

Regional Security Complex Theory: A Case Study of Afghanistan-Testing the Alliance

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Abstract

Since 2001 onwards, the US led coalition of NATO and the European countries have invested heavily in politics, economy, and defence areas of Afghanistan. The transatlantic alliance has created an effective institutional framework by utilizing a wide range of both political and military instruments at their disposal. The rationale of this research paper is to analyze if Afghanistan fits neatly into the given constructivist framework proposed by Regional Security Complex Theory; to examine subjective nature of security threats to transatlantic alliance in Afghanistan through discourses they maintained overtime in order to investigate the validity of the securitization process. This research addresses (i) that penetration of external great powers in the region do not necessarily require geographical proximity factors but the nature of perceived threats invite their attention. (ii) The securitization process which includes non-state actors can play a crucial role in identifying the level of threat, politicizing the issues, and to take effective measures to tackle challenges.

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Introduction

Afghanistan is described as an insulator state and it is also known as a connector¹ due to its unique geostrategic location at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.² Pakistan shares a long porous border with Afghanistan- the Durand Line which is considered the most contentious, dangerous and poorly demarcated at most places.³ The deployment of international troops in Afghanistan in 2001 brought new challenges for Pakistan to deal with. The question arises where the border was and Pakistan's responsibilities for maintaining peace, law and order in its own territories acquired international attention.⁴ Since the Taliban's ouster in 2001, Afghan militant groups have found safe havens in Pakistan. In fact, the US has yet to declare Afghan Taliban group founded by Mulla Omar as terrorist and has continued efforts to hold peace talks with it. It has certainly declared Haqqani network as terrorist but still wants to hold talks with it.

Western media and political narrative shapes the story for the world to believe that the command and control structure of the three main militant groups – Mullah Omar's Shura (council), and the al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network terrorists are not only given shelter by Pakistan but they can operate in neighboring Afghanistan

¹Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Afghanistan in a Neighborhood Perspective," *Peace Research Institute Oslo*, (2009): 8-9.

²Jon Schiller, *Internet View of the Arabic World* (Charleston: BookSurge Publishing, 2009), 188.

³Natasha Underhill, *Countering Global Terrorism & Insurgency* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 54.

⁴Lubna Sunawar, "Stopping Illegal X-border Movement: A Must for Peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Hilal Magazine*, 2014, 104.

with great ease. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-elIslami used to enjoy the same protection and safe asylum in Pakistani territory but since 2017 Hekmatyar made a peace deal with Afghan government, stopped fighting and shifted to Kabul. These terrorists continue to undermine the U.S. led European coalition efforts for peace, democracy and stability in Afghanistan.⁵ In addition to this, these terrorists have associations with religious parties based in Pakistan⁶ from where they receive ample support. In the wake of 9/11, the EU-U.S. relations can be characterized as competitive cooperation but both have strengthened this partnership in the non-military areas related to counter-terrorism as well.⁷ Francois Heisbourg argues that the transatlantic relationship can survive if the European Union assumes more active military role in the global conflicts.⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the first time invoked Article 5 in the wake of 9/11 terror attacks and chose to send ground troops to Afghanistan, making it NATO's first out-of-area- ground operation. NATO is a multinational actor that works in high-pressure environments, making it well suited to operate in zones and areas that are culturally, geographically, and politically diverse.

Theoretical Framework

The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) and its related concept of Securitization form the basis of this research. Buzan, Waever and Wilde define the RSCT as: "a set of units whose major

⁵Ibid.

⁶Talat Masood, "Pakistan's Fight Against Terrorism," *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring & Fall 2012): 13-14.

⁷Christian Kaunert, "The External Dimension of EU Counter-Terrorism Relations," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Publisher: Routledge, 2009), 42-50.

⁸Francois Heisbourg, "The Defence of Europe: Towards a new transatlantic division of responsibilities," in *All Alone? What US retrenchment means for Europe and NATO* edited by Tomas Valasek, *Centre for European Reform* (2012): 27-44.

processes of securitization and de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.”⁹ The regional states are interconnected in such an amalgamated manner that the matters related to domestic security of one state have a major and profound impact on the other. Buzan and his colleagues have expanded the scope of the security complex by including non-military aspects thus giving rise to constructivist methodology.¹⁰

The basic concept which RSCT underlines is: “political and military threats are more potent to create the sense of insecurity as compared to other threats. The insecurity of the state is closely interlinked with the proximity factor.”¹¹ In the international system, states that are located on the border of regions, for instance, Afghanistan is a political weak country that has shaped great power politics despite its’ relatively weak potency and resources in international affairs. Realist approaches have sidelined these states by calling them ‘buffer or proxies.’ Mainstream IR has lacked a central framework for the analysis of regions and put emphasis on great power politics. Similarly, neo-liberalists have generally ignored states which despite having a significant impact on international relations and peculiar geo strategic location are disproportionate in terms of economic wealth and institutional engagement.¹²

Based on neo-classical realism and globalism, Buzan and his colleagues Waever build up ‘a three-tiered system of the

⁹Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 201.

