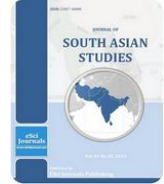




Available Online at ESci Journals

Journal of South Asian Studies

ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)
<http://www.escijournals.net/JSAS>



AFGHAN-INDO ALLIANCE: SEEKING GUARANTOR FOR AFGHANISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY

Fawad A. Nazami*

Department of Political Science, Asia Institute of Higher Education, Heart, Afghanistan.

ABSTRACT

Afghanistan's economic development and political stability are directly related to its security. In the recent decade, the government strived to implement deployment projects to bring about positive changes in its citizens' lives and place the country on the path of stability and welfare. However, domestic and external security challenges have undermined the economic development efforts. While, the United States and its allies are helping Afghanistan to overcome the domestic's security challenges, Afghan government's capabilities are feeble to respond the external security challenges and guarantee the country's regional survival. This article attempts to answer the question of "How Afghanistan can secure itself in the anarchical international system?" While relying on own limited resources is not a rational option for the country, Afghanistan can form alliance with another political unite that suffer the same source of threats and challenges. Such an alliance not only helps securing Afghanistan that can also boosts economic and trade cooperation among countries in the region.

Keywords: Afghanistan's security, Afghan-Indo relations, Alliance, Balance of power, Indian foreign policy.

INTRODUCTION

In the international system, states struggle for power and build up military capabilities to protect themselves against any aggressor or their enemies. When states fail to accumulate adequate power on their own, they form alliances with their friends and unify their military resources to balance their enemy's power and guarantee their survival. Afghanistan, in its first decade of democratic rule, lives in one of the most anarchical region in the world. It does not have the capability to defend itself against external aggressors. The United States is helping the country to fight against terrorism and insurgencies but has no interests to defend the country against other states in the region. This article argues that the most rational option for Afghanistan is to ally itself with India. It is in the national interests of both Afghanistan and India to unify their capabilities and respond against potential aggressors. Both Afghanistan and India have democratic governments committed to following international norms and cooperation. They have

mutual security threats: terrorism, extremism and insurgencies supported by Pakistan's military and intelligence services. The security of Afghanistan has strategic importance to India. Afghanistan can serve as a bridge to Central Asia's energy resources and alter India's continental trade. A formal alliance between Afghanistan and India can secure and stabilize the region. It can help balance the power between Afghanistan and Pakistan and function as an arm to the Afghan diplomacy with Pakistan. This will result in visible positive consequences in the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. The regional reaction against Afghanistan will be constructive. Iran, Russia, Central Asia and China all favor stability and security in Afghanistan as opposed to the security vacuum that will negatively affect the region. A stable Afghanistan has positive commercial implications for the countries in the region. Pakistan will be the only country in the region that will oppose an Afghan-Indo alliance formation. Pakistani policy makers view any close Afghan-Indo relationship as being against their national interests. While the survival of Afghanistan and the security of India are under threats, the two countries should not hesitate to form such an alliance.

* Corresponding Author:

Email ID: f.nazami@mfa.gov.af

© 2015 ESci Journals Publishing. All rights reserved.

ON ALLIANCE

Unlike domestic politics which take place in a hierarchical system and there are authorities responsible for maintaining order, International politics takes place in an arena that has no central government body. As a consequence, no agency exists above the individual states with authority and power to make law and settle disputes. States can make commitments and treaties, but no sovereign power ensures compliance and punishes those states which fail to comply. Each of the independent sovereign states considers themselves to be their own highest authority and do not recognize a higher power above them (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008). In such a system, the survival of state is not guaranteed. In any moment, one powerful state can make a judgment in accordance to her interests and attack or threaten the survival of another state in the system. This teaches us that the international system is a self-help system, in which, as Mearsheimer believes, the aim of each state is to guarantee its own survival and takes care of its own security.

