This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Contents

This thesis is my own work and I am the sole author of the full and final draft. Any information, ideas, quotations and literature by others that may have helped in or contributed towards the production of this work have been attributed to the original author or speaker and appropriately referenced, to the best of my knowledge.

The full text of this thesis (76,507 words including the appendices) does not exceed the word limit described in the guidelines book for postgraduate research degrees at the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion (PPR), Lancaster University.

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Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my kids, Lema Shuja and Aryoub Shuja, who arrived in the third and fourth year of this research respectively.

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The Reluctant Realist

A Study of India's Afghanistan Policy from 2001 to 2018

In Light of India's Civilizational Strategic Culture

Abstract:

Whether or not India has a distinct 'strategic culture' is becoming an increasing important debate, thanks to the country's growing military and economic strength and her emergence as a major regional power. New Delhi's current Afghanistan policy can serve as a litmus test. This thesis, within the context of this very debate, raises a fundamental question: ***What factors have influenced and shaped India's Afghanistan policy since 2001, and how has Kabul responded?*** *To provide plausible answers, this thesis, by utilizing primary and secondary data collection methods, employs two distinct, yet conceptually overlapping structural theoretical frameworks to make three detailed, equally important and mutually complimentary arguments.*

First, the study argues that certain aspects of India's current Afghanistan policy can be traced back to her civilizational as well as contemporary 'strategic thinking'. The fear of an 'enemy state' and the desire to befriend 'a state that has enmity with the enemy state' still influences Indian psychology just as it did during the days of the Maurya Empire. Kautilya's 'Mandala Theory' provides the conceptual and theoretical framework for such an analysis.

Second, based on Buzan and Wæver's 'Regional Security Complex Theory', this research argues that existing structural constraints (the Pakistani factor) and the 'penetration' of the South Asian security complex by external powers (the United States) also influence India's foreign policy options in Afghanistan.

Third, the thesis argues that Kabul has failed to 'institutionalize' its foreign policy apparatus. As a result the 'Afghan perspective' in this debate is quite often ignored and remains under-researched. Unearthing the 'Afghan narrative' and understanding Kabul's strategic responses to New Delhi is necessary in order to gauge the success, or failure, of India's current Afghanistan policy. Hence, a very significant contribution this thesis makes is a detailed analysis of Afghanistan's strategic calculus and foreign policy options vis-à-vis India.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Theory, Methods and Literature Review

Introduction:

India, as many observers argue, is a nation on the rise, finally waking up to her economic and, more importantly, military potential both in the region and on the global stage. This growing economic and military strength, they believe, is a testimony to the fact that India has 'transformed'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made no secret of his ambition to turn the country into a 'leading power' (Tellis, 2016). And it might just be time for India to give up on her traditional foreign policy approach and behave in a more dominant manner if it is to be considered and respected as a regional hegemon (Ladwig, 2010). Others, such as Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier (2010) however, are sceptical of this somewhat 'exaggerated potential'. They argue that India, despite being the most powerful state within the South Asian complex, does not have a desire to play a more dominant and hegemonic role. Scholars in this group strongly believe that New Delhi lacks not only the ability but also the desire to play a greater role in regional and international affairs. In their opinion India is strategically hesitant, ideologically confused and economically and militarily incapable of taking up the role of a regional power broker. This debate over India's strategic vision, economic interests and military capabilities raises many questions, both internally and outside the country. So does India behave strategically then? Does she have a strategic culture or not? Is there an 'Indian way' of devising foreign policy? If yes, what is that Indian way, and how is it different from, let's say, the American way of making foreign policy decisions? This thesis, within the context of this very debate, raises a fundamental question: **What factors have influenced and shaped India's Afghanistan policy since 2001, and how has Kabul responded?** To provide plausible answers, the thesis, by utilizing primary and secondary data collection methods, employs two distinct, yet conceptually overlapping structural theoretical frameworks and adds to the body of knowledge on regional security studies by making three detailed, equally important and mutually complimentary arguments.

First, this study claim that certain elements of India's current Afghanistan policy can be traced back to her 'civilizational strategic culture'. The fear of an 'enemy state' and the desire to befriend 'a state that has enmity with the enemy state' still influence Indian psychology just as it did during the days of the Maurya Empire. Kautilya's 'Mandala Theory' provides the conceptual framework for such an analysis. Second, based on Buzan and Wæver's 'Regional

Security Complex Theory', the study argues that India's 'bolder but still hesitant' strategic posture towards Afghanistan is due to her increasing military and economic strength within the South Asian Security Complex. But New Delhi is still cautious about certain structural constraints within this complex. One such constraint is the spoiler role that Pakistan plays within this complex. Also, the 'penetration' of this complex by external powers (such as the United States) leaves India with limited policy options in Afghanistan. Third, this thesis suggests that Afghanistan lacks the traditional 'institutions' that help shape a country's foreign policy behaviour. As a direct result of this, the 'Afghan perspective' in this debate is quite often ignored and remains under-researched. Filling this void and bringing out the Afghan foreign policy narrative, especially Kabul's India policy is therefore necessary for a better understanding of the subject area. Hence, a very significant contribution this thesis makes is a detailed analysis of Afghanistan's strategic calculus and foreign policy options vis-à-vis India. First, however, it's worth looking into the very concept of 'strategic culture'.

Jack Snyder coined the term 'strategic culture' in the late 1970s. Many definitions of the term have been put forward since then, all showing a visible degree of conceptual overlapping. Chapel (2009 cited in Benneyworth 2011) defined it as '*a set of beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of military force', often moulded according to historical experience*. Doeser and Eidenfalk (2018) believe that 'strategic culture captures a state's core beliefs in military strategic matters'. Snyder himself was of the opinion that cultural and historical perceptions, and personal experiences, greatly influence the way leaders and governments behave in situations of war and crisis (Snyder, 1977). But why is strategic culture important? Nayef Al-Rodhan (2015) argues that the study and understanding of strategic culture is important because it teaches us how to understand the actions of a state and put that behaviour in a wider historical context. He warns, however, that strategic culture is not 'unalterable' and states, whilst giving space to historical perceptions and understandings in the affairs of policy making, should keep moving on with time and not stick to deeply rooted historical assumptions and opinions.

In the Indian context the debate has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. One of the key questions arising from this debate is whether or not India actually has a strategic culture. There are arguments both in support of and against the very idea of an 'Indian strategic culture'. Supporters of the 'Indian strategic culture' doctrine believe that, given India's emergence as a regional power, it is important to understand what factors shape and influence Indian strategic thinking. Among them, the works of Kautilya are regarded by many as one of the most influential factors that shape India's strategic calculus (Zaman, 2007). Also, there are some important secondary questions to it. If an Indian strategic culture does really exist then what are its driving factors? How do these factors influence New Delhi's current strategic behaviour and foreign policy thinking? Also, how does this behaviour connect with India's 'civilizational strategic culture? This thesis intends to answer some of these questions by taking up India's current Afghanistan policy as a case study.

While New Delhi fully understands the nature and importance of her current strategic relationship with Kabul, this aspect of her foreign policy behaviour has not been thoroughly studied on the academic front until very recently. A few people have lately taken this subject area seriously but there is still a lack of scholarly literature on India's Afghanistan policy compared to the work done on, let's say, her relations with Pakistan or China, or New Delhi's ambitions as a Nuclear state and a regional power. What is even more frustrating is the lack of an Afghan perspective in this debate. How does Kabul react to New Delhi's strategic approaches? Where does India stand in Afghanistan's strategic calculus, and what factors influence Afghanistan's strategic posture vis-à-vis India? These questions are important because they help us assess the success and/or failure of India's strategic approach towards Afghanistan. After all a successful foreign policy is one that encourages other states to behave in a desirable way. Hence, with keeping this gap in literature in mind, this thesis intends to make a contribution to the existing literature on the subject by adopting a two-pronged approach. The primary objective here is to assess whether or not India has behaved strategically in Afghanistan over the past decade and a half. But the thesis also looks at whether Kabul has given New Delhi the kind of strategic space the latter craves for.

Although there is a brief discussion on the history of India-Afghanistan relations in this chapter, it rather looks into this bilateral relation within a specific time frame (2001 to 2017). This time frame has been chosen because it provides analytical simplicity in two ways. First, it is easier to look into and focus on the domestic factors that have shaped both Indian and Afghan foreign policy thinking vis-à-vis each other during this period (the rise of Hindu nationalist politics and the empowerment of political parties such as the BJP in India, and the transition of power from Hamid Karzai to Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan). Second, it is easier to identify the external (in this case structural) constraints that have shaped Indian foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan (the global war on terror, the United Sates' [un]willingness to accommodate India in Afghanistan and Pakistan's continued policy of undermining India interests in Afghanistan).

In order to put forward my three key arguments clearly and explicitly we first need some context. For that we need to return to the basic debate regarding the presence/ absence of an Indian strategic culture. The next chapter expands the discussion surrounding this key question. Effort has been made to present both sides of the argument without necessarily getting entangled in details which are irrelevant to the purpose of this study. The discussion ranges from review of George Tanham's interpretive essay on 'Indian Strategic Thought' to Kanti Bajpai's (2013) rejection of Tanham's arguments. It also highlights some key sources of Indian strategic culture (history, geography, British Raj, nuclear weapons). The chapter then highlights some key features or characteristics of Indian strategic culture (non-alignment, self-sufficiency, deterrence). Chapter 3 focuses more specifically on India's current Afghanistan policy. It discusses the key features of India's involvement in that country and tends to relate them to India's civilizational strategic culture. Over the past sixteen years India has adopted an 'aid-driven' Afghanistan policy, with New Delhi being the largest regional donor. This aid spreads over a number of sectors

(education, healthcare, reconstruction, professional training and more). This approach highlights India's efforts to win 'hearts and minds' in Afghanistan by applying more soft-power. By interviewing key figures (including former Indian ambassadors in Afghanistan) this thesis argues that India has now adopted a 'Government-focussed' Afghanistan policy.

Chapter 4 of this thesis argues that India's Afghanistan policy, at present, is sensitive to regional and global political and security structures. In other words India does not deal with Afghanistan in an isolated way but rather treats it as part of a larger strategic calculus which is concerned with both regional and global developments. The chapter discusses the United States' unwillingness to accommodate India in Afghanistan in a broader role as another structural constraint. Based on interviews with former Indian diplomats and foreign policy and security experts, the study argues that India's options for a broader role in Afghanistan have remained limited. The United States has continued to believe that such a role could destabilize Afghanistan because it would provoke Pakistan. This was clearly the case during the initial years of the US military engagement in Afghanistan. While American attitudes regarding India's presence might have softened over the years there is still no reason to believe Washington would accommodate New Delhi at the cost of cold-shouldering Islamabad. The Afghan War is the longest the US has ever fought and still continues. Pakistan, despite being accused by the US of playing double games, still remains Washington's most important regional ally in the so called 'War on Terror'. In response, India over the years has shown great strategic patience. Despite repeated Afghan demands for large-scale military aid and equipment India refused to do so for many years. India's training of Afghan Security Forces has also continued in a limited capacity, and there have been absolutely no signs of a desire to send Indian troops to Afghanistan. This policy reinforces the argument made earlier that India's strategic behaviour in Afghanistan is sensitive to regional and international structures.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of how Pakistan and the United States see India's current role and presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's immediate fears regarding an India-Afghanistan strategic partnership are highlighted in this chapter. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the chapter discusses how and why Pakistan's security fears have spread beyond the political and military circles and have become part of public mentality. The chapter looks into Pakistan's national discourse on security and highlights certain features that influence and/or shape the country foreign policy behaviour. These features include a fear of encirclement by India and Afghanistan. Pakistan's official stance on cross-border terrorism, especially from within Afghanistan, is another key part of the country's political and security narrative. Also, Islamabad claims that separatist groups in the country have links with India, and that New Delhi provides these elements sanctuaries and training on Afghan soil. There are also economic fears. For instance Pakistan considers Indian decision to develop the Chabahar Port an effort to undermine the Gwadar Port. While many in India and Afghanistan reject these fears, there are other issues which are more real in nature. The territorial disputes between India and Pakistan (Kashmir) and between Afghanistan and Pakistan (The Durand Line) have a deep

impact on strategic behaviours and foreign policy decisions in all three capitals (New Delhi, Kabul and Islamabad).

The 5th chapter is perhaps the most important part of this thesis, in the sense that it provides an 'Afghan perspective' on current India-Afghanistan relations. It discusses India's position and importance in the Afghan strategic calculus. This chapter makes a much needed contribution to the existing knowledge on the subject because the current lack of an 'Afghan narrative' in the debate over India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security triangle is both frustrating and unfortunate. Present literature on the subject only describes Indian and Pakistani strategic behaviours and foreign policy options within the above mentioned triangle. However much of the scholarly work on the subject fails to tell us why Afghanistan behaves the way it does. There is a severe lack of literature on how Afghanistan, being a weak State, devises foreign policy. Hence, keeping this gap in mind, the chapter provides a detailed discussion on the factors that shape and/or influence Afghanistan's foreign policy decisions and highlights the foreign policy options available to Kabul. It also highlights the role of certain individuals (in this case one former and one current Afghan President) in making foreign policy decisions. The chapter also sheds light on Afghanistan's failure to 'institutionalize' its foreign policy decision making.

An important part of this chapter is an interview with the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai. In the space of the few minutes that were available he talks to me about why he refused to accept Pakistan's demands regarding India's role in Afghanistan. He also discusses his repeatedly failed efforts to convince Pakistan to play a constructive role in Afghanistan and the region. But the chapter is also rich with other sources of primary data regarding Afghanistan's foreign policy behaviour and options. The author has interviewed ex-President Karzai's then spokesman Aimal Faizi, who gives a rare insight into the day-to-day business of foreign policy making within the Afghan Presidential Palace. Jawed Ludin, a former advisor to President Karzai and ex-Afghan diplomat tells me about his personal experience of working with ex-President Karzai on foreign policy and national security issues. Based on these interviews and other sources of primary data the chapter presents a detailed discussion on Afghanistan's strategic objectives vis-à-vis India. They include Afghanistan's desire to counter Pakistan, find an alternative regional partner for the long term (beyond a possible US military withdrawal from the country), preserve what India provides in terms of aid and try to secure more aid, and seek Indian help in institutional and capacity building in different sectors.

The 6th and last chapter presents the conclusions of the study. It argues that certain features of India's civilizational strategic culture, especially concepts such as enemies, friends and enemies of enemies, still continue to influence and /or shape Indian strategic behaviour vis-à-vis Afghanistan. But it would be a miscalculation and over-simplification of the current regional security dynamics and ground realities to argue that India thinks and behaves in purely 'Kautilyan' terms when it comes to matters of national security and foreign policy. For many, India still remains a 'reluctant partner' for Afghanistan (Destradi, 2014). But the research argues that this Indian reluctance is not because of a lack of confidence or desire.

Instead, it is down to the structural constraints and the influence of external factors over the South Asian security complex that limit New Delhi's strategic options in Kabul. Also, the domestic debate within India over Afghanistan's security and political future is split. Whilst some within the Indian establishment continue to be pessimistic and are waiting for the worst scenario, others can see a window of hope (Destradi, 2014b). Despite these constraints, and confusions, India has continued to show 'strategic patience' in Afghanistan and has waited for the right time and opportunity. Many in India also count on a positive response from Afghanistan. How Kabul chooses to resolve its 'India-Pakistan' dilemma and the strategic choices that it makes in the future will certainly shape the future of India-Afghanistan relations.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

Kautilya, the royal advisor to the Hindu King Chandragupta Maurya, is widely considered as a genius in matters of war and peace. He advised the King, and later his son, on all aspects of governance, local administration and economy. But perhaps more important was his advice on whether to wage war or make peace, depending on which action best served the King's interests. He assessed the strengths and weaknesses of rival kings, encouraged the use of spies to spread disinformation and confusion and was a master of forging treaties with the enemies of his enemy. The Arthashatra, Kautilya's magnum opus, discusses the art of successful diplomacy in great detail (Boesche, 2003). But it would be an exaggeration, perhaps a misinterpretation of Kautilya, to suggest that India always applies 'Kautilyan tactics' in her contemporary foreign policy decision making. In fact, as Gautam (2013) rightly warns, there is a real risk of misinterpreting Kautilya's ideas if scholars are not familiar with the original Sanskrit script. Many observers of Indian foreign policy who spoke to the author for the purpose of this study insisted that Kautilya and his work were not a 'must read' for the Indian diplomatic community. In fact, many in the Indian Civil Service community have never heard the name. Social media platforms connected to the Pakistani military and establishment continuously bring up Kautilya and his tactics when discussing Indian foreign policy behaviour. But the advice from Indian observers is to separate facts from mere exaggeration.

However, as Gautam himself suggests later, certain principles in the business of war and diplomacy are timeless. In that sense, while Indian diplomats and politicians may not necessarily refer to Kautilya in order to devise foreign policy, elements of some of his theoretical concepts can still be found in India's contemporary strategic thinking. The Mandala Theory, also referred to as the Rajamandala, is one such theoretical concept. According to this theory different Kings with adjacent kingdoms are placed in a circle of states. The focus is on the state which is positioned in circle 1. Now, depending on the nature of each one's relations with the state in circle 1, and their bilateral relations among themselves, all other states are categorized either as enemies, friends, friends of enemies, enemies of enemies and so on. For the sake of simplicity I quote Kangle (cited in Gautam, 2013b) to explain the basic concept of the Mandala Theory.

> *"This mandala is said to consist of 12 kings or states. The 12 kings are: (1) Vijigisu (the would be conqueror); (2) Ari (the enemy); (3) Mitra (the vijigisu's ally); (4) Arimitra (ally of enemy); (5) Mitramitra (friend of ally); (6) Arimitramitra (ally of enemy's friend); (7) Parsnigraha (enemy in the rear of the vijigisu); (8) Akranda(vijigisu's ally in the rear); (9) Parsnigrahasara (ally of parsnigraha); (10) Akrandasara (ally of akranda); (11) Madhyama (middle king bordering both vijigisu and the ari); and (12) Udasina (lying outside, indifferent/neutral, more powerful than vijugisu, ari and madhyami)".*

It needs to be insisted that Kautilya's categorization (or naming) of the states should not be taken in the literal sense. India, for example, does not necessarily behave as the 'conqueror state' within the South Asian security complex. Also, Afghanistan does not always consider Pakistan an enemy state. In fact, as President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani showed immediately after coming to power in 2014, Kabul would be happy to accommodate and befriend Pakistan at the cost of cold-shouldering India if Islamabad stops interfering in Kabul's internal matters and does not act as the 'constraint factor' in the above mentioned security complex. What the Mandala Theory provides, however, is a clear framework which helps us analyse and understand the foreign policy behaviours of all relevant states (India, Afghanistan and Pakistan) within the Rajamandala (circles of states). As suggested by Kautilya, these behaviours are shaped by concepts such as enemy, ally, war and peace. The Mandala Theory helps in the analysis of India's current Afghanistan policy in two ways. First, it allows us to place certain states within the 'South Asian Security Complex' in specific circles. Since we are talking about India's strategic behaviour it has therefore been categorized her as state 1 (Vijigisu). Pakistan, in this case, is state 2 (Ari) which is the enemy of state 1 (India). Afghanistan, for its strained relations with Pakistan but comparatively closer strategic ties with India hence becomes state 3 (mitra, or vijigisu's ally).

However, the above categorization, or the placement of states within circles, does not tell us everything about the psychology behind 'state behaviour'. We still need to analyse and understand why certain states act in the way they do in situations of war or when facing a potential (or perceived) threat. For this we need to refer to another part of Kautilya's Mandala Theory, the *Sadgunya*, or the six constituents of foreign policy. Kautilya suggests that, when faced with a threat, states have the option to react in six different ways. It is also possible that a state in two or more different ways at the same time when facing the same threat. Gautam (2013c) explains the six constituents are listed below.

1. **Samdhi** (choosing peace by making a treaty)

2. **Vigraha** (choosing hostility and going to war)

3. **Asana** (neither negotiating peace nor going to war, but remaining quiet)

4. **Yana** (marching on an expedition)

5. **Samsraya** (Seeking shelter with another King, or finding an ally against the enemy).

6. **Dvaidhibhava** (choosing a double policy – negotiating peace with one King and waging war against another).

The six Sadgunya sometimes overlap with the four '**Upayas'**, or the four different approaches used to fulfil foreign policy objectives. These four Upayas are **Sama** (conciliation), **Dama** (offering gifts to win over allies), **Bheda** (rupture) and **Danda** (the use and application of force in order to fulfil foreign policy objectives).

By applying Kautilya's above categorization of state behaviour and foreign policy options to the 'India-Afghanistan-Pakistan' security triangle, this thesis argues that each state chooses one or more of the six foreign policy options listed here. Again, we need to be careful with terms such 'negotiating peace', or 'choosing hostility' and 'seeking shelter'. A literal translation of these terms runs the risk of creating confusion rather than bringing clarity. Afghanistan, for instance, is not seeking shelter (samsraya) with India against a Pakistani threat, nor is it choosing hostility (vigraha) against Pakistan. A more suitable (and updated) way of explaining Kabul's strategic behaviour would be to say that it is 'signing a strategic partnership with India in order to neutralize Pakistan's destructive role within the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan' security triangle. India, one could argue, is choosing a double policy (dvaidhibhava) by signing a strategic partnership with Afghanistan and, at the same time, fighting back to neutralize Pakistan's anti-India influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan on the other hand has traditionally preferred a policy of hostility (vigraha) towards both Afghanistan and India. Afghanistan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has repeatedly said his country is in a state of 'undeclared war' with Pakistan (Sonwalker, 2016).

The one major disadvantage with Kautilya's Mandala Theory is that it is very much 'regional' in nature, in that sense that it only helps us analyse and understand scenarios which have domestic variables and local underlying causes. While it is helpful in explaining the strategic behaviour of states that are either direct neighbours or regional allies/ enemies, the Mandala Theory does not tell us how other factors external to Kautilya's 'circles of states' can influence foreign policy

decision making. For example it will be difficult to find a suitable position for the United States in Kautilya's circles of Sates as it does not have a direct border with India or Afghanistan. Therefore the Mandala Theory cannot fully explain the influence of US military presence in Afghanistan over India's foreign policy options vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

For a clearer analysis and understanding of these external factors I tend to apply Barry Buzan and Ole Waever's '**Regional Security Complex Theory' (RSCT)** to the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security complex. The RSCT, just like the Mandala Theory, discusses all domestic (regional) factors that influence foreign policy decisions. But more importantly, it explains the influence and the consequences of an 'external penetration' of a certain security complex. Buzan and Waever (2003) argue that geographical proximity increases security interaction among states. This is because security threats usually travel more easily over shorter distances; let's say between two neighbouring states, than longer ones. But in an ever-changing global security order it is no longer possible for regional security complexes (RSCs) to remain isolated. Instead there is a high degree of possibility that an RSC is penetrated by one or more global powers at the same time. This is because the strategic interests of these global powers, and the threats that undermine those interests, are often spread and stretched beyond their territorial boundaries.

It was for such global interests that the British got involved in Afghanistan in the mid-19th and early 20th century. At the time Afghanistan was an isolated country minding her own business. W. R. H. Merk (quoted by Chambers, 1925) described it as a geographical entity which resembled Switzerland in many ways. He explains that, pretty much like Switzerland, Afghanistan was sandwiched between other counties, namely the Russian, Persian, Chinese and British territories on all sides. And it was precisely due to the fear of Russian aggression in Afghanistan that the British adopted a 'forward policy' there. More recently, the September 11 attacks in the United States resulted in the ongoing global War on Terror. Though global in nature it was mostly fought in Afghanistan, especially during its first few years. But long before America's military engagement in Afghanistan there was an existing 'regional security complex' in which the security dynamics of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan were entangled. There are many other examples (Russia's involvement in the ongoing Syrian crisis) of how a global power penetrates security complexes in other regions. Hence, the arrival of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan did not necessarily create a new security complex, but rather changed the way states in already existing complex behaved.

For many years, especially during the Taliban era, New Delhi had solely emphasized on neutralizing any threats to her national security that emerged from within Afghanistan. In order to achieve this national objective she had to establish

ties with anti-Taliban (and hence anti-Pakistan) elements within Afghanistan. New Delhi provided military and financial support to these elements for many years. But after the collapse of the Taliban regime and the formation of a transitional Afghan Government under the Bonn Agreement, India sensed an opportunity to review its Afghanistan policy. The different causes and aspects for this policy transformation are discussed in detail in chapter 3 of this thesis. The point I want to make here is that this policy transformation reinforces Buzan and Waever's argument that external penetration (in this case the arrival of the US in Afghanistan) influences, even transforms, strategic thinking within an already existing security complex.

While they highlight the importance of such an external penetration, Buzan and Waever argue that these external factors *do not* completely eliminate the already existing domestic variables of foreign policy decision making. Instead, they emphasize that domestic factors are, and will be, the actual and more persistent driving force behind a country's strategic behaviour. India and Pakistan, for example, sided with different power-blocks during the Cold War. However they did not return to a state of peaceful co-existence and normal relations at the end of the Cold War. Instead, tensions over domestic issues continue to undermine bilateral relations between these two neighbours to this day. Buzan and Waever also make another important observation in their analysis of the South Asian Security complex. They argue that the bipolar nature of this complex is weakening, in the sense that India's increasing military and economic strength has made it difficult for Pakistan to keep pace with her. This 'structural transformation', which is basically domestic in nature (e.g. economic strength), has allowed India to behave more confidently (Buzan and Waever, 2003b).This observation reinforces their argument regarding the importance and continuity of domestic factors of foreign policy decision making.

In terms of methodology both primary and secondary methods of data collection have been utilized over the course of this study. Sources, both classical and contemporary, on the existence, nature and factors of Indian strategic culture have been referred to. It has been made sure to include both Indian and non-Indian sources to avoid any potential conceptual bias. Literature published by think-tanks both in India and other countries has helped in understanding the 'Indian perspective'. Also, there are a lot of newspapers articles in the bibliography, showing the growing interest in the subject area (India-Afghanistan relations) not only among scholarly circles but also among the general public. It was important to look into and analyse India's official rhetoric regarding her Afghanistan policy over the past sixteen years. For this purpose a thorough review of the annual 'Afghanistan Reports' by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (2001-2017) was conducted. Such a review provides a useful insight into the transformation, both rhetorical and practical, in India's Afghanistan policy over the past decade or so. But for the purpose of making a real contribution to existing knowledge on the subject, however, this thesis counts

heavily on the numerous interviews that have been conducted over the past three years. They include brief as well as detailed discussions with both Indian and Afghan officials including former heads of states, diplomats and policy experts. It has not been possible to accommodate all the interviews in this thesis. Certain data needed to be sacrificed in order to make space for other. Below is a brief list of some the 'more important' interviews that make a significant part of the discussion in this study.

- Hamid Karzai, former President of Afghanistan
- Dr. Shaida Abdali, Afghanistan's ambassador to India
- Rakesh Sood, India's former ambassador to Afghanistan
- Jawed Ludin, former advisor to President Karzai and ex-Afghan diplomat
- Aimal Faizi, former spokesman to ex-President Karzai
- Rajiv Dogra, former Indian ambassador and author on Afghanistan
- Professor Rani Mullen, lecturer and expert on Indian foreign policy
- Halimullah Kousary, head of research at the Kabul based Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS)
- Dhruva Jaishankar, Fellow at Brooking India and expert on Indian foreign policy.

Besides those mentioned above, numerous other individuals were also interviewed, some for the purpose of this study and others for my employer, the BBC. While not all of them have been quoted or referred to in the study, much of what they said has helped in shaping my own ideas and understanding of the subject area. Over the past three years the author had the opportunity to speak to a number of Afghan students who studied in Indian on scholarships provided by the Indian Government. Also, certain ideas were drawn from my many discussions with Indian academics in the UK, and from the many events and discussions that the author has attended in London and elsewhere.

Literature Review

Just around the era when the different states of ancient China were at war with each other, Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, was helping Chandragupta lay the foundations of the Gupta dynasty in the Indian sub-continent. Boesche (2002) refers to Kautilya as 'the first great political realist'. Boesche's Kautilya had a clear vision about war and peace. In his classic title, 'The Arthashastra', Kautilya has exhaustively discussed laws and principles concerned with governing and running a

state. From the duties of the King to the protection of the Prince, from collecting taxes to maintaining internal order, from negotiating peace to waging war, Kautilya's Arthashastra provides detailed commentary on almost all aspects of statehood. For many scholars this is where the idea of an 'Indian strategic culture' is born. Any discussion on Indian Strategic culture will be incomplete with taking into account Kautilya's contributions. The chapters of the Arthashastra which are most concerned with the purpose of this thesis are the ones dealing with the art and business of foreign policy.

As previously explained, Kautilya's Mandala Theory provides a suitable conceptual and theoretical framework for the analysis and understanding of India's Afghanistan policy over the past sixteen years. But the Arthashastra is not just about the Mandala Theory. Its study and interpretation is helpful to the aim of this study in many other ways. First, it helps us discuss the idea of an Indian strategic culture in a civilizational context. Second, it provides a detailed description of the many elements and features of that 'civilizational strategic culture'. Third, Kautilya's work serves as the foundation of almost every modern commentary on Indian strategic culture, hence making its study important and relevant even if we are analysing contemporary scenarios. References to Kautilya's ideas, therefore, are spread all over the coming chapters in this thesis.

In more contemporary terms George Tanham's (1992) essay on 'Indian strategic thought' was perhaps the first major scholarly work on the subject. A large part of the discussion in the next chapter regarding the sources of Indian strategic culture and its key features draws from Tanham's essay. He not only explored previously under-researched concepts and ideas but, perhaps more importantly, his arguments regarding Indian strategic culture also paved the way for others to take up the topic more seriously. This reaction, especially from Indian scholarly circles, was partly because of Tanham's half-heartedness about or the rejection of the idea of an 'Indian strategic culture'. Understandably then, much of the literature on the subject since Tanham's essay has been produced either within India or by scholars of Indian origin. The majority of these scholars argue that India does indeed have a strategic culture. They seek to locate its sources and roots in India's civilizational history. For many the starting point once again is Kautilya's Arthashastra. Others like Kanti Bajpai (2013) provide a more contemporary picture of Indian strategic culture. Arguing that 'India does do grand strategy', Bajpai suggests that the country has started to part ways with both Nehruvianims and hyper-realism (two ideological extremes) and has started to adopt 'neoliberalism' as the most suitable foreign policy choice.

Within some Indian scholarly circles the debate has moved on. Whether or not India has a strategic culture is no longer the key question. Instead, many of the more recent commentaries discuss the degree to which the concept of a strategic culture influences the country's contemporary strategic behaviour and foreign policy, and the many contradictions in India's internal debates regarding her strategic objectives in Afghanistan. There are suggestions that, despite having a distinct strategic culture, India does not necessarily know how to apply it. Many argue that India suffers from 'strategic ambiguity', i.e. not having the ability to carry out a

through calculation of her strategic environment. Many reasons for this ambiguity have been highlighted. According to some there is no cohesion among the country's foreign policy elite and other state institutions (such as the Indian Army). Institutions, and individuals within them, are not on the same page when it comes to India's strategic objectives in the region and on the global stage (Bagchi, 2012).

Avinash Paliwal's book 'My Enemy's Enemy', published only months before the submission of this thesis, gives a much deeper and more detailed analysis of India's policy contradictions vis-à-vis Afghanistan. He argues that, when it comes to India's strategic objectives in Afghanistan, there are two dominant schools of thought within the Indian foreign policy establishment. Paliwal calls the first group 'conciliators'. This group believes in having close ties with whoever comes to power in Kabul, and emphasizes on engaging with everyone in Afghanistan, including groups like the Taliban who have had anti-India sentiments in the past. In their opposition is another group of politicians and foreign policy elites called 'partisans'. This group has a more hesitant policy approach. In their opinion, India's primary strategic objective in Afghanistan should be to neutralize or weaken pro-Pakistan elements. The partisans, in order to achieve this objective, are willing to side with smaller political and ethnic anti-Pakistan groups within Afghanistan. Depending on which of these two groups is in power, India's Afghanistan policy has elicited different approaches and priorities at different times (Paliwal, 2017).

