic insecurity, however, has dampened cooperation in human security issues and any negative developments post 2014 would prevent civil society institutions from promoting human security together.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations:

In addition to Pakistan-India relations, Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan is another area which has cast a shadow over South Asian rapprochement. Historically, Pakistan and Afghanistan have shared a love-hate relationship without Afghanistan ever physically threatening Pakistan's territorial integrity.

India-Afghanistan relations became more than amicable with the beginning of the US War on Terror in South Asia post 9/11. With the terrorist attacks on the twin towers in New York and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, a new era began in Afghanistan-India relations. The US blamed Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden who resided in Afghanistan at the time for the terrorist attacks. The US demanded the handing over of Osama bin Laden from the Afghan Taliban regime which Mullah Omar headed at that time. With the refusal of Mullah Omar, the US with the help of UN and NATO resolutions invaded Afghanistan in November 2001 under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) beginning the US War on Terror in South Asia. Ever since, the US and NATO military forces have stationed in Afghanistan in order to combat Al-Qaeda related terrorism. The US presence in Afghanistan gave India a golden opportunity to forge strategic, political, societal and economic relations with Afghanistan. Of these, India-Afghanistan strategic relations are of foremost importance for the stability of the South Asian region.

India's construction of Farkhor Air Base at Afghan-Tajik border and India-Afghanistan strategic partnership forged in 2011 has been of utmost significance for the prospects of peace and conflict in South Asia. Farkhor Air base is located in Tajikistan, 130 kilometers southeast of Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe. It was only in 2005 that India openly admitted that it has acquired an air base and that it will be under the joint control of India and the military of Tajikistan. New Delhi has stationed a squadron of MiG 29 aircrafts in the base. The air base is also used to collect information and data through the Indian intelligence agencies. It is possible that the US helped India to retain this airbase to contain China in Central Asia. However, the base has strong implications for Pakistan's security. In case of India's conflict with Pakistan, Indian war planes could reach Pakistani air space in a short period of time. Many Pakistani leaders including former President Musharraf have raised the objection with Tajikistan authorities. It is noteworthy that the base provides strategic depth to India vis-à-vis Pakistan. Any serious calculations on conflict in South Asia must account for the presence of this Indian air base on Afghanistan-Tajikistan border as it is going to assume more significance after the withdrawal of NATO and US forces from Afghanistan in 2014. The air base will provide strategic depth to India vis-à-vis Pakistan.

To forge closer ties, Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh have signed Agreement on Strategic Partnership (ASP) on 4 October 2011 at New Delhi. Most importantly, according to the agreement, India would provide training to National Security Forces of Afghanistan along with providing all requisite light and heavy equipment to Afghanistan including weapons. During his visit to New Delhi, on 22 May 2013, Karzai stated that 'We have a [military] wish list that we have put before the government of India'.²⁸ On India's part, an Indian government official was shocked that Afghanistan was talking so very openly about the purchase of weapons from India.²⁹ Kabul also desires to have an air force. This agreement will be in force when the US and NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014 changing the

discourse on peace and conflict in South Asia. According to James Cogan:

The agreement is a clear threat that India, in conjunction with the US and its allies, will continue to build its political and economic influence in Afghanistan at Pakistan's expense. It will also add to the pressure of the government in Islamabad to bow to increasingly strident US demands to take greater action against the Afghan insurgents who operate from Pakistan's tribal border regions.³⁰

Pakistan-India-Afghanistan Relations and Regional Security Theatre

The triangular relationship between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India has been of a highly complex nature. Ever since 9/11, the US presence in Afghanistan, the US deeper ties with the Northern alliance to curtail the Taliban, the US-India strategic partnership forged in 2005 along with the Indo-Afghanistan strategic partnership further complicated Pakistan-Afghanistan-India triangular relationship. The Northern Alliance forged deeper links with the US and India at the expense of Pakistan. In April 2013, however, at a seminar in National Defence University, a high official in Pakistan's foreign office commented that Pakistan was making inroads with the Northern alliance and indeed meetings had been held between northern alliance members and Pakistan's foreign office officials at Pakistan's embassy in Kabul.³¹ Moreover, being unsuccessful at defeating the Taliban, holding negotiations with the Taliban became more acceptable to the US. With the US assumption of talks with the Taliban, it became easier for the leadership of Pakistan's political parties such as *Pakistan Muslim League* (Nawaz), *Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf* and *Jamaat-i-Islami* to support a dialogue with the Taliban in order to allot them certain space in Pakistan's political system. Nevertheless, the US support for India to play an influential role in Afghanistan even when the US forces begin to withdraw from Afghanistan would pose a

serious threat to Pakistan's security. In his May 2013 visit, Karzai admitted that the 'peace process' with Taliban would not succeed without Pakistan's cooperation. He stressed that he was totally committed to the peace process and had kept the Indian side informed. He accepted that India was concerned that the 'peace process' might lead to the 'flourishing of terrorism and radicalism'. He assured India that the peace process would be within the framework of the Afghan Constitution.³²

