

Pakistan's Approach to Security in South Asia

Rustam Galimov^a

Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Keywords: Pakistan, South Asia, Regional Security Complex, Afghanistan, Central Asia Threats to Pakistan's Security, Indian Factor, Afghan Factor, Pakistan's Interests', Islamic Radicalism.

Abstract: In the context of heightened globalization and integration in the contemporary world, security has emerged as a major concern for the global community. New security threats, such as terrorism, transnational crime, and environmental disasters, are spreading and strengthening the interconnections between various levels of security: national, regional, and global. At the regional level, geopolitical power centres are emerging, acting not only as 'engines of growth' for specific regions but also playing a crucial role in regional security processes, addressing their own security challenges. In South Asia, Pakistan stands out as one such 'regional power.' India's prominent position among the countries of the South Asian subcontinent, backed by several geographic, demographic, and economic indicators, is further solidified by its proactive regional policy. Pakistan's role in ensuring political stability in South Asia holds fundamental importance for the entire regional security complex. As the significance of the South Asian region in international affairs continues to rise, there is a corresponding increase in the potential threat to the global security system if regional stability is disrupted. This is attributed to the persistent presence of numerous conflicts on the South Asian subcontinent, stemming from both its colonial past and the Cold War era. Since the late 1980s, South Asia, particularly Pakistan, has garnered international attention as a key player in the region. The growing economic potential has been accompanied by an upsurge in militarization in the area. Military spending in South Asia has consistently risen and currently ranks second only to the Middle East and North Africa region. Notably, India and Pakistan contribute to over 90% of the total military spending. The issue of militarization in South Asia is a cause for concern within the international community and poses a tangible threat to both regional and global security. The accumulation of military power heightens the potential for escalating conflicts in the region and raises the risk of India and Pakistan transitioning into the nuclear domain.

1 INTRODUCTION

The South Asian region stands out globally due to its unique parameters. Encompassing an area of approximately 4.4 million square kilometres, it comprises seven countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. Remarkably, these seven nations collectively house about a quarter of the world's population, totalling 1.3 billion people.

However, a significant concentration of over 95% of the region's population and area is found in three countries: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The remaining four countries are notably smaller in both population and territory compared to the average Indian or Pakistani state.

The three major countries boast populations of around 20 different ethnic groups, ranging from 10 million to 100 million individuals. Notably, certain large groups, including Punjabis, Bengalis, Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Balochis, are dispersed across various countries and are considered 'divided' ethnic groups, at least according to Soviet and Russian literature.

Historically, South Asian countries were British colonies or semi-colonies, united by bonds of national liberation as they worked together to achieve independence. In 1947, major countries in the region – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka – gained independence from British rule. Nepal was under British rule, while Bhutan and the Maldives were British protectorates. Shared cultural and historical heritage, along with a common history, fostered a strong bond between these countries, forming the

^a<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5934-2644>

geopolitical grouping known as South Asia. Throughout history, close cooperation among these nations has been driven by shared agendas, providing a basis for ensuring regional stability.

South Asia's natural geography, with Hindustan separated by mountains and surrounded by the Indian Ocean, has resulted in a distinctive political map. National borders in the region do not align with natural geographical boundaries but primarily follow major rivers like the Ganges, Indus, and Brahmaputra.

Post-colonial history has revealed the vulnerability of national borders in the region. The 1947 border with Pakistan, for instance, divided the densely populated and economically developed regions of Punjab and Bengal. Events such as the "Bengal Crisis" of 1950-1953 and the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 led to significant migrations and tensions over refugees between India and Bangladesh.

The strategic divide between India and Pakistan has compelled Islamabad to focus on its northern neighbours, particularly Afghanistan and the Central Asian states. Pakistan aimed to maintain a friendly regime in Afghanistan to counter threats from both the north and the south. The invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's involvement in the conflict, and the war on terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s transformed the regional situation. By the late 1990s, two distinct security complexes had emerged: Central Asia and Southern Asia, separated by Afghanistan. Presently, these complexes are converging into a shared territory, especially in Afghanistan, which has become the central hub of a new security complex for South and Central Asian countries known as the RSC (Regional Security Complex).

To comprehend Pakistan's approach to regional security, it is essential to examine how other countries address the issue.

2 DISCUSSION

Approaches to the Theory of the Regional Security Complex:

The concept of a regional security complex is diverse and has been approached from various perspectives. Scholars such as Alexander Wendt, Patrick Norman, and Alexander Lake have contributed to this theory through different lenses, including constructivism and realism.

Barry Buzan, a prominent scholar in this field, has extensively researched regional security systems. He defined a regional security system in 1983 as "a group

of states whose fundamental security concerns are so closely related that they cannot be separated from each other's national security problems." In 1998, together with Ole Weaver, Buzan introduced the ideas of securitization and de-securitization, emphasizing the intertwining of these processes in a constellation of actors.