There are also those who do not buy into the argument that India suffers from strategic confusion. They argue that India not only has a strategic culture but also does 'grand strategy'. In their opinion India's foreign policy moves along an ideological spectrum, ranging from Nehru's pacifism to 'hyperrealism' (Bajpai, 2013). The reason why some scholars have failed to grasp the idea of an Indian strategic culture is because India, historically and ideologically, responds differently to threats. New Delhi does not easily or willingly resort to the use of force for the purpose of achieving strategic goals. But that fact that it reacts differently does not mean it lacks a strategic culture (Goswami, 2013).

Published titles, academic essays, debate transcripts and the literature produced by independent think-tanks and research centres have proved extremely valuable for the purpose of this thesis. But any study of India's Afghanistan policy also needs to look into and take into account the numerous sources of data from official (Government) sources. These sources provide a valuable insight into India's official and internal rhetoric and practice regarding her Afghanistan policy. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs has continuously published briefs on the country's foreign relations. The Ministry's annual reports provide a comprehensive chronology of the major developments in India-Afghanistan relations over the past sixteen years. A review of these reports highlights the 'transformation' in India's strategic behaviour vis-à-vis Afghanistan, from a reluctant and reactive regional partner in 2001 to a more confident and 'forwarding looking' strategic ally in 2016 and 2017. As this transformation took place over the years it is also interesting to see that the Ministry's policy briefs on Afghanistan kept getting lengthier and more detailed year after year. These reports are also extremely helpful in understanding India's official

narrative regarding her strategic objectives in Afghanistan. They provide a detailed account of what India is actually doing on the ground in Afghanistan.

There is, however, a severe lack of such official documents or policy briefs from the Afghan side. Surfing and searching through the different sections of the official website of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one can only find several brief passages on the country's foreign policy objectives and priorities. These passages are nothing more than a general (and incomplete) description of where Afghanistan sees itself in the region and the world, and do not provide much for an academic study. There are references to Kabul's relations with the US, the EU and NATO and the Islamic World. However there is no passage on Afghanistan-India bilateral relation, neither can one find any reports or updates on the several major strategic agreements between the two countries over the past sixteen years. This is surprising because India is not only Kabul's largest regional donor in terms of financial aid but is also the first country to have signed a 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' with Afghanistan in October 2011. It is primarily for this lack of both official and academic narrative on Afghanistan's foreign policy objectives and behaviour in general, and her India policy in particular, that the thesis heavily relies on primary sources of data, mainly interviews. My several conversations with government officials and experts have helped in putting together an 'Afghan perspective'. Because such a narrative has been difficult find previously it is therefore an important part of this study and is a much-needed contribution to the existing body of literature.

A Brief History of India's Engagements with Afghanistan

Chronologically, the history of India's engagements with Afghanistan can be divided into three different phases. Each of these phases is marked by a particular strategic behaviour on part of India. Other authors have already discussed the terms 'strategic inactivity', and 'strategic reactivity'. Here, one could suggest adding a third phase which is marked by 'strategic activity'. Historically, those who ruled India have chosen to either do nothing or simply react to threats that emerged from or in Afghanistan. In other words, they were either 'strategically inactive' or 'strategically reactive' towards all such development. Only recently has India shown a more pro-active attitude in her Afghanistan policy. It is worth noting that sometimes one of the above three strategies have appeared on more than one occasion in the history of India-Afghanistan relations.

Mahmud of Ghazni, commonly referred to as Ghaznavi, rode through the many passes on the North-Western border and invaded India no less than seventeen times. He came for wealth, for spreading the 'Islamic faith' and for eliminating any threats directed at his own empire which was based in Ghazni. There were others who had come and conquered India before him but none came as many times as he did. His own empire was of course facing economic challenges at the time. One should remember that they were neither Arabs nor part of the larger Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Ghaznavids were Ottoman slaves who, with the passage of time,

had reached higher ranks within the Ottoman command. In order to sustain his rule Mahmud had to come up with way of funding it. India, for obvious reason, was one place he could find the wealth to rely upon. But wealth could not be the only reasons for his more than often incursions in to the Indian sub-continent. He also considered himself a defender of the Islamic faith and came to spread Islam further into India. It was a fertile ground for the spread of the Islamic faith. People embraced Islam because, unlike the Hindu caste system, it preached and practiced equality. Hence, he had reasons to come and conquest India time and again. Many followed him, and for centuries the Indian subcontinent was the epicentre of battles and adventures forged by numerous Kings and rulers from Afghanistan and beyond (Salehi and Shekari, 2013). This was pretty a period of 'strategic inactivity' on part of India vis-à-vis its north-western border and the lands which now comprise the modern Afghan state.

One of the last to do so was Ahmad Shah Durrani, also known as 'Abdali'. He was the founder of the modern Afghan state in 1747. In his early days Abdali ruled an empire which included many parts of modern-day Iran in the west, Kashmir in the north and Delhi in the south. Within months of being crowned in Kandahar Abdali had conquered Peshawar by driving out the Mogul governor from there. Towards the end of 1747 he was riding further south, reaching Attok and then Lahore soon after. Over the course of the next twenty years he invaded parts of India at least seven times. Pretty much like Mahmud Ghaznavi before him Abdali was also a new ruler in search of wealth to sustain his new empire. His own country had none. But a brief look at Indian sources reveal that, unlike Ghaznavi, he was far from famous among the Indian populations. The Marathas especially suffered at his hands in the Battle of Panipat. It was a blow to them as they were, at the time, at the height of their power. Different reasons have been given for their heavy defeat at the hands of the Afghan ruler. One argument is that they could not decide whether it would be wise to rely on artillery, or stick to the traditional use of cavalry during the battle. In the end they failed to utilize either of the two properly (Sharma, 2014). It was perhaps because of this 'indecisiveness' that the phrase 'Panipat syndrome' entered Indian strategic discourse and still exists. The Sikhs in Punjab were the next to face the Abdali rage. They accuse him of large-scale Sikh massacre in February 1762. Some accounts claim the Afghan forces killed between twenty to thirty thousand Sikhs, including non-fighter, near Malerkotla. It is argued that Abdali was outraged after the Sikhs repeatedly attacked and intimidated his forces following his victory in the Battle of Panipat (Kamal, 2012). But Abdali was different than Mahmud of Ghazni in the sense that he was the first ruler of the modern Afghan state who attacked India. For Afghans he is the father and the founder of the nation. Indian historians are pretty much divided about his personality and ambitions. Abdali did not stay in India for long but his many incursions left a permanent mark on the Indian strategic psyche. There is also the argument that his crushing victory over the Marathas in 1761 paved the way for British rule in Indian over the next couple of centuries. This second phase shows some sign of 'strategic reactivity' by Indians to threats emanating from Afghanistan, thought in the end it did not count for much.

It was after the arrival of the British in India that the rulers of the sub-continent started doing something about these more than frequent incursions. As Greaves (1991) puts it, the British had to deal with Afghanistan for one-hundred-and-fifty years, right until their withdrawal from India in 1957. By the time the British had put a firm grip on India the Afghans themselves no longer posed a serious challenge. Rather, it was the Russians who emerged as a grave threat to British interests both in Afghanistan and India. Many high-raking British officials in India had chosen to ignore the internal politics of the Afghan state, and were not much bothered by developments beyond the Khyber Pass. But the fear of a Russia which had ambitions in Afghanistan and beyond changed this status quo. There is also a debate over whether Russia actually wanted to advance militarily into British Indian territory. Scholars such as Oye (2014) argue that there is little evidence of any such grand scheme on part of the Russians, except one attempt by Emperor Paul 1 in 1801. But as far as the British policy makers in India were concerned the days of 'masterly inactivity' were numbered, and Her Majesty's Government in India had to come up with a 'forward policy' (Rastogi, 1965). The core objective beyond this forward strategy was to neutralize or even eliminate the Russian threat in Afghanistan. This rivalry between The British and the Russian Empires in 19th century Afghanistan is well documented, and has been termed by historians as 'The Great Game' (Wallis, 2009).

The British wanted the Afghan Emir Sher Ali Khan to remain a friend of Her Majesty's Government, and not to entertain Russia's plans regarding India. But dealing with the Afghans of course was not as straight forward as it sounded. The Emir had fears, and motives, of his own. Despite promises and offers of financial and military support he failed to gain the trust of the British policy makers in India. Relations between the two sides remained strained over the next few decades. Britain's 'entanglement' in Afghanistan led to no less than three wars with the Afghans. The first of them, fought between 1839 and 1842, proved to be the biggest military disaster in British Imperial history, ending in the complete annihilation of a 16,000 strong British-Indian Army by the Afghan tribesmen. This defeat also ended the myth about British military invincibility at the time (Military History, 2010). Britain made up for the loss, and victories in subsequent battles enabled her to put a grip on Afghanistan's foreign policy and dealings with the outside world.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War broke out in 1878. This time the British were concerned about Russia's intentions in Afghanistan and beyond, and decided to adopt a 'forward-policy' to neutralize the threat. Kabul was taken, the British gained control of Afghanistan's foreign relations and the new Emir, Abdul Rahman Khan, promised to respect British interests in return for subsidies and weapons (Hyman, 2002). It also led to the demarcation of the 'Durand-Line', which marked the 'spheres of influence' of the two sides. In 1919 the Afghans and the British fought for the third and last time. The young Afghan King, Amanullah, decided to attack British Indian territories across the Durand Line. Efforts to orchestrate an uprising in Peshawar against the British did not materialize. British plans bombarded Kabul but no side achieved an all-out victory. However Amanullah Khan declared independence and put an end to Britain's control over his country's foreign policy (Hyman, 2002b). By

that time British military and political priorities had changed, both at home and abroad. What had also changed was Russia's ability to pose a genuine threat to British interests in India.

London was constantly alerted by the threat posed by the newly founded Soviet Union in the 1930s and 40s vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Afghanistan, despite having won and announced independence from British control over its foreign affairs, was also still counting on British help in case of aggression by the Soviet Union. In the couple of decades prior to India's partition and the withdrawal of the British, a number of pacts were signed between Kabul and Delhi aimed at stopping Soviet adventurism towards India. Kabul repeatedly asked for military aid. The British were more interested in first training and enabling the young Afghan army instead of simply giving weapons. As Hauner (1981) suggests, they did not want to 'put the cart before the horse'. Though it took the Soviet Union a few more decades to finally make up its mind and intervene militarily in Afghanistan, there is no doubt that the mere presence of such a threat shaped and influenced strategic thinking and decisions in British India.

Also in the 1930s and 40s the separatist movement in the sub-continent was gaining momentum, meaning Her Majesty's officials in India had other domestic issues to worry about. Yet the eighty-year long military escalation with the Afghans and the whole experience in Afghanistan left a permanent mark on how the British political and military policy makers in India strategized their defence of the North Western Frontier. It continues to influence, and even shape, India's foreign policy behaviour and strategic thinking to this day. The only change is the emergence of Pakistan as the new threat to India.

This was a period of 'strategic reactivity' in the context of British-India's engagements with Afghanistan. Britain was mainly concerned with what Russia was doing in Afghanistan rather than having any genuine interests in the land-locked mountainous state. For some even this British reaction was misplaced. In other words, Britain exaggerated and misunderstood the degree of a potential Russian threat. This had a very simple reason. The policy making community in London were not exactly on the same page with British officials in India on the issue of Afghanistan and Russia. Those in London were worried and hence thought 'something must be done'. But many in India played down the severity of the Russian threat and were not too keen in any sort of military adventure beyond the Khyber Pass (Bayly, 2016).

In 1947 India became an independent state. By then the United States of America had replaced Great Britain as the hegemonic world power. Russia, strained by both internal political strife and external military exhaustion had paved way for the Soviet Union. The Great Game in Afghanistan and Central Asia had turned into a new global rivalry, this time between the United States and the Soviet Union. Many of us prefer to call it the 'Cold War'. Most importantly, for India and Afghanistan, Pakistan had emerged on the world map as a new country separating the two historical neighbours from each other. Amongst all these global political and military developments a young India was trying to stand on her feet. For much of the first few

decades of her history as an independent state India suffered from a 'strategic inactivity', which was deeply rooted in Gandhi's and Nehru's pacifist ideologies. India's foreign policy choices were influenced by notions of bilateralism, negotiations, non-violence and non-alignment. India lacked the will to use 'hard power' as a foreign policy tool. According to Basrur (2014b), India at the time was adopting the 'offensive realist approach' to foreign policy. It simply means India accepted the 'usefulness of military power', both against and by her. However, it didn't necessarily mean countries adopting this approach went on to use military force. This approach was based on an anarchical international structure, assuming that powerful states would not shy away from using forces for achieving their goals simply gaining more power. Typical of a weak state, India was wary of getting involved in the global game, preferring 'non-alignment' over engagement. Relations with Afghanistan over the next few decades remained cordial but benign. Both countries had strained relations with Pakistan, caused predominantly by land disputes. For India it resulted in three wars with her new western neighbour (1948, 1965 and 1971). Between 1947 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 there is little scholarly evidence to suggest India deliberately tried to undermine or hurt Pakistan in Afghanistan. This, one could argue, went totally against the core message of Kautilya's 'Mandala Theory', given Pakistan's strained relations with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan managed to stay out of the major global conflicts by adopting the same 'non-alignment policy' which had many supporters in India. During the 1960s and 70s both countries came closer in terms of economic and cultural ties. On other fronts there was not much sympathy for each other. India chose not to support Afghanistan's claim regarding the 'Pashtunistan' issue, which demanded either an independent status for the Pashtun tribes on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line, or their amalgamation into Afghanistan. Similarly, Afghanistan refused to support India's position during the many wars with Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute, or during the war with China in 1962. King Zahir Shah skilfully maintained his country's 'perfect neutrality' on regional conflicts. Despite such 'cold episodes' leaders of both countries exchanged official visits on several occasions. A number of bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries, with India agreeing to assist Afghanistan in the fields of agriculture, power, health, industrial cooperation and training of personnel (Ansari, 2003). Yet, for much of this post-independence period, India had once again chosen 'strategic inactivity'.

The Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 proved to be the last major incident before a 'strategic paradigm shift' in India's foreign policy. For decades Delhi had enjoyed cordial relations with Moscow. India was obviously the happier of the two, as the country directly depended on military assistance from the Soviet Union. Despite her 'non-alignment' tendencies India had managed to maintain friendly ties with a global power that was at the centre of the Cold War against the United States. And now this partner had decided to invade another country, one very close to India's own borders. To make things worse, Afghanistan, the country that was invaded, had a similar history of non-alignment like India's. Delhi faced a dilemma. The Soviet Union was a key ally but Afghanistan was a close neighbour and a partner in the 'Non-Aligned Movement'. Any sort of

open condemnation of the Soviet Union's actions would have severed ties with Moscow. Walking on a thin rope, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced 'opposition to military intervention' in any country. But, importantly, she also condemned the United States attitude towards the crisis, and showed concern over Pakistan's turning into a 'boiling point' as a result of direct military funds from the US. India also insisted that the crisis in Afghanistan was a regional matter, and that global powers should avoid destabilizing other nations for their own 'strategic ambitions'. But, of course, no one listened to India at the time and her impartial counselling made little difference on the ground (Roy, 1987). Soon after, the Soviet Union faced a disastrous defeat against the Afghan rebels which led to its collapse. Afghanistan was left to the mercy of Pakistan, India's hard-core enemy, and many rival islamist groups who, under Islamabad's influences, did not shy away from showing anti-Indian sentiments. Despite not being involved in it India seemed to have lost the 'war' in Afghanistan.

And it was at this crucial stage in her history that India underwent a 'strategic paradigm shift'. As Basrur (2014b) puts it, New Delhi gave up on 'offensive realism' and adopted 'defensive realism'. The new approach believed in multilateralism and cooperation, and was wary of using unilateral force for resolving issues and conflicts. Having grown more confident both militarily and economically, India was no longer a 'scared and weak state that stayed out of global politics. Instead she started to engage in world affairs in a more constructive but benign way. India's economy started growing after 1991, and its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose rapidly. This economic growth resulted in greater defence expenditure. By 1998 India had finally joined the 'Nuclear Club' after conducting successful tests. She had also overcome suspicions against the United States and new ties were being established elsewhere in the world. Economic forecast looked pretty healthy, with the country expected to overtake economies such as Japan and the United States over the next few decades. All this resulted in a different and more confident diplomatic posture by New Delhi.

Gilpin (1981) talks about how a state's potential strength and wealth can shape her strategic behaviour. As states become stronger and wealthier they also tend to become more and more ambitious in their foreign policy postures and objectives. By this logic India's growing economic and military strength after 1991 can explain the 'strategic paradigm shift' in her foreign policy in general and her Afghanistan policy in particular. India's pro-active Afghanistan policy over the past sixteen years is part of a broader attempt by New Delhi to control her 'strategic environment. At the same time, it is an opportunity for India to play a more active role in regional affairs and demonstrate her strategic ambitions (Pant, 2010b). India's Afghanistan policy since 2001 can be best understood by studying the contents of her strategic behaviour both before and after the above mentioned 'strategic paradigm shift'. While many aspects of her current Afghanistan policy might still be deeply rooted in her civilizational strategic culture, there is abundant evidence to suggest India is applying 'defensive realism' in Afghanistan since the turn of the millennium. Economic strength has allowed New Delhi to reach out to Afghanistan in a broader way. In return India gained the respect and friendship of both the

Government in Kabul and, more importantly, of the Afghan people. The arrival of the international community in Afghanistan after 2001, and the presence of international military forces, has provided India an opportunity to test her mettle. New Delhi has done well so far. Her strategic outlook towards Afghanistan is one of a more confident state, well aware of her military and economic strength, but also a firm believer in the 'defensive realist approach'. This third phase, from 2001 to the present, is what I tend to call a period of 'strategic activity'.

Chapter 2

Indian Strategic Culture

Debates, Sources and Key Features

The study of Indian strategic culture, like many other branches of strategic studies, has become an area of immense interest and strong academic debate. One of the key questions regarding India's strategic culture is whether it actually exists. To rephrase this, many people are not sure whether India behaves strategically in a situation of crisis or when faced with a threat. Some argue that, throughout India's history as a civilization, one can find 'bits and pieces of strategy' here and there. They claim, however, that India has failed to show any signs of a continuous 'strategic orientation', neither has she managed to 'think strategically' for a period considered long enough. Others, especially those within the Indian scholarly circles, reject this claim. They insist that the country not only has a 'distinct strategic culture' but also has the ability and the ambition to design a 'grand strategy'. This second group of academics provide reasons for why outsiders cannot grasp the basics of Indian foreign policy behaviour. First, they argue that the very apparatus or the institutions in India tasked with devising foreign policy or strategy operate within an isolated system which is free from outside influence. Even the influence of public opinion on foreign policy, a key driver of public policy in other countries, is not properly gauged in India. This is partly because a vast majority of the Indian public isn't interested in the country's foreign policy, and hence isn't part of the 'policy making apparatus' (Kapur, 2009). Second, the business of foreign policy in India is practiced by an 'elite community' of individuals. These individuals go through many rigorous stages of selection before they become part of the country's 'prestigious' Foreign Service. They do not discuss foreign policy in public; neither do they have much interest in what the public might think of the country's foreign policy. This isolationist approach by Indian elite has led to confusion regarding the country's foreign policy objectives, both among the Indian public at home and the observers outside.

The first part of this chapter presents both sides of the argument in order to better understand this key debate. First, I discuss some of the contemporary literature which rejects or, to say the least, questions the existence of an Indian strategic culture. This set of literature touches on issues such as 'strategic ambiguity' among India's foreign policy elite and India's inability to devise a 'national strategy' This is followed by another brief review of the literature that strongly supports India's ability and ambition to design 'grand strategy'. Scholars of this second group also differentiate between 'strategic culture' and 'strategic thinking'. They mention the reasons why some people have confused the two with each other. The chapter then expands and locates some key sources and characteristics of Indian strategic

culture in a 'civilizational' context. The aim here is to identify these 'civilizational features' and then locate them in India's contemporary Afghanistan policy over the coming chapters, and see whether the country's present strategic behaviour can be connected to her past in any way.

Argument 1: India Lacks Strategic Culture

In his detailed study of *Indian Strategic Thought*, George Tanham (1992b) has delivered the most blatant criticism of India's inability to think 'strategically'. He argues that the Indian elite have hardly thought 'systematically and coherently' about a *national strategy*. Tanham mentions some reasons for this lethargic behaviour. First, he argues that the very fabric of Indian culture and society is responsible for this 'strategic ambiguity'. In Tanham's opinion there is no articulated literature on the existence of an 'Indian strategy'. Most of what exists has reached us through a tradition of oral history. This history is complex and contradictory in nature and fails when tested for empirical accuracy. Hence, Tanham argues, there is a general sense of 'confusion' among the Indian elite regarding their national strategy. Indians, in Tanham's opinion, accept this confusion easily and readily. They consider this to be a part of life. It is something which they cannot escape. This very tradition of *acceptance* and the lack of interest by the Indian elite in their own national strategy have created a void in the field of '*Indian strategic studies'*.

Second, Tanham states that India has lacked *political unity* throughout her history. Even the few periods of relative political unity are still known by their dynastical backgrounds (The Gupta dynasty, The Mogul Empire). That different states that once existed within the territorial boundaries of what later becomes 'India' did not always have shared interests or concerns. In fact, often when they were not being bullied or conquered by an outsider, they were at war each other. What mattered to the rulers of these separate political units were their own personal interests. This lack of political cohesion among the different states contributed to the absence of a collective 'Indian defence strategy'. This also explains why so many invaders were able to enter the sub-continent through the north-western frontier and ride through it without facing any serious resistance. The states, having no allegiance or loyalty to a central government or command, had to come up with their own strategies for defence. Understandably, they often lacked the military capacity and strategic genius to resist conquest and interference. Though the British were able to change this and bring a sense of 'strategic cohesion to India, they pretty much kept a tight grip on strategic affairs. The Indian elite, despite their loyalty and allegiance to the British Raj, were often kept away from this sensitive business. All strategies for the defence of India were mostly discussed directly between British political elite in the Whitehall and the British military experts in the sub-continent. Also, these strategies were more suited to safeguarding 'British Imperial interests' rather than the interests of an independent Indian nation which emerged after the Empire. The Russian Empire, for example, was considered an enemy because it posed a direct threat to the military and economic interests of the Raj. Tanham's above arguments regarding the absence of a *grand Indian strategy* has faced more criticism

than any other work on the subject, especially from Indian scholars. But, while he questions the existence of such a strategy, he does not deny India's potential to behave more strategically. In fact Tanham himself confesses, in the very beginning of his essay, that India may finally be getting closer to devising a 'grand defence strategy'. He refers to Indian's political and military behaviour, especially after the 1962 war with China and the ultimate failure of Nehru's foreign policy, and accepts that the Indian elite may have finally started to take their 'strategic affairs' more seriously than they have done before.

Some scholars suggest recent Indian Governments themselves have shown a concern about the lack of an 'Indian strategic culture'. Indrani Bagchi (2012b) argues that the government of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also suffered from foreign policy confusion. He refers to the Indian elite and the public as an 'inchoate mass of chattering classes', arguing that there is no cohesion among the different stakeholders (government, civil society, security establishment and the political elite) regarding the direction and the objectives of India's future strategy. This lack of cohesion, Bagchi states, has undermined Indian's interests in the global marketplace. While Bagchi does not totally reject the existence of an Indian strategic culture, he highlights two main reasons why it has remained invisible and non-operational. His first argument pretty reinforces Tanham's opinion regarding Indian strategic culture. Baghchi also believes that India lacks a grand strategy. In his opinion there is a severe 'lack of purpose' regarding India's political behaviour and ambitions. For instance, Indians are not sure about why they need/ want a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. They also do not understand the details and the objectives of India's recent nuclear deal with the United states. In short, Bagchi argues, 'Indians do not know why they are doing what they are doing'. Secondly, Bagchi argues that the system itself is at fault. Those working on security and foreign policy do so within a closed and isolated apparatus which he calls 'silos'. Also, strategic thinkers and analysts are being kept away from the actual business of devising strategy. Most of what these scholars or analysts come up with is based on what they read and see in the media, and is obtained through their limited personal contacts with the 'actual system'. Hence, they are pretty much an emasculated population merely observing the system from the periphery rather than being part of the system itself.

Manjari Chatterjee Miller (2013) highlights other important factors which contribute to the lack of a long term strategic planning on part of the Indian Government. First, she argues that the business of devising foreign and security policy in India is pretty much a bottom-up rather than a top-down business. Her findings are based on interviews conducted with former and current Indian ministers and ambassadors. Miller states that the Indian Foreign Service is considered as one of the most prestigious institutions in the country and therefore has one of the most rigorous and demanding recruitment processes. Those who make it through this process go on to become advisors in key areas, including the Foreign Office and the Office of the National Security Advisor. These officers almost never receive any document or white paper from the Prime Minister's Office on what India's goals and role should be on the international stage. Instead, they devise and plan strategy on a

day-to-day basis, in reaction to the circumstances that prevail and based on their own personal/ individual perceptions and understanding. To make things worse they hardly ever report back to their ministries or their seniors about their roles, and about the decisions which they make in those roles. Miller's argument provides another example of how the different institutions within the Government responsible for foreign policy are not always on the same page. They are in fact a disjointed community of elite individuals not always aware of what the other party is doing, and why. Those at the lower ranks of India's foreign policy apparatus spend their entire careers studying issues, observing regional and global developments and identifying India's strategic priorities and ambitions. However, the political elite responsible for taking decisions in order to fulfil those ambitions are often too busy, uninterested or out of office by the time they get grips with the details of foreign policy documents.

Second, Miller argues that the Indian elite are not very comfortable with India's image as a global super-power. In fact, many government officials, both past and present, have told Miller that the whole idea of 'super-power India' was a western construct. Miller highlights reasons why India is not very interested in playing a greater role on the international stage. She argues that the whole western discourse on the rise of India puts a negative pressure on the country's economy. Indians believe they may not be able to grow economically at a pace which they are expected to. While India will definitely take decisive and effective steps to safeguard her immediate regional interests, there is a general uneasiness among the Indian elite about expanding, either politically or militarily, beyond her realistic capacity. There is a fear that any broader or more adventurous role by India on the regional or international stage could provoke reactions from rivals such as China, and that India may not be ready for such an unnecessary rivalry. This lack of 'self-belief' partly explains India's somewhat 'lethargic' foreign policy behaviour. New Delhi is unwilling, perhaps also unable to become a global power just yet. It also reinforces the argument made earlier, that the Indian political elite, especially those concerned with devising foreign policy, still suffer from what can be called 'the Nehru syndrome'. India is finding it hard to part ways with the pacifist nature of her foreign policy. Many in India are not sure what to do with a 'super power status', or with power itself. It is one thing to defend your interests when faced with a threat. It is quite another thing to be on the front-foot and neutralize such a threat before it even emerges.

The Economist published two interesting articles on the subject in March 2013. Both supported the argument that India's lack of strategic culture is undermining her capacity to become a global power. The first of the two articles (*Can India become a great power? India's lack of strategic culture hobbles its ambition to be a force in the world*) argues that there is a severe lack of coordination and cooperation between the country's political elite and its armed forces. In fact, the Defence Ministry itself lacks strategic expertise. This is partly because India has successfully kept military generals out of politics. As a result, India's military ambitions in the region have remained humble, at best below her own potential. Nehru's ideology of 'non-alignment' and the deeply rooted mistrust against the West

still influence India's foreign policy objectives. But this strategic humbleness can be dangerous, especially since India has long-standing border disputes with both China and Pakistan. The former is a growing military power that will not shy away from using force when/ if needed. Pakistan also has a troubled history of military dictators toppling democratic governments. Fazil (20116) argues that the reasons for military takeovers in Pakistan often come from within the political system itself. He mentions three reasons why the army in Pakistan has decided to take control. First, Fazil refers to the constant political strife that Pakistan has been suffering from for decades. Things didn't' start well as the country's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, died soon after independence. Those who followed lacked political maturity in many ways and couldn't sustain a long-term democratic process. Second, the same political instability has led to economic hardships. A lack of political consensus meant that many of the country's mega projects were never completed. Third, political instability and a corrupt system meant there has never been any serious transparency and accountability in the country. Even if it did happen it was more to damage political opponents and wasn't aimed at cleaning the system from within. All this chaos meant that things often reached boiling point on the political as well as the economic front, and the army found an excuse to topple governments. Chaudhary (2016) however believes that constitutional ambiguity and political strife cannot be the only reasons for military takeovers in Pakistan. He argues that, despite Jinnah's early death, other political figures in later decades were also not given an opportunity by the army. Also, the 1958 coup was a direct attack on the constitution which was only two years old by the time. In short, as Wolf (2013) puts it, the military brass in Pakistan has never allowed civilian regimes in Pakistan to move towards democratic consolidation.

Most of the generals behind such army takeovers, and by large the Pakistani Army itself, have anti-India sentiments and ambitions. In response, India does not seem to have a strategic plan to cope with any unexpected or unwanted provocation on any of her borders. The article also highlights some key factors which give India an edge over other regional rivals such as China. Unlike China, India has a greater 'soft-power' capability. Her tradition of democratic institutions brings India closer to the western world than China. Also, as a direct victim of terrorism herself, India can play a greater role in the ongoing fight against terrorism. These factors need to be exploited if India is to achieve the 'great power' status. Until now no such attempt has been made. It seems hard for the Indian Army generals to think on behalf of the country's politicians and identify the country's strategic interests. At the same time, the politicians are too wary of engaging with the Army on issues of strategic interest, and hence unaware of the country's potential and capacity as a military power.

The above argument is reinforced in the second article by The Economist (*Know Your Own Strength*). It discusses India's apparent inability to deploy her increasing military clout for the protection of her national interests. While there is general consensus regarding India's ability and capacity to become one of the four largest military powers in the world by the end of this decade, Indian political and military elite do not necessarily understand what that status means for the country's

future. The article highlights the threats caused by Pakistani backed Islamist groups and argues that even a low-scale attack such as the one on the Indian Parliament in 2001 can take the two countries to the brink of war. And, if such a war escalates, India is ill-prepared to either win it or contain it. The article argues that 'strategic restraint' is practiced when it comes to India's military postures towards Pakistan. The idea is to avoid the temptation to strike first. But if attacked then India will strike fast and hard and take as much territory as possible, not giving Pakistan the opportunity to think nuclear. But the question is whether Pakistan can be trusted when it comes to the use of nuclear weapons. The article argues that it is a strategic suicide to think that Pakistan will back off from using her nuclear weapons, especially when Islamabad has not signed up to the 'no first use' policy like India. Another example is the disputed border with China where India seems to have taken her eyes off the rapid military investment by her communist neighbour. China is fast building railway lines, airfields and communication centres on her side of the border. It is well capable of rapid and effective action aimed at taking Indian territory. Top military experts have repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of an Indian counter-strategy in case the situation on the Chinese border escalates. Any document explaining such a counter-strategy is yet to be produced. India's lack of a strategic culture has been tolerated this long because she has stayed out of major trouble since independence. But the wars she fought against Pakistan and China clearly expose New Delhi's strategic confusion and vulnerability. But with a militarily and politically volatile Pakistani state on one side and a militarily ambitious China on the other, India cannot ignore the absence of a grand strategy for too long. Sooner or later Indian policy elite will need to part ways with Nehruvian traditions and start thinking in more *realpolitik* ways.