¹⁰Raimov- Yrynen, “Regionalism: Old and New,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (2003): 39.

¹¹Nadine Godehardt, *The Chinese Constitution of Central Asia: Regions & Intertwined Actors in Int’l Relations* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 31.

¹²Ersel Aydinli & James N. Rosenau (ed), *Globalization, Security, and the Nation State* (State University of New York, 2005), 155.

international security structure in the post-Cold War world with one superpower (US) and four great powers (EU, Japan, China and Russia) acting at the system level and regional powers at the regional level.¹³ The conceptualization of the (RSCT) requires the clarification of three key concepts used here: regional security complex, securitization, and amity/enmity pattern.

The fundamental purpose of this research paper is to determine the applicability of RSCT and its related concept of securitization to Afghanistan. By employing RSCT, this research applies to the military sector of multidimensional security focus as envisioned by the Copenhagen School. "During the Cold War, regional security and stability were defined largely in terms of the place that a region occupied in the strategic calculation of the United States or the Soviet Union."¹⁴ Unlike the Cold War period, today many important actors have shaped the international system that replaced superpowers with regional or great powers. Today, regional powers are more influential with military, economic, demographic, political, and ideological resources for power projection.¹⁵

RSCT explains Afghanistan as an insulator state which is being surrounded by South Asia, Middle East and Central Asia. In addition to this, many factors contribute to Afghanistan's new security paradigm such as so-called Islamic extremism, terrorists' affiliation with regional states, and great powers presence in Afghanistan, etc. The South Asian (RSC) can be best understood when states feel

¹³ "State Failure in a Regional Context", *Stefan Wolff*, http://ainstud.at.ua/Id/0/29_Wolff_State_Fai.pdf (accessed December 8, 2018).

¹⁴ James Sperling, "Regional Security. Oxford Bibliographies," 2015, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document> (accessed December 8, 2018).

¹⁵ Detlef Nolte, "How to Compare Regional Powers," *Review of International Studies, British International Studies Association*, (2010): 893.

threatened and form a security network, it might be with the regional powers or great powers.¹⁶

In recent political and scholarly debates, most of the academic scholars have applied RSCT on Afghanistan with relation to Central Asian Republics^{17, 18}. However, very thin literature is available on the applicability of RSCT of Afghanistan within South Asian framework¹⁹. In addition to this, very little attention has been paid to other aspects of non-state actors in the securitization process, for instance counter-terrorism and threat perception with regard to the transatlantic alliance in Afghanistan, these themes still remain open for investigation.

Kristian Berg Harpviken believes Afghanistan is not a part of the Middle East, South Asia or even Central Asia. "Afghanistan has historically been in between all these regions."²⁰ The regional security complex includes cooperative and confrontation relations. The study of regions has received significant attention in contemporary international order but major differences have been central and disagreements arise on what comprises regions, how do they originate, how do they influence, and what happens when they interact within the larger international system. Regions do not define only different actors' interaction within the system but it is

¹⁶Irina Chernykh and Rustam Burnashev, "Conditions for Securitization of International Terrorism in Central Asia," *Quarterly Journal*, (March 2005): 131-142.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Praha, "Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the post-Cold War Era: A Sub-regional Insecurity Complex?" *Diploma Dissertation, Univerzita Karlova V Praze Fakulta Socialnich Ved Institut Politologickych Studii*, 2006.

¹⁹Melanie Hanif, "Indian Involvement in Afghanistan in the Context of the South Asian Security System," *Journal of Strategic Security* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2010).

²⁰Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Geopolitical Fault Lines – The Case of Afghanistan", *The International Relations & Security Network*, December 05, 2011, www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital Library/Articles/Special (accessed February 11, 2019).

where national and global security interplay.²¹International relations scholars emphasize the importance of regions regarding policy-making and the differences among them. Regions play a vital role in shaping and constructing the post-Cold War order.