How do states help themselves to guarantee their survival and security in anarchical international system? This is a question statesmen seek to respond in accordance to their countries situation and strategic culture. The first and most efficient response is that, states should rely on their own strength and power. They should build up military power to protect them against any aggressor or their enemies, In this regard realists emphasis that the main aim and concern of states in the international system is to protect themselves from external threats and maintain their security through maximizing their power. Mearsheimer (2001) notes that under anarchy states try to accumulate power and Waltz (1979), an offensive realist, believes that through the accumulation of power states maximize their security. In the practical world we can see that states are struggling for power and offer a large portion of their income to their defense and military buildup expenses, for instance the United States spends annually 4.6% of its 15.65 Trillion US dollar GDP, China gives 2.6% of its GDP and India spends 1.8% of its total GDP (CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

However, while states fail to accumulate adequate power on their own to protect and guarantee their survival in the anarchical international system, they take the second most common option. They seek for trustable friends and unify their military resources to balance

their enemy power and halt the potential enemy and aggressor. In other words as a second common action states make alliances to guarantee their survival and security.

There are many literatures on the study of alliances, but Glenn Snyder's and Stephen Walt's works have been found the most interesting and relevant, The reason might have been their scholarly analytical studies of the alliance phenomenon. Rarely one can define alliance better than Snyder, who describes it "as a formal association of states for the use or nonuse of military force in specified circumstances against states of outside their membership" (Saperstein, 1992). Stephen Walt's definition is also high illuminating as it sees alliance as a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states intended to augment each member's power, security and or influence (Walt, 2009). Both definitions are well structured, but Snyder's perspective limits alliance as a formal commitment, because formality itself is a signal to the aggressor state or the potential enemy that, there will be a definite response to its attack or threat of any attack (Snyder, 2007). At the same time alliance formality specifies the commitment of members and could also be used as a tool for containment and deterrence.

Regardless of the definition, alliance has one important characteristic which sets it apart from any other form of states cooperative actions. This criteria is that; "an armed attack on any member considered as an attack against all of them". This is the most powerful element of alliance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is labeled as an alliance by having the aforementioned criteria in the fifth article of its treaty. Therefore, not every security and strategic agreements between states could be considered as an alliance agreement, unless it has the most important element of alliance criteria. Afghanistan signed strategic agreements with France, Italy, United Kingdom, India and the United States, but none of them could be seen as an alliance agreement, while they have not aimed to defend collectively against external attacks and the agreements are not tied to be in such a format.

States also join alliances to cut the influence of other states on them and they use alliances as an instrument of their national security and foreign policy. Alliances can become an arm and supporter of states diplomacy. Small power states' diplomacy is not often successful. Through joining alliances, states can strengthen their diplomatic efficiency and their negotiations with other states might

become more satisfactory. Alliances can be formed in unilateral, bilateral or multilateral formats (Snyder, 2007). In a unilateral alliance, one state commits itself to defend another state but the other undertakes no obligation. An example of such an alliance is Britain in 1939, which committed itself to guarantee Poland and other eastern European countries' national security. Bilateral alliances are formed between two states that follow the same security interests; there are numerous examples of such alliances throughout the history of global politics. However, multilateral alliances are a commitment of more than two states addressing a greater competitor and threat. A clear example of such an alliance is NATO, formed after the Second World War. Nevertheless, there are different circumstances in which shape states behavior towards alliances; States with similar ideology or domestic political systems are sometimes seen as more likely to ally with one another (Walt, 2009). For instance democratic states are more prone to ally with each other rather than making alliances with non- democratic states, the same goes to authoritarian. Same identity and ethnicity could also be a source of alignment, such as pan-Arabism. Regional and geographical structure can also be a source of alignment, but the stronger and sustainable alliances have always been made by the time when states had common national interests, were addressing same source of threat and had the common enemy. Last but not the least, alliances are not permanent, states of the same alliance may change their position to that of their enemy and thus compete against each other. Only the interests of states are permanent and drive them to ally with other states or compete and ally against them.

