

# An Analysis Of Regional Security Dynamics Of South Asia In Post 9/11 Period

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**Abstract:** The security situation of South Asia region had deteriorated due to massive increase in traditional and non-traditional security threats in post 9/11 period. This research paper is an attempt to offer a broader analysis of current regional security dynamics of South Asia. This research study has employed the qualitative method in which secondary sources of data have taken from existing literature, published and unpublished research works and primary data has collected by conducting interviews of International Relations experts' in Pakistan to analyze current security situation of the region. In addition, the aim of this study is to examine the role of China that it can offer to mediate the complex state of regional affairs and play an important role in the betterment of economies of regional states. One of the main finding of this research is that a strong partnership and cooperation between China and Pakistan to counter terrorism, religious extremism and bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan is very important. Governments of both countries are determined to increase cooperation between the two countries at bilateral as well as at multilateral level for the socio-economic development of the people of both states and the region at large.

**Index Terms:** Afghanistan, Religious Extremism, Security Challenges, South Asia, Terrorism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Located at the junction of resource rich regions of Middle East, West Asia and Central Asia, covering an area of 5.2 million square kilometers, the region of South Asia has immense strategic significance in global politics. Approximately 1.891 billion population lives in this region which is nearly one fourth of entire world's population [1]. The most important states in the region are India and Pakistan, while the other regional countries include Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan. Due to its geographical location and its closeness to the world's most resource-rich areas like Middle East, West and Central Asia and world's rising power China, the region of South Asia is strategically significant in global politics. Although, the geographical location of South Asia raises the importance of the region for foreign players but the unsettled political and territorial disputes among regional states had been a huge impediment in the region's economic growth and development.

The political and territorial conflicts between regional states have affected the peace and stability of the region. South Asia faces multi-faceted conflicts having implications for security and peace in the region. Furthermore, non-traditional security threats like rise in terrorism and extremism utterly changed the world scenario in the post 9/11 era due to which South Asia has failed to appear as a unified bloc like EU and ASEAN.

The region of South Asia is the least integrated region due to inter-state conflicts. Intra-regional trade of South Asia is just account for five percent as compare to 58 percent, 52 percent and 26 percent of European Union (EU), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) respectively [2]. India

and Pakistan are the largest countries by population with 133 billion and 197 million respectively. Bangladesh, Afghanistan Nepal and Sri Lanka have 164 million, 33 million, 29 million and 21 million population respectively. Bhutan and the Maldives are very small states comprising only 0.80 million and 0.40 million population respectively [1]. Although, China is not part of South Asia region but it plays an important role in regional security mainly due to its geographical proximity to the South Asia as it shares an extensive border with India, Pakistan Bhutan and Nepal. Due to its geographical location, China has significant influence over the security dynamics of the region. China is also an observer state of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). As China's economic and political influence is growing, it is strengthening its bilateral relations with South Asian states including India which has emerged as the major economic partner of China in the region [3]. According to trade statistics 2014, China accounts for 10% of the total trade of South Asian region while China's trade with South Asian countries makes up only 2 % of its global trade.[4]

Regional security of South Asia is very important as regional powers such as China and Russia and global powers like USA and European Union have great interests in this region. After United States invasion in Afghanistan, South Asian region has witnessed a continuous rise in traditional and non-traditional security threats particularly religious extremism and terrorism. On top of these complex security scenarios, there is powerful struggle among foreign players over a wide range of vital geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic interests in this region which has further intensified the security situation of the region. The involvement by foreign actors has further aggravated the regional divide.

South Asian states are facing multi-dimensional security threats which are inter-linked to each other and have an aptitude to affect world security environment. Extra-regional powers such as USA, UK and other western powers are also involved in the regional affairs for promoting and saving their own strategic interests. This sort of global engagement further complicates the political and security dynamics of South Asia.

Presence of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan has made the current intricate state of affairs far more complicated. The other inter and intrastate security

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challenges that South Asia has been facing include ongoing deadlock between India and Pakistan, mainly due to the Kashmir issue and the cross border terrorist activities, border conflict between China and India, the rising threat of Hindu-extremism in India and terrorism in Pakistan are only few to mention. This situation has badly affected foreign direct investment in the region and the overall socio-economic progress of South Asian region.