In fact, Stein and Lobell have argued that regional security was not globalized even during the Cold War. Throughout the Cold War period, the U.S. was a significant player in most regional security arrangements, but on the other hand, it remained hesitant to engage itself in African and Asian conflicts because these conflicts were not posing major threat to its interests in these respective regions.²²Regional power hierarchies are equally important to explain regional security complexes, for instance Buzan and Waever have made a clear distinction between superpowers and great powers in the framework of RSCT. Superpowers exert influence in the international system which can be felt by other states in the system but the regional powers have minimal influence to exert which 'may be large in their regions but have less of an impact at the global level. This category of regional powers includes Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey.'²³

Destradi argues regional powers pursue different strategies for different causes and consequences. Regional powers follow different strategies in order to obtain same objectives. On the other side of the debate, neoliberal institutionalists such as Nye and Keohane put emphasis on economic and institutional

²¹Saeid Naji, "Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 168-169.

²²Raimo V - Yrynen, "Regionalism: Old and New," *International Studies Review* 5, (2003): 28.

²³Detlef Nolte, "How to compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics," *Review of International Studies, British International Studies Association* 36, (2010): 886-887.

integration by including the European Union (EU), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and NAFTA for regional analysis.²⁴ These frameworks presented by realists and liberalists fail to address loopholes within the international system “especially in relation to states that do not fit within a natural geographically congruent region, and whose positions often have influence on the international system disproportionate to their military and latent capabilities.”²⁵

The end of the Cold War and bipolarity provided more room to local powers for maneuvering their strategic objectives. The U.S. being left as the sole power and other great powers like China, Japan, and Russia are not interested to enter any strategic competition and intervene in security affairs outside their own regions because their domestic capabilities are not enough to take on these ventures. They chose to leave regional powers on their own to deal with strategic and military issues within their respective regions.²⁶

Afghanistan can be seen as the ‘core’ of a larger conflict formation which has brought many trans-national networks to work across the borders, for instance Al-Qaeda and ISIS, Islamic and ethnic networks which are actively exporting terrorism to the neighboring countries. However, Afghanistan relations with neighboring countries depend on how they formulate ‘their

²⁴Wayne McLean, “Regional Security Complex Theory and Insulator States: The Case of Turkey,” *University of Tasmania*, (2011): 6-11.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Saeid Naji, “Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory,” *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 168-169.

perception of threats coming from non-state actors, especially trans-boundary ones.²⁷

The political and security transition uncertainties have already had a pronounced effect on Afghanistan's fragile economy. Predictably, the levels of financial assistance and the presence of foreign military and aid personnel will decline over time. But deserting Afghanistan may not be a prudent option for the United States and others. To deprive Afghanistan of humanitarian and development aid would be cruel in light of how the country has suffered and sacrificed. Realpolitik would also dictate that this resource-poor country should not be left vulnerable. Without a visible international involvement, there exists a strong possibility of domestic political turmoil and economic failure that could condemn Afghanistan to become a narco-state, and leave it prey to rapacious neighbors. Once again, Afghanistan could easily become a breeding ground for an Islamic militancy that is regionally and globally contagious. A nuclear-armed Pakistan and the dangers of its becoming a jihadi state also raise the regional stakes for the international community, and especially the United States. The investment of the international community in keeping Afghanistan from becoming a narco-state has more immediacy than any of the other threats facing Afghanistan. As a direct consequence of a broken economy and a weak state system, opium poppy cultivation has spread across the entire country and criminalized much of its economy and governance. It has created a community of interests among dealers, local militias, government officials, and anti-regime militants that defies the enforcement efforts of the Kabul

²⁷W. Sean McLaughlin, "The Use of the Internet for the Political Action by Non-State Dissident Actors in the Middle East," *First Monday*, <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1096/1016> (accessed December 13, 2018).

government and those assisting it. The country's weak judicial institutions also stand as a major impediment.²⁸

Discussion

If the states are weaker in the system, the trans-national networks will have a certain destabilizing effect not within the state itself but across the region. With this in mind, this research paper evaluates whether Afghanistan fits the 'category of an 'insulator'—part of RSCTs categorization intended to fill the 'outlier' gap.' The topic requires to be studied because RSCT has no updated account on Afghanistan with regard to terrorism and non-state actors in the post 9/11 period. This research paper has three major contributions to the RSCT: First, unlike its authors who put emphasis on security threats emerging from the states within the region; I argue, in the post 9/11 period, security threats come from terrorist organizations and non-state actors. Second, the previous work done on South Asia within RSCT framework mainly focuses on Pakistan and India but I incorporate Afghanistan to give a complete picture of how the regional security complex is effecting at the ground, which has been a neglected theme. Third, this paper provides a guideline for policymakers on Afghanistan supported by scientific evidences for improving regional security.