THE DEYNAMISM OF AFGHAN-INDO ALLAINCE FORMATION

The current young democratic state of Afghanistan lives in one of the most anarchical regions in the world. The one decade old government is struggling to build up its military structures, to tackle internal and external threats. Afghanistan has over a 300,000 manpower armed forces and spent almost 10 percent of its GDP for its military expenditure and has very limited defense equipment, while being surrounded by neighbors who possess nuclear and other modern warfare weaponry. Considering the situation, in the long run Afghanistan may find the position to be able to guarantee its survival and security on its own, but in the mid and short term process, it severely needs to rely on the second option of

security and survival grantor, in other word Afghanistan should find an ally that will be committed to guaranteeing its survival in the region.

The most proper option for Afghanistan to choose as a formal ally is India. One may ask why Afghanistan should choose to ally itself with India when currently the United States is Afghanistan's strong supporter and partner and NATO is doing all it can to train the Afghan Security forces.

The answer lies in the fact that the US – NATO strategic cooperation with Afghanistan is limited in a framework of fighting against terrorism and insurgency (ISAF Mission in Afghanistan, 2014). This was the main security reason for why the United States has taken military action in Afghanistan since late 2001 (Griffin, 2013). A couple of rational reasons block the US-Afghan alliance formation as well as a NATO Afghan alliance. The Afghan government does not have the capacity to maintain the US strategic interests in the region to the stage that the US does not count on Afghanistan ability and fulfillment of its commitments (USA-AFG relations, 2014). On the other hand the United States is not in a position to ruin its relationship with Pakistan in the cost of making an ally with Afghanistan, although the United States still has a military presence in Afghanistan, it has never taken any political or military position to help Afghanistan respond to the recent continues attacks of Pakistan on Kunar province of Afghanistan (Salahuddin, 2010). Hamid Karzai's efforts to ensure Washington's commitment for Afghanistan security post 2014, through the Afghan-US security agreement remained with no result.

NATO on the other hand is neither a proper option for Afghanistan to ally with, whereas the organization is limited to the North Atlantic region and is far for Afghans to receive member states' political agreement to get the membership (NATO, 2014). Having said that, Afghanistan should continue its cooperation with United States and NATO, in order to receive support for the security challenges it receives from the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

However, the dynamism of the Afghan-Indo alliance formation is strong enough for both sides to move toward it. The two sides have a number of convergence elements. In the first part of this article, I pointed out a number of circumstances such as; ideology, political system, national interests, common threats, enemy and national security requirements all of which push states

towards forming alliances. Almost all these factors exist in the contemporary Afghan-Indo relations (Ashok & Pattanaik, 2010). India is the 5th largest development donor in Afghanistan, having provided aid worth \$2 billion to date. The aid covers military and police education and capacity building programs, infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance, small and community based development projects (Sachdeva, 2012). Both Afghanistan and India have a democratic system of government committed to international norms and cooperation. Most importantly, they have mutual security threats; terrorism, extremism and insurgency supported by Pakistani intelligence and military services are their mutual enemies. The two states have been attacked by Pakistani backed terrorist groups several times in recent years in Delhi, Mumbai, Kabul and other major cities (CNN, 2013). Afghanistan was used against India's security interests during the Pakistani backed Taliban regime and the current Islamabad's pursuit of policy of 'strategic depth' that is to control over Afghanistan to balance Pakistan, warns India's strategists to take proper measures to prevent the implementation of such a scenario (Gross, 2014).

A peaceful and stable Afghanistan has other strategic importance to India; serving as a land bridge, Afghanistan would alter India's continental trade by opening routes to Central Asia and Iran going beyond Russia and China and circumventing Pakistan (Gross, 2014). It can also increase and diversify the energy resources. Consequently an Afghan-Indo alliance is in the interest of both sides, whereas none can respond to the security challenges on its own as well as get access to regional market resources. The two sides have no other effective choice then moving towards such a direction. Security and stability are crucial for the realization of India's interests in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan has recently submitted a list of various weapons and equipment including tanks, artillery, mortars, transport aircraft and helicopters and India response has not been negative (NDTV, 2013). Military and defense cooperation are expected to be intensified in the post International forces withdrawal from Afghanistan. Although the 2011 strategic agreements signed by the parties have provided a framework of cooperation, it is as limited as it can't be perceived as a formal alliance of the two sides. It is in the national interests of both Afghanistan and India to take serious decisions and build a formal alliance. A formal alliance of