This very lack of *realpolitik* on part of India is also highlighted by Harsh Pant (2009). He refers to two important internal constraints that have influenced or undermined Indian strategic thinking, and still continue to do so. First, he argues that the Indian strategic community must 'learn to exploit the structure of the international system to their advantage'. Structural constraints, Pant argues, can undermine a country's foreign policy ambitions but at the same time India must learn to exploit some of these constraints to her advantage. In Pant's opinion, India is no longer at the periphery of global politics in the newly emerging global order. Instead she is expected to play a more confident role on both the regional and the international stages. Such a role will further cement her status as a 'great power'. But to achieve such a status Indian policy elite should stop being over-cautious in their foreign policy rhetoric and practice. Instead they should openly embrace this emerging image of a new, stronger and more confident India, and exploit it whenever possible in order to safeguard national and regional interests. Second, Indian elite should understand the basic logic of hard-power. They should realize that, for a state to play a major role in regional and global affairs, it should not only be aware of its military potential but also willing to put it to use for the right cause and at the right time. This is something India has historically been hesitant to do. Pant argues that the end of the Cold War and the arrival of a unipolar world under American hegemony helped India reconsider and reshape its strategic outlook towards global affairs. Yet, he argues, this shift was not strong enough and Indian's

still suffer from the confusion and hesitancy typical of a pacifist ideology. Pant concludes that India is not only uncomfortable with the notion of hard-power but also unable to utilize is effectively when it matters. The marginalization of the military from politics has created a vacuum. Many are concerned about the fact that Indian politicians and military generals are not aware of and interested in each other's roles and contribution towards the country's strategic vision. This lack of cohesion between two of the most important institutions has cost India heavily. Many also refer to certain occasions where India has played a heavy price when politicians have taken military affairs in their own hands (defeat in the 1962 war against China).

The above discussion highlights a number of factors that contribute to India's lack of ability and/ or interest in devising a grand strategy, either for offensive or defensive purposes. Historically, India has lacked political unity. As a result, it has never been able to mark out a strategy for the defence of India as a whole, or as a nation. This is partly because of the fabric of Indian culture, one which gives away easily and readily to 'the actions of fate and destiny'. Also, there is a severe lack of cooperation between India's political elite and her military generals, both doing their own individual jobs with different ambitions and motivations. India's military and foreign policy apparatus is isolated from outside influence. Even Indian think-tanks and analysts find it hard to connect with this policy making apparatus. They are therefore unable to advise and assist on issues of strategic interest. India's foreign policy elite do not publicly talk about the New Delhi's regional and global ambitions, neither do they spell out their strategy for fulfilling those ambitions. As a direct result of this silence a vast majority of the Indian public do not show much interest in the country's foreign policy. The Nehruvian ideology of non-alignment and pacifism still influences Indian psychology, and comes at a cost in today's changing international system. India is hesitant about playing a greater role on the international stage because of this pacifist, defensive mentality. These symptoms are typical of a country that is not only confused in her strategic postures, but also lacks a vibrant and distinct 'strategic culture'.

Argument 2: India Does Have a Strategic Culture

Kanti Bajpai (2013c) is a strong critic of Tanham's essay on Indian strategic thought, and argues that India does have a strategic culture indeed. Not only that, he also claims India has a 'grand strategy'. To support his argument he places India's foreign policy behaviour, especially in the post-Cold War context, on a scale between Nehruvianism and Hyperrealism. These, Bajpai argues, are the two opposite ideological extremes on India's foreign policy spectrum. The Nehruvians are idealists. They believe that trust, contact, mutual respect and political sincerity between states can overcome all other obstacles, and that peaceful co-existing is possible even among the greatest of enemies if the above notions are respected. Hyperrealists on the other hand strongly believe in the 'anarchical world system'. They are of the opinion that states always act in their own self-interest and will not shy away from using power, if they can, to safeguard their national interests.

Therefore, from a hyperrealist's view, no amount of contact, negotiations, trust or sincerity can change the very nature of international relations. In Bajpai's opinion it is possible to locate India's current position on this spectrum. She is somewhere in the middle, Bajpai argues. India is neither stuck in her Nehruvian past, nor attracted by the global hyperrealist order. Instead, India has chosen '*neoliberalism*'. This means that emphasis on economic growth and self-sufficiency forms the basis of India's current neoliberal worldview. Once we have understood this ideological position we can see that India has surprisingly shown a 'consistent and stable behaviour' in her foreign policy over the last few decades. It helps us understand why Indian elite have been more interested in economic growth and self-reliance at home rather than military adventurism abroad. One way to explain Bajpai's argument is to say that India, unlike what most scholars in the previous section have argued, is not shy of military adventurism if there is a genuine need. The reason why she does not come across as a more aggressive regional power is because her priorities are elsewhere. Indian elite strongly believe that real strength lies in domestic self-sufficiency and economic growth, and not in engaging in regional political or military rivalries. These notions of self-sufficiency and economic independence are spread all over Kautiyla's Arthashastra. For example he describes an 'able king' as one who allows his subjects to prosper at home and, at the same time, prevent attacks by the enemy (Sellmann, 2009). One can therefore argue that India's modern foreign policy behaviour does show signs and symptoms of her civilizational past.

This neoliberal approach is evident when it comes to India's engagements with China in recent years. Bajpai argues that India, after the end of the Cold War, had to back off from her traditional stance on territorial disputes with China. In the past New Delhi demanded a permanent resolution of the border issue before all other forms of engagement with Beijing. But in recent years India has continued negotiations on territorial disputes alongside economic engagements. As a result, trade between the two counties increased from $200 million in the 1990 to a staggering $75 billion in 2011. India has allowed China to be her biggest trade partner and even wants Chinese investment in areas such as energy and transport. There is perhaps a strong belief among Indian political and military elite that, under present circumstances, a direct confrontation with China on territorial issues is not in the best interest of New Delhi. India still has some catching up to do both on the economic as well as the military front. While it is important to have a clear stance on certain issues, India will not allow these issues to undermine her economic (and hence military) growth. Bajpai interestingly argues that 'India is pulling a China on China'. He believes that much of the literature which rejects the concept of an Indian strategic culture has actually failed to locate India's position on the ideological spectrum mentioned above.

India's recent strategic overtures towards Pakistan can also be best understood when studied under a neoliberal lens. Despite the menace of cross-border terrorism and frequent skirmishes between the two armies on the Line of Control, India has kept contact with Pakistan. India's policy has been to maintain economic engagement with Pakistan. Trade has remained a major part of the agenda during all recent talks between the two countries. The fact that Pakistan gave India

the statues of 'most favoured nation' and removed bans on many trade items shows that India's approach has paid off. India is also part of other regional economic and developmental projects which involve Pakistan. The TAPI Gas Line Project, which will allow gas from Turkmenistan to reach Indian ports via Afghanistan and Pakistan, is a good example. The project will cost an estimated $9.9 billion over 30 years, and will have a capacity to transfer 33 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan to India. 16% of it will go to Afghanistan while Pakistan and Indian will get 42% each (Aqdas, 2018). Despite Pakistan's past history of undermining regional and bilateral trade opportunities, India has fully supported the project and has hoped that Pakistan will cooperate too. This hopefulness makes sense because India is well aware of Pakistan's own energy needs. Just like India, Pakistan also heavily depends on external sources of energy as domestic production dries down. According to India's strategic calculations Pakistan will not have much choice but to cooperate in such regional projects due internal needs and pressure. Therefore, while India will still react strongly to security threats posed by Pakistan, at the same time there is no need to engage in any form of hyper-activity that provokes Islamabad and undermines India's long term economic and trade interests.

However one joint China-Pakistan project, though economic in nature, is becoming a source of concern for Indian policy makers in New Delhi. The China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (often referred to as CPEC) seems to undermine some of India's regional interests, especially on the military front. The Gwadar Port, which is being developed by China, is at the heart of this project. India is concerned that China might use it as naval base in future. Also, the corridor itself passes through parts of Kashmir under Pakistani control. That also adds to the tension that is being felt in New Delhi (Rej, 2017). But despite such concerns, by viewing India's foreign policy behaviour through a neoliberal lens one can see that the country has had a stable behaviour on the international stage in recent decades. In his opinion, and unlike what many have suggested in the past, India seems to have both strategic ambitions and a grand strategy to fulfil those ambitions.

It is also interesting to see whether India's modern neoliberal worldview has anything to do with her 'civilizational strategic culture'. To understand this link one needs to see whether the two main pillars of this neoliberal strategy, namely economic growth and self-sufficiency, can be traced back to India's civilizational strategic thought. There is evidence to suggest that these notions existed in India's ancient strategic thought long before the recent emergence of neoliberalist thinking. De Vylder (2014) argues that concepts such as self-sufficiency and economic independence can be traded back, and goes back all the way to Kautilya's Arthashastra. He states that, for him and for many others, Kautilya was the 'inventor of economics as a separate discipline'. As a chief advisor to Chandragupta Maurya Kautilya suggested better ways of economic growth, husbandry, boosting trade and increasing revenue. The degree to which Kautilya emphasized on economic growth can be understood from the fact that he considered the very concept of wealth (artha) as a goal in one's life. In De Vylder's view Kautilya considered economics inseparable from politics, war and law. He strongly believed that a King's military strength is directly related to the size of his treasury. An economically weak and

dependant King, in Kautilya's opinion, cannot go to war in a confident manner. To be strong and ruthless on the battlefield a King needs to be rich and self-sufficient at home. Kautilya advised his Kings to be aware of his enemy's weaknesses. He suggested that a weak rival can be encouraged to behave in a desirable way by offering him gifts and concessions. Also, strong rival King can be weakened by offering his enemies (sometimes even his allies) gifts and concessions. Kautilya logic was simple. Material temptations influence the way a King behaves. If carrots can work there is no need to use sticks.

Kautilya used the phrase 'self-sufficiency' while referring to resources and man-power deemed necessary to neutralize threats and win wars. In more recent decades the term was associated with India's 'green revolution', a policy aimed at making India self-sufficient in food and agriculture sectors. The idea of an Indian 'green revolution' kicked-off in the late 1960s. Towards the end of that decade wheat production in India reached a record 20 million tons per annum, thanks to advancement in agricultural technology and the introduction of high-yielding wheat varieties (Frankel, 1971). The trend continues to this day, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government aims to make India self-sufficient in the defence sector too. Mr. Modi, since taking office, has repeatedly called for producing more defence equipment at home rather than depending on others. In fact he goes a step further and intends turn India into an exporter of arms and other defence equipment (The Hindu, 2014). In early 2017 the Defence Secretary Manohar Parrikar suggested that India will have the capability to export military equipment worth $200 billion by 2019. Interestingly, Afghanistan has been named as one of the countries keen on purchasing Indian military equipment (Sen, 2017). This aspect of India-Afghanistan relations is discussed in detail in the coming chapters, but the statement by the Defence Secretary clearly shows India's ambition and commitment to becoming a manufacturer as well as an exporter of military equipment.

Writing for the *Asia Times*, Namrata Goswami (2013b) argues that Indian strategic culture gives priority to other means of resolving disputes than using military force. Criticizing one of the articles published by *The Economist*, and referred to earlier in this chapter, Goswami argues that the author seems to perceive India's strategic culture, but apparently does not like it. She defines strategic culture as '*the way in which leaders and strategic community in a country see and react to threats and opportunities'*. Indian methods of responding to these threats and opportunities are simply different from those adopted by other countries. This, however, should not be interpreted as a lack of strategic culture or strategic thinking. Goswami also informs us of a 'revolution' taking place within the Indian strategic community at present. She argues that the Indian foreign police elite constantly discuss and review the country's strategic preferences and the use and efficacy of military power against external threats. She states that the Foreign Office and the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), two departments previously accused of a severe lack of cooperation and cohesion by most authors, have now started to organize and sponsor projects which assess future threats and opportunities, especially in India's immediate neighbourhood. She claims to be personally involved in many of these projects. While Goswami does not mention Bajpai's moderate neoliberal foreign

approach, she agrees that India's foreign policy behaviour is influenced by hard-core realism and Nehruvianism. This overlap, she argues, has superimposed a complex structure on India's strategic preferences. India does have aspirations for becoming a Great Power in the very *realist* sense. But Nehruvian pacifism has tampered these aspirations, and India will prefer dialogue over military force for conflict resolution. Goswami does come close to Bajpai's neoliberal approach though, by stating that economic growth and tackling poverty at home seem to be issues of greater importance and concern for the Indian elite than the country's potential super-power status.

Some scholars have termed the 'rejectionist literature' on Indian strategic culture as broadly misleading, arguing that India has a somewhat enigmatic foreign policy, often beyond the grasp of authors and journalists both in India and abroad. The fact that the government is hesitant to publish any strategic documents, and a broader culture of secrecy among politicians and policy makers, further add to the ambiguity surrounding Indian foreign policy. However, India has shown 'consistent objectives and effective performance' in her foreign policy since the end of the Cold War At present, three important features of India's strategic ambitions can be highlighted. First, India strives for internal balancing. This means a greater emphasis on economic growth. This approach is closer to and in line with Bajpai's moderate neoliberalism. But in order to achieve economic growth India first needs to bring about political and military stability. This may sometimes mean taking the bitter pill. Despite having enough reasons to act aggressively on many occasions, India has preferred to normalize relations with Pakistan and avoid escalation and confrontation. She has also managed not to indulge too much in the internal affairs of other neighbouring states. India also believes that her economic growth depends, to a great extent, on technological advancement. One of India's major objectives from the nuclear deal with the US was to get the much needed nuclear know-how (Jaishankar, 2013).

Secondly, India still believes in the effectiveness of a policy of deterrence. India's 'deterrence doctrine' has had its critics and supporters in the past. What is clear though is that it still influences Indian strategic thinking. The nuclear tests carried out in 1998, for example, helped to stabilize the balance of power in the region. Relations with both China and Pakistan have improved after an initial period of condemnation and panic. India has stuck to the same policy by trying to modernize her armed forces, equipping them with advanced weapons deemed more effective in modern-day warfare. This again has brought balance and stability to regional security dynamics (Jaishankar, 2013b). Lastly, India's has historically tried to preserve her autonomy regarding her energy needs and military dependencies. In recent decades, beyond the Middle East, India has tried to find other sources of energy in Africa and Latin America. Central Asia is another region where India has taken serious steps to ensure a sustainable future energy hub for her domestic needs. Perhaps the biggest and the most important of these steps is the '*Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India Pipeline*', commonly referred to as TAPI. The project is still in its initial phases and there are serious questions about it's the sustainability in the long term. Among these obstacles the security situation in Afghanistan is

perhaps the most important. Yet all countries involved have expressed a strong desire to get the project going. The Asian Development Bank has very recently declared the project as 'doable' (Putz, 2016). At the same time India expanded her market for her military needs by purchasing weapons from Russia, Europe, Israel and now the US. Some observers have called this a 'diversification of dependency'. At the end of the day what matters to India's strategic community is that the country no longer depends on a single source/ country of all her energy and military needs. This 'diversification' in itself ensures a degree of autonomy in the energy and military sectors. While this strategy seems to have worked well self-sufficiency and home-manufacturing are still top of the agenda. Current Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone all the way to launch a 'Make in India' drive encourage home-manufacturing and decrease India's dependency on others. The basic idea behind the drive is to turn India into a Chinese style regional hub for manufacturing, hoping that the initiative will endures India's statues as one of the regions and the world's leading economies (Keohane & Crabtree, 2016)

Unlike in Pakistan, successive smooth political transitions from one government to another in India have also helped the country maintain a degree of continuity and sustainability in her strategic behaviour. Successive Indian governments have done their best to work for 'national foreign policy objectives', instead of pursuing their own personal or party agendas. The nuclear tests in 1998 and the recent nuclear deal with the US were both initiated by one government but were executed or signed by a successor government. Perhaps it is time the rest of the world also sees this effective strategy, and takes India more seriously (Jaishankar, 2013d). In an interview for the purpose of this thesis former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Rakesh Sood, mentioned several developmental projects India had taken up in Afghanistan. Most of these projects, he emphasized, were initiated by the previous Governments and were eventually inaugurated by the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Salma Dam Project for example was associated with India in the 1970s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the civil war that followed meant that the project could not be completed. However work has restarted now and India is committed to finishing the project. The Afghan Parliament building is another example of how a change of Governments in New Delhi has not affected India's developmental projects in Afghanistan in recent years. Initially signed between the previous Congress Government and the Government of former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the building was inaugurated by current Indian Prime Minster Narendra Modi in December 2015 (Sood, 2016). This smooth transition has brought stability and consistency to India's strategic behaviour in recent years.

Lastly, Happymon Jacob (2014) is of the opinion that most observers have confused strategic culture with strategic thinking. When they say India does not have a strategic culture, actually mean that India does not think strategically. The complexities and contradictions surrounding Indian strategic thinking are because of the cultural and civilizational diversity in that country. To explain this we must go back to George Tanham's initial arguments. He states that Indians accept much of what happens to them as a 'work of destiny'. The idea that 'everything that is supposed to happen will happen' is part of the very fabric of India society. This

readiness to accept things the way they are has often brought about a 'political or strategic disability' on part of the India strategic community. In other words the absence of strategic thinking within an elite community can be partly explained by the country's culture. As mentioned earlier in this chapter many in the Indian strategic community are not sure about the idea of India as a regional or global superpower. Some consider this whole concept as a western construct and believe that India, at this point in her history, neither has the capacity nor the ambition to play a more dominant role on the international stage. Also, India's security and military apparatus is isolated, and hence difficult to penetrate and analyse. The government does not readily and openly talk about strategic goals and ambitions. This however, should not mean that it does not have any. To summarize Jacob's argument India does have a distinct strategic culture but some of its sources discourage strategic thinking. However there are signs, as most observers agree, that India is waking up to her potential and taking her role and status more seriously, both in the region and on the international stage.

The above discussion on both sides of the argument regarding the presence/ absence of an Indian strategic culture leads to another important question. Who really defines India's security policy then? The answer to this is in the above discussion itself. One main conclusion from the two arguments is that the whole idea of an Indian security policy is 'multi-sourced'. There are different actors involved. At the very bottom of the process is the Indian Foreign Service, within the Ministry of External Affairs. Its, officers, as discussed in previous pages, spend most of their time reading historical and contemporary sources on the region and the world. Their recommendations and opinions on India's security policy are pretty much based on their personal understandings of these resources. The next layer, which comprises of the political elite, is not always on the same page when it comes to India's security priorities. Some are forward-looking and ambitious. Others question the very idea of India as a regional or global power. Politicians also tend to react in different ways to external threats or factors. That means the behaviours of other states in the region, such as China and Pakistan, also have a direct impact on India's own security policy. Lastly, the Indian Army remains pretty much isolated and does not actively take part in any discussion on the country's security policy and strategic objectives. Some believe this has helped democracy nurture in India. They point to Pakistan as an example, where the army has had a troubled history of getting involved in politics. Others however argue that the 'disconnect' between the army and the political elite has led to a lack of clarity regarding India's military potential and her strategic objectives and priorities in the region and the world. In conclusion one could argue that the architects of India's security policy are many, but it is hard to say whether any of these solely define it.

Sources of Indian Strategic Culture

Historically, many factors have influenced Indian strategic thinking. Indian foreign policy elite and strategy experts are more sensitive to certain things when it

comes to devising a 'strategic vision' for the country. These factors are both psychological as well as structural (real) in nature. Hinduism and Hindu nationalism, for example, have deeply influenced India's domestic politics and strategic thinking in recent decades. It is a psychological factor which enforces and encourages the need for a 'Hindu identity'. Also, Indian rulers have traditionally been wary of geographical threats to the country's sovereignty. The British were most concerned about the threat emanating from the northwest, hence engaging in the 'Great Game' in Afghanistan and Central Asia to neutralize Russian aggression. This is an example of a structural factor that has traditionally influenced Indian security and defence policies. Such fears continue to shape Indian strategic thinking even today. George Tanham (1992b), often accused of rejecting the presence of an Indian strategic culture, has highlighted the most important sources of an Indian strategic thought. His RAND study sheds light on these sources, arguing that they are deeply rooted in India's civilizational and cultural history. They continue to leave their mark on India's foreign policy behaviour, proving a linkage between the country's present strategic thinking and her civilizational strategic culture. Some these sources are listed below.

1. Geography

For centuries Indian strategic perceptions have been influenced and shaped by the countries geography. In in George Tanham's words, geography has induced some conscious and unconscious thought processes in the Indian strategic mind-set. India lies at a strategically important location, connecting the Far East to the Middle East and Africa and serving as an important historical trade route between these different regions of the world. The size and the population of the country have for centuries given her leaders a sense of greatness. India is a land which is marked and divided into smaller regions by rivers and mountains. These geographical features have for long provided a sense of security to the inhabitants of this region. But history also tells us that foreign invaders were not held back by India's above-mentioned greatness. The North-western corridors were always vulnerable and proved to be the entry point to most of the invading armies from Persia, Central Asia and modern day Afghanistan. India continues to be fearful of the threat posed from the north (China to the northeast and Pakistan to the northwest). The country's modern day strategic preferences show a remarkable similarity with her historical perspectives. Indian military strategy is mostly land oriented, with the Army receiving the bulk of the country's defence budget. The fact that India was hardly threatened via sea shows why her Naval Forces and capabilities were ignored until very recently. This trend, however, seems to be changing, though in response to naval superiority of other regional rivals, especially China.

Contemporary Indian scholars have also emphasised on the importance of India's strategic location in the pursuit of her grand strategy. Writing for *The Diplomat*, Akhilesh Pillalamarri (2014) argues that India is still the only naval power in the Indian Ocean, and should use this leverage to play a more dominant role on the international stage. He advises that India should negotiate with her smaller neighbour on the Indian Ocean and provide guarantees of security, increasing her

regional influence in return. By doing so, Pillalamarri argues, India can expand both eastwards and westwards on the Indian Ocean. Such a forward strategy will also be useful to prevent Chinese advancements via sea. India has already lost high ground to China on land (Tibet). Back on land, Pillalamarri interestingly suggests that India can eliminate constraints posed by Pakistan by reaching out to countries further west. He mentions Afghanistan as an example, where India can exploit her historical and cultural ties with that country in order to gain strategic upper hand over Pakistan. Pillalamrri thinks India is already doing this. There are difficulties in overstepping Pakistan to reach out to Afghanistan and Central Asia, but India should 'remain involved in these regions and not lose strategic ground to other regional rivals, especially China. How India deals with these geographical (structural) realities will determine her future role as a regional and global power. In the next chapter we will return to Pillalamarri's advice regarding how and why India should reach out to Afghanistan in the northwest.

2. History and Civilization

Both these factors are of great importance for a better understanding the concept of Indian strategic culture. India's strategic perspective is still 'civilizational' in nature. Its roots are scattered over a history of many thousands of years, and is therefore much older than the Westphalian thought (Paranjpe, 2013). At the same time it has accumulated and embraced many concepts which are also dominant in the Westphalian thought, such as economic growth, 'deterrence doctrine' and military and economic autonomy. The civilization that occupies the sub-continent today has emerged after many historical events. The arrival of the inhabitants who spoke the Indo-Aryan language laid the foundations of a new culture and religion in this region. Their religion, in fact, gave rise to modern day Hinduism. Toney Joseph (2017) argues that Indians have a 'multi-sourced' civilization. In his opinion, the Indo-Aryans arrived in this part of the world at some point between 2000BC – 1500BC, after the Indus-valley civilization had perished. Besides many other things these people also brought Sanskrit language to India. These people also established a social hierarchical system which still prevails in modern India.

This was followed by the arrival of the Muslims. Tanvir Anjum (2007) believes that this was not a sudden appearance of a new people in India. In fact their arrival happened in phases, taking many centuries. It started with the Arab conquest of Sindh in 712. A few centuries alter Mahmoud of Ghazni marched into India through the north western passage connecting India with what is Afghanistan today. Then the Mugols came in the 16the and the 17th century. It was under the Mogul rule that Islam consolidated in South Asia and Persian art and culture were introduced to India (BBC, 2007). Their period is marked by advancement in art and literature. Also, new methods of administration were introduced. The British rule tried to modernize India along the western way of life. All these historical phases left a permanent mark on the cultural and political identity of the people that live in India today. They are still divided along their language, religion and caste. They have their own strategic preferences and perspectives (Paranjpe, 2013b). Tanham's RAND study (1992b) also

points to the awakening of the Hindus to their own history during the British Raj. He argues that before the arrival of the British the Hindus of the region were neither aware of nor interested in their civilizational past. But once the British started digging deeper to locate the foundations of the Hindu society, the Hindus themselves joined the campaign. With time, and with the discovery of further historical evidence, the Hindus in India started to find a sense of pride in their past. Their search for past glory took them to the reign of the Maurya Empire. They learnt about the great leader, Ashoka, who seemed to be a symbol of justice and non-violence. The Hindus of the sub-continent readily accepted the moral values which were upheld by Ashoka.

The Muslims had come with their own culture and religion but did not destroy the civilization that already existed in the sub-continent. Instead they worked for integration and political unity among the different inhabitants of the region. The great Mogul Emperor, Akbar, went a step further and tried to introduce a new religion, a mixture of both Islamic and Hindu values. Before him, Ashoka had also converted to Buddhism. Their efforts to bring about religious acceptance and tolerance can still be seen in modern Indian society. It was a society committed to the notion of equality among religions, and avoided the supremacy of one religious group over another. This was the very reason why the country adopted a secular constitution after independence in 1947. These values, however, were undermined as time passed. A new sense of identity along religious lines threatened the notions of 'religious tolerance and social cohesion'. It ultimately led to the withdrawal of the British and the partition of India in 1947. Although India chose a secular constitution for herself the seeds of 'religious politics' had been sown. Pakistan, on the other hand, chose to adopt Islam as a 'state religion' and proudly defines itself as a country found on the basis of Islam. For many this religious sentimentalism in Pakistan is partly responsible for the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. Safi (2017) believes that the region surrounding India, including Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and even Sri Lanka has been experiencing a wave of 'religious nationalism' in recent decades, and India has also been affected by this global phenomenon.

3. Hinduism and Hindu Nationalism

The Hindu's search for their past glory gave rise to a new sense of a separate identity. This new identity emerged in the form of 'Hindu nationalism'. Followers of this doctrine believed that Hinduism was the only tool which could truly give India a sense of 'nationhood'. Everything else, in their opinion, had divided the country and undermined the prospects of 'political unity'. In their search for 'political unity', the followers of this doctrine allowed Hinduism, and Hindu nationalism, to become a new political ideology. While the seeds of such an ideology might have been planted during the British Raj, it took more than a century for the believers of this doctrine to come together as a political force. The emergence to power of the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1990s was the first instance where followers of the Hindu nationalism doctrine had their say on India's strategic objectives and preferences. Llewellyin (2011) calls this 'a fundamental change in the India body politic'. The same BJP is the governing party in India today. It is considered by many

in India and in the west as the flag bearer of this new identity and political ideology. Their perceptions and sense of identity have significant influences on India's contemporary strategic vision. For Hindu nationalists, it was important to dig deeper into history and bring out their past, their 'glorious past'. Hindu nationalist authors have highlighted the reason for this urge. In their opinion, resurfacing the greatness of their past civilizations would help lay the foundations of a new India. The intention has never been to undermine the existence and interests of other non-Hindu inhabitants of this land. In fact, this historical awakening took place out of necessity. There was a need to rescue the Hindu mind-set from the inferiority complex brought about by centuries of Muslim and British rule in the sub-continent. But once the chains were broken, and after the Hindus were introduced to their past glory, there was no doubt that the future strategic vision and preferences of this nation would be deeply rooted in her civilizational, cultural and religious perceptions (Pattanaik, 1998).

Hindu nationalism itself can be categorized into extreme and moderate tendencies. There are those who want Hinduism to overshadow all other forms of identity. Their take on national policies and perspective on regional and international issues greatly differ from the more moderate elements of this community. But even the moderates seem to oppose the secular tendencies of the Congress Party. They strongly believe in India being the hub and birthplace of Hinduism, and hence the perfect laboratory to practice and preach the core values of the Hindu faith. At the same time they emphasise on a shared 'national identity' (Panda, 2014). Kunal Mukherjee (2013) notes the idea of Hindu nationalism has been problematic has it has led to violence in certain parts of the country in recent past. However, he argues that the level of such violence is not uniformly distributed throughout the country. While certain cities may have suffered due to the idea, it is just too early to say that India as a country is under any form of threat from the violence associated with Hindu nationalism.

When it comes to foreign policy and India's strategic objectives, the Hindu nationalists approach these subjects in the true *realist* tradition. They believe in the anarchical nature of the international system, where the powerful dictates the rules while the weak and the oppressed merely obey them. Nations, and their agendas, are strongly driven by the idea of nationalist interest. Hence, Hindu nationalists see economic growth as one of the most important pillars of their foreign policy. Speaking in military terms, Hindu nationalists believe that a strong sense of identity gives strength to and increases the morale of the armed forces, and hence they put up a better fight on the battlefield (Panda, 2014b). Such rhetoric often gains momentum when Hindu nationalist parties like the BJP are in power.

Despite deliberate 'liberal efforts' in the West and elsewhere around the world, religion has continued to remain an integral part of society, and thus continues to influence politics and state behaviour in general to this day (Spikckar, 2013). India is no different in this regard. It is still a rural country where more than half of the population lives in villages. Religion is an integral part of their life, and greatly shapes their view of the outside world (Srinivas, 1986). Observers believe that

Indian foreign policy behaviour went through significant changes during BJP Governments. This party dealt with issues such as nuclear tests, relations with the US and Pakistan and regional politics in their own way. They favoured *realpolitik* in their foreign policy, and emphasised on regional pragmatism. It has also been noticed that the BJPs domestic policies had an impact on their foreign policy. Literature by some hard-line Hindu nationalist authors shows an awareness of India's rise on the global stage, both in economic and military terms. In their opinion, India should behave with more confidence on the international stage than she has done in the past. Figures such as Swami Vivekananda are considered the fathers of modern day Hindu nationalism and their writings have had a significant impact on India's strategic behaviour (Kumar, 2016). A major shift in world opinion regarding India gives her the right to do so. In recent years there also seems to be a shift in Washington's attitude regarding India's regional role, especially in Afghanistan. Today, India is no longer compared with Pakistan, but is considered a partner of counties such as the US, China and Russia. This global discourse on the rise of India can be linked with the rise of Hindu nationalist politics at home. India's recent foreign policy behaviour reinforces her status as a potential future regional and global power (Khosla & Khuthiala, 2009). Interestingly, the successive Congress government continued to shape its foreign policy along the parameters drawn by the previous BJP government (Ogden, 2014). It reinforces the argument made earlier in the chapter that a change of Government in New Delhi does not necessarily bring a change in the country's foreign policy behaviour. India has started to show much needed stability and consistency in her strategic vision.

4. Nuclear Weapons

India was initially considered a 'reluctant nuclear power' even after the nuclear tests in 1998 (Narang, 2018). Although it had nuclear capabilities since the 1980s, the nuclear doctrine was not part of India's strategic thinking until the end of the century. This 'reluctant' trend still continues. But nuclear capability has clearly had an impact on India's strategic posture over the years. Samina Ahmed (2000) argues that the nuclear tests by Pakistan in 1998 actually did little to ease already prevailing tensions in South Asia. Instead, she argues, it gave a stronger voice to the advocates of the 'nuclear option' in India. There seems to be an increase in India's military confidence and a change in her foreign policy behaviour recently. After Pakistani violations of the Line of Control (LoC) on the border in 2013, both the opposition parties and the military officials asked the government to consider a 'controlled response' to Pakistani aggression. The question is whether this increase in confidence has anything to do with India's nuclear capabilities. While it seems like India's more confident military and foreign policy posture is mainly due to her economic growth, there is no denial that her nuclear capability has been an important 'contributory factor' (Jacob, 2014b). The phrase '*nuclear minimalism*' is often used to define Indian strategic culture in relation to her nuclear capabilities. Joshi (2014) believes that India's nuclear doctrine shows a clear commitment to a 'minimalist nuclear posture'. Some important features of India's nuclear strategy can also be pinpointed. India is still hesitant to openly accept the use of nuclear weapons

for the purpose of safeguarding national security. Also, the whole debate over the utility of nuclear weapons seems to be more 'politically driven', rather than technically, or operationally. While there is a general understanding of the fact that nuclear weapons may provide a strong sense of security in an anarchical world, there is also a belief that they are 'morally wrong, and carry a lot of risks, even to security itself (Basrur, 2006). One can argue that Nehruvian tendencies still influences the way India deals with her nuclear capability.