The RSCT is applied on two threats studied, i.e. uncertain security environment as a decade long War on Terror remains an unfinished agenda in Afghanistan, second, rise of Islamic terrorism. In the first place, the US and European leaders have 'politicized the

²⁸Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood," *United States Institute of Peace*, June 01, 2006, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/06/afghanistan-and-its-neighbors-ever-dangerous-neighborhood> (accessed December 14, 2018).

threat by highlighting the regional security dimension, either by making reference to the dimension of military security of NATO, or by securitizing the strategic values and interests of the Alliance.²⁹

The US led NATO military alliance in Afghanistan remain focused on the military dimension of security. Al-Qaeda emerged as a global threat for the US and its European allies which led to the 'creation of a large coalition that supported boots on the ground in Afghanistan and which involved NATO. Invocation of article 5 by NATO was another step in the legitimization of WoT securitization.³⁰ On the other hand, in recent years, despite the U.S. insistence, European countries are quite reluctant to send their troops to Afghanistan due to multiple reasons and security is one of them.

RSCT emphasizes geographic factors. It explains that states at regional level make more security arrangements with each other rather than forming this relationship with states located in other regions. In other words, proximity plays a central role and causes threats to travel more easily. 'Only superpowers have the capability of having wide-ranging interests over the whole planet.'³¹RSCT has historical as well as contemporary dimensions that enable to provide a link to pre Cold War, the Cold War, and the post-Cold War developments in the international system. It also gives a

²⁹Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, "Extraordinary Measures: Drone Warfare, Securitization, and the War on Terror" *Global Security Studies* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 2.

³⁰Ibid., 9.

³¹Saeid Naji, "Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 168-169.

framework of regional security that helps to analyze, predict, and explain major events within any region.³²

Anarchy is the central feature of international system, where Regional Security Complex (RSCs) not only have mediating effects but also determine the respective roles of great powers in the international system. From a systemic perspective, regions form subsystems because states interact and interconnect with each other. Unlike larger international system which is determined by the interactions of major powers, regional subsystem analyzes the interaction of regional powers where major powers have the ability to exert influence and get involved in regional affairs. In such a situation, a great power active in the region through military and economic incentives may become a part of regional security complex by taking positive and negative measures.³³

Barry Buzan's concept of "regional security complex" offers a useful tool to investigate regional security in the contemporary international system which emerged after the end of the Cold War era. It is worth mentioning that this theory makes two significant contributions in the field of international relations. First, it shows relative importance of the regional security and the role of a great power in the international security system. Second, and most important factor is, "regional security complex" is embedded in security interdependence and not by following common and systematic factors which determine the nature of the contemporary international security system.

³²Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40.

³³T. V. Paul, "International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation", Cambridge, 2012, <http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/> (accessed December 14, 2018).

The end of the Cold War period brought Third World conflicts to the limelight. Today, regional states are more concerned to tackle dominant regional power which they considered as the main threat to their security and survival. Based on their colonial experiences, the principle of non-intervention has assumed greater significance to Third World states. In addition to this, alliances, for instance, SEATO and CENTO with superpowers during the Cold War did not yield any productive results and Third World states remained vulnerable to domestic opponents or subversion. The practice of intervention carried out by superpowers during the Cold War period and great powers in the post-Cold War period has only aggravated already fragile political conditions and posed a direct threat to the security of the regional states.

Buzan and his colleagues argue that RSCT facilitates scholars to get better understanding of new structure of international politics which emerged after the end of the Cold War. RSCT explains the distribution of power by combining both neo-realism and securitization in the Copenhagen School. However, RSC does not accept global level structure in international politics and emphasizes on regional level and that is what makes it different from the neo-realism.³⁴

‘This social constructivist method of conceptualizing security known as ‘securitization’ was first presented by the so called Copenhagen School in 1989 Working Paper “Security the Speech Act: Analyzing the Politics of a Word” by Ole Waever.³⁵ Hayes identified three elements of a successful securitization process

³⁴Saeid Naji, “Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory,” *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (August 2016): 168-169.

³⁵Catherine Charrett, “A Critical Application of Securitization Theory,” *International Catalan Institute for Peace*, (2009): 10.