It was basically the US-India strategic partnership coupled with the US influence with the Karzai regime in Afghanistan, which enabled India to forge a strategic partnership with Afghanistan further complicating Pakistan-Afghanistan and Pakistan-India relations. The US-Indian strategic partnership and the US presence in Afghanistan provided India the space to develop a strong strategic relationship with Afghanistan, which strained Indo-Pakistan relations. Sajid Mansoor holds that the opening of Indian consulates in Afghanistan near Pakistan's border, the presence of Indian intelligence agencies at Pak-Afghan border and India's support of separatist elements in Balochistan has been an Indian ploy to encircle Pakistan on both its eastern and western borders.³³ According to him, Indian military base on Afghan-Tajik border at Ayni would provide 'a solid opportunity to inject Indian forces towards potential areas of threat and in case of any serious clash with Pakistan, India will be able to use Tajik soil to strike against Pakistan.'³⁴ It remains to be seen, however, whether India's engagement in Afghanistan along with Indo-US strategic partnership would necessarily amount to a zero-sum game versus Pakistan in the post 2014 situation.

Implications for Pakistan's Security

This section argues that the new great game in South Asia along with the developments in the regional theatre would have important consequences for Pakistan's security especially after the US partial exit from Afghanistan in 2014. There are three different yet equally viable scenarios which explain the implications of conflict and cooperation in South Asia for

Pakistan's security post 2014. The first one is a promising scenario, the second one is an alarming scenario while the third one is a synthesis located between the two extremes.

First, the auspicious scenario for Pakistan's security after the US partial withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 is entrenched firmly in the international relations theories of balance of power and complex interdependence. According to this scenario, the developments in South Asia would benefit equally both India and Pakistan resulting in the stability of Afghanistan post 2014. Both US-Indian strategic partnership and Pakistan-China strategic partnership would bring about balance of power in South Asia resulting in India-Pakistan cooperation in bilateral trade as well as in transit trade to and from Afghanistan through Pakistan which would benefit all the actors involved. In general, an environment would be created in which both India and Pakistan would derive equal advantage from their involvement in Afghanistan. Indo-Afghanistan strategic partnership would not act against Pakistan and a semblance of balance would be maintained between India and Pakistan's reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. Keeping in mind the role of China as a balancer in South Asia, the US would emphasize equally the influence of both India and Pakistan in Afghanistan, which would discourage Indian hegemony in Afghanistan. Afghanistan would stabilize with a combined US-China-Russia consensus, on the one hand, and among South Asian states themselves especially India, Pakistan and Afghanistan on having a mixed Taliban-northern alliance government in Afghanistan. Indo-Afghan strategic partnership would not be directed against Pakistan. The US and India would help Pakistan build bridges with the northern alliance, while Pakistan would play a role in reconciling the Taliban with India.

The new great game in Central Asia would encourage both India and Pakistan's access to Central Asian resources along with bringing about cooperation in South Asia through promotion of regionalism, India-Pakistan composite dialogue with increased emphasis on trade along with Pakistan's strong involvement and influence in Afghanistan. Moreover, the

success of democracy in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan can be an added feature which could strengthen the relationship between the two countries as well as stabilize the South Asian region. This scenario would ensure Pakistan's security post 2014 by diluting its fear that a hostile India would encircle Pakistan on both its eastern and western borders. In an interview with Pakistani television channel on 29 May 2013, General (Retd) Ihsan-ul-Haq who had once served as Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief commented that Pakistan's nuclear program is in safe hands and it cannot be rolled back either. Moreover, Pakistan needed to behave like a nuclear state. In the current scenario, according to him, there was no harm in engaging with India on trade. Within the context of Pakistan's strength as a nuclear state, he agreed with newly elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's policy of economic engagement with India.³⁵ On Sharif's optimism on India-Pakistan trade, Ashfaq Bokhari in *Dawn* of 27 May 2013 wrote:

The incoming industrial Prime Minister would tend to be a protectionist and would provide impetus to commodity producing sectors particularly manufacturing to target regional markets. That may create trade surpluses for exports to India. The current exchange rates for the currencies to the two countries work to the advantage of Pakistani exporters. Indian buyers and Pakistani exporters would both find it feasible to strike trade deals.³⁶

Despite all this optimism regarding trade with India, the real test is whether Pakistan is able to convince India to 'demolish' its non-tariff barriers or not. Nevertheless, Sharif is going to award Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to India. All this optimism in trade with India is only possible due to the prevalence of balance of power in the region.