Also, there is reason to believe that India's nuclear strategy may not be completely in line with the realist's 'deterrence theory'. For instance, if deterrence was the central agenda of India nuclear strategy then she should have tried harder to catch up with China, with whom she had a war in 1962. In fact, India was ten years late in responding to China's arrival at the 'nuclear club'. India also didn't seek an alliance with another world power to neutralize the Chinese threat. Pakistan has also posed a nuclear threat on several occasions, for instance during the 1999 Kargil war. In fact, as Thakur (1998) argues, Pakistan's nuclear capability meant it continued to wage a proxy war in Kashmir despite being second to India in conventional military strength. In this case, India's unwillingness to openly demonstrate its nuclear capability has been a sore wound for too long. On all these occasions India did not show any signs of rapid weaponization or deployment. Also, India has shown no intention to plan and prepare for any sort of 'counter-proliferation' strike by other nuclear rivals. This means that India's nuclear capability is vulnerable. It is not as secretive as those of other states. India's seems to be suffering from a spell of 'wishful thinking', assuming that the permanent members of the UN Security Council have accepted and accommodated her nuclear capacity. Such a neglectful behaviour is hard to understand in a *realpolitik* tradition, and can be a gamble on national security (Sridharan, 2007). In short, whilst there is evidence that nuclear capability has an influence on India's strategic thinking and her foreign policy posture, there is no reason to suggest that it is one of the main driving forces behind the country's strategic calculus. This capability is rather meant for neutralizing external threats. In recent years, India has shown a more 'aggressive reaction' to potential threats from neighbours, especially Pakistan. The main purpose of India's nuclear capability seems to be deterrence, i.e. preventing hostile neighbours from any sort of military aggression.

5. Conflict at Home and Abroad

Perhaps nothing leaves a more permanent mark on a country's strategic behaviour than the experience of war. That includes both good and bad experience at war. Since independence in 1947 India has suffered from conflicts. In fact, the whole experience of partition is a sore wound which still has not healed. Present generations in both India and Pakistan still suffer from it in many ways (Boni and Maiorano, 2018). The Kashmir issue is perhaps the bloodiest aftermath of the partition. Other conflicts that followed partition have also influenced India's thinking about security and foreign policy. At home, India faces four types of military threats. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has suffered from militancy since 1948. However,

the nature and scope of this militancy has changed rapidly since the 1990s. Since 1989 more than 14,300 Indian citizens have been killed and an equal number of have been injured as a result of insurgent attacks in Kashmir (Chaudhury, 2001). The major ideology behind the insurgency movement is independence from India. Since its beginning around 40,000 people have lost their lives. The second major internal security threat is the separatist movements in the Northeast. These are more complex in nature than the Kashmir dispute. The demands of these groups range from regional autonomy to full separation, or independence. Over the past decades the Indian Government has come up with many different mechanisms to eliminate or at least maintain these insurgencies. In some cases the Government has announced ceasefire with the insurgents; in others they have made promises of development and rehabilitation if the insurgents agreed to surrender (Sinha, 2017). Speaking of 'separatist movements', one could also argue that India herself has supported such movements in the past. For example critics could refer to the Mukti Bahini movement which struggled for the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan, and India's role in arming and supporting the movement (

The third threat is the menace of Left Wing Extremism (LWE). Initially an ideological movement, it has now grown into a full-fledged guerrilla force, with impressive military capabilities. The youngest of India's internal security threats is the issue of global Jihadism. US government reports claim India is among the countries most affected from Islamic terrorism. One striking similarity among all these threats is that they all have external backing. Pakistan, China and even India's smaller neighbours have for decades supported armed groups and movements in India for their own strategic interests (Manoharan, 2014). To counter these threats the Indian Government, historically, seems to have followed three main approaches. The *pacifists* believe that most of these threats are consequences of political confusion and misperceptions. They strongly believe in and advocate the use of dialogue and negotiations to neutralize these threats. The *developmental* approach suggests that poverty and economic deprivation are the root causes. Hence, in their view, a redistribution of wealth, financial incentives and economic growth will put an end to all these internal military and security threats. The *realists* argue that the best way to end violence at home to use force. They believe in 'kinetic measure', suggesting that militants and insurgents will not be won over by political dialogue or financial incentives. Instead, they should be crushed militarily.

India's response to these threats has been mostly 'reactive' and, at times, even confused. She still seems to be suffering for the 'Panipat Syndrome'. It simply means India has lacked the ability to anticipate a challenge (Mohan, 2016) and has waited for a security threat to materialize rather than taking the initiative to prevent it or neutralize it before it emerges. There has also been a lack of coordination and confusion over responsibilities between the central government and the states. But the situation seems be improving, and Indian's leaders are finally starting to understand the seriousness of the threats posed by these internal conflicts (Manohar, 2014b). There are also suggestions that, in some cases, India's territorial disputes might have been blown out of proportion. For example in Kashmir factors such as language and religion seem to constitute and dominate the debate both in India and

Pakistan, as well as in Kashmir itself. For India, the material and objective value may be less important than the fact that having or keeping Kashmir is vital to the very idea of a 'pluralist' India (Hill and Motwani, 2017). Also, India's historical position on Kashmir is somewhat 'inflexible' and rooted in historical readings. This position has nurtured a sense of 'ethno-nationalism' in both India and Pakistan. Both countries have hence failed to show the pragmatism to resolve the dispute (Reynolds, 2014).

India's external conflicts, however, seem to have a more rapid and significant effect on Indian strategic thinking. It would be safe to argue that her conflicts with both Pakistan and China, and her newly acquired nuclear capabilities, have helped India, or rather forced her, to think in a *realpolitik* tradition. Against Pakistan, India has been relatively successful in military terms. The few wars since Independence proved that Pakistan will not pose a real military threat to her security and territorial integrity. This reality explains why Pakistan has traditionally backed non-state actors in waging guerrilla warfare against India. The insurgency in Kashmir is one good example. India has found it hard to neutralize or even contain Pakistani backed elements in Kashmir. The insurgency in that troubled region has constantly irritated Indian policy makers over the past few decades. Her nuclear capability has helped India pose more confidently against Pakistan. This posture goes side by side with efforts to improve relations through non-military means. It shows how India's traditional '*pacifist culture*' can work alongside a more *neoliberal* approach. At the same time, the *realist* option is also on the table. It might sound strange for a culture to be 'pacifist' in nature but at the same time embrace militaristic tendencies of 'realpolitik'. Yet this is not a contradiction. We need to remind ourselves of the 'ideological spectrum' mentioned earlier in this chapter. India has managed to maintain different postures along this spectrum, from the left-wing pacifisms, to the modern day neoliberalism and all the way to the right-wing realism. Which posture the Indian strategic community chooses depends on what they are up against. India's external conflicts have also resulted in a change of strategic behaviour at home. In case of China, the defeat in the 1962 war seems to have put an end to Nehru's pacifism. The political and military consequences of that defeat forced India to be more cautious against China. India is well-aware of the fact that her communist neighbour has an upper hand, both in military and in economic terms. India therefore tries to 'maintain and restrain' China diplomatically while she strives hard to achieve economic and military growth at home. India's emphasis on technological advancement, especially in the military area, suggests that her strategic thought is finally evolving (Roy, 2014).

6. The British Raj

The British put a great deal of time, effort and man-power into strategizing India's defence. In this sense, the Raj has left a somewhat continuous and significant influence on Indian strategic thinking. For instance one of the important legacies the British left behind in India was the Civil Service. During the colonial era it was considered to be a successful bureaucratic system for the governing of India. One of the branches of this institution, the Foreign Service, still dominates Indian Foreign policy. To this day its officers are trained in the English way

of diplomacy, demanding excellent language and intellectual skills. The strict criteria for inclusion into this prestigious Service means only the cream of the academic diaspora in India make it through the selection process. These officers, after long distinguished careers in the Foreign Office, end up being advisors to both political and military elites. Their perceptions and beliefs not only influence but actually shape Indian strategic thinking to this day. At the same time Tanham (1992c) argues that the Indians of the sub-continent were impressed with the Englishman's sense of nationalism. They were impressed with how the British considered it a source of pride for themselves. Hence the Indians also started to search for a similar identity. As mentioned earlier in this section, the historical awaking of the Hindu India under the British rule was part of this search for a sense of nationalism. Though it later shrunk and developed as merely 'Hindu nationalism', nationalist tendencies and opinions still dominate the discourse on India's strategic ambitions and preferences.

India's defence strategies during the colonial period were mainly concerned with the protection British interests. These interests shrunk with the passage of time, as did British capability to defend them. By the middle of the twentieth century the British Empire in the sub-continent was a mere status quo power. Britain did not leave India with much to defend herself with. India's naval capabilities at the time of independence were almost non-existent. This meant that India had to start from the scratch in many respects (Tanham, 1992d). But the British did leave behind other positive influences and qualities. One such quality, which mattered more than anything else to the new Indian state, was '*strategic knowledge'*. To this day Indian, attitude towards the threats in her neighbourhood are deeply rooted in '*British strategic perceptions'*. The British also helped India connect with her civilizational past. Most of the European scholars who initially wrote about India as a civilization were critical in their tone, mainly because they were looking at the subject through a European lens. Their harsh tone and criticism however encouraged Indian scholars to write in response (Thapar, 1968). This indirectly led to a new wave of literature focused on Indian awaking.

7. Technological Advancement

2014 can rightly be regarded as the year when India raised her flag in space. The Indian Space Agency came of age to launch a number of satellites and rockets into space, hence joining the elite group of nations with similar, though more advanced capabilities. India's $24 million dollars multi-purpose space mission intends to send a 'manned satellite' into space in the near future. While the glory belongs to India alone, she definitely seems interested in sharing it. Prime Minster Narendra Modi has given the green light to a 'SAARC Satellite', allowing regional countries to participate in and benefit from India's space technology (Jagannathan, 2014). This is indeed a strong foreign policy posture by India. It goes in line with her traditional approach of 'positive engagement'. The US-India Nuclear Deal is seen by many as a major step towards acquiring the much needed nuclear know-how for India to develop her civilian nuclear programme. However, the deal looks suspicious to may in India. The major concern is whether India will be able to continue with her

tradition of having an independent foreign policy. This deal, though very much civilian in nature, can have other political implications. The US certainly wants something in return. The fear is that India will drift towards a US strategic doctrine, deviating from her historical tradition of multi-polarity and non-alignment. In 2005, for example, India voted against Iran's nuclear programme at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This was very much unlike the India of the past. Many argue that US nuclear promises, even indirect pressure, had much to do with India's decision (Karat, 2007). It is an example how the thirst for technological advancement can have a direct impact on India's foreign policy behaviour. It is also argued the US is indirectly putting pressure on China by signing a nuclear deal with India. Whether such a situation will be in India's interest is open to debate but many suggest it will not be. Also, it seems like Pakistan has felt threatened by the deal too. Reports claim the country has already started to increase her nuclear arsenal in wake of the US-India deal. Such a provocation of two strategically important neighbours with whom India has territorial disputes can cause unnecessary tension. It also undermines India's efforts to maintain regional calm for the purpose of economic growth (Etzioni, 2015). Whether this deal brings about any drastic changes in India's strategic perspective is yet to be seen. But both supporters and opponents of it consider it be a major event, even a game changer, in India's strategic behaviour.

Factors influencing India's strategic thinking are multiple. They are both historical (British Raj, Hindu nationalism, ancient Indian civilization) and contemporary (Internal and external conflicts, military nuclear capability, technological advancement). Each of these factors seems to influence Indian strategic behaviour and foreign policy posture in their own way. The very concept of an Indian strategic culture is marked by complexities and contradictions at times. Hindu nationalism is the dominant force in a country where the constitution is secular in nature. Also, undermining the 'Non-proliferation Treaty' and signing a nuclear deal with the US is against the core values of an Indian tradition, values such as pacifism and non-alignment. It would be safe to argue, as some have already done, that India is going through a phase of 'strategic transition'. While her traditional ethos of non-violence, cooperation and restraint still shape her general strategic behaviour, it seems like India is also learning the art of *realpolitik*. This is partly out of necessity, as her neighbours both on the North-eastern and North-western frontiers continue to undermine her strategic interests and security. At the same time India still seems to be looking inwards for her 'sources of power'. This is evident from her emphasis on 'stability at home first'. For contemporary India, this stability means economic growth. It seems like the 'developmental approach', which suggests that economic prosperity is the best solution to even military threats, is dominant in India's strategic discourse. Perhaps the best way to summarize this approach is to repeat what Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after his election. When asked about his priorities, he replied that his first, second and third were 'economic growth'. At the same time, Indian politicians, the military and the foreign policy elite have to make up their minds on what kind of an India do they wish to see in the future. India has the potential to be a regional power. Whether it also has the will to do so remains to be seen.

Key Features of Indian Strategic Culture

So what does an Indian strategic culture look like? Some suggest that it is marked by a set of characteristics and key features, and revolves around certain themes. Historically, strategic thinking in India has been shaped by a number of historical, civilizational and religious beliefs and perceptions. It does not entirely base itself on a single idea or perception. Rodney Jones (2006), in his essay on Indian strategic culture, calls it 'mosaic-like'. He argues that it is embedded in the elite social class and has withstood the changes in the political and military landscape of the sub-continent. In Jones opinion, The Muslim or the Mogul invaders could not destroy it, nor could the colonial powers that arrived later. It is therefore important to understand the characteristics of a culture that has resisted extinction in the face of such powerful historical events. Again, as it will be revealed in the following section, many of these characteristics may look complex and contradictory. Contemporary Indian behaviour on the world stage may not comply with her strategic traditions. Questions such as whether India is still a non-allied country, in the traditional sense, are important and worth further research. But despite the many contradictions and confusion there are certain elements that continue to mark Indian strategic thinking and foreign policy behaviour.

1. Non-Alignment

India has historically taken pride in her policy of non-alignment on the international stage. The newly independent state in 1947 was in no rush to jump into any of the newly formed international military blocks, namely the US and the Soviet Union. Nehru strongly believed that the interests of India were the same as those of many other countries born around the same time. He believed that while the US and the Soviet Union remained engaged in deterring each other, the rest of the third world countries had the opportunity to focus on their internal economic development and bilateral and multilateral relations. Hence it was only natural for India to form the 'Non-aligned Movement. Since then, it has been an integral part of India foreign policy to stay out of the mess created by the world's super-powers. Non-alignment, along with many other aspects of the Nehruvian thought, influences and shapes India's strategic behaviour to this very day. One may question the nature of India's non-alignment tradition by pointing to her close bilateral relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. But there is a context to how and why India remained relatively closer to the Soviet bloc. Indians had suffered from colonialism and imperialism for more than a century. Although both these menaces ended after the Second World War, yet the US emerged as the new 'global aggressor', imposing her will where required and wished, by force or coercion. It was perhaps such US behaviour that slightly tilted India towards the Soviet Union. Also, India has historically depended on Soviet/ Russian support, especially in the defence sector. Facing serious military threats from Pakistan and China, India had to compromise on her non-alignment ideology to a certain degree. This was necessary in order to

acquire Soviet military assistance for India's own national security interests (Dutt, 1983).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the sole super-power in the world, it has proven to be difficult for the previous members of the Non-aligned Movement to keep their strategic independence the way they had done during the Cold War. The major emphasis of this movement was on the diffusion of tension between the two super-powers, namely the US and the Soviet Union. But in an increasingly multipolar world the movement lost much of its significance. Another purpose of the movement was the restructuring of the global economic balance. But once again US hegemony and dictatorial behaviour proved to be major obstacles. With the passage of time many formers members realized it was in their national interest to support the US strategic doctrine. This was evident when countries such as Iran and Syria did not oppose US military offensive against Saddam Hussain during the Gulf War (Datta, 2005). India is also accused of having jumped onto the US boat, though much later. The recent nuclear deal between the two countries can seriously constrain Indian foreign policy choices, some argue. A good example of this was India's vote against Iran at the IAEA Conference in 2005. Whether India is giving up on her policy of non-alignment and adopting the US strategic doctrine remains to be seen. But there is evidence to suggest that she is starting to part ways with pat traditions. Some see it as 'strategic transformation' on part of India.

2. Emphasis on Domestic Growth and Self-reliance

Self-reliance has been a cornerstone of Indian strategic thinking both in civilizational and contemporary terms. Kautilya, in his Arthashastra, stressed the importance of the 'availability of resources to the army'. He suggested that an army should not depend on outside help of any sort, and should be self-sufficient in all aspects. More recently, self-sufficiency, especially in economic terms, was of vital importance to Indian policy makers during the Nehru years. It is a major theme in Nehruvian ideology. This doctrine of self-sufficiency and domestic growth has also been reflected in the policies of multiple Indian Governments in the past two decades. One of the greatest champions of this cause is perhaps the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. In the past, India has not been able to turn economic potential into military strength. But modern India seems to be obsessed with the idea of self-sufficiency, especially in the economic and the military sectors. The present government has encouraged 'home manufacturing' in the defence sector. Meeting her own defence needs through domestic manufacturing is of great strategic importance to India. In 2014 Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the launch of India's largest indigenously-made warship. He showed his confidence in India's youth and asked them to develop India's defence manufacturing sector to a level where India would one day be able to export weapons rather than buy them from other countries. The Prime Minister has also stressed on the importance of sea trade, and the positive role India can play in such a trade due to her dominance of the Indian Ocean. But for such a trade to happen, India needs to be able to provide maritime security. This explains the recent emphasis on developing and modernizing the

Indian Navy. India is now ambitious enough play a more dominant role in the region, both on political and economic fronts.

Self-sufficiency in economic and military sectors is the key to fulfilling this ambition (Pillalamarri, 2014b). The Indian government's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) claims that Indian will be able to provide/ manufacture a staggering 75% of its defence needs at home over the next decade and a half. This really is an ambitious plan. One should remember that Russia still remains one of India's greatest trade partners in the defence area. India-Israel cooperation in the defence sector has also increased in recent years (Pant, 2018). But in recent years cooperation in defence research areas has increased, allowing India to develop her own defence technology and manufacturing capability at home (Mahapatra, 2014). The bitter truth is that at present, around 50% of Indian weapons still are of Russian origin. But if the current emphasis on self-sufficiency continues, there is no reason why this scenario cannot change.

Domestic growth, however, is not all about increasing military strength. Kautilya's work is full of references to the importance of economic growth at home. He considers a poor King to be a weak ruler. Such a King, in his opinion, easily gives in and surrenders to external threats. A wealthy King on the other hand can easily transform his wealth into military strength. Also, he can buy allies by offering financial incentives (he calls them gifts). In more contemporary terms, Indian policy elite, as discussed earlier in the chapter, are well aware of the need for economic growth in order to maintain the positive momentum on the military front as well. Much has changed since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. A pro-market policy has enabled the Indian economy to grow at an annual rate of 6 percent over the past quarter of a century. Such growth rates are impressive compared to figures from previous decades (Kohli, 2006). The latest figures show that Indian economic growth in the period between April and June 2018 was at an impressive 8.2% (Kaul, 2018).

3. Deterrence

The idea of 'deterrence' highlights yet another complexity in Indian strategic thought. Contemporary Indian literature on security issues continuously brings up the argument around the deterrence policy. This term appears even more consistently and frequently in literature on India's nuclear policy. Many argue that India applies the 'deterrence doctrine' for the purpose of national security The Indian state, after independence, was not very comfortable with the idea of using brutal force to neutralize external threats. Leaders of the Nehruvian ideological school were suspicious about the very concept of deterrence. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi repeatedly rejected the idea of nuclear deterrence. She told the Indian Parliament that India should not overreact to the prospects of Pakistan's acquiring of nuclear weapons since China, India's other regional rival, had already developed the capability. Another Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, also believed that a nuclear arms race in the region will only bring misfortune to its people (Poulose, 1998). But after

conducting the nuclear tests in 1998 India adopted 'nuclear deterrence' as her official policy. This was capped in 2003 by the initiation of the 'credible minimum deterrence' (CMD) policy. In the wake of 'Pokhran-II' tests in 1998, many trends emerged in the Indian strategic discourse. Indian strategic thinkers do not agree on the practicality and morality of nuclear deterrence. The 'rejectionists' follow the Nehruvian perspective, rejecting the very existence of nuclear weapons. They consider them more of a threat than a tool. At the opposite end of this spectrum are the maximalists. They believe India has reasons to think of even thermonuclear deterrents, practically going a step ahead of nuclear deterrence. Between these two extremes are the pragmatists. They realize that an arms race in the sub-continent will not serve Indian interests, and can even be disastrous. However, given the current regional and global military and political environment, they argue that nuclear deterrence is vital to safeguarding India's national interests (Kulkarni and Sinha, 2011).

The debate on whether India's nuclear deterrence policy has achieved its objectives continues. Despite being the government's official strategy, it has been criticized by opponents. They argue that instead of enforcing a stronger sense of security, the nuclear tests have created an atmosphere of fear and panic both in India and Pakistan. In response to Indian postures, Pakistan has also speeded up weaponization. The situation is made worse by the lack of an 'arms control programme' in the region. At the same time the nuclear tests have put more pressure India's conventional military capabilities in Kashmir due to the fear of a 'nuclear aggression' by Pakistan. Critics also point to the economic burden of the nuclear programme, arguing that it has hampered economic growth in the country (Carranza, 1999). India's 'minimum deterrence doctrine' is also criticized for provoking aggressive reactions in China. For years China did not even accept India as a nuclear power. But recently the prospects of an India nuclear threat has have been discussed in Chinese academic circles. The communist regime has reasons to be cautious about India's indigenously developed recent air defence system. India Navy is also developing its capabilities and building up strategic momentum in the Indian Ocean. Beijing is not blind to Indian emphasis self-sufficiency and home manufacturing in the defence sector. All these steps have surely alerted China, and any strategic reaction may not be in the best interest of India at this critical moment (Saksena, 2014). It is a typical example of how fear one capital creates tension in another.

4. Strategic Caution and Confusion

Although there are reasons to believe that Indian foreign policy behaviour might be undergoing a transformation New Delhi still remains cautious about the regions security dynamics. Some argue that defeat in the 1962 War with China suck the self-confidence out of India's strategic vision and foreign policy. Before that, India was free of shackles, emerging on the international stage as a champion of nuclear disarmament, non-alignment and regional and international peace. Such was the strength of Nehru's pacifism that he refused to accept a

permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council and instead suggested it to be offered to Communist China. This was a time when Indian foreign policy thinking was shaped and influenced by other ideologies and priorities (Karnad, 2015). But after that military embarrassment at the hands of China Indian foreign policy elite had to wake to the new realities. New Delhi had paid heavily for her strategic caution and 'idealism'. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 once again exposed India's strategic confusion. New Delhi was caught between a strategic ally in the form of the Soviet Union, and a historical friend in Afghanistan. New Delhi depended heavily on Soviet military support and expertise at the time. But at the same time Indians had centuries of friendly ties with the people of Afghanistan. To make things worse India had designated herself as the so called champion and leader of the non-aligned movement. It was a difficult situation indeed, and New Delhi did not know how to react. Initially the then Prime Minister Charan Singh criticized Soviet aggression both at home and at the United Nations. However he was soon out of office and the incoming Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took a U-turn. Her policy to deal with the issue was somewhat complicated. Her Government would say one thing at the UN and another in Kabul and Moscow. At the same time Gandhi was trying some sort of an understanding with the US and Pakistan on the issue (Paliwal, 2017c).

During an official visit to New Delhi in July 2011 the then US Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton openly called on India to give up her cautious foreign policy approach towards the region and start behaving more confidently. This was not the first time a senior US official had openly questioned India's strategic ambitions in the region and on the global stage. One could feel that Washington was somewhat frustrated with New Delhi's lack of desire to play a more dominant role in regional affairs. But domestic observers in India were suspicious of the US's real agenda. They believed that such US rhetoric had more to do with undermining China's regional hegemony than a long term US-India strategic partnership on regional issues (The National, 2011). It has been previously discussed why Indian policy elite have always resisted the temptation to embrace India's 'super power' status. They are not sure India has the economic muscle necessary for playing a more dominant role in regional affairs, especially military adventurism. They are also wary of becoming mere tools in the hands of the US. But some are concerned that such strategic caution and confusion is undermining India's interests, even security, both at home and abroad. They point to India's reluctance to equip the Afghan Security Forces with heavy weapons fearing that it would provoke Pakistan. But opponents of this policy argue that Pakistan has not given up on undermining Indian interests in Afghanistan anyway, irrespective what role India plays in that war-torn country. The next chapter presents a more detailed discussion on whether Indian strategic caution is causing damage in Afghanistan.

Chapter 3

East Looking West: India's Afghanistan Policy Since 2001

Strategic Culture in Practice?

In the previous chapter we discussed the idea of an Indian strategic culture, highlighting some of its key feature. This chapter presents the first argument; *that certain features of India's civilizational and contemporary strategic thinking can be found in her Afghanistan policy over the past sixteen years*. Kautilya's Mandala Theory will be used to analyse certain features of Indian strategic behaviour in Afghanistan. The aim here is to see if those same features are still dominant in India's Afghanistan policy. It is also important to see whether India has shown any degree of consistency and stability in her foreign policy thinking and behaviour over the past sixteen years. Has India behaved like a regional power in Afghanistan, or does she still continue to suffer from strategic caution and confusion? Why does Afghanistan matter to India from a geopolitical point of view? Are India and Afghanistan allies? If they are then why is there a need for such an alliance? Who is the common 'enemy', and what sorts of threats does it pose? Also, what has India done in Afghanistan in order to isolate that enemy and neutralize the threat that it poses? Finding answers to some of these questions is also important in the overall debate regarding the presence, or absence, of an Indian strategic culture.

Under the influence of Kautilya's Arthashastra, the Hindu political thought thrived and excelled, finding the ability to define and categorize friends and enemies, identify problems and study and understand social/domestic and international structures. Kautilya gave the Hindu political thought his 'six golden principles of foreign policy', advising his King on what the best strategy was under specific circumstances. Each policy option was devised in relation to the King's power, or that of the enemy's. For instance, if a state was more powerful than its enemy the King was advised to either show hostility or attack. If an enemy state was deemed superior or more powerful the wise thing would be for the King to accommodate the enemy, seek protection or resort to a double policy. If the two were equal then the King had the option to show indifference or, put in simpler words, just ignore the enemy (Modelsky, 1964). We also discussed Kautilya's other significant contribution to Indian strategic thought, the 'Mandala Theory', also referred to as 'Rajamandala' by some. He knew too well that two states with unequal power and status could never behave in the same way in terms of their ambitions. The stronger will always seek to undermine the weaker in order to maximize personal power and wealth. Hence, more than often, such two unequal states will be enemies. Kautilya therefore devised a 'Circle of states', placing the King's state in the centre and all other states in subsequent circles. Once each state was allocated a position in the circle Kautilya

devised relevant policies of dealing with each one in the light of his six principles of foreign policy. For example if an adjacent state showed hostility the King was supposed to neutralize it by reaching out to other states within the circle. The basic logic behind this was that 'the enemy of your enemy is your friend'. By reaching out Kautilya meant the King should either seek direct protection from another state against a stronger enemy, or forge some sort of an alliance in order to isolate the 'joint threat' (Modelsky, 1964b).

The question is whether Kautilya and his thoughts are relevant in today's world, and whether it can inspire the Indian strategic community to put down the foundations of a 'grand strategy' capable of overcoming 21st century challenges. Many argue that Kautilya still matters. As long as human nature remains unchanged, and states and their rulers seek self-interest, his teachings will continue to make sense both in India and elsewhere. Recent Indian Governments have unsurprisingly shown Kautilyan tendencies in their strategic approach. In 2002 then Minister of External Affairs Jashwant Singh said India could still learn from the Arthashastra by forming a conceptual framework of 'concentric circles'. These circles, in his opinion, would include India's immediate neighbourhood, the larger world and the global issues (Gautam, 2013c). Mr. Singh was a senior member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is often associated with Kautilyan politics. Currently in power under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP has adopted a 'make India great again' approach by seriously reconsidering her foreign relations and re-evaluating India's economic and military potential. Due to this new potential India's role both in the region and on the international stage has changed. The world simply expects more from India in the 21st century. Given this scenario Mr. Modi seems to have got his priorities straight, stressing on economic growth, less dependency in the defence sector by manufacturing at home and diversifying India's energy dependency by reaching out to new energy hubs in Central Asia. What he hasn't yet done is show a willingness to utilize 'hard-power' in a more direct and effective way to safeguard India's interests in the region. Whether this will also change in the future remains to be seen.

It is exactly for the above mentioned priorities, and ambitions that Afghanistan matters to India. Mr. Singh's above statement regarding the need for India to form 'concentric circles' in the region came only months after the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the return of the international community to that country after many years of isolation. India, from the very beginning of the world's renewed engagement with Afghanistan in 2001, was playing a prominent role. Policy elites in New Delhi realized this was an opportunity to not only shape India's future strategic vision for the region but also to re-engage with a strategically important neighbour which India had pretty lost to Pakistan for many years. Being the world's fourth largest energy consumer one might suggest India's greater interest should be beyond Afghanistan and in Central Asia. It is a valid argument. The Central Asian Republics have some of the world's largest and most readily available energy resources. The countries of the region are rich in oil, gas and uranium, all commodities which India is in severe need of (Wallace, 2014). But for India to reach these resources Afghanistan must first come out of its current security and political

crisis. Only then can the country serve as the bridge or corridor connecting Central Asia with South Asia. Any continuation of political instability and military tension in Afghanistan greatly undermines India's ambition to play a major role in the affairs of the region. Furthermore, and as history has proved, an insecure and unstable Afghanistan directly affects India's own security, posing a series a threat to the stability of the region and the world at the same time. It is precisely for these reasons that India cannot afford to let Afghanistan slip back into chaos and become a safe haven for groups and individuals deeply under the influence of Pakistan. Many of these groups do not hide their anti-India sentiments (Fair, 2014).

Factors Shaping India's Afghanistan Policy since 2001

1. Security

Kautilya's Mandala Theory a useful analytical tool to understand this important aspect of India's Afghanistan policy. It allows us to put the different states within the South Asian security complex into imaginary circles similar to those described in Kausalya's theory. Such categorization then helps us understand how India strategizes her security vis-a-visa both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Security is perhaps the most important among India's strategic objectives in Afghanistan. India is concerned with the 'destructive' role Pakistan has been playing in the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security triangle. Pakistan openly undermines India's ambition and ability to test its mettle and establish her position as a growing regional power (Fair, 2010). Historically, what happens in Afghanistan and who rules the country has had significant impacts on India's security. The porous North-western border has always been a source of concern for Indian rulers. Neither the Moguls nor the British after them could ignore the threat that emanated from Afghanistan. After the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 the two countries were geographically separated, with Pakistan emerging in the middle. But India still had reasons to relate her security with the political and the military situation in Afghanistan. This was especially true in 1992 when the Mujahedeen factions came to power. Almost all these groups were under the direct influence of Pakistan and had clear anti-India sentiments. The Taliban era from 1996 until 2001 was another dark period in India-Afghanistan relations. During this ten year period India lost ground in Afghanistan to her arch rival Pakistan. So what has India done over the past sixteen years to neutralize the Pakistani factor, both in Afghanistan and over the region?

To answer this question we need to return to Kautilya's categorization of 'enemies' and 'allies' in his Mandala Theory. For the purpose of conceptual clarity each of these three countries will be put in separate circles. Since we are primarily dealing India's security and her foreign policy options it has been put India in the first circle and called her the '**Vijigisu'**, or the would be conqueror. Avoiding the literal meaning of the word 'conqueror' we simply categorize India as a state whose security and interests are at risk from another state. Pakistan, within this security

framework, is the enemy or '**Ari'**. Pakistan has been placed in the second circle next to India. This placement is in line with the actual geographical position of the two countries as they share a direct border. Finally, Afghanistan has been placed in the third circle and named '**Mitra'**, or the Vijigisu's ally. Afghanistan and India are strategic allies whose security and interests are being threatened by a middle state (Pakistan). In order to neutralize this threat India wishes to reach out to Afghanistan. Her strategic objectives in Afghanistan and her foreign policy options are pretty much in line with what Kautilya suggests. The thesis argues that India has chosen '**Asana'**, a foreign policy option which emphasizes on neither negotiating with the enemy nor going to war. At Present India is not negotiating with Pakistan over her strategic interests in Afghanistan. But she has not gone to war with Pakistan either. At the same time India has adopted a policy of '**Samraya'**, (finding an ally against the enemy) by negotiating strategic partnerships with Afghanistan. Such an alliance helps India minimize Pakistani influence over anti-India elements in Afghanistan. But before I discuss India's foreign policy behaviour in detail we first need to briefly look at the present security dynamics within the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security triangle. Understanding this background is important as it provides a context for the discussion on India's strategic behaviour later.