Afghan-India can balance power between Afghanistan and Pakistan and this itself can produce more stability and security in the region. Normally the aim of each alliance is to maintain security and prevent conflict. The formation of an Afghan-Indo alliance can lead to such an objective in the region and in their relation with Pakistan. In the absence of such a guarantee, Afghanistan's one decade negotiations with Pakistan on Taliban and terrorism in the region have remained with no result. As Hans Morgenthau once noted, diplomacy without military power is feeble and military power without diplomacy is destructive. Thus, an Afghan-Indo alliance can function as a muscle for diplomacy with Pakistan and result the resolving of political differences among them. Afghanistan, with a security guarantor, will strengthen regional trust and confidence for broader regional cooperation. It will stimulate foreign investors to invest in Afghanistan and pave the way for Central Asian countries to use Afghanistan as route of transit to South Asia and the Middle East.

REGIONAL IMPLICATION

The structure of regional perception of Afghanistan is in a way that almost all states in the region welcome the formation of an Afghan-Indo alliance. Iran, Russia, Central Asia and China all favor a security guarantor for the current state of Afghanistan than a security vacuum- which can affect their own stability. Tehran's policy towards Afghanistan is defined by a couple of strategic aims: first, to insure that Afghanistan will not serve as base for any aggressor against the Islamic regime's interests. Second: to insure that the country will not fall into civil war and instability which result in a spillover of refugees and criminal challenges into Iranian territory? Third, to prevent the influence of Middle Eastern Wahhabism's supporters in Afghanistan (Posch, 2014). Iran has sought to strengthen its economic relations with the Afghan central government and supported Afghanistan in its efforts to build up its own capacities. In the absence of a security grantor for Afghanistan, all the Iranian interests will be jeopardized. For Iran, which is suspicious of a strong western military presence in its neighborhood and who also opposes the resurgence of the Taliban and other extremist groups, the formation of Afghan-Indo alliance should be very much desirable (Kugelman, 2014).

Russia is also seeking a secure and stable Afghanistan. Despite opposing western regional foreign policies, Russia is expressing growing concern over the prospects

for stability in the country after the withdrawal of ISAF forces beyond 2014 (Lang, 2014). Russia fears that a security vacuum emerging after the withdrawal could destabilize Central Asia and affect Russia. There are several threats originating from Afghanistan; drug trafficking, violence and extremism spillover to Central Asia can easily affect Russia itself. Considering the situation, Russian decision makers would welcome a security grantor for Afghanistan as well.

For China, a secure and stable Afghanistan would open up economic opportunities. The country has already taken a number of commercial projects from road building to telecoms (Payne, 2013). In 2007 China won the tender for the largest investment in Afghanistan's history, the Aynak copper mine, but security risks has suspended the implementation of this project (Gross, 2014). Continuation of uncertainty in Afghanistan doesn't only affect China's economic interests, but it can even threaten Chinese internal security. If Afghanistan again descends into chaos the Chinese ethnic Uighur separatist militants from its western Xinjiang region will take advantage of it, resulting in their cooperation with Afghan insurgents that will enable them to destabilize the Xinjiang region. Uighur fighters are believed to be based in militant strongholds in ungoverned stretches of the Afghan-Pakistani border.

While China wishes to see western troops' withdrawal, it is contemplating concerns over the uncertainty and future security of Afghanistan. Beijing has no intention of taking on a security role in Afghanistan, as Sun Yuxi, who was recently appointed as special representative to the country has denied Western rumors that China will fill the security vacuum Post ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan. As Sun Yuxi stated, "This idea about filling a void after the withdrawal of troops, I think it doesn't exist." He clarified that China's involvement would remain commercial (Martina, 2014). As a result China should also welcome an Afghan-Indo alliance which can guarantee security and protect Chinese commercial and security interests in Afghanistan.