In the post 9/11 period, various factors such as, rise in terrorism, formation of new external alliances, Indo-US strategic partnership, Indo-Israeli alliance, India's strategic partnerships with major powers and nuclear arm race in South Asia have played an important role in making the current scenario of South Asian Regional Security more complex. For the development of Regional Security Complex Theory, Buzan and Ole used South Asia as a prime case. According to them, South Asia is facing many security challenges mainly due to internal security dynamics which are also linked with external factors making regional security scenario complex. India is the most dominant country in South Asia due to growing economy, huge military spending, and large population. India's dominance in the region makes South Asia a unipolar region (where only one country dominates and faces no competition) but on the other hand its hostile relations with Pakistan and vulnerability in case of any predicament make South Asian order bipolar.

Despite having vast material capabilities, India is unable to acquire political dominance. Therefore it is completely unintelligible to elucidate that distribution of power will establish the balance in unipolar order of Regional Security Complex in South Asia, largely because of the India's inability to use the economic superiority for regional integration and the indifferent approach by other small states of South Asia to play any active role regarding this issue.

However, this truth cannot be denied that despite India's economic superiority, Pakistan's capacity is excessively inflexible in comparison to other South Asian states [5]. Pakistan also holds a status of challenger to India's hegemony in South Asia owing to the fact that Pakistan is also a nuclear power country. Therefore, the two possible conflicts that make South Asian Regional security complex are; aggressive military conflict between Pakistan and India and secondly India's military conflicts with other South Asian countries [5]. One of India's foreign policy goals is to develop cordial relations beyond their boundaries and dominate the region. India's non-cooperative attitude towards other South Asian states and particularly Pakistan is one of the main reasons of regional stability. SAARC has also failed to enhance economic cooperation among regional states and remained incapable to resolve bilateral disputes especially between India and Pakistan.

During Cold war era, security of South Asia revolved around Indo-Pak relations, Sino-Indian relations and nuclear proliferation. In the post 9/11 period, there are many factors such as involvement of extra-regional powers like US (US presence in Afghanistan and PAK-US alliance in global war on terror), growing Indo-US strategic partnership (as US thinks India has an important role to play to contain China), Pak-US mistrust over terrorism, Sino-Pak strategic partnership, Sino-India competition and rapprochement and US-China competition in South Asia have changed not only global politics but also regional politics of South Asia. Intra-Regional and Global

Security complexes In current geo-strategic setting of South Asia, India gets extensive support from US as US wants to limit China's growing influence [6]. On the other hand China and Pakistan have transformed their relationship into comprehensive strategic partnership and cooperating with each other mainly in economic and defense spheres. Pakistan is important for China as it is giving a trouble free access to Arabian Sea through deep Sea Gwadar port which would be connected with China's western province Xinjiang [6].

The US strategy to support India's hegemonic designs to limit China's growth is disturbing balance of power in the region as US policy towards South Asia region based upon balance of power approach. U.S has developed close strategic relations with India. Indo-US strategic cooperation especially in nuclear and military spheres is a disturbing factor for South Asian security. In 2005, India and America signed 123 Agreement known as Indo-US civil nuclear deal to enhance bilateral civil nuclear relations. The Indian government under Narendra Modi decided to accelerate the process of military modernization and enhance defense capabilities. It provides opportunities to United States to enhance its military cooperation with India. Other than this, China's rise and its growing assertiveness in South China Sea compel US to expand its partnership with India.

In 2016 United States signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with India to provide the militaries of both countries an access to each other's facilities for defense supplies and maintenance.[7] India also signed S-400 deal with Russia and believes that acquiring S-400 anti aircraft defense System will help them to maintain balance of power with China as previously China signed S-400 deal with Russia without any fear of sanctions from US under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). US supported India's stance by stating that CAATSA is not for destructing defense capabilities of our allies [8]. It also shows that India is successfully influencing America's policies towards South Asia and has leverage over US. After signing LEMOA, India and United States have gone one step ahead in consolidating strategic ties by signing communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement in 2018 (COMCASA) which will provide India an access to secure intelligence and data sharing equipment about combat situation [9]. After LEMOA, COMCASA is the second defense agreement out of four foundational defense agreements which United States signs with close partners to enhance defense capabilities [9].