(existential threat + referent object + means for resolving the threat)³⁶ “Copenhagen School argues that an issue is transformed into a security issue (securitized) after a securitizing actor presents it as an existential threat and this ‘securitizing move’ is accepted by the audience.”³⁷ “Securitization means ‘the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure.’”³⁸ The ‘securitization theory’ defines ‘security’ not as an objective condition but as the outcome of a specific social process.”³⁹ ‘This has on the contrary been criticized by those of the Critical Security Studies school of thought, which itself is set in contrast to the assumptions of neo-realism and realism.’⁴⁰

According to the securitization theory, security is socially and inter-subjectively constructed. This theory states, political actors securitize things as threats to legitimize their objectives. The main objective of the theory is to explain who, why, and under what circumstances political actors securitize issue. An issue becomes a security issue once it is presented as a threat to the audience. Thus Copenhagen School terms ‘securitization’ as an inter-subjective process which can be institutionalized, for instance, military

³⁶Jarrod Hayes, “Europe and America in the War on Terror: Transatlantic Security Relations after 9/11,” *Georgia Institute of Technology*, (2013): 6.

³⁷Christian Kaunert and Sarah Leonard, “Re-conceptualizing the Audience in Securitization Theory,” in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. by T. Balzacq (London: Routledge, 2011), 57-76.

³⁸Edwin Ezeokafor, “The securitization processes and West African Security,” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Dundee, 2015), 16.

³⁹Goran Popovic, Thesis: “Securitization of EU Development Policy” (Dissertation, Lund University: Department of Political Science, 2007), 14-15.

⁴⁰“The Regional Security Complex Theory Politics Essay,” *UK Essays*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/the-regional-security> (accessed December 20, 2018).

issues.⁴¹ In order to present an issue as a security concern, it must be presented and accepted by an audience. 'Indeed, Buzan, Waever and Wilde further clarify that securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience.'⁴²

In other words, the process of securitization is a speech act in which the audience plays a central role in determining different obligations, rights, and responsibilities and not the securitizer. 'Kaunert and Leonard have made an important contribution by identifying loophole in the securitization theory 'as a problematic and under-theorized aspect of the securitization framework... it is important for the framework to offer a clear conceptualization of who constitutes the audience and how its acceptance is assessed'.⁴³

It has been questioned whether securitization can be conceptualized as both a speech act and an inter-subjective process at the same time?⁴⁴ Barry Buzan claims a successful securitization is decided by an audience and not by the securitizer who launches the process, but who could be the audience? Both scholars are of the view that there is no clarity when it comes to define what makes 'an audience' and how its' acceptance is evaluated in the process. This is where Leonard and Kaunert have tried to fill the gap by presenting a valid argument that without determining exact nature of an audience, the process of a securitization would remain an

⁴¹Saeid Naji, "Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 168.

⁴²Op.cit., *The Regional Security* (2015).

⁴³Christian Kaunert and Sarah Leonard, "Re-conceptualizing the Audience in Securitization Theory," *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011), 57-60.

⁴⁴Ibid., 60-76.

ambiguous exercise. They demand more clarity about the given concept for further investigation.

The global security calculus is changed for the U.S. and its key allies after the events of 9/11. Terrorism was securitized as the top most priority and existential threat to contain in the post-Cold War era. 'According to the securitization framework of Buzan, an issue becomes securitized when it is presented and accepted as an existential threat that requires emergency measures outside the normal bounds of politics.'⁴⁵

The articulation of a successful speech act by a securitizing actor can manipulate the situation to get the audience support for his actions. For instance, President Bush through his speech act on September 20, 2001 articulated 'War against Terrorism' and declared: Our War on Terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.'⁴⁶

The U.S. political and military leaders convinced U.S. public and European allies that they needed emergency military action against perpetrators who were responsible for executing these terror attacks against the US mainland. The logic provided by the leaders was accepted by the public thus giving way to the US to intervene in Afghanistan by leading the Global war on Terror (GWoT). For the first time in history, NATO invoked Article 5 by declaring this security threat as an immediate threat against all member states. This in turn, invited the US and its European coalition to take extraordinary measures- in the form of retaliation and invasion of Afghanistan through Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 to tackle

⁴⁵Necla Tschirgi, Roger Mac Ginty (eds), *Routledge Handbooks of Peace Building*, (2013): 201.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 202.

the threat beyond the normal democratic boundaries. This research primarily focuses on the successful securitization of threat perception and related security dynamics regarding the War on Terror in Afghanistan. This research explores the subjective nature of security threats confronted by the US and its European allies and resultantly how this has made securitization a successful process. 'Thus, as the threat presented by al-Qaeda was securitized by the US, a number of measure were moved out of the realm of politics and became entered the realm of security politics.'⁴⁷