Pakistan would be the only country in the region that will strongly oppose an Afghan-Indo alliance formation. Pakistan has been suspicious of an Afghan-Indo relationship and publicly announced its concerns over the diplomatic presence of India in the eastern, northern and western provinces of Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2013). Pakistani strategists view any closer Afghan-Indo relationship as against their national interests and

would use all social, political, economic and proxies' instruments to prevent the happening of such a scenario. Pakistan has border disputes with both Afghanistan and India and during its seven decades of life, several clashes have occurred with its western and eastern neighbors. With the aim of containing India, Pakistan supported and empowered the Taliban in Afghanistan. After 9/11 Pakistan formed the Quetta Shura and has created a safe haven for the Haqani terrorist network that organizes attacks in Afghanistan and India (Green, 2012). Pakistani strategists believe that a stable and strong Afghanistan will demand for the disputed territory it has with Pakistan on the side of Durand line in Pakistan. They also predict that the formation of an Afghan-Indo alliance will enable both India and Afghanistan to achieve their goals in Kashmir and Durand.

CONCLUSION

No state can survive and function well without securing itself against external aggressors in an anarchical international system. Afghanistan lives in one of the most anarchical regions in the world, surrounded by nuclear and semi modern weaponries it has to find a way to guarantee its survival. Relying on its own capabilities is not a rational option for the current government, which is only a decade old. The United States continues to support Afghanistan on the fight against terrorism and insurgencies but has not yet committed to defend the country against external aggressors.

Afghanistan and India have mutual national interests that make the formation of an alliance between the countries ideal. The formation of an Afghan-Indo alliance will ensure Afghanistan's stability and security. It will further contain other actors from using Afghanistan's territory against Indian national security. An alliance will balance the power between Afghanistan and Pakistan and this itself helps in the stability of the region. Afghan diplomacy will become effective leading to visible positive achievements in the reconciliation and peace process. The alliance will also boom regional economic and trade cooperation. India would get access to Central Asia's energy resources and Afghanistan will benefit functioning as route for the transit.

Regional reaction on Afghan-Indo alliance is positive. Iran, Russia, Central Asia, and China will benefit from a secure and stable Afghanistan and prefer to see Afghan-Indo alliance rather than a security vacuum in the country.

The Afghan-Indo alliance will raise anxiety of Pakistani military strategist and policy makers. It will temporarily intensify Pakistan-Afghan relations and may stimulate Pakistan to increase interference in Afghanistan. However, in the long run Pakistan will find the opportunity to benefit from a stable and secure Afghanistan. Afghan diplomacy should put their efforts to ensure Pakistani policy makers that such an alliance is neither a threat to neighbors nor an act of aggression; rather it is aimed at stabilizing the region and heightening the level of security of broad regional trade and economic cooperation. Afghanistan and India should not hesitate to form the alliance due to negative regional reactions. The survival of Afghanistan, the security of India, and regional economic interests make forming such an alliance worthwhile.