These developments in Indo-US relations is complicating regional security scenario of South Asia as USA is supporting India in its conventional and nuclear build up which is compelling Pakistan to enhance its own capabilities. There is a need to develop a regional framework to reduce risk of any nuclear escalation in the region. In a Personal interview, Khalid Chandio; an expert on Pakistan and US affairs expressed his views regarding US approach towards South Asia. He noted: "To promote peace and stability in South Asia is not America's agenda. If Americans wanted to promote peace in the region, why did they create defense pacts such as SEATO and CENTO in the first place? These pacts were not in favor of regional peace as it enhanced competition among states. America had never a long term strategic interest in the region. It always tries to achieve its short term goal and leave the region in a chaos. For instance,

during cold war era, they wanted to contain communism and now after losing a longest war in Afghanistan, they will leave which will ultimately destabilize the region.”[10] Most of time, involvement of super and major power in South Asia has not always played a positive role in promoting peace in the region. They have played their roles in proxy wars in the region for achieving their interests and sometimes they have made the security scenario more complex especially in cold war era. Dr. Zafar Khan; an assistant professor in Department of Strategic Studies, National Defense University Islamabad expressed his views regarding regional security and South Asia in a personal interview. He noted: There are three main factors which are raising concerns in global community regarding the security situation in the south Asia 1) Pakistan and India as nuclear powers 2) South Asian geographical closeness to the Indian Ocean, South East Asia and the Middle East, and, 3) China’s rise and its growing role in South Asia. In this complicated scenario, China wants to promote regional peace and security in the region through trade, economic integration and cultural exchanges with all the states of South Asia including India [11]. Tallat Shabbir; Director China-Pakistan Study Centre, in personal interview expressed his views regarding the role of external powers . He said: “Undoubtedly, the role of outside powers is a crucial factor in power politics of any region. Extra-regional powers of global powers should give value to efforts and actions of regional states in preserving regional security and external powers should not impose their decisions on them for achieving their objectives.”[12] In personal interviews with Dr Manzoor Afridi, Brig (Retired) Naeem Saalik, Dr. Munir, Dr. Ghulam Ali, Dr Salma, Dr. Fazal Rehman and Dr. Muhammad Khan, they expressed their views regarding external powers role in South Asia. According to them external powers role especially US role in South Asia had always been a destabilizing factor and it is still playing the same role. One of the most important factors which make South Asian security situation complicated is the nature of relationship that South Asian states share with other countries especially with the extra-regional states

## 2. SECURITY DYNAMICS OF SOUTH ASIA

South Asia plus China is not just important because of its location and human resources but it is also natural resource rich region. The two of major growing economies; China and India and three nuclear powers; Pakistan, China and India are present in the region. Russia; another nuclear power state, has great interest in South Asia due to its proximity to Central Asian states which has further enhanced the significance of this region. [13] The United States has always been involved in the regional affairs of South Asia as it has its own interests in the region. In the post 9/11 period, US enhanced its engagement in the region mainly due to war on terror in Afghanistan. China’s rise is another factor which has compelled US to get engaged more in South Asian affairs. US led war on terror in the wake of 9/11 incident completely transformed security dynamics of South Asia. This war hugely affected Pakistan’s internal security and peace process between India and Pakistan. Emergence of non-security threats such as rise in terrorism through non state actors and religious extremism posed serious threats not only to internal

security of regional states but also affected regional peace and stability.