The securitization of War on Terror is embedded in discourse at official level thus enabling the US and its allies to carry on with their respective policies in Afghanistan. In the post-Cold War era, the US' unbalanced and unchecked power projection has invited conflicts in different parts of the globe and potential for conflict cannot be routed out in future too. The Bush administration articulated, interpreted and manipulated these potential threats in order to get wide scale acceptance to justify its military engagements all across the globe. The Copenhagen School's Theory of Securitization reveals how a threat is constructed through a speech act it is to be understood as a process "of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat."⁴⁸ This research paper highlights official discourses and the articulation of political threat as a base of justification regarding the ongoing War on Terror in Afghanistan. This also explains future implications of the US led European allies' decisions on regional security in general and Afghanistan's security in particular.

⁴⁷Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, "Extraordinary Measures: Drone Warfare, Securitization, and the War on Terror", *Global Security Studies* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 3.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 4.

In contrast to the realist and neo-realist assumption who believe that security is primarily defensive, Critical Security Studies take a different view by conceptualizing security not as an absolute characteristic 'but as a constructed quality which is dependent on shared ideas rather than state-centric gain.'⁴⁹ Apart from sharing this traditional military understanding of security with traditional security scholars, Critical Security Studies (CSS) and Copenhagen theorists do not define security in terms of military strength but equally emphasize on other sectors which have potential to become security issue- 'a mix of neorealist and social constructivist concepts – differs immensely from their traditional colleagues.'⁵⁰

The Copenhagen theorists have expanded the debate on security by involving other schools of security studies. The CS school is of the view that 'anyone who classifies an issue as a security problem makes a political rather than analytical decision.' The basic issue is not to deal with the threat but to know how, when, by whom, under what conditions some issues can be labeled as existential threats but no other issues fall in the same category.

CSS differs from the Copenhagen School in two ways. Firstly, CSS scholars have criticized CS School for dividing security in sectors and they hold the view that not only security but objects are socially constructed. Secondly, a CSS scholar, such as Ken Booth, seems more interested in defining the respective roles of threat and security objects arise from the process of social construction resulted from security dilemma. 'Thus, CSS scholars emphasize the

⁴⁹Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰Ali Diskaya, "Towards a Critical Securitization Theory: The Copenhagen and Aberystwyth Schools of Security Studies," *E-International Relations*, February 1, 2013, <http://www.E-IR.Info/2013/02/01/Towards-A-Critical-SecuritizationTheory-TheCopenhagen-And-Aberystwyth-Schools-Of-security-Studies/>(accessed December 16, 2018).

possibility of major change in world politics because things are socially constructed.’ Lene Hansen points out the Copenhagen School have ignored individuals and group society by primarily focusing on societal security and the state. ‘For CSS theorists, on the other hand, individual humans are the ultimate referent and security is not only survival but living a life without fear.’⁵¹

Rita Floyd critically examines ethical dimension of securitization process. She believes that neither securitization nor de-securitization are good or bad processes. ‘Floyd argues that the moral rightness (or wrongness) of a securitization finally depends on its consequences.’ It is important to evaluate the performance of the securitizer through results in order to see if s/he has achieved the required objectives.⁵²

In Regional Security Complexes, states interact with each other on the basis of amity and enmity pattern and both aspects are used as independent variables in order to determine the character of security relations.⁵³ The dominant regional powers determine rules for other states in the Regional Security Complex and also for the global powers to intervene.⁵⁴ In another sense, this theory provides valid reason to have constructivist roots, because patterns of amity and enmity make regional systems dependent on the actions and interpretation of other actors in the region. ‘Wendt, for example, makes the connection explicit, pointing out that his social theory can be applied to regional security complexes.’⁵⁵

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Saeid Naji, “Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory,” *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 168.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, “South Asia and Afghanistan: The Robust India-Pakistan Rivalry,” *Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO)*, (2011): 1-2.