This scenario, therefore, implies that complex interdependence would prevail in the region due to balance of power in the region. Balance of power would, in turn, endure

because of India and Pakistan's nuclear status and Pakistan's strategic partnership with China. With such balance of power in South Asia, the situation would not be alarming for Pakistan's security. This is what Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani implied in his address at Command and Staff College, Quetta on 31 May 2013, when he stated that there must be a balance between defense and development needs for progress in Pakistan.³⁷ On the contrary, the prevalence of hardcore realism in South Asia would alarm Pakistan on the regional front.

The second scenario is named 'nightmare scenario' post 2014 which is grounded deeply in the international relations theories of hardcore realism as propounded by E.H. Carr and Hans Morganthau along with neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz. According to realism, instead of morality and interdependence, 'will to power' is everything for states reducing the art of statecraft to the pursuit of a zero-sum game with one's rival state/s. Neo-realism holds that the nature of the international structure imposes arms races and security dilemma upon the rival states. That is precisely why ideologically different states act in the mirror image of each other. The case of the communist Soviet Union and capitalist US during the Cold War era is a case in point. By the same token, the very nature of the international system has imposed security dilemma and security interdependence upon India and Pakistan from which there is 'no exit'.

Is it possible that there may evolve security dilemma between Pakistan-India-Afghanistan presenting Pakistan with a two front threat situation where the latter encounters India on both its western and eastern borders. With Indo-US strategic partnership, Indo-Afghan strategic collaboration, Indian consulates in Afghanistan, India's air base on Afghan-Tajik border which stations India's MiG 29s, along with nine new US bases in Afghanistan, some of which would be located close to Pak-Afghan border, Pakistan's security at the strategic level would surely be affected adversely. In addition to these factors, if the US decides to create Indian hegemony in Afghanistan, then Pakistan and India could indulge in a proxy

war in Afghanistan which would destabilize the entire South Asian region. Given these circumstances, the corridor to Central Asian resources would be lost to the South Asian states for decades to come.

The third scenario is a synthesis between the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios post 2014. In terms of international relations theory, this scenario is a curious mix of balance of power, complex interdependence, realism and neo-realism and carries varied implications for Pakistan's security. According to this scenario, there would be both conflict and cooperation in South Asia post 2014. It is possible for rival states to compete and cooperate simultaneously if statesmen are viewed as playing on multiple chessboards at the same time. The 'multiple chessboards view' would emphasize that like China and India, India and Pakistan would cooperate on the economic chessboard but would clash on political and strategic chessboards post 2014. In the post 2014 environment, Pakistan, India and Afghanistan would have ample chances to collaborate on economic issues such as trade, while they would clash over strategic and political issues such as Kashmir, maintenance of conventional and unconventional strategic balance along with their desire to gain influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. They would also compete over their relations with the major powers such as the US and China. The third scenario is more appropriate for the understanding of conflict and cooperation in South Asia in the current times as well as in explaining the implications for Pakistan's security. Pakistan's security would probably be ensured due to global and regional reasons.

Conclusion

The world structure is moving towards a loose multipolar world order with the US, China, Russia and Europe emerging as eminent powers in the 21st century. Among them, the US, Russia and China have been in competition in Central Asia, while cooperating in the economic domain. Their mutual competition, which has extended from Central Asia into South Asia through the US war on terror post 9/11, has strengthened

balance of power in the region which would stabilize the region. Balance of power has been maintained through Indo-US strategic partnership on one side, and Pakistan-China strategic partnership on the other side. Moreover, Pakistan's informal alliance with the US in the war on terror and on-going US-Pakistan strategic dialogue has somewhat mitigated the brutal force of Indo-US strategic partnership. How far the Indo-US strategic partnership is blunted would depend upon both the nature of Pakistan-US relations after the US partial withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 and the evolution of Pakistan-China strategic relationship.

The major powers' policies along with India and Pakistan's nuclear status have brought about strategic stability in South Asia. Currently, South Asia has effective balance of power and has been moving towards complex interdependence which augurs well for regional security. Moreover, the US and China have supported India-Pakistan composite dialogue especially bilateral trade between the rivals. Within this context, Pakistan's newly elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh have shown strong willingness to expand trade with each other in May 2013. Additionally, with the success of democracy in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the ancient dictum: 'Democracies never fight democracies' would hold. Given these circumstances, South Asia could face conflict on the strategic and political chessboards, but there would be cooperation on the economic chessboard post 2014. Given strategic security through balance of power, it will be the right time for Pakistan to ensure its internal security through addressing domestic issues of terrorism and through maximizing its national security at political, societal and economic levels.

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