There are very few chances of normalization of Indo-Pak relations due to their past baggage and blame games as both countries are not ready to make any compromise particularly over Kashmir issue. In February 2019, a Kashmiri young man attacked buses in Pulwama Kashmir carrying CRFP personnel. According to the reports, almost 45 army men killed and many were severely injured. Indian government blamed Jaish-e-Muhammad and Pakistan for the attack and claimed that Jaish-e-Muhammad was responsible for the attack while Pakistan has denied the allegation. The attack on CRFP in Pulwama led to the most serious conflict escalation between the two countries in recent years [14]. India breached Pakistan’s sovereignty by entering in Pakistan’s airspace on 26 February 2019 and dropping bombs in an empty area near LOC claiming it an attack on Jaish-e-Muhammad’s training camp. Pakistan denied Indian claims and on 27 February 2019, Indian airplanes again entered in Pakistan’s air space and this time Pakistan shoot down India’s two fighter planes.

On August 5, 2019, India revoked Kashmir’s constitutional status and violated its previous agreements by scrapping Article 370 and 35A. This article allows Kashmir to have its own administrative government and constitution capable of making decisions for all matters except foreign affairs, defense and communications. Abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A which allows the citizens of other places to buy land in Kashmir, secure government local jobs, scholarships and settle there permanently would change the demography of the region which is also against the UNSC resolutions over Kashmir and also Simla Accord which Pakistan and India signed in 1972 according to which India cannot take any decision regarding Kashmir unilaterally. After the abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A, Indian Government put Kashmir under security lockdown and cut off the lanes of communication, Internet, mobile phones and land lines. Top Kashmiri politicians were house arrested. The move has increased tensions between India and Pakistan. Pakistan has taken this matter to UNSC where permanent members of UNSC had urgent meeting over Kashmir on the request of Pakistan. Pakistan suspended its trade and diplomatic relations with India and India’s high commission was sent back to India.

The implementation of UNSC resolutions over Kashmir and the right of self determination of people of Kashmir is continuously ignored by India. While taking advantage of Post 9/11 developments, India was able to equate legitimate freedom movement of Kashmiri people with global terrorism. A peaceful relationship between India and Pakistan is not possible without an amicable solution of Kashmir issue. International community and great powers like China and United States need to play an active role for the peaceful solution of Indo-Pak issues as both countries are nuclear powers and any armed conflict between the two countries could be destructive not only for the region but also for the entire world.

Water dispute is also another major problem between India and Pakistan which is also linked with Kashmir dispute. Water dispute is making Indo-Pak relationship is even more complicated. India has been investing a vast amount on hydro projects which is limiting the flow of water to Pakistan which is a violation of Indus-water treaty. Legal battle between India and Pakistan over

the water issue at various global forums shows the lack of trust between the two countries.

Other than Kashmir, both countries accuse each other for supporting separatists and militants to create unrest in their respective countries. India accuses Pakistan for supporting Khalistan separatist movement in Indian Punjab. Indian government also accuses Pakistan intelligence agencies for supporting Kashmiris in their freedom movement and backing Masood Azhar and Hafiz Saeed for creating unrest in the country. On the other hand, Pakistan claims that India is training terrorists and providing them financial and weaponry assistance to create instability and unrest in Pakistan. In 2016, during his speech on Independence Day, Indian Prime Minister openly expressed his support for Baloch nationalists [15]. In March 2016, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies arrested one Indian spy named Kulbhushan Jhadav while entering into Pakistan at Pak-Iran border. Later on, he confessed that he is a serving Indian naval officer and his objective was to create instability and unrest in Baluchistan and Karachi.

There is no doubt that cordial relations between India and Pakistan would improve the security situation of not only respective countries but also the entire region would be benefitted tremendously. In Comparison to other regional states such as ASEAN, ARF and EU, SAARC has failed to realize its potential in resolving bilateral issues of its regional states. To counter menaces of terrorism and extremism, regional states need to cooperate to develop a comprehensive strategy based upon mutual interests. [11]

### 3. EFFECTS OF AFGHANISTAN WAR ON SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY

Since the invasion of Soviet Union, Afghanistan is in the state of war. The Afghanistan's geographical proximity to South Asian and Central Asian states always effects internal security situation of these countries. Soviet invasion in 1979 and the US invasion in 2001 have created a situation of hostility and chaos in Afghanistan which in turn, is effecting the security and geo-political environment of neighboring states [16].