Geo-geographical proximity is also relevant to explain security paradigm between states within region as threats pass through more easily over short than long distances. This bordering relationship is significant in all the security sectors including military, political, societal and environmental sectors except economical sector. The RSC highlights the importance of balance of power that serves as a bridge to connect the regional to the global level. Global powers can intervene in the RSC when states within RSC make security alignments with powers outside the RSC. Regional Security Complex (RSC) approach put emphasis on geographic proximity as most states in the region feel threatened from neighboring states more than distance powers and this is equally true for South Asian Regional Complex.⁵⁶

The regional states actually invite the intervention of great powers in order to balance power in the region thus making security dynamics different from the region which does not have great power intervention 'The RSCs may be unipolar, bipolar or multipolar; the kind of polarity affecting the security dynamics.'⁵⁷ Within South Asia, the regional powers relations with are based on amity/enmity patterns to exert influence. In Afghanistan, India and Pakistan are not competing over the country's resources, but rather to prevent each other from using Afghanistan against their respective interests and strategies.⁵⁸

Likewise Iran, which never established diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime in 1990s, now has developed an economic

⁵⁶Patric Fahlander, Thesis: Regional Security in the Persian Gulf: Indications of change in a Regional Security Complex, *Lunds universitet Statsvetenskapliga institutionen*, (2011): 7-8.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Bhashyam Kasturi, "India's Role in Afghanistan," *State of Pakistan*, February 20, 2012, <http://www.stateofpakistan.org/indias-role-in-afghanistan> (accessed December 20, 2018).

sphere of influence in Afghanistan's west⁵⁹ but its primary aims remain preventing Afghan soil from becoming a launch pad against Iran. China, an emerging global economy, has also invested in Afghanistan in the Aynak copper deposit⁶⁰ but is quite reluctant to under-take any further investment due to uncertain political climate and security concerns particularly to protect its Xin-jiang province from militancy from Afghanistan based Taliban elements. Though, China has developed friendly relations with Afghan Taliban even if it is wary of them. Also, China is more concerned about the presence of militants from ISIS, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and more so from East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) of Uighur Chinese Muslims in Afghanistan. As the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) are allies, China has more concern about these two groups even if they are small. Many of the issues affecting Afghanistan and other neighboring countries like economic cooperation, cross-border problems such as refugees, drugs smuggling and safe havens for militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan border areas are entangled and cannot be analyzed separately from a security perspective. For instance, 'Paradoxically, if the Afghan Taliban gains even a limited victory in Afghanistan, it will strengthen and empower the Taliban forces in Pakistan too, and this victory would give them a chance to get closer and work together in joint collaboration.'⁶¹

This situation to fight against common dangers bring states closer to each other to minimize the possibility of conflicts and enhance co-operation in mutual fields 'the patterns that govern the

⁵⁹Mohsen M. Milani, "Iran's Policy towards Afghanistan," *Government and International Affairs Faculty Publications*, (April 2006): 251-254.

⁶⁰Michael Wines, "Uneasy Engagement: China Willing to Spend Big on Afghan Commerce," *New York Times*, December 29, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/12/30/world/asia/ (accessed December 20, 2018).

⁶¹Lubna Sunawar, "The 2014 U.S. Withdrawal: An unsettled Quagmire for Pakistan," *Regional Studies* XXXII, no.4 (Autumn 2014): 109.

region would naturally lead more toward amity and cooperation than enmity between states.⁶²

Conclusion

The (RSCT) put emphasis on the regional dimension by highlighting the interplay between regional countries which are interconnected in such a way that their national securities cannot be considered separately. RSCT also claims that geographical proximity invites more security interaction between states at regional level as “many threats travel more easily over short than long distances.”⁶³ Different parts of the case study are interrelated and fit together to explain historical and contemporary developments in South Asia particularly after the U.S. and NATO drawdown from the region. From the above mentioned definition, this research paper highlights two theoretical gaps: First, RSCT does not elucidate the role of external great powers in the regional context, for instance, the U.S., NATO and the EU respective roles in Afghanistan as these global powers are not geographically, socially, culturally, or economically adjacent to South Asian Regional Security Complex but have had a profound impact on the global politics taking place in Afghanistan in the post 9/11 era. Lake and Morgan define geographic proximity as an unnecessary limitation for a state to be a member of a regional security complex. “This suggests that great powers not geo-graphically located in the region but with the ability ‘to project force over distance’ should be considered constituent members of the regional security complex.”⁶⁴ Second, security threats do not necessarily confine at regional level but have the potential to travel even with faster pace from regional to transnational level and are equally potent for the security of great

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Op. cit., Patric (2011).