The structure of a regional security complex is defined by four variables, as outlined by Buzan and Weaver:

1. **Border:** This geographical element is fundamental, allowing the complex to be spatially defined and distinguished from others. For instance, Afghanistan is seen as an isolationist country that separates one regional security complex from another.
2. **Anarchic Structure:** The complex is composed of two or more autonomous parts, driven by the assumption that anarchy is a driving force behind various elements of the international system.
3. **Polarity:** This variable, in line with neo-realist thinking, considers the distribution of power as an important aspect but not the sole determining factor in shaping the regional security complex.
4. **Social Construction:** Linked to constructivist perspectives, this variable highlights the significance of perceptions in establishing connections between elements of the international system. Models of friendship and hostility create perceptions that lead to the formation of alliances or conflicts.

The regional security complex concept represents a step forward in regional cooperation. However, it also raises questions about the role of perception in international politics. The constructivist framework underscores the importance of context and interpretation in shaping relationships, urging consideration of how different actors perceive agreements and how this influences their behaviour.

The international system is undergoing rapid and frequent changes, especially post-Cold War and post-9/11. Central Asia serves as a dynamic example of this evolving power balance. The article proposes the Regional Complexes of Security (RCS) theory as a tool to comprehend the complex reality of international affairs, offering three potential paths for the development of RCS based on the identified variables.

3 RESULTS

Pakistan's foreign policy, as outlined by S. Aziz, focused on several key priorities and faced challenges from both regional and global players. The central government set the following priorities in June 2013:

1. Security Based on Non-Intervention: Emphasis was placed on maintaining Pakistan's security through a policy of non-intervention.
2. Peaceful Good Neighbourliness: The objective was to ensure peaceful relations with neighbouring countries, allowing the government to focus on securing energy resources for economic development.
3. Active Trade, Investment, and Regional Integration: Actively engaging in trade, attracting investment, and providing assistance to promote regional integration, leveraging Pakistan's geo-strategic position.
4. Cooperation Against Terrorism: Collaboration with the international community in the fight against terrorism.

However, challenges arose due to the evolving global landscape, including the rise of a multipolar world order and significant geopolitical shifts. Pakistan faced a deterioration in relations with neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan and India. The departure of the international security assistance force from Afghanistan led to a decline in military and economic aid from the United States and European countries.

To navigate these challenges, Pakistan shifted its strategic focus. The signing of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project with Beijing in April 2015 became a flagship initiative. The CPEC project aimed to achieve GDP growth, optimize trade potential, and enhance energy security. Pakistan sought to act as a catalyst for economic integration in the region by strengthening ties with China and neighbouring countries.

Despite diplomatic efforts, challenges persisted in relations with Afghanistan and India. Efforts to improve relations with Afghanistan included supporting the reconciliation process and border control. However, Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan faced resistance from Kabul. Relations with India became more complicated, with challenges such as the long-standing Kashmir dispute and concerns about an imbalanced distribution of strategic weapons in South Asia.

The regional projects, including the Turkmenistan-Pakistan-Afghanistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI) and the CASA 1000 project, faced delays due to the situation in Afghanistan. The reformatting of Pakistan's foreign policy largely depended on the success of the CPEC project, with planned Chinese investments directed towards energy and infrastructure projects.

However, challenges emerged, particularly criticism from India regarding the route passing through disputed areas. The security of the project and its implementation became crucial, considering the geopolitical sensitivities of the region. The

success of Pakistan's foreign policy hinged on effectively managing these challenges and leveraging regional initiatives for economic growth and stability.

The security landscape of Pakistan is shaped by various complex factors and challenges. Here are some key points regarding threats to Pakistan's security:

Strategic Position between India and Afghanistan: Pakistan, located between India and Afghanistan, faces security challenges from both directions. Historical asymmetry in power and resources between Pakistan and India has influenced Islamabad's security approach.

Historical Context with Afghanistan: Pakistan's interest in Afghanistan is rooted in historical factors, including ethnic influence and concerns about Russia's ambitions in the region.

The desire for a friendly government in Kabul has led to strategic cooperation with militant groups in Afghanistan.

Power Dynamics in South Asia: Pakistan has been at a strategic disadvantage compared to India since their independence.

The end of the Cold War exacerbated this disadvantage, prompting Pakistan to play a more active role in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Security Challenges Shared in the Region: Common security threats affect all states in the South and Central Asian region, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and Islamic extremism.

Nuclear Dimension in South Asia: Nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 increased the significance of the nuclear dimension in regional security.

The concept of 'minimal deterrence' and the lack of a formal nuclear arms control treaty between India and Pakistan are notable.

China's Role in the Region: The presence of China's nuclear weapons complicates arms control negotiations, particularly for India.

While Pakistan is interested in an agreement with India, China has shown little interest.

Verification Challenges and Comprehensive Dialogue: Existing agreements on nuclear arms control lack verification mechanisms, contributing to challenges in building trust.