China and Pakistan believe that without peace and stability in Afghanistan, the region of South Asia and Central Asia cannot be secured. Both countries believe that the "Afghan-owned and Afghan led" reconciliatory process is the only key for getting an amicable solution of this longest and deadliest conflict. Since the beginning of the war on terror in Afghanistan, India has been enjoying an influential role in Afghanistan under the umbrella of American forces which on the other hand a great threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan wants to limit India's role, as strong foothold in Afghanistan gives India leverage to pressurize Pakistan and it uses Afghanistan's soil against Pakistan. Along with US and India, other strong regional players such as Russia, Uzbekistan and Iran are also influencing the security situation of Afghanistan by supporting different armed groups within the country [17]. All these factors have complicated not only the situation in Afghanistan but also the overall security situation of the region. Till date peace and stability in Afghanistan is the biggest challenge due to the lack of coherent strategy. Most of the countries enhance their focus on Afghanistan after 9/11. Since the beginning of this Afghan conflict in 2001, there are many international conferences that have been organized in Bonn 2001 and

2011, Berlin 2004, London 2001, 2006 and 2011, Rome 2007, Paris 2008, Moscow 2009, the Hague 2009, to get an amicable solution to this destructive conflict [18]. International community signed many agreements over the years such as the Bonn Agreement in 2001, Tokyo Declaration in 2001 and 2012, Afghanistan compact in 2006, Paris Declaration in 2008 and the Hague Declaration in 2009 to keep engagements in Afghanistan [18]. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has passed many resolutions regarding the security, peace and developments in Afghanistan and international community assured their support for the implementation of these resolutions and observing the role of other stakeholders in country's neighborhood.

Recent Taliban talks with America are raising hopes for an amicable solution to this conflict as peace in Afghanistan will offer huge opportunities not only for regional states but also neighboring regions and China. Bringing Peace in Afghanistan is one of the major policy points on which both Pakistan and China converge on due to the fact that regional security situation cannot be improved without having an amicable solution to Afghan conflict. As a result, both countries have shown keen interest in making efforts to bring peace, stability and rehabilitation of war-torn Afghanistan. Chinese leadership appreciated Pakistan's initiatives for facilitating US-Taliban talks for political settlement for this deadliest war in Afghanistan. China had also deputed its representative who is in contact with both Taliban and Afghan government.[19] According to Chinese leadership, all the stakeholders including Afghanistan's immediate neighbors need to play an active role for bringing peace in Afghanistan as peace in South Asia is in favor of all [19].

China and Pakistan have realized that future prospects of a peaceful Afghanistan offer great opportunities for economic integration and regional cooperation. In this context, China and Pakistan emerge as natural partners. On one hand, China has financial and technical resources to invest in large infrastructure projects, energy routes and transport corridors traverse Afghanistan. On the other hand, the most feasible and sea route is in Pakistan for transporting Afghan and Central Asian energy and natural resources to Chinese mainland. By having an access to this alternative route, China can avoid congested and insecure sea route passes through Strait of Malacca which is a major security dilemma for Chinese [16].

Chinese investments in Afghanistan can serve as a model for future foreign investments in the country. Pakistan and China are cooperating with each other in energy sector and exploring mineral resources in Afghanistan. In 2008, Chinese companies China Metallurgical Group (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation signed the contract of US \$ 3 billion to mine one of the world's huge untouched copper deposits worth US\$ 50 billion in Logar province of Afghanistan. Later on MCC merged into China Minmetals Corporation; a largest entity having expertise in supply chain, exploration and advanced processing [20]. This Chinese investment in Ayank copper field includes a railway link between Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Tajikistan. This also includes power generation projects [20]. China's investment model in Ayank shows that development of natural resources, transport infrastructure and trade networks can be done simultaneously. Sino-Pak cooperation for the peace and stability in the Afghanistan is very important. [16]

Role of immediate neighbors of Afghanistan such as Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, China, Turkmenistan Uzbekistan, and all other stakeholders which have great interests in Afghanistan such as India is very significant for the peace and stability in this country.