At present India's security interests and objectives in Afghanistan are multi-dimensional. New Delhi is wary of the Taliban and will not want the group to return to power under any circumstances. The 1999 hijacking of an India Airline which later landed in Kandahar is a good example of how the group's presence in Afghanistan undermined Indian security interest. Having no diplomatic ties with the radical group India had to dispatch its Foreign Minister to negotiate the safe release of its citizens. In return India had agreed to release a number of hard-line Islamists from serving time in India prisons. It was the earliest example of the group's willingness to operate under Pakistan's influence and undermine India's security (Jaishankar, 2016c). That threat did not completely end after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. In July 2008 a suicide bomber drove a car packed with explosives into the main entrance at the Indian Embassy in Kabul. The blast killed 41 people and also injured more than 100. Among the dead were four Indian nationals. The most high-profile of them was India's defence attaché in Afghanistan at the time. New Delhi, Washington and the Afghan Government blamed the Pakistani-backed militants for orchestrating and executing the attack (Wafa and Cowell, 2008). Just over a year later, in October 2009, another similar attack just outside the Indian Embassy in Kabul killed 17 people and injured another 80. No one from the Indian staff at the Embassy was killed or hurt this time. The Taliban openly claimed responsibility for the attack. Afghan officials said the attack was too sophisticated for a 'bandit group' and evidence suggested it was a state-sponsored act of terrorism (Roggio, 2009). Attacks on Indian Consulates and officials took place on many other occasions, in different parts of the country. The most recent target was the Indian Consulate in Jalalabad, eastern Afghanistan, which was attacked in March 2016. Once again suicide bombers were used, leaving 9 people dead and the Consulate building severely damaged. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai once again accused Pakistan of direct involvement in the attack (Haidar, 2016).

In response India has continued to choose a policy of '**Asana'** against the Pakistani-sponsored threat. Kautilya's basic logic behind this foreign policy option is to maintain a status quo by neither engaging in negotiations with the enemy nor choosing to go to war. At no point over past sixteen years has New Delhi engaged in any sort of direct talks with Islamabad over Afghanistan. Even if India did show a willingness to engage, there is a strong belief in New Delhi that Pakistan will not cooperate with honesty. India is well aware of the fact that the balance is tilted in Pakistan's favour at present. This has certain reasons. The United States presence in Afghanistan has left India with limited options in that country. Washington continues to rely on Pakistan's cooperation in the ongoing War on Terror. During the initial years of the ongoing war in Afghanistan both US and NATO troops directly relied on Pakistani land routes for military and logistic supplies. Washington still continues to count on Pakistani cooperation in encouraging Taliban elements to come to the negotiating table and hold peace talks with the Afghanistan. This US behaviour has caused serious frustrations both in New Delhi and Kabul. Both countries have serious doubts over Pakistan's desire to play a constructive role in the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security and economic triangle. Under such circumstances India foreign policy elite see little logic in engaging directly with Islamabad. Both countries have pursued separate strategic objectives in Afghanistan, choosing different methods to fulfil those objectives. India has also been completely side-lined from other multilateral efforts aimed at holding peace talks with the Taliban. Over the past sixteen years such talks have taken place in Kabul, Pakistan, China, Turkey, Qatar and elsewhere. India has never been offered a place on the negotiating table. Some observers also suggest that New Delhi has not pushed hard enough for a place on the table. This is partly because India understands her limited influence over the parties involved, especially the Taliban themselves. The US, for reasons mentioned earlier, is also not keen on offering India a role at the cost of provoking Pakistan. Pakistan on the other hand has exploited this strategic space. Islamabad's traditional opponents such as Afghanistan are frustrated by the fact that Pakistan has completely hijacked the whole peace process.

I interviewed former Afghan President Hamid Karzai in May 2016 for the purpose of this thesis. He spoke of his desire to see India on the negotiating table during peace talks with the Taliban. Karzai was highly critical of Pakistan's role in the peace process and even accused Washington of playing double games. He argued that neither Islamabad nor Washington was truly committed to ending the ongoing military crisis in Afghanistan. This was not the first time the former Afghan President had pushed for such a role for India. During a visit to New Delhi in late 2015 he emphasized that New Delhi could play a positive role in the ongoing peace process. His remarks amused many in the audience. In that same speech he also declared that a recent MoU between the Afghan and the Pakistani intelligence agencies did not stand anymore. Karzai also stressed that Kabul and New Delhi face similar security threats, giving India further reasons to engage deeper with the Government of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani (Bagchi, 2015). I came across such arguments again and again during my numerous discussions with a number of Afghan diplomats and observers. There is a strong desire in Kabul to expand the current framework and mechanism for holding peace talks with the Taliban. For many in Kabul such an

expansion means making India part of the process. They see a simple logic behind such a role for India. Afghans believe that peace talks should not be held with the Taliban but with Pakistan. They see Islamabad as the actual constraint factor in the process, and have no doubts about Pakistan's influence over most of the insurgent groups in Afghanistan. The Taliban, they believe, will not deviate from Pakistan's strategic objectives in Afghanistan. Trying to talk to them group is therefore a waste of time and energy. Instead, the international community should put serious pressure on Pakistan to cooperate in the peace process. However, this argument is challenged by some former Taliban members. The group's former ambassador to Islamabad, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, believes that the Taliban won't bow to Pakistani pressure even if Islamabad did want them to come to the negotiating table. He insists that the Taliban will only talk directly to the United States Government (Khan, 2018). Some argue that bringing India to the table is one way of putting pressure on Pakistan. Others are sceptical of such a move and argue that it will create further tension in Pakistan (Kousary, 2016). Under such circumstances finding a role for India in the ongoing unstable peace process will be easier said than done. Pakistan and China will not accommodate India on the table at any cost. They have done everything in their power to keep New Delhi out of the process for years. Karzai, some argue, knows this fact very well. Hence, much of what he says regarding India's involvement in the peace process is purely rhetorical. It is a mere attempt by the former President to gain Indian sympathy and raise his personal profile (Ganguly, 2016b).

I also interviewed India's former ambassador in Kabul Rakesh Sood in June 2016. I asked him about India's official stance regarding the Afghan peace process. India has also been accused of giving ambiguous and confused signals on the subject. Many question whether New Delhi actually wants to be involved in the peace process. There are also questions regarding India's role in the process, and her ability to negotiate for her strategic interests. I asked former ambassador Sood what India could offer if given the opportunity to sit on the table. I quote part of his response below.

"Firstly, we in India have always stressed that peace talks should be an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process. In that sense it is for the Afghanistan Government to tell us whether they want us to be present. I am sure if they invite us we will be present. But, given the Pakistan, China and US combination, even if the Afghans want us to be present they are in a minority. So there is a clear unease and the Afghans have time and again insisted on making the process broader and defining a clear road map for it. Secondly, if given a place on the table, we can play a positive role despite the fact that we do not have any influence on the Taliban. But we can bring a certain amount of weight to the table. We have the experience of having negotiated with insurgent movements in India. Giving up arms and ceasing hostility is the sort of things we have dealt with successfully within our own country".

Rakesh Sood,
Indian Ambassador to Kabul, 2005-2008

These were the remarks of someone who was once India's most senior diplomat in Afghanistan. While he was positive about India's ability to play a constructive role in the peace process he was less hopeful that New Delhi will ever get such an opportunity. Mr. Sood's take on the current dynamics of peace talks in Afghanistan remind us of the 'strategic cautious' India has often been accused of. Critics accuse New Delhi of over-calculation when it comes to devising foreign policy. They argue that Indian foreign policy elite often spend more time debating potential risk rather than possible gains when making foreign policy decisions. There is a clear desire on New Delhi's part to play a more dominant role in Afghan peace talks. But they she clearly questions her own ability to make a difference on the negotiating table. Under present circumstances, and as for ambassador Sood indicated, New Delhi sees Afghanistan as her only ally. This explains India's emphasis on the 'Afghan leadership' and 'Afghan ownership' of peace talks. Behind such rhetoric there is a desire to neutralize Pakistan's influence and control over the very process of negotiating with the Taliban. For now though, India seems to have stuck of a policy of 'Asana', and peace talks with the 'enemy' are not top of the agenda when it comes to New Delhi's strategic objectives in Afghanistan. The current mechanism and make-up of the peace process is not in India's favour. New Delhi is looking for other options. She has recently shown interest in efforts initiated by Iran and Russian in order to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. Earlier this year Russia assured India that it had limited ties with the Taliban and that Moscow wants the group to break up with the Pakistani intelligence agency, the ISI, and other terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda (Chaudhury, 2018).

The second part of Kautilya's 'Asana' approach to foreign policy advises against engaging in any kind of war or hostility with the enemy. For many, it would make sense if India chooses to use more 'hard power' for safeguarding her strategic interests in Afghanistan. If such an approach has worked for Pakistan then it would probably work for India too. However, for India's political and military elite, engaging in any sort of direct military adventurism in Afghanistan is not an option. In fact it could mean strategic suicide for New Delhi. India's Afghanistan policy has always had clear red-lines. Sending ground troops to Afghanistan is one such 'red line'. Under present circumstances there is absolutely no way India will put boots on the ground. This has less to do with Indian concerns over the 'Pakistan-terrorism Nexus'. Instead this attitude is more a result of India's own understanding and concept regarding the use of hard-power. There are also questions regarding India's ability to engage in Afghanistan militarily. Foreign policy elite in New Delhi strongly believe that sending troops to Afghanistan would mean getting over-stretched and over-involved in the Afghan quagmire. Delhi, at present, neither has the desire nor the capability to do so (Ganguly, 2016). There are also structural constraints against such an approach. The United States and even Afghanistan itself are less keen on offering India a broader military role. Islamabad and Beijing would be even more concerned. They will see this as a direct provocation and would not shy away from reacting. Of all the Afghans that have been interviewed and talked to over the years none has shown any desire or excitement about seeing India troops in Afghanistan. Afghans have traditionally disliked foreign forces in their country. British and Soviet military adventurism in Afghanistan proved to be disastrous. The current war in Afghanistan is already the

longest in the history of the United States. Indians know this history well. As former Indian ambassador in Kabul Rakesh Sood told me, India will never put boots on the ground in Afghanistan.

Alongside the 'Asana' approach to foreign policy; this study argues that India has adopted the '**Samsraya'** at the same time**.** This Kautilyan approach advises the King to find an ally if he is too weak to defeat the enemy alone. Kautilya argues that the 'samraya' is a useful foreign policy tool when a King does not have the same wealth or influence as his enemy. Under such circumstances he should find an ally, win him over with gifts and concessions and seek his support in order to defeat actual enemy. The King's job would be far easier if this newly found ally also happens to be an enemy of the King's enemy. Kautilya calls such an ally '**mitra'**. Given the current security dynamics in the region Afghanistan is India's 'mitra'. Also, Kautilya's 'wealth' has been translated as 'influence' in the present context. India obviously has greater wealth than Pakistan due to her growing economic strength. But she lacks the kind of influence that Pakistan has traditionally enjoyed in Afghanistan. To overcome these structural constraints India has not only provided more than $2 billion in financial aid but has also made an effort to change the current military and security dynamics in Afghanistan.

Over the past sixteen years India has focussed on enabling and equipping the Afghan Security Forces to shift the balance of military power in that country. India has been heavily involved in training Afghan Army officers and Police Forces. In 2013 Indian Army officials announced they were carrying out training and joint exercises with a contingent of Afghan Commandos in the Rajasthan Desert. Around 60 members of the Afghan elite forces were said to be involved in the training. The focus of the exercise was on how to prevent civilian casualties. Teaching such military tactics to Afghan Forces make sense given India's limited diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, and the nature of the terrorist threat they can be exposed to (Miglani, 2013). While the training of military personnel has continued for years, India has shown no strong desire to provide heavy weapons to the Afghan Security Forces. During his thirteen years of being in power former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's repeatedly asked India to provide his country and Armed Forces with much needed military equipment (Burke, 2013). In 2013 Afghan vice-President Karim Khalili reiterated his country's desire to receive arms from India during an official visit to New Delhi. However, until recent years, India continued to cold-shoulder such wishes and demands from Kabul.

There are multiple reasons for New Delhi's hesitation. Indian officials have previously insisted that there were hurdles in providing such military aid to Afghanistan. For instance, they said countries that sold military equipment to India signed an 'end-user agreement' with New Delhi. India would be breaching the contract agreement if it decides to supply these weapons to a third country (Roy, 2013). In reality though, New Delhi had more important reasons not to entertain Kabul's demand for providing heavy weapons. As discussed earlier in the chapter Washington, for many years, was reluctant to allow India to play a more active role on the military front in Afghanistan. This, in Washington's view, would have

provoked concerns and reactions in Islamabad. In Washington's strategic calculus putting an end to the Afghan crisis required full and honest cooperation from Pakistan. The United States was more than happy to allow India train Afghan Security personnel. But a broader military engagement between Kabul and New Delhi carried the risk of provoking Pakistan and even China. Such a situation would not be in Washington's interest. In recent years however Washington has heard repeated calls, both domestically and abroad, to review this policy. At present serious questions are being asked regarding Pakistan's role and willingness to cooperate in Afghanistan. Despite continued US financial aid over the past sixteen years Pakistan has never fully gained the trust of police makers in Washington. Many argue that Islamabad has not been an honest ally of the United States in the current War on Terror. Such rhetoric gained even further momentum after the 2011 raid which killed Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, in Abbottabad of Pakistan (Jayshankar, 2016d). There were claims in the west that he was living in Pakistan with the knowledge and under the protection of the Pakistan security establishment (Hersh, 2015). Even a former Pakistan spy chief, Assad Durrani, thought it was possible for the Pakistani authorities to be aware of ben Laden's presence (Tharoor, 2015). These developments had understandably changed the way the US has looked at India's role in Afghanistan for much of the past sixteen years. A paradigm shift was soon to follow.

It came on 25 December 2015 as the Indian Ambassador in Kabul, Amar Senha, completed the handover of three Russian fighter helicopters to the Afghanistan's National Security Advisor, Hanif Atmar. The MI-25 attack helicopters are said to be equipped with machine-guns, rockets and grenade launchers. India had reportedly gained the approval of the manufacturing country, in this case Russia, for the transfer. Some argued that it was the most consequential arms deal in South Asia for years, and will have considerable implications (Kugelman, 2016). Washington, obviously aware of the deal, did not raise any eye-brows. In fact it would be difficult to believe that such an important deal could go through without US support. Some observers suggest that Pakistan's double-games may not be the only reason behind Washington's willingness to accommodate India in Afghanistan in a broader capacity. They argue that, in the wake of a future military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US is counting on regional countries to shoulder the task of stabilizing Afghanistan. Whichever the case there a clear shift in US attitude regarding India's role in Afghanistan. A few hours after the transfer of the helicopters to the Afghans, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new building of the Afghan Parliament, built by India. In his speech he reiterated India's country's commitment to Afghanistan's security (Hindustan Times, 2015). It was an important day for India-Afghanistan relations; important because India, for the first time in decades, was blending 'hard power' with diplomacy. It is perhaps this expression of 'hard power' more than anything else that signifies the change in India's Afghanistan policy in recent years. While the 'Asana' might still be the dominant aspect of India's Afghanistan policy, there are clear signs that New Delhi is looking at other much 'bolder' ways of safeguarding strategic interests in that country. By enabling the Afghan Security Forces to secure their country India is neutralizing the threat posed to her security by Pakistani-backed militant groups. Kautilya called this 'sandwiching' the enemy.

2. Energy and Trade Interests

Kautilya also talks about the different constituents of power in his Arthashastra. He believes that power comes in three different yet equally important forms. These are intellectual power (the level of a nation's collective intellectual ability and wisdom), the power of sovereignty (a King's wealth or the size of his treasury) and physical power (military or hard power). These different forms of power often reinforced each other. Kautilya for example argued that a King is only sovereign if he is wealthy enough to not only provide for his people but also build a strong army (Bakhshi, 2015). The power of sovereignty was therefore directly proportional to a King's physical power. The end of the Cold War resulted in the emergence of a number of regional powers, each having a set of strategic ambitions both in their respective regions and globally. It also led to the introduction of a new discourse in IR studies, one dealing with and studying the international interactions of these newly emerging regional powers. India was one such power emerging on the global stage. In this context, New Delhi's Central Asia policy was considered a prism of its strategic behaviour in the post-Cold War scenario (Kavalski, 2010). Indian policy makers called it their 'connect Central Asia strategy'. In 2015 Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided a breath of fresh air by visiting all five of the Central Asian republics and Russia in a single trip (Jha, 2015). As a rising regional power with clear ambitions India once again considered Afghanistan an important part of her 'strategic neighbourhood. So how does India, as a regional power, intend to deal with Afghanistan? What is Afghanistan's place in India's 'grand strategy' for the region? To answer these questions one needs to evaluate and understand India's strategic objectives in Afghanistan. Security has already been discussed in the previous section. But at the same time India has serious and long term trade and energy interests vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

First, let us discuss India's energy crisis. For a country expected to be a future regional power it is a worrying reality that a quarter of its population does not have access to electricity. It is one of the many examples of a shocking contrast between India's domestic vulnerabilities and regional political ambitions. India needs energy, and needs it badly. It is the fourth largest consumer of energy in the world. Demand is so enormous that the country simply cannot meet it through domestic production. It means India heavily relies on energy imports, at least for the near future. This has been the case for quite a while now. Between 1990 and 2009 India's dependency on energy imports rose from 11% to 35%. Crude oil was the biggest import in the energy sector. At present there are no signs these figures will decrease any soon (Ahn and Graczyk, 2012). Understandably then India has made it a strategic priority to broaden its options in terms of potential energy resources. The Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project did not materialize due to Pakistan's inability to complete its part of the project. Islamabad claims it could not do so due to western sanctions on Iran and pressure from some Gulf states (Economic Times, 2018). The next option is finding access to Central Asia's energy-rich market. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Natural Gas Pipeline Project, commonly referred to as TAPI, is the most ambitious project to have kicked-off so far. It was launched in Turkmenistan in late December 2015. Given Pakistan's own domestic energy crisis it

is one of the rare projects where Islamabad has chosen to work together with New Delhi, raising hopes for future cooperation in other areas too. The TAPI project is being developed by the Asian Development Bank at a potential cost of $10 billion. The aim is for it to be operational by 2019. Once completed the 1,800-kilometre long pipeline will transfer a total of up to 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas every year from Turkmenistan all the way to India. The Bank claims the project is 'an opportunity for regional cooperation at an unprecedented scale' (ADB, 2016). India has waited for a very long time for TAPI to come along. Now, New Delhi is pushing hard for its early implementation. In 2008, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India signed a tripartite agreement on the project. Four years later the three countries took another step forward by agreeing on a uniform transit fee and gas purchases amongst them. For India the benefits are manifold. First, access to Turkmenistan's gas reserves ensures its energy security. It is expected that by 2030 India will require importing 53% of its total energy needs. Under such domestic demand and public pressure it makes strategic sense on India's part to find alternative markets and reduce its dependency on the Middle East and North Africa. Second, the project involves Pakistan. The hope is that energy-dependency in the region will lead to normalization of relations among the two hostile neighbours in the future. Third, India hopes and expects the project to bring a degree of economic stability to Afghanistan. Such stability can have a direct impact on the security situation in the country, and the Afghan Government's capability to implement development projects (Ganguly, 2016). India's interests in a secure and stable Afghanistan are numerous and have been referred to in detail in the previous sections.

Second, India also has well-defined and long-term trade interests in Afghanistan. The country not only has the potential to be a future market for Indian products itself but can also serve as a transit route for India to reach other markets in Central Asia and Europe. Of course there are obstacles. Pakistan's continued refusal to cooperate on issues of bilateral and regional trade is the biggest challenge. Despite numerous opportunities to resolve internal difference and exploit the enormous economic potential, New Delhi, Kabul and Islamabad have failed to make any significant progress. As a result not only the people in all three countries have suffered but their Governments have also lost golden opportunities to bring economic stability and tackle endemic poverty. Pakistan's policy to deny India an easy land route to Afghanistan has not achieved its goals. The Afghans have suffered far more than the Indians. This has turned the public opinion in the war-torn country against Pakistan and in favour of India (Mohmand, 2016). In March 2014 I travelled to Afghanistan for field research. During my ten days in the country I had the opportunity to a number of Afghan traders. Some of them owned small businesses and mostly imported Pakistan products. Others included wealthy investors who looked beyond Pakistan and wanted to trade regionally. Afghans are known for their trading skills. Many of these men, despite a lack of formal education and much experience, were surprisingly well aware of India's potential as a trading partner for Afghanistan. They wanted to export fresh and dry fruits, rugs, animal skins, precious stones and saffron to India. In return Indian businessmen could invest heavily in Afghanistan infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare and education sectors. By talking to these men for a few minutes one could not help imagine a region connected by

trade interests and living in mutual prosperity. In reality though, it was a picture of frustration and hopelessness. Much of the frustration was directed at Pakistan. Afghans, both political elite and the general public, accuse Pakistan economic siege. The two countries initially signed the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) in 1965. It allowed Afghanistan to use Pakistan's sea ports for import and export purposes. However, to the frustration of both Kabul and New Delhi, the agreement did not allow Afghanistan to trade directly with India. In 2008, decades after the initial agreement, the two countries started negotiations on revising the agreement and adding new provisions. The Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement was signed in 2010. However, Pakistan still does not allow its land route to be used for trade between Afghanistan and India (USAID, 2014).

The above constraint factors continue to exist. But India has not let them undermine her strategic trade interests in Afghanistan and beyond. Instead, New Delhi has managed to find alternative routes for connecting with Kabul. These include both sea and air routes. In May 2016 the much anticipated 'Chabahar Port Agreement' was signed between the leaders of India, Iran and Afghanistan. Under the agreement India will spend around $500 million to develop the Port in the southern Iranian region of Sistan, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. On paper Afghanistan seems to be the main beneficiary of the project. But the Port is significant for India for two strategic reasons. First, as discussed earlier, Pakistan has not cooperated in providing India a land route to reach the markets of Central Asia and Europe. The Port will enable New Delhi to bypass Pakistan and establish a new trade corridor with Afghanistan and beyond. It is believed that this new route will immensely reduce time and cost of exports. Second, India sees the Port as an alternative to match a similar Chinese mega-project in Pakistan's Gwadar. Afghanistan once again lies at the heart of the Chabahar Port project. Any continued instability and an escalation on the military and security front will severely undermine its success (Hindustan Times, 2016). More recently, in June 2017, India and Afghanistan managed to establish an air corridor for trade purposes. The first Air Cargo transported thousands of tons of fresh fruit from Afghanistan to India. Though small in volume, this new air route connecting the two countries has symbolic significance. It has not failed to raise eye-brows in the region, especially in Beijing. According to one Chinese publication, the corridor reflected India's stubborn strategic thinking. Officials in Beijing are sceptical of India ambitions. They believe New Delhi wants to under China's own mega project in the region, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is aimed at connecting the region to other global markets. India's opposition to the CPEC is well known. It partly runs through the Gillgit-Baltistan region in north-western Pakistan, a disputed territory which is claimed by New Delhi (The Economic Times, 2017).

Despite all this euphoria, however, India-Afghanistan trade relations are still low scale. At present the current volume of bilateral annual trade between the two countries is considered modest. The total volume of trade between them for 2014-2015 was in the region of $684 million. The two countries have also signed a 'Preferential Trade Agreement' to give each other duty concessions. Bilateral trade is of minimal importance for India. New Delhi sees Kabul actual potential elsewhere.

Afghanistan can serve as the bridge which connects India to the Central Asian market. This explains Indian investment and interest in projects such as the Chabahar Port Agreement. India also took up the construction of the Zaranj-Dilaram Road in the southern Afghan province of Nimroz. It will serve as the land route connecting Afghanistan to Chabahar. Trading with India also helps the cause of bringing stability to Afghanistan. India needs a stable Afghanistan in order to safeguard the above-mentioned interests in areas of trade and energy. Many of the mega-projects India has undertaken in Central Asia also involve Afghanistan. The TAPI Gas Pipeline Project and the Chabahar Port Agreement are obvious examples. Normalization of relations with Pakistan in the future and the establishment of trade ties with Islamabad will make Afghanistan even more important in New Delhi's strategic economic calculus. At the same time there are genuine concerns that instability in Afghanistan can spill over and destabilize the region, seriously undermining India's trade and economic interests. But a rising power does only do trade of course. It also adopts a 'forward policy' to neutralize threats to its security. India has already shown signs of a more aggressive policy in response to Pakistan's 'destabilizing role'. 2014 saw some of the heaviest shelling on the Line of Control in decades. Indian security officials warned about 'inflicting pain' if Islamabad did not change its attitude (Ahmed, 2014). As Ahrari (2004) suggests, this change of attitude on India's part should not surprise anyone. It has taken India almost half a century to realize her own potential of a 'rising power'. This change in posture and attitude certainly accelerated after the nuclear tests in 1998.

India's Afghanistan policy has also undergone a slow but evident change over the past fifteen years. It now reflects the diplomatic posture of a 'rising power' more than ever before. New Delhi is starting to play a broader and deeper role in Afghanistan's military and security affairs. The training of Afghan Security Forces, carrying out joint military exercises and, most importantly, the recent transfer of fighter helicopters to the Afghan Air Force clearly indicate a more confident approach. India is also showing a paradigm shift on other fronts too. For instance many in New Delhi argue the country should not shy away from talking to the Taliban directly. This, they argue, is crucial for safeguarding India's key security and trade interest in Afghanistan and the region. While this might be a shot too long, nevertheless India has supported the Afghan Government's position on negotiating with moderate elements within the Taliban. High ranking ex-Indian officials who were interviewed for this chapter have also indicated New Delhi is happy to join the group of countries involved in peace talks with the Taliban. They are confident India can play a positive role given her own experience of negotiating with insurgent groups.

So how does the above policy approach fit into Kautilya's concept of 'sovereignty'? This research argues that, in today's globalized world, one cannot think of sovereignty in pure Kautilyan terms. The new order of international affairs means countries and regions are increasingly connected with and dependent on each other. Kautilyan sovereignty and self-reliance may no longer be possible. It might therefore be time we review our definition of 'sovereignty' itself. In economic terms a successful strategy is one which ends a country's dependency on a single market or

region. New Delhi is well aware of her energy needs and wants to diversify her purchasing markets. She is also confident about her potential and capacity to do trade with the wider region and the world. Her 'connect Central Asia' policy could be regarded as India's grand strategy for the future of the region. In that future India sees itself as a power that has the desire as well as the ability to safeguard its strategic interest. Kabul, for its geopolitical importance, fits easily into New Delhi's strategic calculus.

Key Features of India's Afghanistan Policy Since 2001

Over the past fifteen years India's role in Afghanistan and her engagement with this strategically important neighbour has been multi-dimensional. Other regional powers such as Russia and China initially remained less involved and observed developments in Afghanistan from a distance. India, however, adopted a much more pro-active policy immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime and the arrival of the international community. Ironically it is China, and not India, who has a seat in the 'Quadrilateral Contact Group', a platform established for holding peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. It has already been discussed why India has not managed to find herself a seat on the negotiating table. But while India may not have remained much involved on this front, the country has achieved much in Afghanistan on many other fronts over the past sixteen years. From being the biggest regional financial donor to providing the highest number of educational scholarships to Afghan student, India has reached out to Afghanistan in many ways. The following section discusses some of the key features of India's engagement in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years.

1. Aid-Driven Engagement

Once again we can refer to Kautilya's four '**uppayas'** in order to understand India's emphasis on pursuing an aid-driven policy in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years. One of these uppayas is called 'dana'. It has been translated as gift or compensation. This foreign policy approach is aimed at winning hearts and minds and extracting goodwill and loyalty from a population or a King (Set, 2015). The logic behind Kautilya's 'dana' approach is simple and clever. He believes that financial aid can encourage a King to behave in a desirable way without the need to resort to hostility. Kautilya aims to use 'dana' to strike an alliance and find a friend against a more powerful enemy. We the sake of clarity we once again designate India as the King or the state in circle one. She is the one offering 'dana' (gifts or compensation). Afghanistan is once again the 'mitra' or friend (in this case the one who is receiving the gift or compensation). In between them Pakistan is the common enemy or 'Ari'. To simply suggest that Indian financial aid to Afghanistan is primarily aimed at winning Afghan loyalty against Pakistan would be a misinterpretation of the current security dynamics in the South Asian security complex. The idea of using aid

as a foreign policy tool has also both its supporters and opponents. According to Morgenthau (1962), many people question the very use of aid for achieving a greater end result. For this group of people aid in itself should be the end result. Others are sceptical about what aid can actually achieve in the troubled business of foreign policy. They question whether certain foreign policy objectives are worth the expenditure.

India is Afghanistan's biggest regional donor in terms of financial aid. It is also the fifth largest donor to Kabul internationally, after the US, UK, Japan and Germany. Since 2001 the total sum of India's financial aid to Afghanistan and the money it has spent on other projects has reached more than $2 billion. At present the largest chunk of India's foreign aid goes to Afghanistan. This is impressive considering the fact that India only recently set up a foreign aid agency within the Ministry of External Affairs. New Delhi has used this aid wisely, and timely. Much of what it has been doing in Afghanistan has long term significance, and is symbolically important. For instance the country spent $178 million on the construction of the new Afghan Parliament building. For many the project is a symbol of India's commitment to strengthening and supporting democracy in Afghanistan. A sum of around $321 million has also gone into the educational sector, spent on reconstruction of schools and providing food to school children. Another project of both practical and symbolic important is the rehabilitation of the Zaranj-Dilaram road in south-western Afghanistan. The cost of the project is said to be in the region of around $150 million. Also, the recently inaugurated Salma Dam in western Afghanistan, one of the most important and symbolic projects marking bilateral ties between the two countries cost around $300 million (Price, 2013).

In addition to this Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged another $1 billion in financial aid to Afghanistan during a visit to New Delhi by the Afghanistan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in September 2016 (Reuters, 2016). Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj met with her Afghan counterpart Salahuddin Rabbani in September to discuss and finalize a 'New Development Partnership' with Afghanistan. Through this mechanism India aims to spend millions of dollars in the education, healthcare, agriculture, irrigation, clean drinking water, renewable energy, hydropower and sports and administrative infrastructure (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017). Former Indian ambassador in Kabul Rakesh Sood told me India had made sure her financial aid and development projects were spread equally all over Afghanistan. He emphasized on India's desire to reach out to all communities and ethnic groups in the country, making sure New Delhi undertakes some king of a development project in almost all the 34 provinces. This is another policy transformation, as New Delhi has often been accused of siding with certain ethnic and political groups in Afghanistan in the past. During the Mujahedeen regime (1992 and 1996) and later during the Taliban rule (1996 to 2001) India is said to have lost contact with and influence with the Pashtun elements in Afghanistan. Instead New Delhi had to support the Northern Alliance and other groups to safeguard in strategic interests in Afghanistan. This changed in 2001 after the collapse of the Taliban regime, as Indian foreign policy elite decided to support the central Government in Kabul irrespective of who was in power. At the same time they made

sure Indian development and financial aid was equally distributed among all provinces.

A clear distinction between Indian financial aid to Afghanistan and that coming from other countries is the way it has been spent. A dollar spent by India goes a much longer way in Afghanistan than the same amount spent by the United States. In some cases projects such as the construction of roads which were initially taken up by US agencies have been sub-contracted to Indian companies. These Indian companies have decided to use local technology and local people to keep the maintenance of that road. Such decisions have had a direct impact on the total cost of such projects. It is an approach that has worked well for India in Afghanistan. Another example is the money India has been spending on educational scholarships for Afghan students and Government officials. There are around 2,000 slots available through these scholarship programmes each year. The India Government has agreements with national universities since the 1960s on how much they will charge the Government. Similarly a training course for a civil servant costs a mere $40, meaning that the Government can afford to train a larger number of Afghan civilian officials. Reconstruction and rehabilitation projects involving schools, roads and hospitals have resulted in a marked change of attitude both among the Afghan Government and the civilian population towards India. Educational and training scholarships for young Afghan students and bureaucrats have also greatly increased India's potential soft power in Afghanistan. For India, foreign aid seems to have served well as a foreign policy tool. (Mullen, 2016). And speaking of soft power Afghanistan seems to have accepted India's regional power status 'looking up to India' and 'learning' from her on many fronts. Afghanistan's official rhetoric and narrative regarding regional terrorism and the factors destabilizing regional security and stability resembles that of India. Afghanistan also looks up to India's 'democratic traditions', and appreciates India's progress and achievements on the economic as well as military fronts (Pate, 2018). All of this has been made possible by India's strategic patience and her continuous soft-power investment in Afghanistan over the past seventeen years or so.