A comprehensive dialogue between India and Pakistan is needed to address contentious issues, including nuclear security and Kashmir.

Economic Security and Regional Cooperation: External and internal factors influence Pakistan's economic security.

Intra-regional economic cooperation in South Asia remains low, but initiatives like the South Asian Free Trade Area Agreement could impact economic security positively.

Food, Environmental, and Demographic Security: Food security is considered a national rather than regional issue.

Environmental security requires a global approach, and demographic security is linked to unresolved conflicts in the region.

Security Doctrines and Strategic Stability: India's "Cold Start" doctrine, considered after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, aims at limited non-nuclear retaliation.

The doctrine could influence strategic stability, prompting positive steps against terrorism.

International Involvement and Non-Proliferation Regime:

International involvement, including cooperation agreements on nuclear energy, can engage India in discussions on nuclear security.

The potential inclusion of India in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and China's response could impact the non-proliferation regime.

In summary, Pakistan's security landscape is multifaceted, encompassing historical, geopolitical, nuclear, economic, and environmental dimensions. Navigating these challenges requires a comprehensive and strategic approach, including regional cooperation and international dialogue.

4 CONCLUSION

The evolving dynamics in South Asia are significantly influenced by the ongoing rivalry between the United States and China, as well as regional projects like the Indo-Pacific Quartet and China's Community of One Destiny. This study emphasizes the geostrategic and economic importance of the Bay of Bengal, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, with China expressing great interest in these regions for trade, investment, and regional connectivity.

Key points covered in the research include:

Importance of the Bay of Bengal: The Bay of Bengal is identified as a crucial region for China due to its geopolitical interests, trade and investment opportunities, as well as its significance in oil and gas resources and regional connectivity.

China's Relations with Bangladesh and Pakistan:

The study explores the evolving diplomatic, military, and economic relations between China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

China's economic growth and foreign policy changes have had a substantial impact on South Asia, affecting relationships within the region.

Impact of Global Order Changes: China's reforms, economic growth, and shifts in foreign

policy are examined in the context of changing global orders.

The study considers how the evolving strategic partnerships between India and the United States, along with China's containment policies, contribute to regional dynamics.

Formation of a New Regional Security Complex (RSCS): The merging of two regional security complexes (RSCs) results in the creation of a new, unified complex known as the RSCS of South and Central Asia.

Characteristics of this new complex include borders with neighbouring states, an anarchic structure, and polarization in the distribution of power between its components.

Multipolar System and Competition in Central Asia: The RSCS is described as a multipolar system where external actors, such as India and Pakistan, seek to influence the region.

The rivalry between India and Pakistan extends to Central Asia, where both countries compete for influence in nations like Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.

Model of Social Construction: The study refers to the model of social construction, emphasizing the dynamics of friendship and enmity between actors within the RSCS.

Potential for Expanded Cooperation: The research suggests that shared political, geopolitical, and economic interests may contribute to the expansion of cooperation between China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan in the near future.

In summary, the study provides insights into the complex interactions and geopolitical considerations shaping the South Asian region, with a focus on the strategic importance of key maritime areas and the evolving relationships between major players, including China, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

REFERENCES

- Central Asia and Pakistan — A Troubled Courtship for an Arranged Marriage: Soviet Perceptions and Realities. In M. Ahmar (Ed.), *Contemporary Central Asia* (p. 85). Karachi: University of Karachi and Hanns-Seidel Foundation.
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan, B., & Weaver, O. (2003). *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security* (p. 44). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lai, R. (2006). *Central Asia and its Neighbours: Security and Commerce at the Cross Road* (p. 23). Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
- The Military Balance 2008. London: IISS-Routledge.

- Hilali, A. L. (2005). *US-Pakistan Relations: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (p. 42). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Zeb, R. (2006). Cross Border Terrorism Issues Plaguing Pakistan — Afghanistan Relations. *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4(2), 69.
- Abbas, H. (2006). Profiles of Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, 19 October 2006, IV(20), 20.
- Magnus, R. (1997). Afghanistan in 1996: The Year of the Taliban. *Asian Survey*, 37(2), 111.
- Jumayev, G. I. (2023). "Audiomanuscript" – a project on the study of oriental manuscript sources. *Journal of Social Research in Uzbekistan*, 2023, 50-52.
- Khalid, A. (2007). *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Tellis, A. J. (2007). *Pakistan and the War on Terror: Conflicted Goals, Compromised Performance* (p. 5). Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Garcia, D., & Abad, G. (2008). Estados Unidos y China en Asia Central: El nuevo Gran Juego. *Politica Exterior*, Mayo-Junio 2008, 123(5).
- The Military Balance. London: Routledge/IISS, 2008, 325.
- BBC. (2005, March 6). Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, Making the First Visit by a Pakistani Head of State for Almost a Decade, Welcomed a Bright New Future.