Before US invasion in Afghanistan in 2001, regional states were playing major role in addressing internal problems of Afghanistan. However, in the wake of 9/11 tragedy and US invasion in Afghanistan along with NATO forces, the role of regional states reduced and it undermined the security situation in Afghanistan. But in the wake of withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, the situation has been changed and regional states are increasingly involved in the process of stabilization of Afghanistan.

#### 4. POST 9/11 DEVELOPMENTS

Prior to 9/11 incident, the security dynamics of South Asia were mainly based on inter-state relations especially interactions among Pakistan, India and China wherein at the time, extra-regional and global powers played their significant role directly or indirectly in the regional affairs. During the cold war period, regional security of South Asia has been affected by Indo-Pak and Sino-India interactions along with nuclear proliferation issue. In the post 9/11 period, security of South Asia was affected mainly due to the increasing role of global players, especially US. US led war on terror and its huge presence in the regional has badly affected many parts of Asia.

Pakistan became an ally of US in war on terror and has given its full support to US in its war in Afghanistan. Different segments of Pakistani society had reservations over Pakistan's alliance with US on war on terror. Pakistan army entered in the tribal areas along the Afghan border and started military operations in searching of the militants and their sanctuaries. Military operations by Pakistan armed forces in tribal areas along with the war in Afghanistan badly affected not only the internal security of the country but also had an impact over domestic and foreign policies [21].

It is noteworthy that with regard to the imperatives of regional security in post 9/11 period, many scholars expressed similar views which indicates that the imperatives of regional security are multi-dimensional covering economic, political and military aspects and often these aspects are inter-linked. In a personal interview, Tallat Shabbir; a senior scholar at institute of strategic studies Islamabad ISSI expressed he views. He noted: "For the regional security, it is very important for the regional states to develop a comprehensive strategy with consent to deal with the post 9/11 period challenges such as rise in terrorism, extremism and non-state actors, economic instability and internal dynamics of all regional countries and its impact on bilateral relations and conflict between the regional countries especially between India and Pakistan." [12]. For regional peace, security and prosperity, peaceful and cordial relations between India and Pakistan is must and it cannot be possible without having an amicable solution to Kashmir issue. Besides this issue, regional states need to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with tradition and nontraditional security challenges which have emerged in post 9/11 period.

Dr. Zafar Khan; an Assistant Professor at Department of Strategic Studies National Defense University Islamabad expressed his views regarding regional security imperatives. He said that "To

devise a plan to eradicate terrorism and poverty, economic development, enhancing regional cooperation and connectivity should be the priority of South Asian states. Foreign investors are interested in trade and investment with South Asian states due to its huge markets and resources, so all the states should grab this opportunity. There is a dire need to balance the indo-US relations especially under the BJP government. Pakistan's role should not be ignored by the international community as it disturbs balance of power in the region and creates instability." [11] In the view of Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry; Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad: "Realignment of major powers especially US growing strategic partnership with India to contain China are one of the most important factor behind the destabilization of this region." [22]. As South Asia occupies a very unique position at the surface of the earth, at the same time, this region is one of the most deprived regions where human development is severely ignored by the governments of regional states. All the states particularly Pakistan and India are facing severe challenges such as illiteracy, poverty, slow economic growth, poor health facilities and unemployment. These problems can be solved as these countries have huge natural resources and huge markets. Investors from all over the world want to invest in this region which can be a great opportunity for the development of this region. Bilateral issues should be resolved in a peaceful manner and extra-regional players like US and China should play a positive role for resolving the issues. Growing Indo-US strategic partnership is one of the reasons of disturbing the balance of power in the region which is a destructive strategy.

In the view of Riaz Mohammad Khan, former foreign secretary of Pakistan, "In the post 9/11 period, terrorism, violence and militancy have spread across the region and beyond. People in the region n beyond feel vulnerable. In stability in Afghanistan and militancy in Pakistan are the biggest security challenges which are need to be addressed through regional security, political stability and human development. China is helping Pakistan in this regard. China's strong cooperation with Pakistan is helpful in maintaining balance of power in the region." [23]. As US backing India's aspirations to dominate the region, it is making India an arrogant player in the region. India's non-cooperative attitude especially towards Pakistan is not in favor of regional peace. China's support for Pakistan is quite helpful in maintain balance of power in the region. Instability in Afghanistan and militant attacks from Afghan soil are the biggest challenges for Pakistan's internal security and country's development is not possible without addressing these issues.