2. Government Focussed Policy

India's traditional stance regarding bilateral relations with Afghanistan has been to focus on engaging with the Afghan Government directly. New Delhi has preferred to support and engage with whoever was in power in Kabul, with the years of the Mujahedeen regime and later the Taliban rule (1992 to 2001) being an exception. During this period India lost ground in Afghanistan as both regimes were strongly influenced by Pakistan and showed clear anti-India sentiments. Before that, even during the Soviet Union's occupation, India was among the countries that recognized the regime in Kabul (Bajoria, 2009). This policy continues to this day, and much of what New Delhi chooses to do in Afghanistan is in tandem with the wishes and the requirements of the Government in Kabul. In December of 2001, the international community gathered in Bonn, Germany, to choose and introduce a new Interim Government for Afghanistan. India played an important role in both

organizing the Conference and in the many rounds of exhaustive negotiations that led to the establishment of an Interim Regime under the chairmanship of Hamid Karzai (Pant, 2010c). In Hamid Karzai India found a partner with whom it could connect on both political as well as ideological levels. Karzai had spent part of his youth in India, studying politics at Shimla University. Rani Mullen (2016b) argues that Karzai was different from every other Afghan leader that had come to or engaged with India in the past. It was evident in his body language, in the way he interacted with Indian officials, and in the manner he spoke to Indian media, often answering their questions in Hindi rather than English. India's investment in Karzai in the form of an educational scholarship had paid well.

Countries such as the United States delivered most of its aid to Afghanistan through agencies such as the USAID. It has been the most extensive USAID program since Vietnam, spreading over many sectors (Hammink, 2018). The USAID then often worked with a number of other smaller agencies. In many ways this approach side-lined and even undermined the central Government in Kabul, often to the frustration of Afghan officials. India on the other hand chose to deal directly with the Afghan Government. This enabled India to do much more with much lesser money than other larger donors. It also resulted in friendlier relations and mutual trust between New Delhi and the Afghan Government. Another reason why this approach has worked better for both India and Afghanistan is that there is a greater amount of transparency and accountability in regards spending financial aid. Over the last few years bilateral relations between the two countries have moved on, from Government-Government levels to sister-city relationships. A number of Indian states have found sister states/ cities in Afghanistan. The two capitals, Delhi and Kabul, have been tied together. Mumbai has been linked with Kandahar, Hyderabad with Jalalabad, Herat with Rajasthan and Assam with Helmand (Haidari, 2015).

India has also managed to stay out of Afghanistan's often messy political quagmire over the past sixteen years. The country has already seen two electoral crises, first in 2009 and then again in 2014. New Delhi's response to the electoral crisis that followed the much-troubled 2014 presidential elections in Afghanistan were diplomatically impressive. Official results declared Mohammad Ashraf Ghani to be the winner. But his closest rival and former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah refused to accept the outcome. Disagreements continued for months, with the country at one stage seemingly heading towards a political crisis. The BJP Government dispatched Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, to Kabul in order to help defuse the political tension. Her message was clear. New Delhi was not getting involved in Afghanistan's internal political quagmire. She made it clear her country was not siding with any of the opposing sides. Instead, the Minster chose to speak to all sides involved and insisted on a quick resolution of the situation. With political tensions high in the Afghan capital this was a unique opportunity for India to stress on a peaceful resolution of the electoral crisis. Both Ghani and Abdullah thought positively of India. Also, unlike Washington, India had not attempted to impose any agreement over the rival parties. Some in Afghanistan, especially supporters of Abdullah, had reservations over the US's role in the whole crisis. However, no such sentiments of suspicions were held against New Delhi (Panda,

2014). India had previously suffered from political instability in Afghanistan. As mentioned earlier she lost significant strategic ground to Pakistan when Afghanistan's political set-up collapsed under the Mujahedeen and the Taliban. Given such a background India wanted to make sure she engages positively with the new Afghan leader from the very beginning. Political stability in Afghanistan was necessary for long-term bilateral strategic ties. New Delhi had enjoyed close ties with the outgoing President Hamid Karzai, and wanted to make sure that relationship continued with the incoming Afghan leadership.

3. Economy Friendly

Trade has been a major part of India's engagement in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years. The two countries established economic and trade ties very early after the installation of the Afghan Transitional Government under Hamid Karzai in December 2001. By March 2003 a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) had been signed between New Delhi and Kabul, aimed at boosting bilateral trade and economic growth in both the countries (TOI, 2003). The key articles inserted in this Agreement stressed on 'promoting harmonious trade relations, ensuring a fair competition for trade between the two countries and to remove the barriers that undermine trade and economic engagement between them'. In 2013-14 the bilateral trade volume between India and Afghanistan was close to $700 million per annum. This included around $5million in exports and $2 million in imports by India. Given the potential for growth and expansion in the area these figures were considered modest at the time (Embassy of India in Kabul, 2016). The latest expansion of trade relations between the two countries came in 2017 after an air cargo was established for bilateral trade purposes. Some of the details have been discussed in the previous sections. The move is symbolically significant as Pakistan has continuously prevented trade between Kabul and New Delhi via land routes.

The 'Chabahar Port Agreement' between India, Iran and Afghanistan was first discussed in 2003. The then Indian Government failed to pursue the idea due to regional and international geopolitical factors. Iran at the time was still facing economic sanctions from the US and many European countries and India fears regarding the project included a potential backlash in Washington at the time. The scenario changed because, first, sanctions on Iran were finally lifted last year and, second, the new BJP Government in India understood the strategic importance of the project well. Finally, on May 25th 2016 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed the Chabahar Port Agreement along with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. The countries also signed a 'Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement' at the same time. India had finally played the masterstroke. The Port is located in southern Iran on the Persian Gulf, and aims to connect India with Central Asia and Europe through Iran and Afghanistan. India has promised a total investment of around $150 million over the next ten years. It is strategically significant for two reasons. First, the Port will allow India to connect with Central and

Euro-Asia. Second, it will also rival Pakistan's Gawadar Port, a similar project being developed by the Chinese. India seems to have killed two birds with one stone (Gupta, 2016). From an Afghan perspective the Agreement has both economic and political significance, as it will reduce Kabul's dependence on Islamabad for transit trade route. Being a landlocked country Afghanistan has always depended on Pakistan's goodwill for commercial and trade connectivity with the rest of the world. Due to political tensions between the two countries, and because of Pakistan's readiness to exploit this strategic advantage, Afghanistan has suffered geopolitically over the last few decades. In this context, the Chabahar Port might prove a game changer not just for India but also for Kabul. Pakistan is observing these developments and the military establishment in the country, given its strained ties with India and Afghanistan, has reasons to be concerned. Many high-ranking officials, including a former Defence Secretary, have already labelled the project as a security threat to Pakistan (Dawn, 2016).

4. Politically Inclusive

The five years of Taliban rule in Kabul (1996-2001) was a rare period since India's independence during which New Delhi did not have any diplomatic ties with the Government in Kabul. Relations were also strained during the few years of the Mujahedeen Government that preceded the Taliban. Even before the Taliban came into power India had reasons to be wary of certain extremist elements within the fragile political and military set up in Afghanistan. Some of these factions were under the influence of Pakistan, with strong anti-India sentiments. The Indian security and foreign policy elite clearly understood the strong connections between these hard-line Afghan groups and the military establishment in Pakistan. Many in New Delhi called it the 'Pakistan-Terrorism Nexus' (Ogden, 2013). The geopolitical scenario was beyond India's control. New Delhi was losing ground to Pakistan in Afghanistan. A more serious threat was the presence of Islamist groups in Afghanistan that were fighting Indian Forces in Kashmir. India could not ignore the severity of the threat, and was forced to make strategic moves it would not have done otherwise. One such gamble was India's military and moral support to the non-Pashtun and anti-Taliban factions such as the Northern Alliance. Throughout the Taliban rule India, together with Iran and Russia, supported the military resistance fighting off Taliban's advances towards northern Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Masood, the slain Northern Alliance commander, is said to have had close ties with India at the time (Paliwal, 2015). Whether the strategy worked for India is a contested debate. But its political consequences were clear. Unwillingly, India had involved herself in Afghanistan's politico-ethnic quagmire. New Delhi, to a certain extent, had lost connection with and any influence over the Pashtuns in Afghanistan.

With a new chapter in India-Afghanistan relations after 2001 New Delhi decided to set this right. Over the past sixteen years India has done well to reach out to the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. New Delhi oversees and pays for a number of development projects in the southern Pashtun areas. Students from these areas receive a fair number of educational scholarships provided by the India Government

each year. This is a clear attempt by New Delhi to broaden its political options in Afghanistan. As referred to earlier in this chapter, the policy worked for India in the form of the Former President Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun who was educated in India. This political diversification by New Delhi of course does not include the Taliban. New Delhi still seems to be unsure as to whether she should engage with the insurgent group in any form or capacity. Many argue that India, under no circumstances, will deal with the Taliban. The group severely undermined Indian interests in Afghanistan in the past and is still deemed in New Delhi as a foreign policy tool used by Pakistan (Ganguly, 2016). Others are more open to the idea of having some kind engagement with the Taliban. Avinash Paliwal (2017c) calls this group of foreign policy elite the 'conciliators'. At the same time India is closely observing peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. New Delhi's diplomatic position on the issue is in tandem with the priorities of the Afghan Government and the international community. The chapter has already discussed India's recent willingness to support peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban insurgents. New Delhi is following developments on this front closely, as they will have a significant impact on Indian's strategic interests in Afghanistan (Jayshankar, 2016c).

5. In Tandem with International and Regional Efforts

Over the past sixteen years India has understandably wished to have a more autonomous Afghanistan policy. But considering the status of regional geopolitics and the US's ongoing War on Terror, New Delhi has not pushed too hard for her strategic options in Afghanistan. Instead she has worked hard to bring her role and engagement in Afghanistan in tandem with other countries involved in the current Afghan quagmire, especially the US. This has seemingly worked well for India's strategic interests so far. But a potential US withdrawal from the war-torn country also poses a number of challenges, even threats, for India's interest and ambitions in a strategically important country. On its own, India neither has the political nor the military capacity to replace the United States in Afghanistan. To make things harder, Russia, China and Pakistan seem to be reaching a 'strategic convergence' on Afghanistan in the wake of any future US withdrawal. It is for these reasons that India, many argue, should not lose direction in this strategic muddle (Kapila, 2015). With the imminent withdrawal of International Forces from Afghanistan and the potential scenario of an 'Afghan end game', the focus of the international community has shifted towards reconciliation with the Taliban. The Afghan Peace Process has continued for many years, though with little or no significant gains. Despite setbacks and a continuing escalation on the military front many believe that reconciliation and peace talks are the only way out of this current political and military deadlock. New Delhi seems to be aware of this bitter truth too. While it has not directly engaged with the Taliban at any level until now, India has supported peace talks with 'moderate elements' within the insurgency and has favoured their reintegration into the Afghan society. India has openly expressed support for the Afghan Government's efforts to bring peace through dialogue with the armed opposition (D'Souza, 2014).

India's trade and economic engagement with Afghanistan has also been more regionally focused, and New Delhi has successfully brought a number of countries onto the same platform to initiate and oversee projects of economic significance. The recent Chabahar Port Agreement is a good example of how India has played the 'regional game' well. India showed strategic patience on the project for a number of years, waiting for the normalization of relations between Iran and the international community. Without a green-light from the US and other western nations it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for India to engage with Iran in such major projects. India's patience finally seems to have paid off, and the Port will enable India to connect not only with Afghanistan and Central Asia but far beyond. Most Indian projects aimed at regional economic development seemed to be in tandem with the US's own 'Silk Road' project for the region. Washington seems to accept and appreciate the positive role New Delhi has been playing on the economic front. Ultimately India hopes to gain more leverage in Washington regarding the nature of her engagements in Afghanistan. For much of the past sixteen years the US administration had not wanted India to play a more visible and active role in areas such as military assistance and training to Afghanistan. This was because Washington could ill-afford to disappoint the military establishment in Pakistan at a time when both the US and NATO forces heavily relied on Pakistan's land routes and sea ports for logistic reasons. The US has also relied to Pakistani airspace and intelligence cooperation.

The situation, however, has changed over the past few years. Islamabad has not hidden its concerns regarding the nature of India's involvement on its western border. It has repeatedly showed displeasure over the activities of Indian Consulates in Afghan cities bordering Pakistan. Despite US pressure on India to keep a low profile in Afghanistan and not poke Pakistan, Islamabad has done little cooperation to put an end to the Afghan crisis. This has led to frustration and harsh rhetoric in Washington. On New Year's Day in 2018 US President Donald Trump openly criticized Pakistan's role in the ongoing War on Terror. In a tweet the President said Pakistan had received billions of dollars in aid from the US but had given safe havens to the same terrorists that fought American Forces (Washington Post, 2018). His remarks were condemned by Pakistan officials, leading to the latest diplomatic row between Washington and Islamabad. Such rows between the two have become more and more frequent over the past few years. Observes argue that India can exploit Washington's increasing frustration with the Pakistani military establishment. India's strategic victory would be to convince the US and seek to play a broader role in Afghanistan. This should be easier since India is committed to its policy of 'no boots on the ground' (Ayres, 2015).

6. Strategic Confusion and Setbacks

Whilst dynamics on the ground might be starting to change in India's favour there are still signs of 'strategic confusion' on India's in certain areas fo her Afghanistan policy. New Delhi has suffered from such confusion in the past as well.

Observers, as an example, point to the U-turns New Delhi has made over the past few years. India initially stuck to the rhetoric that 'there are no good or bad Taliban'. She emphasized that they were all the same; that they were all bad. New Delhi tried to establish international consensus on this point. But a diplomatic setback came in the London Conference of 2011 where many countries supported negotiations with the 'moderate elements' within the Taliban. Pakistan, a strong backer of this theory, had caused India a strategic embarrassment. This brought about a change in India's strategic alignment on Afghanistan and peace talks with the Taliban. This has been discussed in detail in the previous sections. Also, having stood by the US in the Afghan muddle for years, Indian policy makers seem to have realized that it might be time for exploring other avenues too. Recently New Delhi decided to hold talks with Russia and Iran over the Afghan crisis. New Delhi sees this as another opportunity to safeguard her own interests in the country. This attitude pretty much reinforces the argument in the previous chapter, that India is still a strategically cautious and confused country. This strategic inconsistency not only undermines India's own long term interests in the region but also makes it difficult for the US to plan an exit strategy from Afghanistan over the next few years (Pant, 2011).

New Delhi has also faced serious set-backs. Questions were also raised about India's long-term strategy in Afghanistan when President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani initially took office in 2014. For a while it seemed like Indian interests in his country and ties with New Delhi were of lesser importance to the new Afghan leader. Soon after taking office President Ghani tried hard to engage in dialogue with Pakistan. He saw this as the best way to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. He visited the Pakistani Army's Headquarter in Rawalpindi and held serious discussions with the country's military leadership (The Express Tribune, 2014). This was very much unlike what India's was used to over the past thirteen years of former President Hamid Karzai's rule. Ghani's strategic tilt towards Pakistan had reasons of its own, but nevertheless many in New Delhi started to worry about its implications for India's long-term interests in the country. While India had never openly objected to peace talks with the Taliban, there were reasons to be concerned, especially because of Pakistan's more than influential role in the Afghan peace process. New Delhi, well aware of the limited diplomatic influence it had on peace talks with the Taliban, found it difficult to speak its mind. India's 'grand strategy' in Afghanistan had once again hit a brick wall (Mclain, 2015).

But despite challenges, and uncertainties, India has stood its ground in Afghanistan so far. Certain factors have helped New Delhi achieve this strategic stability of course. First, despite all the fuss about a potential withdrawal and an 'exit strategy', the US's administration has repeatedly expressed its long-term commitment to Afghanistan and to bringing peace and stability to the country. Even today high-ranking officials in Washington are calling on President Trump to rethink his country's plan and timetable for an 'Afghan exit'. Many support a prolonged US presence in the country. As previously mentioned, Washington has recently shown willingness to allow India play a more dominant role in Afghanistan's political, economic and military future. Washington's frustration with Islamabad over Pakistan's 'double-games' also gives India reason to be hopeful. American policy

makers are starting to think more about finding a 'regional solution' to the Afghan crisis. India can exploit this latest policy transformation in Washington. At the same time New Delhi is also evaluating options for finding a 'regional solution'. Engagements with Afghanistan's other neighbours are starting to gain momentum. With the exception of Pakistan, other regional stakeholders such as Iran and Russia are interested in seeing a political solution to the crisis. All this has given India reason and hope to stick to her guns her Afghanistan.

Chapter 4

Constraints in India-Afghanistan Relations

A discussion on India-Afghanistan contemporary relations needs to address the many structural constraints that undermine the strategic priorities of New Delhi and Kabul. These constraints are many. The Afghan Government lacks the military might to secure all parts of the country from Taliban and other newly emerging insurgent groups such as the Islamic State

of the Khorasan (IS-K). As such, India has to restrain its open presence on the ground in Afghanistan due to the threat posed to its citizens. Also, India does not have a border with Afghanistan and needs to rely on a third state. Pakistan has proved a constraint factor in the middle. New Delhi has recently reached out to Tehran to increase its reach and influence inside Afghanistan. On the international stage Pakistan has continuously undermined Indian interests in Afghanistan by refusing to cooperate in the peace efforts. Afghanistan's own internal political chaos has also not helped India find a foothold in that country (Wang, 2018). The section below provides a detailed discussion on some of these obstacles.

Among them, Pakistan's role in the region and its strategy vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan, and the United States' military presence in Afghanistan are the most important. It is of paramount importance to look into the sources of Pakistan's 'spoiler role' within the South Asian security complex, and understand why Islamabad fears an 'India-Afghanistan nexus' against itself. Also, one needs to understand why the United States has remained cautious about a broader Indian presence in Afghanistan. There are some signs of change in recent years as US officials have called on Indian to play a broader role. But critics argue that even this is to put pressure on Islamabad, and that Washington is well aware that a prolonged and expanded Indian engagement in Afghanistan is not in the interest of any party (Reetz, 2017). This also magnifies US limitations in Afghanistan vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. Both these structural constraints have greatly undermined the potential as well as the future of India's strategic postures towards Afghanistan. Are Pakistan's security concerns vis-à-vis an 'India-Afghanistan nexus'

genuine or exaggerated? Also, has the United States' policy of 'limiting' India's role and presence in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years paid off?

This chapter seeks to answer some of these important questions. Here, the discussion is focuses on how security, and a fear of India, has overshadowed everything else in Pakistan's strategic calculus and foreign policy behaviour. With the developments in Afghanistan since 2001 and India's expanding role in the country's political, economic and military affairs, Pakistan has reasons to panic. While some of these fears might be genuine this chapter argues that the Pakistani narrative on 'India-Afghanistan nexus' stems from a long history of exaggeration, mistrust and deliberate misinformation. Pakistan fears 'encirclement' by India and Afghanistan, and see's New Delhi's engagements with Kabul as an attempt to undermine Islamabad's security and strategic interests in the region. This narrative has influenced Pakistan's strategic behaviour and foreign policy decisions for many decades now. However, the discussion in this chapter focuses on Pakistan's immediate fears in the post-2001 context. I also look into Pakistan's deeper and more serious concerns vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan i.e., its territorial disputes with the two neighbours (Kashmir, the Durand Line). Speaking in strictly post-2001 scenario, the chapter will also assess Pakistan's response to an increasing 'Indian threat in Afghanistan'.

Kautilya's Mandala Theory once again proves helpful in explaining Pakistan's strategic behaviour within the South Asian security complex. The study argues that Pakistan considers itself as the '**Ari**' (the enemy) within the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan security triangle. Islamabad believes, or at least argues, that both New Delhi and Kabul have joined hands in order to sandwich her in the middle. Pakistan's strategic behaviour within the above mentioned triangle also has elements of Kautilya's '**Dvaidhibhava**' approach to foreign policy decision making. In other words, Pakistan has pursued a 'double policy' in her dealings with India, Afghanistan as well as the United States over the past sixteen years. While it remains a key member of the multilateral coalition attempting to hold peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, Islamabad has also continued to use 'non-state actors' as a foreign policy tool in the region. Observers such as Ijaz Ahmad Khan (2007) argue that, by pursuing such a policy, Islamabad has historically tried to achieve two objectives. First, it tries to undermine Indian influence in Afghanistan. Second, Pakistan has tried to put pressure on Afghanistan to give up on its claims to Pakistani territory. Also, the US-Pakistan partnership in the ongoing 'war on terror' has seen many ups and downs in recent years. Washington has repeatedly accused Islamabad of supporting and harbouring anti-American as well as anti-Afghan elements. Most recently, President Donald Trump accused Pakistan of 'lies and

deceit' and claimed Islamabad was harbouring terrorists which killed Americans soldiers in Afghanistan.

The second constraint factor undermining India's role and presence in Afghanistan is the 'penetration' of the South Asian Security complex by the United States. Barry Buzan's and Ole Waever's '**Regional Security Complex Theory'** is a useful tool to analyse India's confident, yet cautious strategic posture in Afghanistan at present. We will discuss how India's growing economic as well as military strength has given her the confidence to pursue a 'forward policy' within the 'India-Afghanistan-Pakistan' security triangle. But this 'forward policy' is undermined by the direct involvement of the United States in the South Asian security complex. The US, being a stronger power with greater strategic interests at stake, has limited India's policy options in Afghanistan. This chapter discusses why this has been the case for more than a decade, and whether things are finally starting to change now.

The 'Securitization' of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Two major drivers seem to have shaped Pakistan's foreign policy, both historically and in contemporary terms. The first is an 'idealist' driver, or the 'Islamic identity' of the country and its people. Pakistanis believe this identity gives them an ensured space within the larger complex of the Muslim world. It portrays Pakistan as a nation that was established on the basis of religion, in Pakistan's case Islam, hence giving her unique status in the Islamic world. Pakistan wishes to use this ideological driver as a rallying call to gain support and establish its influence, both domestically and at regional/global levels. The second driver of Pakistan's foreign policy is much more 'realist' in nature, influenced by the realities of the region rather than an ideology. This driver gains its strength from realist narratives in IR theories. It revolves around the security threats that surround Pakistan. Amongst these threats, India is perceived as the biggest. Historically, this realist driver has had a far more visible and influential impact on the country's foreign policy behaviour (Pande, 2011). Fear, therefore, has influenced and shaped Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour and strategic options since its birth as an independent country in 1947.

Barry Buzan (2011) argues that the Regional Security Complex (RSC) in South Asia is moving from a state of bipolarity to unipolarity. This is partly because of the slow social, political and economic decay in Pakistan, and partly because of India's steady economic and military rise on both regional and global levels. This state of affairs has naturally raised concerns in Islamabad. The country is suffering from multiple domestic issues as well as the regional turmoil. These

factors have undermined both Pakistan's security and political stability. The war in Afghanistan, the emergence of Pakistani Taliban in the tribal areas, climate change and an ever-growing energy crisis are top of the list. Whilst these domestic and regional factors surely influence Pakistan's strategic thinking, in more recent years the whole narrative on security in Pakistan has developed a global dimension to it. For instance many in Islamabad consider US drone strikes against Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders on Pakistani soil a threat to the country's national security, and a clear violation of its sovereignty. High-ranking Pakistani officials have repeatedly condemned such strikes (Boone, 2016). Some of these threats may have only emerged in recent years. But the 'securitization of foreign policy' has much older and deeper roots in the country. This paradigm gains its strength from, first, the many wars that Pakistan has fought against India after independence in 1947. The first of these broke out only a year later in 1948, over the disputed Kashmir region. In 1965 they two Armies were face to face again, this time on the Sindh and Punjab fronts. The biggest blow came in 1971 when Pakistan lost a huge part of its territory and half of its population after Bangladesh gained independence. These very early conflicts in its history as a state left Pakistan obsessed with an 'Indian military threat'. On each of these occasions Pakistan's territorial integrity was seriously challenged. In fact in the 1971 war it was undermined, leading to the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. It planted the 'seeds of fear' in Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour very early on.

Second, the military and security dynamics of the region over the past few decades have also left a mark on Pakistan's strategic thinking. Writing almost three decades ago, Pakistan's former Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan (1987) highlights some of these regional developments that shaped Pakistan's understanding of 'national security'. He argues that India's intervention in East Pakistan led to Pakistani Army's surrender, resulting in the country's break-up. Years later and not too far away the United States was humiliated in its attempt to end the hostage crisis in Iran. The Soviet Union sent the Red Army into Afghanistan, seriously threatening Pakistan's own security. It convinced the then military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq to put 'traditional diplomacy' to a side and give the military full control Pakistan's foreign policy matters (Grare, 2003). Also, Iran and Iraq were engaged in a separate war at the same time. The whole belt of these neighbouring countries presented a picture of conflict and turmoil. On the western front Afghanistan itself posed a military threat. Rejecting Pakistan's claim over the Pashtun territories in the tribal best as well as the formerly North West Frontier Province, the government in Kabul never recognized the Durand Line as an official international border between the two countries. Tensions escalated during the Government of former Afghan President Mohammad Daud Khan, taking the two countries to the brink of war in the 1970s. It was because of these regional security and military dynamics that Pakistan's immediate

neighbourhood had turned into a very sensitive geostrategic point, leaving a permanent mark on Pakistan's own strategic behaviour.

Since 2001 whole debate regarding a potential 'India-Afghanistan nexus' has left Pakistan in an uncomfortable position. Pakistan's concerns vis-à-vis such a nexus are both immediate as well as long term. Some of these concerns might be exaggerated, as many observers argue. However, there are other issues that deeply influence the way Pakistan behaves within the South Asian security complex. Its territorial disputes both with India as well as Afghanistan have continuously influenced and shaped Pakistan's narrative on security for many decades now. Pakistan's fear vis-à-vi India-Afghanistan engagement has other non-security dimensions too. Islamabad considers this engagement more than just a 'conventional security threat' to herself. In other words, Pakistan believes that Indian presence in Afghanistan not only poses a military threat to but also undermines Islamabad's interests in many others way. These 'other ways', according to the dominant narrative in Pakistan, include putting economic pressure on Islamabad, forcing it into trade isolation, establishing a rival port to undermine Pakistan's Gwadar Port in Baluchistan province. Pakistani media outlets have repeatedly questioned Indian objectives behind the huge investment in the Chabahar Port. They believe it is to rival the Gwadar Port and undermine Pakistan (The Economic Times, 2018). Another claim is that India is providing funding, support and even military training to Baluch separatists and elements of the Pakistani Taliban, also known as the TTP, who are currently fighting the Pakistani Army in the minerals-rich Baluchistan province. Pakistan also believes India can provoke Kabul against Islamabad. As mentioned earlier Pakistan's role within the South Asian security complex, especially in Afghanistan, has become a constraint factor for India-Afghanistan relations. It is therefore important to understand why Pakistan behaves the way it does. The following section discusses some of Pakistan's immediate fears.

Pakistan's Immediate Fears

1. Indian Influence over Afghanistan

Pakistan's strategic elite are familiar with Kautilya and his teachings. A brief look at the popular media in the country gives an idea of how Kautilya is demonized by the foreign policy elite, the media and even some circles of the public. Pakistan social media forums debating national security and sovereignty refer to Kautilya as a 'poisonous philosopher' that inspires anti-Muslim as well as anti-Pakistan sentiments in modern India. Islamabad therefore looks at India's role and presence in Afghanistan through a Kautilyan lens. There is a general feeling among

the country's foreign policy elite, the military establishment as well as the general public that India and Afghanistan have joined hands to undermine Pakistan's security and sovereignty. Pakistan officials have openly shared these concerns with the United States in the past (Iqbal, 2017). In May 2015 a report by the US's Congressional Research Services argued that Pakistan, one of the US's key regional allies in the War on Terror, had reasons to be wary of the increasing Indian involvement in Afghanistan and the nature of its activities on the border with Pakistan. The report suggested that Pakistan's biggest fear was 'encirclement' by India and Afghanistan. It was out of such concerns that Islamabad considered the Taliban a safer option to invest in for safeguarding its own long-term interests in Afghanistan. India, the report, continued, had its own reasons to deny Pakistan 'strategic depth' in an unstable Afghanistan. For instance, the report suggested, India considered Pakistan a threat to her own trade and economic interests (Kronstadt, 2015). The whole idea of 'strategic depth has for long dominated the discourse on Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The core argument behind the term is that Pakistan, out of fear of Indian aggression, relies on and wishes to use Afghanistan as a backyard from where it can counter-attack India in an unpleasant scenario. In May 2016 I asked the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai if he believed in the very concept of 'strategic depth'. His response was clear.

"They reality is Pakistan considers Afghanistan a part of her territory. Pakistan wants to use Afghanistan as a base against India. They will not give up on this policy as long as we are weak. Strategic depth is a reality. It is one of the reasons why I didn't sign the bilateral security agreement with the United States. The Americans will not help us so we can stand up to Pakistan. They wanted bases inside Afghanistan but they didn't equip us enough so we could secure ourselves".

Hamid Karzai, former President of Afghanistan

The fact that the term was mentioned in a US Congressional report gives further weight to the whole argument of 'strategic depth'. High-ranking Pakistani officials themselves have confessed it is a core part of their Afghanistan policy. In 2010 Pakistan's then Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani said his country wanted 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan because it would bring much-awaited peace and stability to the war-torn country and the regional as a whole. He also expressed his country's concerns over India's growing involvement in the training the Afghan Security Forces (Umar, 2010).

2. Encirclement

This aspect of the 'India-Afghanistan nexus' perhaps creates the greatest fear in Islamabad. Encirclement is one of the most desirable foreign policy options

coming straight out of Kautilya's Mandala Theory. In fact, the very structure of the 'Rajamandala' consisting of states placed in adjacent circles encourages the 'encirclement of the enemy'. The problem for Islamabad is that India and Afghanistan have too many shared interests, and almost all of them are a source of concern in Pakistan's strategic calculus. First, both countries have long-standing territorial disputes with Pakistan. The Kashmir issue has been the bone of contention and a source insecurity and conflict for many decades. A somewhat similar dispute over the Durand Line with Afghanistan has continued since Pakistan came into existence. These territorial disputes will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Second, both countries were against the very idea of the establishment of Pakistan as a new country at the time of British withdrawal from the sub-continent in 1947. Afghan and Indian leaders believed that, by accepting Pakistan, they were giving away parts of not only their territory but also their population. While New Delhi and Kabul have moved away from their traditional stance of rejecting Pakistan's status as a state, many of the underlying grievances still continue to cause tension. Third, Afghanistan and India have always remained traditional neighbours. The countries have similar cultures and old civilizational ties. Afghans have flooded into India for all reasons over the centuries. Many have stayed behind and blended into the Indian society and way of life. Islam as a religion is practiced in both countries (Pande, 2012). In an interview for the purpose of this chapter, former Indian diplomat and author Rajiv Dogra (2018) emphasized on the long history of civilizational and cultural ties between India and Afghanistan.

"One can go back to the Mahabharat in the India-Afghanistan context. Gandhari came from the present-day Kandahar. There was a very intimate connection between India and Afghanistan of that time about 2,500 years back. So much more than a strategic connection it is a civilizational connection which binds Afghanistan and India together. Rabindranath Tagore a hero of the entire concept of the Pathan in his book, 'Kabuliwala'."