REFERENCES

- Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai to push India for arms wish list. (2013, December 13). NDTV. Retrieved from <http://www.ndtv.com/-article/india/afghanistan-president-hamid-karzai-to-push-india-for-arms-wish-list-458341>
- Ahmad, N. (2013, December 6). 'Pakistan Concerned over Afghanistan India Relationship'. *The Central Asia Analyst*. Retrieved from <http://www.caci-analyst.org/publications/analyticalarticles/item/12755-pakistan-concerned-over-afghanistan-india-relationship.html>
- Ashok, A.G. & Pattanaik S. (2012, July 18). 'Afghanistan and India Options'. *Institute for Defence studies and Analyses*. Retrieved from http://www.idsa.in/politybrief/post2014Afghanist-anandindiaoptions_180712
- Baylis, J. (2008). *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to International relations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bourchill, C. et al. (2005). *Theories of International Relations*. New York: Palgrave.
- Brown, C., & Ainley K. (2005). *Understanding International Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- CNN. (2013, September 19). Mumbai Terror Attacks. Retrieved from <http://editions.cnn.com.2013/09/18/world/asia/mumbai-terror-attacks/>
- Green, M. (2012, July 21). 'US report says Pakistan backing Taliban. Asia Pacific'. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/cms.s.0.9c525462-4cad-11e1-8b08-00144feabd0.html#axzz38tvbfefy>
- Griffin, D. R. (2013, May 19). 'Did 9/11 justify the war in Afghanistan?' *Global Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.globalresearch.ca/did-9-11-justify-the-war-in-Afghanistan/19891>
- Gross, E. (2014, January 9). 'Afghanistan: The view from India'. *European Union Institute for Security Studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.iss.europa.eu/fr/publications/detail-page/article/afghansitan-the-viewpfrom-India/>.
- Gulshan, S. (2012, June 26). 'The Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan'. Institute for defence studies and analyses. Retrieved from http://idsa.in/idsacommentstheDelhiinvestmentssummitonafghanistan_gsachdev_260612
- 'Iran and Afghanistan'. (2014, March 19). *Institute for the Study of War*. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/iran-and-afghanistan>
- ISAF. (2014, July 22). Retrieved from ISAF: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/>
- Jervis, R. & Art R. (Eds.). (2007). *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*. USA: Pearson.
- Katz, M. (2014, July 14). 'Putin's Predicament: Russia and Afghanistan after 2014'. *Asia Policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?720>
- Kuggelman, M. (2014, July 14). 'The Iran factor in Afghanistan'. *Wilson Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-ran-factor-afghanistan>
- Lang, J. (2014, February 7). 'Afghanistan: The view from Russia'. *European Union Institute for Security Studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.iss.europa.eu/fr/publications/detail-gage/article/afghanistan-the-view-from-russia/>
- Martina, M. (2014, July 21). 'China will not fill U.S. Vois in Afghanistan'. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/21/uk-china-afghanistan-idukkbn0fq12k2014721>
- Merashemier, J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton.
- NATO. (2014, July 22). Retrieved from Nato: http://www.nato.int/eps.en/natolive/official_text_17120htm
- Pande, A. (2013, September 2). 'Why is Pakistan afraid of India-Afghanistan Ties'? *Hudson*. Retrieved from

- <http://www.hudson.org/research/9708-reality-or-paranoia-why-is-pakistan-afraid-of-india-afghanistan-ties>
- Payne, J. (2013, July 28). 'Afghanistan: Delima for **China** and the US'. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2013/07/afghanistan-a-dimemma-for-china-and-the-us/>
- Posch, W. (2014, March 12). 'Afghanistan: The view from Iran'. *European Union Institute for Security Studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publlications/detali/article/afghanistan-the-view-from-iran>
- Salahuddin, S. (2010, July 27). 'US-Afghanistan relations'. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/07/27/us-afghanistan-wikileaks-idustre66p4cb201000727>
- Saperstein, A. M. (1992). 'Alliance Building versus Independent Action: A Nonlinear Modeling Approach to Comparative International Stability'. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 518-545.
- Small, A. (2014, January 14). 'Afghanistan: The view from China'. *European Union Institute for Security Studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.iss.europa.eu/fr/publications.detail/-page/articl/afghanistan-the-viw-from-china/>.
- Snyder, G. H. (2007). *Alliance Politics*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- The Diplomat*. (2014, May 24). Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/tag/india-afghanistan-relations/>
- US Department of State. (2014, July 22). Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/af/>
- Walt, S. M. (1985). 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power'. *International Security*, 9(4), 3-43.
- Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliance*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Walt, S. M. (2009). 'Alliances in a Unipolar World'. *World Politics*, 61(1), 86-102.
- Waltz, K. N. (2010). *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Waveland.