#### 5. CHINA'S ROLE AS A STABILITY FACTOR IN SOUTH ASIA

According to many international politics experts, China's increasing role in South Asia is a stabilizing factor. China is an observant state in SAARC and most of the South Asian states, like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka support China's entry in SAARC as a full member except India that is against a full membership of China in SAARC. If China gets full membership of SAARC it can play a balancing role in South Asia and can bring all the states to work together for the regional peace and stability. India is threatened by the fact that China's increasing role can

undermine its influence in the region. Although China has few concerns regarding security situation in South Asia especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan but this region provide China great economic opportunities and strategic advantages including a chance for China to play a bigger role in Indian Ocean. China has been developing stronger economic and political ties with South Asian states and investing in infrastructure projects in many South Asian states such as Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. China's is playing an important role particularly for regional connectivity and economic integration in South Asia as there are two important projects under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI);China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. With the concept of economic interdependence, China has changed its domestic and foreign policies massively. Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has been developing its ties with South Asian states on the basis of mutual interests. Although China is facing few hurdles but it is the fact that Chinese has been playing a prominent role in regional dynamics of South Asia and has wide-ranging implications for the region [24]. The major objectives of US's policies towards South Asia are to curb terrorism and contain China. Pakistan played an important role in US led war on terror as a front-line state but the events such as Raymon Davis case; A CIA contractor who killed Pakistani citizens in the city of Lahore, US drone attacks inside the Pakistan along the Afghanistan border, NATO attack on Pakistan's Salala check post at Mohmand Agency, US frustration over Pakistan's assistance to different militant groups more especially Haqqani Network and Osama Bin Laden's presence in Pakistan and Pakistan's anger over the US attack on Pakistan killing Osama Bin Laden which was a clear violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty are some of the important events which heightened the tensions between Pakistan and the United States. U.S was furious over Osama's presence in Abbottabad and raised a question that how could it be possible that Pakistani government and Intelligence agencies were not aware of Osama's presence. Pakistani government hit back to its accusers especially Washington and said that there has been an intelligence failure not only of Pakistan's but all the intelligence agencies of the world. This mistrust between

Pakistan and the United States grew with the passage of time and Trump Administration took harsh stand against Pakistan to put more pressure on Pakistan to crack down on militants. It suspended coalition support fund and military training programs for Pakistan. President Trump tweeted against Pakistan and said that "Pakistan is giving safe heavens to all those militant and terrorist groups we are fighting with." Pakistani military establishment and government officials denied all the allegations and said that Pakistan is making all the efforts to curb the menace of terrorism and Pakistan has lost millions of dollars and precious lives in US-led war on terror. The United States growing strategic ties with India especially to keep Pakistan under pressure and act according to US instructions also pushed Pakistan to diversify its foreign relations. Pakistan felt that the way Americans showed an extraordinary outreach towards India, it has created instability and disturbed the balance of power in the region. Hence, China-Pakistan's growing cooperation particularly in defense sphere is the natural outcome of such indifferent approach of US towards Pakistan. However, in certain other spheres of influence; the US's presence has profound impacts on regional security dynamics of South Asia.[6]

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed regional security dynamics of South Asia. South Asian states are facing multi-dimensional traditional as well as non- traditional security threats which are inter-linked and have an aptitude to affect world security environment. Extra-regional powers such as USA, UK and other western powers are also involved in the regional affairs for promoting and saving their own strategic interests. This sort of global engagement further complicates the political and security dynamics of South Asia. For the regional peace and security, it is very important to resolve conflicts between India and Pakistan. An amicable solution on peace Afghan conflict and promote trade among regional states are equally important for regional peace and stability. Here, the role of China in South Asia and its increasing influence in the region especially its ties with Pakistan was projected as a stabilizing factor.

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