

Studying the Status of the New Afghanistan among Regional Security Complexes: from Central Asia to South Asia

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Abstract

The article aims to study the place of Afghanistan among regional security complexes including South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. During the Cold War period, Afghanistan was located at the center of US-USSR competitions. Lastly, the dyadic tension led to invasion of the country by the USSR Red Army and its occupation. Thanks to presence of former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, an ‘overlay’ came into existence influencing the security processes of the state. So, the end of the war in the Afghanistan was a pivotal accident in the late of bipolar era.

The end of the cold war coincided with rising incidents and concepts such as multi-dimensional security, security regionalism, and new regionalism. In other words, regions and the status of different countries among them were playing an important role in security analysis. Regarding the process, Afghanistan’s status was subjected to change in security analysis. Afghanistan had lost its geostrategic importance after the cold war, but it was regained after the 11/9 terrorist operations. The operations obliged the United States to fight against terrorism and try for democratization of Islamic world under the frameworks like ‘the Great Middle East’ and ‘the Greater Middle East’ – all of them set Afghanistan on the Middle Eastern security complex. Transiting responsibilities to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and reducing American troops in Afghanistan, historical-cultural relations between Afghanistan and Central Asia was highlighted and pushed the Country to Central Asian security complex. Meanwhile, Indo-Pak conflict and its externalities for Afghanistan security tie the late state in South Asian security complex. So, the main question here is which security complex does include Afghanistan. Answering the question, there are three approaches as follow:

- a) The first approach sets a link between Afghanistan and the Middle Eastern security complex.

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- b) The second attitude ties Afghanistan in Central Asian security complex.
- c) The third view argues that Afghanistan is an 'insulator state' which puts on borders of regional security complexes including Middle Eastern, central and south Asian ones.

But our hypothesis is that given the geographical proximity, security dependencies, economic interdependence, and patterns of amity and enmity, Afghanistan is located within South Asian security complex. Studying the hypothesis, regional security complex theory and bi-dimensional method including comparison and proof by contradiction has been used. Using this method, first, it is demonstrated that several factors take Afghanistan away from the Middle Eastern security and Central Asian one, notwithstanding the vast similarity among them. Then, regarding indices of security complexes, Afghanistan's relations with South Asia especially India and Pakistan are examined.

It seems that regional security complex theory could be helpful here. Security complex theory was first sketched out by Barry Buzan. Security complexes address the level of region located between national units and international system. So, the theory focuses on the regions as objects of security analysis, and offers an analytical framework for dealing with them. The aim of this theory is to highlight the relative autonomy of regional security relations. In this regard, seven factors including geographical neighborhood, models of amity and enmity, existence of two influential actors, relative independence, security interdependence, cultural-civilizational relationships, and economic relations has been examined in many regions from the Middle East to south and east of Asia. Under the above-mentioned theory, it is possible to test our hypothesis in below sections:

a) Geographical neighborhood: Afghanistan and South Asian countries, especially India and Pakistan, have similarities in geographical policy. These similarities including: vicinity to China and East Asia, direct or indirect accessibility to Indian Ocean, being subject to historically common external threat especially by United Kingdom, and so forth.

b) Models of amity and enmity: in this section, problems such as borders disputes, ethnical concerns, historical relations and other similar issues are in mind. In this regard, Pashto-ethnicity concerns has casted a shadow on Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral relations.

c) Existence of two influential regional actors: formation of regional security complex depends on the presence of at least two players. In this case, everyone accepts that India and Pakistan are two key actors in South Asia. Both of them are playing very important roles in the economic and political process at their surrounding environment.

d) Relative independence: next factor influencing the security complex is relative independence in security relations of one region regarding another

ones. It seems that security processes of South Asian security complex are independent of other security complexes.

e) Security interdependence: the fate of a security-complex members relate together negatively or positively. According this, the security of Afghanistan depends on South Asian security by whether common agreement or joint threats. For example, both Afghanistan and other countries of South Asia are subject to threats caused by nuclear proliferation or terrorism. Alongside, all of them are members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which could facilitate their relations.

f) Cultural-civilizational relationships: Afghanistan and South Asian countries are the successors of the historical governments which have joint traditions. These traditions, today, constitute a basis for vast linkage between the nations. For example, Pakistan TVs shows Pashto films and many Afghans and Pakistanis welcome Bollywood films.

g) Economic relations: Afghanistan and South Asian countries, especially India and Pakistan are among the economic partners of each other experiencing a wide bilateral trade. For example, Afghanistan is the second great market of Pakistani commodities.

Lastly, findings show that different factors including above-mentioned ones as well as spilling Indian-Pakistani conflict over Afghanistan place the late country on the South Asian security complex.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Geographical Proximity, Patterns of Amity and Enmity, Regional Security Complex, Security Dependencies.