Rajiv Dogra, former Indian ambassador and author

Islamabad is understandably uncomfortable with such historical narratives. It sees present India-Afghanistan engagements as an attempt by both sides to return to the past. Such a return, hypothetically, would clearly undermine Pakistan's territorial integrity. Observers such as Javid Hussain (2015) believe India is resorting to the 'Kautilyan' tradition of foreign policy and wants to establish her hegemony in South Asian and the Indian Sea. There are also arguments that, by using the 'Mandala Theory', India and Afghanistan want to sandwich Pakistan in between. Some observers in India have even argued that the Pakistani Army reads Kautilya's Arthashastra in order to understand and assess India's

military mentality (Gupta, 2014). There is no evidence of such readings within the Pakistani Army. But what is obvious, and as mentioned earlier, is that foreign policy elite (mainly retired military officers) and academics in Pakistan are familiar with Kautilya's work, and understand how his teachings can still undermine Pakistani interests. This is how the whole 'encirclement narrative' imposes itself on Pakistan's strategic thinking vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan. Khan (2010) argues that as long as the fear of being 'out-flanked' by India in Afghanistan exists among Pakistan's foreign policy makers, it is unlikely that Islamabad will give up on its 'trump cards' such as the Taliban. By using this card Islamabad can, to an extent, prevent the establishment of a completely pro-India Government in Kabul that will undermine Pakistan's own interests in the region.

3. Cross-border Terrorism

The debate on cross-bordering terrorism between Afghanistan and Pakistan is often confused and fiercely contested. Both sides blame each other for the presence of non-state actors such as the Taliban along the Durand Line. Afghanistan is especially frustrated with Pakistani's role in the fight against the group, and recent events suggest it has a point. The group's elusive leader, Mullah Omar, was declared dead in Pakistan in July 2015. He had apparently received medical treatment in the country in the past, and had actually died of illness two years before the official announcement came from the group (Rasmusen, 2015). His successor Mullah Mansour was targeted and killed by a US drone strike in May 2016 (Aljazeera, 2016), again on Pakistani soil. Over the years the group has openly claimed responsibility for a series of deadly attacks targeting both civilians and military forces in Afghanistan, including the twin attacks on India's Embassy in Kabul in 2008 and 2009. The current Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has repeatedly accused Pakistan of harbouring elements that are actively fighting both Afghan and American forces inside Afghanistan. The way Pakistan has dealt with the many insurgent groups on its soil has also created confusion and suspicion. Some groups have been targeted by the Pakistan Army while others have been allowed to operate with relative freedom (Straniland, Mir and Lalwani, 2018).

The Americans themselves have repeatedly shown concerns over Pakistan's links to militant groups fighting Afghan and NATO Forces inside Afghanistan. At times the frustration in Washington has boiled over. Current President Donald Trump surprised many around the world with his blatant criticism of Pakistan in a tweet on the 1st of January 2018. He said:

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. NO more"

Donald Trump, President of the United States

In recent years there have been some surprising confessions on Pakistan's part too. Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, Sartaj Aziz, advisor to the former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, openly admitted in March 2016 that Pakistan was harbouring leaders of the Afghan Taliban. Aziz went on to say that leaders of the Afghan Taliban were being provided medical care inside Pakistan, and that their families lived there too. He insisted, however, that such a presence could help in putting pressure on the group to hold peace talks with the Taliban. These remarks from the country's most senior diplomat were the first time Pakistan accepted the presence of the Afghan Taliban on its soil. (Time, 2016)

But the blame-game continues on both sides. Pakistan has repeatedly alleged that leaders of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are given sanctuaries in Afghanistan. In fact Pakistani officials have gone a step further and blamed India for financing and training the TTP on Afghan soil (Joshi, 2015). Such accusations have come from both the Pakistan military and the Government in the past. In April 2017 a former spokesman of the Pakistani Taliban surrendered to the Pakistani Army. In his first public interview since his surrender Ehsanullah Ehsan accused both Indian and Afghan intelligence agencies of actively supporting the Pakistani Taliban. Ehsan was the media face of the TTP for many years and claimed responsibility for some of the deadliest attacks on Pakistani soil carried out by the Pakistani Taliban. The Afghan Government immediately denied the allegations (Reuters, 2017).

Pakistani media outlets usually follow and promote the narrative given by the country's military establishment. A large majority of the people in the country, unfamiliar with and unaware of any counter-narrative, tend to believe much of what appears on local media and comes in official statements. They develop their opinions on India's role in Afghanistan in the light of this doctrine. But this narrative is not just for domestic purposes. Pakistan has openly accused India on international forums and in foreign capitals of undermining its security. Islamabad is especially concerned about the presence of Indian Consulates in Afghan cities that border Pakistan. These facilities, Islamabad argues, are used for intelligence rather than diplomatic purposes. These missions are accused of being 'forward bases' for Indian intelligence agencies, from which they plan and execute attacks against Pakistan. In bilateral meetings between with Afghan officials Pakistan has repeatedly insisted on the closure of Indian missions in cities such as Kandahar and Jalalabad. Many observes in Pakistan also agree with the establishment's narrative, arguing that these Consulates are involved in 'clandestine activities' on the Pak-Afghan border (Ahmad, 2013). To the surprise of many in New Delhi and Kabul, the US has never openly rejected Pakistan's claims. For example in August

2013 the US Special Representative to the country told the BBC Pakistan's allegations against India in Afghanistan were not 'groundless'. He added that certain elements crossed over the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan, though he insisted that a majority of the militants move in the opposite direction, from Pakistan into Afghanistan (The Express Tribune, 2013). India has always rejected this narrative. Kabul has played down the significance of Indian diplomatic presence in southern Afghanistan, insisting at the same time that its bilateral relations will be independent of the concerns and wishes of Pakistan. Pakistan's narrative on India's role and presence in Afghanistan not only influences the country's strategic posture but also inspires further securitization of the country's foreign policy.

4. India's Links with Separatist Groups

Another important threat in Pakistan's strategic calculus comes from the Baluch separatist movement fighting the Pakistani Army in Baluchistan, Pakistan's largest province by territory and the richest in terms of mineral wealth and trade potential. The roots of this conflict are old, and strong, so much so that repeated military operations by the Pakistani Army have failed to put down the insurgency. The first wave of uprising was seen immediately after Pakistani's independence in 1947. The conflict resurfaced in the 1970s, this time crushed mercilessly by the Army. In recent years though it has both gained a much stronger momentum and spread deeper into the Baluch territory, and the society. Pakistan accuses India of stirring up separatist activities in the province. In May 2015 the Pakistani Army accused Indian military intelligence of supporting and financing Baluch separatists inside Afghanistan. Pakistan has continuously claimed that Indian intelligence operators are active along the Durand Line in the southern Afghan provinces. There are the areas where many of the Baluch separatists groups are also based (Khan, 2015). The Pakistani Army has responded to the threat posed by Baluch militants in the traditional way, by using maximum and brutal force to root out the insurgency. What is different about the current insurgency is its shear cost in human life. Over the last few years thousands have been killed in clashes between the Pakistani Army and the Baluch fighters. But the conflict has an even dirtier side to it. The Army and Pakistan's intelligence agencies are accused of going after non-combatant elements in Baluch society. The dead and mutilated bodies of Baluch lawyers, students, activists and ordinary people, found in the mountains and along dead road, has become a harsh reality in this brutal conflict. Many observers, both inside Pakistan and outside the country, accuse the Army of playing a 'secret dirty war' in Baluchistan (Walsh, 2011).

In Pakistan, the narrative on Baluch militancy again stems from the fears and suspicions regarding the 'India-Afghanistan nexus'. Almost all fingers

point towards New Delhi for secretly supporting and financing the separatists. The Pakistani military wing has also accused New Delhi of causing instability in Baluchistan province (BBC News, 2015). This narrative is given further strength by the fact that Baluch leaders themselves have often asked India to help the movement and put an end to the ongoing 'genocide' by the Pakistani Army. They have been quick to point out that any such intervention would be in India's own 'strategic interests' (Kashani, 2016). Adding fuel to fire, India's reaction to particular events in Baluchistan have given further weight to Pakistani allegations. One such reaction came after the killing of the most significant and powerful Baluch leader, Nawab Akbar Bugti, in 2006. The man had a rollercoaster political career. He remained a member of the Pakistan Parliament at one stage, and had also served as the Chief Minister and the Governor of Baluchistan on different occasions. In 2004, after long-held grievances against the Pakistani state and the military establishment, he took up arms whilst in his late 70s. Two years later he was killed in clashes with the Army. Immediately after his death the Indian Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement, calling him a veteran and a great leader. Pakistan has exploited these reactions well. It has raised its concerns over links between India and the Baluch separatists with other regional stakeholders, including the US and NATO (Guha, 2016). While it is difficult to assess India's desire and/ or ability to play a 'spoiler role' in Baluchistan, it is relatively easier for Pakistan to draw links between the insurgency and India's growing presence in the Pak-Afghan border areas.

5. War Against Gwadar

An aspiring India within the South Asian Security Complex understandably rings alarm bells in Islamabad. Adding Afghanistan to this equation will create even more panic. As discussed in the previous sections Islamabad has been concerned about the many aspects of India-Afghanistan engagements for a while now. The most recent wave of unease among the Pakistani policy elite emerged after the launch of the Chabahar Port in southern Iran, where the leaders of India, Afghanistan and Iran came together to mark the beginning of a new trade corridor, one that will eventually connect South Asia with Central Asia via Afghanistan. The bad news for Islamabad is that all this can be achieved by completely bypassing Pakistan. Understandably these developments were being observed closely is Islamabad. A former Pakistani defence secretary called the launching of the Port a 'security threat to Pakistan'. Lt-Gen Asif Yasin Malik argued that India, Iran and Afghanistan were forging an alliance that could push Pakistan into isolation. The former Army officer, however, accepted the fact that much of this was down to 'Pakistan's own mistakes and her failure to 'integrate and cooperate'. (Dawn, 2016). This new rivalry over sea routes has opened an entirely new front in the India-Pakistan-Afghanistan security

and economic triangle. The added significance of course is that it has an economic aspect to it. Islamabad considers the Chabahar Port a direct threat to her own economic interests and ambitions both at sea and via its land routes. Many in Pakistan see the Chabahar port as a direct rival to the Gwadar Port, in the southern region of the same insurgency-hit Baluchistan province discussed in the previous section. The Gwadar Port is ideally situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is important because a huge chunk of the global oil trade takes place through these waters. It can also serve well to connect South Asia with Central Asia and the Middle East. To top this up, the Port is ideally located to export Pakistan's own mineral wealth in the Baluch region (Ijaz, 2015). Initial construction work on the Port started in the 1980s but it still hasn't been developed to its full commercial potential. The reasons for this delay have been many, including the unrest in the region discussed in the previous section. Over the last few years a Chinese consortium has been trying to complete the project. Beijing also sees the Port as a major part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The whole project, including the Port and the land corridor, is seen as the backbone of Pakistan's future economic ambitions and potential.

There is a lot of hope attached to the Gwadar Port in Pakistan. But that hype also brings some fears with it. Pakistan finds itself in a geostrategic hot-spot where competing states seek to maximise their strategic gains. This is sometimes done at the expense of undermining the interests of other states. Pakistan's immediate concern regarding the Gwadar Port is that India will do everything to turn the project into a failure. India, some in Pakistan believe, is fearful of an economically stable Pakistan that has commercial ties and trade links with the region. This fear draws India into the 'Gwadar Great Game' (Izzadeen, 2009). To undermine Pakistan's interests India is accused by many of applying a two-pronged approach. First, it is directly supporting the insurgency in Baluchistan. New Delhi is accused of training and financing the Baluch separatist fighters. Both Pakistani and foreign workers on or around the Gwadar Port Project have been specifically targeted by the insurgents. The group has made it a strategic goal to undermine the development of the Port. The history and nature of this insurgency were discussed in the previous chapter. Second, New Delhi has decided to establish other similar Ports and trade corridors in the region that would directly undermine the significance of Gwadar Port. And this is where the recently launched Chabahar Port Agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan comes into play. Not located far from Gwadar, the new trade corridor will not only bypass Pakistan completely but will also make it easier for India to reach Central Asia and Europe. It will also greatly reduce Afghanistan's trade dependency on Pakistan, a tool which Islamabad has used skilfully to its benefit over the past few decades in order to put pressure on Afghanistan.

Though there is consensus in Pakistan about India's motives behind the Chabahar Port Agreement, some argue that its potential threat to Pakistan economic interests is minimal. Such statements have also come from high-raking officials. The advisor to the Pakistani Prime Minister on security affairs, Sartaj Aziz, reasserted this in his remarks at the Senate in 2016. Experts have also downplayed Chabahar's capacity to replace Gwadar as the port of choice for regional trade. In fact there is another twist in the Chabahar saga. Some Pakistani observers argue that India and Iran have minimal trade interest in the Port. Instead, both countries wish to use it as a blue navy base in the future (Ahmad, 2016). Whether the Port has the desired economic potential or not is a debate beyond the scope of this discussion. What is clear though is that in Pakistan, the Port is seen as yet another Indian attempt to undermine Pakistan's economic ambitions.

The above section highlighted some of Pakistan's immediate fears vis-à-vis the 'Indian-Afghanistan nexus'. As mentioned in the beginning, some of these fears are genuine in nature while others purely stem from exaggeration on part of the Pakistan military establishment and foreign policy experts. Over the past decade there has been little evidence to suggest that India has any connection with or influence over the Baluch separatists inside Pakistan. These groups, however, have repeatedly shown a desire to engage with India in their efforts to gain independence from Pakistan. Some accuse Pakistan of deliberately creating a 'monstrous enemy' and portraying itself as a victim of terrorism in order to achieve political objectives (Sahil, 2017). This policy has served Pakistan well, both at home and abroad. Domestically it keeps the political forces on their toes by injecting a fear amongst them that things could go wrong without the military. Abroad, Pakistan silently plays victim's role whenever international pressure and condemnation of its dual policy grows.

Afghan officials have time and again emphasized the desire of the Afghan people to live in peace with Pakistan. People to people ties between the two countries remain cordial despite tensions on the military and political fronts. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, a strong ally of the US in Afghanistan for many years, told a Pakistani journalist in 2011 his country would side with Islamabad in case a war broke out between the US and Pakistan (The Guardian, 2011). His remarks surprised many both domestically and abroad but others saw them as a testament to the goodwill of the Afghans towards Pakistan. As for the Chabahar Port, many argue that Pakistan's continuous refusal to open its land route for trade between India and Afghanistan encouraged New Delhi and Kabul to look for alternative routes. The Port is therefore seen as a 'strategic reaction' to the structural constraints caused by Pakistan in the region, not an 'aggressive threat' to Pakistan's economic interests. Many experts are also unsure of the economic and trade potential of the Port,

finding it hard to believe that it can compete with either the Gwadar Port or the much shorter and less expensive land trade routes via Pakistan.

Pakistan's Territorial Disputes with Indian and Afghanistan

Pakistan's immediate fears, whether genuine or exaggerated, continue to influence its strategic behaviour vis-à-vis both India and Afghanistan. These fears and concerns, however, do not give us a full understanding of Pakistan's India-Afghanistan dilemma. There are other more important issues in Islamabad's relations with her two immediate neighbours, with much larger interests at stake. Pakistan has long-lasting territorial disputes with both India and Afghanistan. It has led the country to war with India on many occasions and has strained her relations with Afghanistan for decades. These disputes have also given rise to the idea of a Pakistani strategic culture. Strategic cultures in states do not appear overnight. They emerge as a result of historical events and ideological preferences, often transcending the parameters of our standard IR theories. The same goes for Pakistan's strategic culture and its foreign policy behaviour. Its sources are many, ranging from Islamic ideology to Pakistani nationalism. But, as mentioned in the previous sections, the one factor that has shaped Pakistan's strategic thinking more than anything else is war. And on more than one occasion, Pakistan has gone to war over territorial disputes. The following section discusses two of these major disputes between Pakistan and its eastern and western neighbours, and assesses their historical influence and current importance in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy.

1. Kashmir and Its Influence on Pakistan's Strategic Thinking

Historically, and even at present, Pakistan's dispute with India over Kashmir has remained at the heart of Islamabad's decisions on the foreign policy front. When it comes to decisions on national sovereignty and security nothing matters more than Kashmir. Observers in Pakistan believe that India does not want to break the status quo in the valley and is strangling the population since decades (Saleem, 2018). Such is the strategic weight of the issue that it pushes everything else to the periphery. Perhaps the best explanation of such an obsession is that for Pakistan, Kashmir has to do with the very Islamic ideology of the country, and not just its security. Pakistanis believe that Kashmir in a way completes their country, and it has to be a part of Pakistan because of its Muslim

majority population (Bose, 2009). The division of the sub-continent and the creation of Pakistan in 1947 followed a decade's long ideological struggle. There was once basic argument behind this struggle. The Muslims believed they needed to establish a separate homeland of their own in order to avoid oppression in a Hindu-majority India after the partition. In Pakistan they prefer to call it the 'Two Nations Theory'. For the Muslims of the sub-continent, at least those who supported the idea of Pakistan, British withdrawal simply meant 'Hindu takeover'. They firmly believed that once the Englishman had left, the hard-line Hindu majority in the region will simply push Muslims to the periphery and dominate the political and ideological future of India. Hence, for Muslims to preserve their ideological and political independence they need to have their own independent state. This led to the idea of Pakistan. A strong and organized movement under Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other key figures rallied behind the call for a Muslim state. This call pre-dominantly came from the Muslim majority areas in India, mainly the western Punjab, Sindh, East Bengal and other smaller regions in the former North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and some in the Baluch belt. The obvious problem with the 'Two Nations Theory' was that a much larger population of Muslims in India did not support it. Not only that, they strongly opposed to idea of a separate Muslim state (Hilali, 2014).

Kashmir, at the time of India's independence, was a Princely state. Whether it supported the idea of Pakistan or not is a contested debate, often depending on whose side of the story one is reading. Much of the literature produced in Pakistan on the topic vigorously argues that it did, and that India illegally laid claim to part of Kashmir's territory by using military force. In fact some go a step further, accusing the British of conspiring with India to separate Kashmir from Pakistan. India rejects this argument by referring to India's Partition Act which delineates the details of how the two new countries were to be formed, and what they would get in terms of territory and resources. India argues that the princely states in the sub-continent were not included in the Act, which means that the 'Two Nations Theory' does not apply to Kashmir. These states were rather given the freedom to choose for themselves who they wanted to join. Again, the argument on what exactly the people of Kashmir decided is split. Both countries have failed to respond positively to the UN's call for a plebiscite on Kashmir, which would give the people of the region the right to decide their own future (Hilali, 2014b).

Over the past seven decades the issue has played significant role in Pakistan's domestic and international politics. Besides being the cause of multiple conflicts with India, the Kashmir issue has also put enormous pressure on Pakistan's economy. This is partly because unfriendly ties with India over the past few decades has pushed Pakistan into economic and commercial isolation. Little has been achieved from bilateral talks on cooperation in other areas. To the

frustration of many in India, Pakistan seems to be obsessed with looking at everything else through the Kashmiri lens. The two countries have failed to resolve a number of other small issues because Islamabad has insisted upon resolving the Kashmir issue first (Pattanaik, 2002). Also, because of this single dispute, and because of the ever-existing potential for war with India, Pakistan has historically allocated a large chunk of its annual budget to military expenditure. According to some estimates the military in Pakistan receives some forty percent of the country's annual budget. Such a military-driven and war-focused domestic as well as foreign policy has led to the Army's interference in the country's domestic political matters. Over the past decades Pakistan witnessed a number of military regimes, leading to a slow decline of democratic institutions in the country.

Another implication of the Kashmir dispute within Pakistan is the ideological division between the 'traditional Islamists' and the 'moderates' on the subject. Historically the former have dominated Pakistan's foreign policy, including the issue of Kashmir. This group has preferred a militaristic approach to resolve the dispute, and readily relates it to Pakistan's political identity, sovereignty and security. Many of Pakistan's military rulers have also had ideological affinities with this group. In fact, democratically elected Governments have been toppled due to differences between the Army and the politicians over issues related to Kashmir. But since the 1990s a more moderate group of thinkers have insisted on resolving the dispute through other 'non-military' avenues. They support a political solution to the issue, and suggest Pakistan should talk to India directly. In their opinion, Pakistan's militaristic approach has achieved little over the past decades, and has pushed the country into diplomatic isolation and economic stagnation (Yasmeen, 2003). The future of India-Pakistan relations depends, to a large extent, on how the two countries resolve the Kashmir dispute. It's political and security significance aside, the issue has continued to undermine the economic future of the region, especially Pakistan. In many ways it is the biggest obstacle to regional cooperation and commercial interdependence.

2: The Durand Line

The Line, drawn and agreed upon in 1893 by the then Afghan ruler Abdul Rahman Khan and the Government of British India, was meant to demarcate the 'spheres of influence' of each side (Ali, 1990). Ever since, successive Afghan Governments as well as the Afghan people have refused to recognize it as an international border. Since the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state in 1947 Afghanistan has never formally accepted the Durand Line as a formal border between the two countries, arguing that it separates the Pashtun people living on both sides of it. Afghans also argue that the Durand Line Agreement was

meant to mark the 'spheres of influence' of the Afghan King and the Government of British India. Hence, with the withdrawal of the British from India the Agreement is no longer valid. All recent Afghan rulers have refused to accept the Durand Line (The Nation, 2015).

Unlike the Muslim populations in western Punjab, Sindh and East Bengal, the Pashtuns living in the formerly North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were not decided on whether to support the creation of Pakistan or oppose it. The idea of a separate state for the Muslims of the sub-continent had support amongst the Pashtuns, but it was not overwhelming. For the people of the region it was not just about choosing between India and Pakistan but also their own national identity as Afghans. Many considered themselves a part of the Afghan state that had been separated it from the main body. At the time of India's partition in 1947, a majority of the Pashtuns in areas under the British rule demanded the right to decide their political future. One of their most prominent leaders Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, better known as Bacha Khan, was openly against the partition of India. In his opinion such a partition should not have happened in the first place. But he argued that; in case Muslim majority areas decided to separate from India, the Pashtuns should have the right to choose who they want join. There was strong support for these territories becoming part of Afghanistan (Khattak, 2014). In July 1947 a huge gathering of the Pashtun tribal leaders in the town of Bannu came up with a resolution. They demanded that, in the event of India's partition, the Pashtuns of NWFP and FATA should either be allowed to join either Afghanistan or establish a separate state of their own. They wanted to call it 'Pashtunistan'. The decision, they suggested, would be made through a referendum. The Government of British India, did decide to have a referendum, but gave people only two choices. They could either stay part of the existing Indian constituent Assembly, or become part of the new Assembly. There was no option of an independent state (Bashir, 2013). The British feared that it might lead to similar calls in other parts of India. The referendum was held in July 1947 and, despite reservations on its credibility, the results showed that a majority of the population had decided to become part of Pakistan. Those who favoured the creation of Pakistan stuck to the British plan and, on 14 August 1947, both the NWFP and FATA became parts of the newly established state of Pakistan. However a large majority of the Pashtun population felt the decision had been imposed upon them (Hussain, 2014).

On the other side of the Durand Line the Afghan Government saw this as a clear violation of the human and political rights of its peoples. Afghanistan did not openly oppose the creation of Pakistan but was adamant in its demand that the Pashtuns on the now Pakistani side of the Durand Line should be allowed to re-join

Afghanistan. For Kabul, there was little doubt in the fact that the territory and the people both belonged to Afghanistan, and that they had been forcefully taken from it by the colonial power. Afghans have historically argued that the Durand Line Agreement was a political necessity towards the end of the 19th century, and that Afghanistan has never given up its claim on Pashtunistan (Ludin, 2015). Afghanistan was one of the few countries that opposed Pakistan's membership of the UN General Assembly in 1948. Former Prime Minster (later President) Daud Khan considered Pashtunistan a basic pillar of Afghanistan's foreign policy via-a-vis Pakistan. His relations with Pakistan were unfriendly and unstable, so much so that in 1965 the two countries were on the brink of an all-out war. In the years of the Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan the regime in Kabul once again raised the dispute with Pakistan. Their claims did not carry much weight on international forums though, as Afghanistan by that time had slipped into the Soviet bloc whilst Pakistan was a key ally of the West. But the Afghan Government has stuck to its traditional stance on the issue. Over the past decades the Afghan Government has continued to use 'Pashtun diplomacy' to support its stance on the Durand Line. The core purpose of this policy was to emphasize on the oneness of the people living on both sides of the Line, hence reinforcing its claim to the territories east of it. In light of this policy the Afghan Governments in Kabul have given refuge and political support to a number of Pashtun as well as Baluch nationalist leaders over the past few decades (Khalil, 2017). Even the most recent Afghan leaders, including former President Hamid Karzai (2001-2014) have openly refused to accept the Durand Line as an internationally recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In fact Karzai was keen to use the Pashtunistan card in applying pressure on Pakistan to eliminate the Taliban safe havens on Pakistani soil, and prevent other terrorist groups from orchestrating attacks against the Afghan Government and the people from Pakistan.

Pakistan's position on the Pashtunistan issue and the Durand Line has always been clear. Islamabad argues that at the time of its inception in 1893, it was the Afghan Emir himself, and not the Government of British India, who demanded a demarcation of the 'spheres of influence' of both parties. There was no pressure on the Emir to accept the clauses in the Durand Line Agreement, and this is proven by the fact that subsequent Afghan rulers did not lay claim to the Pashtun areas until the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Pakistan also claims that the Pashtuns of the NWFP and FATA were given a fair chance to choose their future and that they chose to be part of Pakistan. A third argument refuting Afghanistan's 'Pashtunistan theory' is that the country itself is not made up of just Pashtuns. Many other ethnic groups also make up the Afghan populous and, therefore, there is no logic in demanding a 'Pashtunistan' (Hussain, 2005). Whatever the argument on each side, the Durand Line continues to influence foreign policy options in both countries and is a bone of contention in the bilateral

relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islamabad is well aware of Kabul's historical desire to regain the Pashtun territories to the east of the Durand Line. This desire poses a direct threat to Pakistan's security as well as territorial integrity. In the next section I discuss how Pakistan has traditionally responded to both fears and threats emanating from India and Afghanistan.

Pakistan's strategic Response to Indian and Afghan Threats

There are distinct paradigms in Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour since independence in 1947. Certain features of the country's strategic response can also be traced back to other civilizational cultures. Resorting to the use of force to neutralize a real or imagined threat to its security is a policy approach parallel with Kautilyan thinking. At the same time some of its features are unique. The notion of 'a separate Muslim state with an Islamic identity and established on the basis of religion' is one such example. By joining these multiple threads together one can see a recognizable 'strategic culture' in Pakistan. This culture has certain driver and actors. First, unstable relations with India and Afghanistan and a volatile military situation on both the eastern and the western border have given the Pakistani military a perfect excuse to play a dominant role in Pakistan's politics. In over seventy years of Pakistan's history as an independent state the military has directly remained in power for half of that period. Even during the many incomplete terms of democratically elected governments the military establishment has quietly influenced and shaped the country's foreign policy behind the scenes. As a result, Pakistan's strategic approach towards India and Afghanistan has always had a dominant militaristic feature. This has not helped build bridges with the country's two important neighbours. In fact, the role of the Pakistani military in the affairs of the state and the region has led to confrontation, in some cases full-fledged war, between Pakistan and India. At the same time this has seriously undermined the democratic institutions in the country, giving them little or no say on issues of security and bilateral relations with regional countries. In the longer term such an approach has created obstacles in the way of a political settlement of the many disputes between these countries. Political leaders in Pakistan have rarely been able to sit opposite their Indian and Afghan counterparts to negotiate issues of peace, cooperation and interdependence. Even if they have, pretty much everything they have said has come from the Army's General Headquarters in Rawalpindi (Khattak, 2014c). In other words, the Pakistani military has completely overtaken the country's foreign policy apparatus, especially in relation to India and Afghanistan. Politicians, policy experts and public opinion have little say in how Pakistan devises its foreign policy.

Second, Pakistan has used non-state actors in order to pursue its foreign policy objectives both in India and Afghanistan. Again, similar tendencies and approaches to foreign policy can be found in Kautilyan teachings. In Kashmir, Pakistan has historically backed insurgent groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and others. Over the years these groups have directly fought against Indian Security Forces in the valley. Critics argue that Pakistan applies this doctrine under the banner of the 'freedom movement in Kashmir'. These groups, however, have not restricted their activities to Kashmir only. Time and again they have shown both the desire and the capability to plan and orchestrate devastating attacks in India's other main cities (Joshi, 2015b). In Afghanistan, Pakistan has openly supported the Taliban insurgency in their fight against the Afghan Government and Security Forces. Despite direct military intervention by the US and NATO, and despite the billions of dollars that have been spent on training and equipping the Afghan Army, the Taliban still remain a dominant force and the Afghan Government has failed to root them out on the battlefield. In fact in recent years the group has had an upper hand on the military front. The fall of the northern city of Kunduz and other districts of the province to the insurgent group in recent years is a clear example of the seriousness of the threat they pose. Many of these areas have since been retaken by the Afghan Security Forces but the Taliban still control large swaths of territory in different parts of the country.

In Afghanistan there is a general consensus regarding Pakistan's support and backing of the Taliban movement. It was one of only three countries that officially recognized the Taliban regime and had diplomatic ties with them. Islamabad continues to have direct influence over the group for reasons discussed in the previous section. Much of the international community also supports Afghanistan's argument regarding the Pakistan-Taliban nexus. Adding to this argument is Pakistan's own confession about having links with the group. Islamabad, however, denies having any military ties with the Taliban. Senior officials only accept the fact that they have some influence over the insurgent group. This influence, they are quick to suggest, can be used to bring them to the negotiating table. This narrative has worked well for Pakistan in the past. But recent events indicate there might be a paradigm shift, most importantly in Washington. US officials are increasingly frustrated with Pakistan's unwillingness to cooperate sincerely in the ongoing War on Terror. Similar rhetoric dominates the debate in both Kabul and New Delhi.

Many steps have been taken to break the deadlock in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations over the past few years. The Istanbul Process, the Heart of Asia Process and peace talks in Qatar, Pakistan, China, Uzbekistan and other countries have not achieved much in terms of positive results. Some scholars have started to suggest alternative approaches. Ahmed and Yousaf (2018) argue that the traditional

'jirga' or tribal council should be given a chance to bring peace to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. They believe that such jirgas have historical and traditional significance in that part of the world and can help bring the many warring factions to the negotiating table, including the Taliban. However, it is not clear how such jirgas can end Pakistan's constant suspicion regarding India's role and objectives in Afghanistan. While the Afghan Government and the people will welcome any efforts aimed and easing relations with Pakistan, there is little evidence they will do so at the cost of cold-shouldering India. That, one can argue, will bring us back to square one.

The United States as a Constraint Factor for India

For India, it has not just been about countering Pakistan influence in Kabul. New Delhi has also tried hard to convince Washington of her desire and ability to play a broader and more constructive role in Afghanistan. Over the past sixteen years Washington has believed that Islamabad holds the key to any progress, on many fronts, in Afghanistan. For the US, Pakistan is still a key ally in its efforts to bring some kind of an 'acceptable to all' solution to the Afghan crisis. These efforts include bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. Having fought the longest war in its history, the US is understandably exhausted and wants to work on an effective exit strategy. Given Pakistan's strong historical influence over the Taliban Washington has hoped that Islamabad will cooperate. In the earlier years of the War on Terror, the US and NATO forces heavily depended on Pakistani land routes to reach Afghanistan. All these factors gave Pakistan special leverage among Washington's policy elite. For years India had to accept the bitter truth. New Delhi has never been in a position where it can replace Islamabad in Washington's strategic calculus (George, 2016).