⁶⁴Bertil Nygren, *Putin's Foreign Policy towards the CIS Countries* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 10.

powers beyond regional borders. The process of Securitization takes place when “actors identify an existential threat that requires emergency executive powers, and, if the audience accepts the securitizing move, the issue is depoliticized and is considered a ‘security’ issue outside the rules of normal politics.”⁶⁵ The Securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School as an attempt to re-evaluate the concept of security, has received much scholarly attention. No doubt, CS has widened the scope of security, but it has theoretical limitations as well, for instance, what is the exact nature of the audience.⁶⁶ difference between politicization and securitization is not clear for theoretical discussion, “Stritzel also highlights that the emphasis on the semantic side of the speech act articulation undermines the role of social and linguistic influences,”⁶⁷ and its focus on western liberal societies thus making it more Eurocentric, which put emphasis on much of the experience results from European security concerns and does not say much about its applicability of the societal sector analysis of other parts of the world. Securitization theory still needs revision in order to be utilized to regimes outside the liberal western model. The very definition has made the securitization process a state centric act thus neglecting other important non-state actors and their respective roles, for instance, media organizations, religious parties/organizations, NGOs, terrorists groups, civil society, etc. The non-state actors have the potential to exert influence and “are often highly active in identifying, raising and/or dealing with non-military challenges which have in recent times been widely acknowledging as having security consequences for groups other than (but not excluding) the state.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵Mark B. Salter, “Securitization and de-securitization,” *Journal of International Relations and Development*, no. 11 (2008): 321–322.

⁶⁶Op.cit., Christian (2011).

⁶⁷Sagarika Dutt, “Theorizing Regional Security,” *South Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 134-164.

⁶⁸Ibid., 174.

In addition, securitization theory does not explain the role of non-state actors in securitizing issues which they perceive as threats on national level, for instance, population support to terrorists, *madrasah* culture (so-called religious institutions for the teaching of Islam) in border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, drugs/weapons trafficking, refugees, Taliban detainees in Pakistani jails, etc; but this securitization process of the non-state actors carries very little significance and exert very minimal influence on the state level regarding policy formulation. In addition to this, non-state actors act beyond the state defined policy areas which make them securitizing agents/practitioners.

The United States is frequently accused of lacking a holistic approach to this turbulent region. Its regional policies on security, democracy, and development are said to be often inconsistent if not contradictory. The decision by the U.S. State Department to incorporate Central Asia's Islamic states into the same bureau as Afghanistan can contribute to a strengthened region-wide perspective. Along with the international community, the United States might also begin to address how it can benefit Afghanistan's quest for security and recovery through aid projects and other policies specifically intended to promote regional cooperation and integration. For this to occur, U.S. priorities that are now so unidimensionally focused on counterterrorism must be better aligned with the aspirations of citizens of Afghanistan and those of its neighbors.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood," *United States Institute of Peace*, June 01, 2006, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/06/afghanistan-and-its-neighbors-ever-dangerous-neighborhood> (accessed February 11, 2019).

Using the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), proposed by the Copenhagen school, as a preferred theoretical perspective, the thesis conclusion is congruent with the logic of this concept. According to its logic, all regional states are deeply involved in security dynamics of their own regional security complexes and hence do not perceive Afghanistan as their top priority. In most cases, Afghanistan has served as a playground for their extended security dynamics, such as in case of India-Pakistan or Saudi-Iranian rivalries or, on the other hand, the states of the complex are too weak to project their security dynamics beyond their own complex, as in case of the Central Asia complex. Very often, Afghanistan is perceived as an insulator, by the RSC theory and generally accepted as such, between its three adjacent regions – Middle East RSC or more specifically Gulf states sub-complex, Central Asia as a Post-Soviet RSC sub-complex, and South Asia.

However, Afghanistan has been increasingly involved in South Asia security dynamics through, on one hand, Pakistan's involvement that has being long term, but also India's increased engagement in Afghanistan since 2001. This has led to increased tension between the two key actors of the South Asia complex due to mutual securitization of involvement in Afghanistan, but particularly by the Pakistani side. Afghanistan has been perceived as a proxy war although not through conventional means. Based on these increased interactions between Afghanistan and the South Asia complex, in particular after 2001 by both key actors of the complex, analyzing the possibility of external transformation in terms of Afghanistan gradual inclusion in the South Asia security complex was my second objective. My conclusion confirms my initial assumption. Although Afghanistan still possesses a great deal of features of an insulator state, its increased security interactions with the South Asia complex, which are much more intense than with the other two surrounding complexes, has led to my

conclusion that Afghanistan is gradually becoming a part of this complex. However, given the uncertainty about Afghanistan future and the scope and form of regional states engagement, this conclusion is not definite and can be also interpreted differently if using different lens.⁷⁰

⁷⁰Iva Zahálková, "Post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan from the perspective of Regional Security Complex Theory", *Charles University Digital Repository*, 2014, <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/67878> (accessed February 11, 2019).