It has been demonstrated in the previous sections that the US has not been willing to allow India have a broader role in Afghanistan. Former Indian diplomats have openly confessed to me that their hands were tied and their options limited for a long time. Reasons for why the US could not accommodate India in Afghanistan at the cost of cold-shouldering Pakistan have also been discussed. The US has heavily relied on Pakistan support and goodwill in its war in Afghanistan. While that reliance is still in place, the paradigm has shifted slightly in India's favour in recent years. Once again New Delhi's strategic patience seems to have paid off. This has less to do with anything India's diplomatic posture but more with events in Pakistan. The raid that killed Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad in 2011 gave the US reason to doubt Pakistan's sincerity. More recently, the death of former Taliban

leader Mullah Omar in Pakistan, and the targeted killing of his successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour by a US drone in Baluchistan gave further weight to suspicions about Pakistan. Washington seems to be increasingly running out of patience with Islamabad's lack of commitment to end the Afghan quagmire. Peace talks with the Taliban over the past few years have not achieved anything significant. In fact, the Taliban have shown little interest in the whole process and continue to attack both Afghan and US forces in Afghanistan. This status quo has opened a window of opportunity for India in Afghanistan. In April 2016 the US's Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Olson, visited India and met with National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval. More importantly, the two travelled to Kabul to accompany Secretary of state John Kerry on an unannounced visit. Other high-ranking visits and meetings also indicate that the US is finally willing to accommodate India in Afghanistan in a broader role and capacity (George, 2016b).

Such a role on India's part has also got to do with the US's exit strategy from Afghanistan. In the event of a complete military withdrawal from the country, the US is wary of leaving behind an unstable Afghanistan at the mercy of its neighbours. Such a scenario would seriously undermine America's national security objectives both in Afghanistan and the region. Washington is also concerned about potential links between the Taliban and other US rivals such as Russia and Iran. Under such circumstances Washington can count on New Delhi as a strategic ally and partner in Afghanistan. India, however, has to wait further for that day. The US is still actively involved in an ongoing war in Afghanistan. The Taliban are still a threat. Other groups such as the so called Islamic state have also emerged in Afghanistan in recent years. No immediate and peaceful end to the Afghan quagmire is in sight. Washington still relies on Pakistan in order to win in Afghanistan. But there is no reason why India's strategic patience shouldn't pay off in the future.

Chapter 5

West Looking East:
Afghan Responses to India's Strategic Approach

The View from Kabul

In the true 'realist' sense, the aim of any foreign policy choice should be to extract the kind of reaction or response that is best for one's national interests. Kautilya emphasizes on the importance of influencing the way a rival or friendly King behaves. He argues that, in certain circumstances, a King needs to utilize other tools for safeguarding his own interests than relying on military force all the time. This is also the core message of his **'Mandala Theory'**, which emphasizes on find a '**mitra'** or a friend against the '**ari'**, which is the common enemy. Kautilya's '**sadgunya'** or his six approaches to foreign policy also suggest a number of options in order to extract a desirable behaviour from a neighbouring King. Hence the strength and success of India's Afghanistan policy will be judged by the kind of responses it receives from Kabul. In other words, how Afghanistan reacts to India's strategic approaches will ultimately decide whether India has made the right decisions in Afghanistan on the policy front. As discussed in the previous chapters India preferred a strategy of 'relational control' in Afghanistan after 2001. Considering all the structural constraints this has seemed to be the policy of choice for New Delhi. The aim has been to create a 'strategic environment' in Kabul that favours India's long-term objectives. India has made policy decisions aiming to influence Afghanistan's responses. This chapter discusses these Afghan responses, and India's position in Afghanistan's strategic calculus.

The challenge here is that foreign policy behaviour in weak states is often unstable. International Relations theories such as structural realism do not always explain the patterns of strategic thinking and political activity in such states. The overwhelming view is that they need political, economic, moral and often military aid to survive. Under enormous domestic and structural constraints they tend to take sides, getting entangled in broader and deeper conflicts, often making them vulnerable to global and regional super-power rivalries. This is a costly option, often resulting in the loss of total or partial sovereignty. There are exceptions though, and sometimes weak states exercise a fair degree of autonomy because of the very fact that they are weak. Being weak means they are non-threatening in nature, hence drawing less attention to their internal affairs from outside. This lack of external attention or meddling in turn generates domestic autonomy (Kassab, 2015).

Afghanistan, however, is not an exceptional case. The one thing it has drawn over the centuries more than anything else is external attention.

The Brookings Institute gave Afghanistan second place on their 'Weak States Index', behind only Somalia (Rice and Patrick, 2008). The Fund For Peace project called Afghanistan the 9th most 'fragile state' in the world (Foreign Policy, 2016). For many the only thing that is stable in Afghanistan is instability. Hence the only thing that is constant is inconsistency. Since its emergence as an independent state in 1747 Afghanistan's history is largely marked by war, occupation or some form of foreign intervention. There have been periods of relative peace of course. But the fact that Afghanistan has survived as a state despite all the domestic disturbances, regional turmoil and global games is still astonishing. Very early on in its political history the country became the stage for the 'Great Game' between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia (Saikal, 2004). It put Afghanistan at the centre of a global rivalry that continued for around a century. The British eventually left the sub-continent in 1947 but left behind many legacies that still shape the political landscape of the region. The creation of Pakistan and the demarcation of the 'Durand Line' as a boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan stand out as examples. Afghanistan continues to pay a heavy price for its geopolitical location and territorial disputes with Pakistan.

The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan is a good case study in how social fragmentation at home can bring around external constraints too. For a whole decade between 1979 and 1989 Afghanistan was at the centre of a conflict involving international and regional stakeholders. This period is marked not only by military conflict in the country involving foreign actors but also by a clash of ideologies among the Afghans political and social elite. The communists who were trained and educated in the Soviet Union wanted an ideal socialist state where there would be no place for the centuries old tribal traditions. The Islamists on the other hand saw the communists as a threat to not just their faith but also to the country's political future and its identity. In between the two extremes were Afghanistan's traditional local chiefs who neither liked the communists on the left, neither listened too much to the Mullahs on the right. These Khans or tribal elders did have a significant amount of social influence at the time. All Afghan governments until then had given them a fair amount of importance in matters of national interests. This was a time when hard-core Islamic fundamentalism had not yet made roots in Afghan society. The Soviet military intervention only turned this ideological strife into a full-fledged military conflict. Divisions within the Afghan society were a fact but it was the American involvement and Washington's backing of the Islamist groups that started a decade-long conflict in the country. Afghanistan descended into political and military chaos after the Soviet Intervention, with its institutional infrastructure severely damaged and its sovereignty and capability to stand on its feet seriously undermined (Crews, 2015). This troubled history has left a permanent mark on Afghanistan foreign policy posture.

Afghanistan slipped into further military and political chaos immediately after the Soviet withdrawal. In 1992 the Government of Najibullah was toppled and

the many different Mujahedeen factions took power in Kabul. Soon after entering the capital they were at each other's throat. The four years of civil war that followed resulted in the killing of thousands and the displacement and migration of millions of other Afghans. Out of this chaos emerged a new group of religious hard-liners. The world came to know them as the Taliban. They initially appeared in the south, disarming local warlords and bringing some degree of stability to the troubled region. Hence they did not meet much resistance from the Afghan people. In 1996 they entered the capital Kabul and executed the former President Najibullah who, until then, had taken refuge at the United Nations compound in the capital. This was the Taliban's way of announcing their arrival at Afghanistan's political and military stage. Though there was relative peace, Afghanistan under the Taliban rule went backwards in terms of political and social stability. Their rule over the country came to an abrupt in towards the end of 2001, after the September 11 attacks in the United States. The US invasion of Afghanistan paved the way for the international community to reengage with Afghanistan after many years of isolation. Afghanistan was once again at the centre of global attention. A new era of 'international intervention' had started. India was part of it this time around.

Kabul's Strategic Calculus Since 2001

Structural and domestic constraints sometimes force weak states to adopt a 'pendulum approach' to foreign policy. According to this approach the strategic behaviour of states keeps swinging between two extremes, ranging from over-engagement to isolation. While any form of 'extreme behaviour' in strategy can create obstacles it is also true that such an approach brings with it a fair degree of 'strategic flexibility' and freedom in the business of foreign policy. The key to strategic success, however, lies in avoiding the two extremes, and exploiting the opportunities and the freedom that exist in between. Call this the 'moderate' approach. A brief look at Afghanistan's foreign policy over the last 15 years reveals signs of both behaviours, i.e. the 'extreme' and the 'moderate'.

First, the deterioration of former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's relations with the US towards the end of his time in Office is a good example of the 'extreme behaviour', so much so that he adopted a policy of 'isolation' and refused to engage or cooperate with Washington at any level. There was a warm start to their relationship but then suspicion and hostility took over (Nuemann, 2015b). This was a clear example of a weak state adopting the 'pendulum approach'. Karzai's relations with Washington went from 'extremely close' during the first years of his rule to 'very hostile' towards the end. Many factors contributed to this. As an Afghan politician brought up in the traditional tribal sense Karzai was always wary of the other side's motives. This was not helped by the fact that the US itself did not have a clear policy on Afghanistan even after many years of its military intervention in the country. Karzai pushed for the sort of autonomy that was embedded in his Afghan character. Yet his dependency on the US's military and financial aid meant the two sides were not always on the same page. To counter the US's influence Karzai

worked hard to create his own domestic political base, a policy which, in some cases, paved the way for institutional corruption. This in turn further aggravated sensitivities in Washington (Neuman, 2015). Other factors also added fuel to fire. A well-known example was Karzai's frustration with Pakistan's role in the War on Terror and Washington's hesitance to grill Islamabad over the issue. As the years went by Kabul and Washington became more and more suspicious of each other's intentions, to the extent that Hamid Karzai, a man Washington chose to lead Afghanistan through the many phases of the country's military and political transition, refused to sign the much anticipated Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with Washington (Graham-Harrison, 2013).

I interviewed former President Karzai for the purpose of this thesis in May 2016. It was clear from his tone and body language that he detested the Americans had had long lost any trust in Washington's rhetoric and practice regarding the war in Afghanistan. He repeatedly argued that the Americans had sold Afghanistan to Pakistan. Karzai confessed that he did not clearly understand American intentions in the first few years of his being in power in Afghanistan. He mentioned a number of incidents that sowed the seeds of distrust between his Government and those in power in Washington. He also told me an interesting story about a meeting with the then US vice-President Joe Biden. According to Karzai, Biden was demanding that the Afghan Government signs the Bilateral Strategic Agreement between the two countries which would pave the way for a permanent US military presence in Afghanistan. According to the Agreement which was later signed under the Government of current President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the US Military was allowed to establish a number of permanent military bases in different parts of the country. Karzai was not entirely against the US's military presence in his country. However, he insisted that Washington should coerce Islamabad into cooperation with Afghanistan. Karzai was adamant that Pakistan held the key to peace talks between his Government and the Taliban. He strongly believed that peace in Afghanistan was a distant dream without any serious commitment and goodwill from Pakistan. And the United States, Karzai argued, was the one country that could convince or even force Pakistan to change its policy and behaviour towards Afghanistan. The Americans, themselves wary of Pakistan's many double games in the War on Terror, did not press Islamabad hard enough. They relied on Pakistan's intelligence cooperation and land transit routes for logistic supplies in their fight against the Taliban. Karzai, however, did not buy this agreement. He not only accused Washington of being too soft on Islamabad but went a step further and directly accused Washington of prolonging the Afghan conflict. He believed that the US had other motives in Afghanistan, and that it was not all about winning the War on Terror. His relation with both Pakistan and the United States had broken down beyond repair. Some had seen this coming. Others were surprised by how quickly Afghanistan's strategic behaviour had changed and the 'pendulum' had hit the extreme.

Karzai's successor showed a similar 'pendulum approach' to foreign in the beginning of his tenure. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, to the surprise of many both at home at abroad, went to Pakistan on an official visit and even visited

the Army's General Headquarters in Islamabad. He appreciated Pakistan's 'sacrifices in the war against terrorism' and ensured them of cooperation on all fronts. It was a gamble on Ghani's part, and he was willing to take the risk. He wanted to personally try and engage with Pakistan, and convince Islamabad to give up its policy of backing non-state actors in Afghanistan. But many argue that the new Afghan President had miscalculated and underestimated Pakistan's strategic interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan was not willing to cooperate. The security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated despite Ghani's friendly gesture. His gamble did not pay off. Things soon returned to normal and the two countries continued to accuse each other of providing safe-havens to terrorists. In the past couple of years President Ghani has reputedly accused Pakistan of waging an 'undeclared war' against Afghanistan. At present relations between the two countries are as strained as ever. There are no signs of any engagement on either the military, political or economic fronts. The peace talks with the Taliban have not materialized into anything meaningful for the Afghan Government. Trade links with Pakistan are severely undermined. Pakistan continues to put pressure on the Afghan Government and the international community by threatening to expel more than one million Afghan refugees from the country. Many argue that Islamabad repeatedly uses the 'refugee card' as a pressure tactic and as a foreign policy too. Both Kabul and the United Nations are concerned about the plight of these refugees and have asked the Pakistani Government to show patience (Negah and Siddique, 2018).

On the other hand Afghanistan's India policy since 2001 reveals a remarkable degree of 'strategic stability'. This is because Kabul, in its strategic outlook towards New Delhi, has found the middle ground. India is a country with which Afghanistan has successfully avoided the two extremes. Let us call it the 'moderate approach'. Both countries have shown strategic patience and have managed to reach common ground on most issues of bilateral interest. This has been achieved despite structural and domestic constraints on both sides. For instance, the US has always been wary of allowing India play a broader role in Afghanistan. Sensitivities in Pakistan have also influenced Kabul's ties with New Delhi. The absence of a geographical border between the two countries has made things harder, especially in sectors such as trade. But despite all this the two countries have remained engaged, and recent developments suggest their bilateral ties can only expand further. Since 2001 Afghanistan is at the centre of yet another global conflict; the West's global war against terrorism. The ongoing conflict has had serious regional implication too. Many of Afghanistan's neighbours are playing their own strategic games in the hope of safeguarding key interests in the country. This predatory nature on part of its neighbours has been a fact of life for Afghanistan for centuries. Its response to such threats has depended on its capabilities and the regional geopolitical circumstances. Historically Afghans have either chosen isolation or resistance. But this hasn't deterred neighbours like Pakistan or Iran to create obstacles. Stability in Afghanistan greatly depends on the goodwill of these regional actors. Alternatively, peace in Afghanistan can boost economic prosperity in the region. In the wake of the US's military withdrawal from the country, economic cooperation provides the only hope for regional stability and political harmony

(Weinbaum, 2006). It is for these reasons that India holds a special place among the policy making elite in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, the Region and the United States

Afghanistan, at present, strives for security, political stability and economic prosperity more than anything. Since 2001 the Kabul has tried hard to stabilize and normalize relations with both the countries of the region as well as global actors. It has not been an easy job though, and bilateral ties with neighbours such as Pakistan remain strained. Afghanistan is also wary of Iran's involvement in and ambitions about her military and political quagmire. In recent years there have been many anti-Iran protests in Afghan cities and major dailies in Kabul have accused Tehran of playing a double game, i.e. engaging in diplomatic talks with Kabul but also having ties with terrorist organizations fighting in Afghanistan (Majidyar, 2017). The immediate challenge for Kabul is to avoid another period of international isolation by the international community, especially the United States. Achieving this foreign policy goal, however, is easier said than done. While successive US Governments have repeatedly pledged their long-term support and commitment to Afghanistan's political and military future, it is an open secret that American public support for the war in Afghanistan is declining. Although American generals have again and again reiterated that the US is not in Afghanistan to lose the war, yet evidence on the ground suggests US strategy in Afghanistan has lost both its aim and purpose. In fact the Obama administration has already changed its Afghan war strategy three times in the last four years (McGurk, 2011). Over a trillion dollars have been spent and yet there is no guarantee that the US is wining this war. What might happen after a potential US military withdrawal is still unclear (Kumar, 2011).

Afghanistan also has to come to terms on a number of historical issues with Pakistan before the two countries can seriously engage in any kind of bilateral economic and political ties. Perhaps the biggest challenge to such bilateral relations or any kind of deal between the countries is the issue of the Durand Line. Drawn by the British in 1893 to stop Russia's advance towards the warm waters of India, the imaginary line has divided villages and tribes comprised of the same people speaking the same language into two. Afghanistan has never recognized the line as an official border between the two countries, while Pakistan has never doubted its statues of an official border separating the two countries (Mahmood, 2005). Afghanistan has always been, and still has reasons to be sceptical of Pakistan's intentions toward a durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. This to a large extent has to do with Pakistan's continuous support for Taliban insurgents and the role of its military intelligence, the ISI, in sabotaging the current peace process in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Pakistan is concerned about the increasing Indian presence in Afghanistan which it considers a threat to its regional strategic interests (Durrani and Khan, 2010).

While Iran has openly opposed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and has helped to bring it down, there is no doubt it considers a long term American presence in Afghanistan a threat to its national security. In recent years, both the Afghan Government and the Coalition Forces in Afghanistan have accused Iran of supporting insurgents fighting NATO Forces in Afghanistan. Historically, Iran has supported Shiite minority groups in Afghanistan during the decade long civil war and still continues to do so (Tahir, 2007). The recent escalation of US-Iran tensions over Tehran's nuclear energy programme also undermines the future of Afghanistan's bilateral ties with Iran. The future of these ties also depends on whether the two countries can come to some sort agreement their decade's long water dispute. The issue has been side-lined at least for now but has the potential to cause political as well as military strife between the two countries in the future (Christensen, 2010).

Russian and China have both closely followed developments in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years. Though neither Moscow nor Beijing has opposed the US's military presence in Afghanistan both are sceptical of Washington's long-term objectives in the region. In recent years officials in Moscow have repeatedly expressed their concerns about the sorts of security threats that are emanating from Afghanistan. The emergence of the so-called Islamic state in northern Afghanistan has not gone un-noticed. This has alarmed Russia to the extent that Moscow has openly accepted having links with the Taliban. While the US insists on a strong central Government in Kabul, Russia is exploiting all other options, including talking to the Taliban (Gurganus, 2018). Russia has openly accused the Afghan Government as well as the US of not doing enough to neutralize this threat. High-ranking Russian officials have threatened that Moscow will utilize military options if the group poses any direct threat to the security of Russian or the Central Asian republics. The Afghan Government on the other hand accuses Russia of having established ties with the Taliban in an effort to form a joint front against Islamic state militants in Afghanistan. Kabul has openly criticized such a policy, calling it a threat for the future security and stability of the entire region (CSRS, 2017). While Russia has chosen to watch developments from a distance, China has interestingly been more actively engaged in Afghanistan in recent years. Beijing is part of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group tasked with bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table. Being has also offered to kick-start 'shuttle diplomacy' between Afghanistan and Pakistan in an effort to resolve long-standing bilateral issues between these two neighbours. China is also undertaking development projects inside Afghanistan, building bridges in the northern Badakhshan province and showing willingness to provide military training and aid to Afghan Security Forces in the future (Kartha, 2017).

While regionalism remains an important foreign policy option for Afghanistan in the long-term, it does seem to offer any serious solutions to Afghanistan current challenges. Regional efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan and end the current conflict have been minimal, or at least haven't had any fruitful results. Kabul openly accuses regional countries of having links with non-state actors fighting Afghan Security Forces. The United States have also accused Afghanistan's

neighbours of fuelling violence in and insurgency in country and the wider region. So far, two regional summits on the future of peace talks in Afghanistan have failed to achieve much on the ground. At the same time Iran complains about Afghanistan's failure to stop drug production and trafficking into Iran. Turkmenistan is even thought to have paid the Taliban fighters to stay away from the Afghan-Turkmen border. China, though actively involved in the Afghan peace process, has refrained from increasing its economic and political footprints in Afghanistan fearing insurgent backlash in her own backyard. Tajikistan tries to convince international donors that any development projects will show better results on the Tajik side of the border rather than in war-torn Afghanistan. Pakistan's role still remains suspicious and can be considered neither a friend nor a foe (Gavrilis, 2001). On the economic side of things, while there is great potential to exploit Afghanistan's geopolitical position and gain huge revenues from some of the mega economic projects mentioned in the previous chapters, there is no immediate answer to Afghanistan's current financial needs. These projects and other possible economic developments will take many years to complete. In the meantime, Afghanistan needs billions of dollars to build up and train its Security forces, fight corruption and improve governance, build schools and universities, improve general healthcare standards and fund the ongoing development projects.

And with more than $2 billion dollars already given to Afghanistan in direct aid, India seems to have played a more constructive role in Afghanistan than many other regional stakeholders. Afghan officials that talked to me for this study clearly understand and appreciate India's generosity. New Delhi is not only providing hard cash but also investing in numerous developmental projects in different parts of Afghanistan. A huge part of India's financial aid to Afghanistan is channelled directly through the Afghan Government, allowing for greater control and transparency. It is for these reasons that Indian financial aid goes a longer way and achieves much more on the ground than, let's say, American dollars. Sticking to the Kautilyan tradition, India clearly understands the significance of financial aid as a foreign policy too, and has used it wisely in Afghanistan over the past sixteen years.

Afghanistan's Economic and Trade Potential

While regionalism may not have served Afghanistan's causes on the security front, it could be a policy of choice when it comes to ensuring a stable economic future for Afghanistan. Kabul can achieve this policy goal by joining and engaging with regional economic blocs. Luckily for Afghanistan, and from a purely economic point of view, its geographical location can serve to its advantage. There are two ways in which Afghanistan can potentially exploit this advantage. Firstly, as mentioned before, it can serve as a major trading route between Central and South Asia and also between China and Europe. Historically, Afghanistan has served this purpose before during the days of the Silk Road (Rust

and Cushing, 2002). Given there is political stability and economic cooperation in the region, there is no reason why Afghanistan should not serve as a major trade highway in the future. Secondly, Afghanistan serves as a bridge that connects the energy rich Central Asian republics to the energy-hungry South Asian region. Countries such as Turkmenistan are eagerly looking for a safe route to channel out its oil and gas to the South Asian markets. Any such route has to be through Afghanistan. The Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India pipeline project (TAPI) is a future mega project that can fulfil Afghanistan's economic ambitions to a great extent.

Historically, the Silk Road used to be a major trading route between China and Eurasia. In recent decades, the 'New Silk Road' metaphor has become a part of the foreign policy in many regional countries. The United States has even initiated an economic project by this name for Afghanistan's future economic growth. Under this initiative, the intention is to form a local market for countries of the region to trade among themselves. As former US Secretary of state Hillary Clinton once put it, this project will make it possible for Turkmen gas and Tajik cotton to reach India. At the same time Afghan rugs and fruits could make their way to the markets of Astana and Mumbai, or even beyond (Kucera, 2011). The US is taking special interest in the project not only because it can boost Afghanistan's economic growth in the future, but also because of China's growing economic influence in the region during the past decade has raised eyebrows in Washington. The American vision for the 'New Silk Road' might slightly go against history because Iran is being bypassed this time. Instead, the US is thinking of a North to South trading route connecting Central Asia with India and Pakistan via Afghanistan (Kucera, 2011b). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also shown interest in Afghanistan's potential as a land bridge between Central and South Asia. Studies carried out by the Bank suggest that exploiting Afghanistan's position as a land bridge can significantly boost regional economies. If road corridors through Afghanistan are developed, export and import prices through regional trade can be increased up to 7% to 10% over the next decade or so. Overall trade in the region can also increase by 15% if transportation facilities are improved in the region. Another study by the ADB in 2003 suggested there could be 52 possible trade corridors which can connect Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to five different sea ports in India and Pakistan. Even more importantly, such a trade corridor can also connect China to Europe via Iran. These statistics speak for themselves. There is no doubt that such a project can boost Afghan economy in the future. It will increase trade opportunities with neighbours, create further chances of employment for Afghans at home and bring enormous revenues for Afghanistan if it can serve as a facilitator of regional economic growth (Aziz, 2007).

The TAPI gas line project which aims to connect Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India is another major regional economic project with the potential to boost regional trade and connectivity. Once again, its geography can serve Afghanistan's economic ambitions well. The rapidly growing economies of India and China show signs of future regional economic harmony and

cooperation. Such economic growth also increases the need and appetite in India and China for new energy resources. The US Department of Energy predict India's energy consumption to increase by 3.8% and that of China by 5% by 2030. The biggest and closest energy resources to them are those in Central Asia. The region has the capacity to channel millions of barrels of oil and gas to South Asia per day. Only Kazakhstan produced 1.672 million barrels of oil in 2016. In 2015 the country produced 19 billion cubic meters of gas. Turkmenistan produced 66.8 billion cubic meters of gas in 2016, according to BP. Astana also produces 261,000 barrels of oil per day. Uzbekistan may have lesser resources but has a diverse range of them (Putz, 2017). Afghanistan can once again play a significant role as a regional energy transport corridor. This will bring stability and prosperity not only to Afghanistan but to the region as a whole (Aziz, 2007b). Major steps have been taken in order to connect these two regions, and the TAPI pipeline project is perhaps those steps. The pipeline will transfer oil and gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. But there is every chance of these energy reserves reaching beyond the Indian shores to the international markets. As far as Afghanistan is concerned, this pipeline will serve more than just as an energy project. It can actually bring stability to Afghanistan by chaining together the countries of the region by shared economic interests. It can also decrease tensions between Pakistan and India, which will surely have a positive impact on the political and military situation in Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan has the fourth largest gas reserves in the world. With prices falling in Europe and Russia, it is eager to channel its energy reserves to South Asia and the world via Afghanistan through the TAPI. Each country will be responsible for the security of the pipeline by securing the stretch of territory through which the pipeline will ultimately run. In Afghanistan, plans are that local communities will be paid to guard the stretch. Since this may not be enough, the Afghan government is expected to turn to the US and NATO to support any security plan for the pipeline. This can lead to formalization of Western military presence in Afghanistan, which for the time being is in America's interest. The US is therefore pushing the Indians and the Pakistanis to speed up diplomatic efforts to get the project going. Afghanistan can be the ultimate beneficiary out all these efforts. Despite setbacks and failures Kabul still needs Western military presence in order to root out terrorism and ensure its future political and military stability (Bhadrakumar, 2010). In light of the discussion above, there remains no reason why Afghanistan should not fully participate in both these regional economic projects and play an active by exploiting its geographic potential. Afghanistan should speed up economic reforms leading to trade liberalization in the region which will further enhance the chances of economic cooperation with countries in the region. It should also speed up diplomatic efforts on talks about these two mega projects. Such economic activity and cooperation will not only fulfil Afghanistan's future economic ambitions, but will also have positive effects on other issues in the country, the fight against terrorism and insurgency being one of them

India in Afghanistan's Strategic Calculus

Over the past sixteen years the regime in Kabul has tried to produce a document which can define the 'content and parameters' of Kabul's 'foreign policy objectives and strategic posture'. Despite exhausting consultations between different state agencies on the issue the Afghan Government has not managed to draft such a paper. Afghanistan's ambassador in New Delhi Shaida Abdali, in an interview for the purpose of this chapter, spoke of his time working as the deputy of the National Security Council in Afghanistan and his efforts to produce a foreign policy document which determines the above mentioned contents and parameters of Afghanistan's foreign policy. It seems, however, that those efforts never materialized into anything meaningful after Abdali's departure from the NSC. For some this is a failure. They argue that, in the absence of a document delineating the country's long-term strategic interests, individuals in power behave according to their personal/individual beliefs and perceptions. For example President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's tilt towards Pakistan during the first year of his Government seemed like a U-turn from what his predecessor Hamid Karzai had been doing. Many in India were concerned by Ghani's diplomatic posture and tilt towards Islamabad. In their opinion, years of good work by Karzai had been wasted. There were reactions too, with India refusing to hold a meeting of the 'Strategic Partnership Council' with Afghanistan in 2015. High-ranking Indian officials also avoided attending key international meetings on Afghanistan (Paliwal, 2015). Others think that, given Afghanistan's political, military and economic fragility, it is not the right time for Kabul to produce any such document. In their opinion it is unwise to restrict the country's strategic options and diplomatic posture given the unstable state of affairs both domestically and at regional and global levels. Afghan officials who were interviewed for the purpose of this chapter insist there are clear priorities and parameters in regards to the country's strategic objectives. The lack of a document therefore does not mean there is strategic ambiguity.

There are some identifiable foreign policy goals and parameters though, within which Kabul makes its choices. Explaining the country's foreign policy priorities the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs states;

"Afghanistan is determined not only to be a land-bridge between Central Asia, the sub-Continent and the Middle East, but also a bridge between the Islamic world and the family of pluralistic democracies. We wanted to convey two messages to our neighbours: Firstly, Afghanistan wants to be an equal partner; and secondly, that Afghanistan wants to be the catalyst for regional cooperation".

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

In light of the policy priorities mentioned above India should naturally be a very important neighbour and partner. This is only natural because, first, Afghanistan wants to serve as the bridge that connects the sub-continent with

Central Asia and beyond. Second, Afghanistan wants to strengthen connections between the Islamic world and the 'pluralistic democracies'. Third, Kabul gives out a clear message of equal partnership and regional cooperation. Afghanistan's foreign policy behaviour vis-à-vis India defies the 'realist' view on how weak states behave in response to greater powers. Scholars such as Stephen Walt (1987) have argued that they adopt a 'bandwagoning' approach to foreign policy, meaning that their policy posture at large is unstable and unreliable. Instead weak states behave in reaction to their immediate environment and circumstances, jumping from one policy position to another. Afghanistan, however, shows a remarkably degree of 'strategic stability' vis-a-visa India, managing to balance the influence and objectives of both regional and international partners in the current Afghan context (Paliwal, 2015b). for example Afghan officials have told me they fully understand why India would not be able, or wiling, to listen to Kabul's repeated demands for more military aid and cooperation between the two countries. The Afghan Government, they argue, understand the sensitivities and the risks that might come with such developments. A closer inspection of Afghanistan's India policy will help us better understand Kabul's responses to New Delhi. It should also reveal whether Kabul's 'strategic thinking' or foreign policy behaviour has shown any degree of consistency and stability since 2001. Afghanistan's engagement with India over the past fifteen years has been multi-dimensional, taking place at different levels. The following section discusses some of them.

1. Government-to-Government Ties

Perhaps the seeds for India's current pro-active role in Afghanistan were planted in the period just before the events of September 11, 2001. The Taliban controlled more than ninety percent of territory in the country. The only group fighting them at the time was the Northern Alliance. It had been cornered to remote areas in central and northern Afghanistan where they operated in small pockets. Militarily out-sourced and driven away, the Northern Alliance still had reasons to be optimistic. Their Government was still recognized by a number of western countries. They had sympathizers, and India was one of the most important in that group. Seriously concerned about the Taliban-Pakistan connection, New Delhi not only gave military and financial aid to the Northern Alliance but also sent advisors to help the group's resistance (Fair, 2010b). After the US's military intervention and the toppling of the Taliban Government, senior member of the Northern Alliance held key portfolios during Hamid Karzai's interim and transitional regimes. Mohammad Qasim Fahim served as Defence Minister and later as vice-President for many years. The current Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, another key member of the Northern Alliance, served as Foreign Minister and twice ran for the Presidency in later years. Younus Qanooni served as Interior Minister and also ran for the Presidency against Hamid Karzai. The list was long. Many high-ranking members of the group still continue to hold key positions in the Afghan Government. There was natural sympathy towards India within the Interim Government formed in 2001 and the transitional Government which followed it and was in place until 2004. The tremendous goodwill towards India still runs deep throughout the different state institutions in Afghanistan.

Over the past fifteen years Afghan heads of state and other high-ranking officials have made a number of official visits to New Delhi. Former President Hamid Karzai was especially keen on forging stronger diplomatic ties with India. During his fourteen years in power Karzai oversaw some important developments in bilateral ties between his country and India. During these visits he visited Indian universities, gave lectures and keynote speeches, signed a number of MoUs between the two countries and also participated in the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Afghan Parliamentarians have also visited India on numerous occasions. India hosted the Upper House of the Afghan Parliament (Meshrano Jirga) during a study visit in February 2013. Current Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani made his first official visit in April 2015. This was five months after he came into power, and many eyebrows were raised in New Delhi over Ghani's decision to visit Pakistan and China before coming to India. The reasons for this will be discussed in detail later. But his belated visit still resulted in one of the most important developments in bilateral relations, as India finally agreed to hand over three M-25 attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force (Embassy of India in Kabul, 2016b).

Afghanistan has also shown a desire to support India on the global stage. The 'Agreement on Strategic Partnership' signed between Kabul and New Delhi in 2011 insists upon cooperation on multinational and international forums such as the United Nations. It was also the first strategic agreement Kabul signed with any country. The document clearly expresses Afghanistan's support for a permanent seat for India in the United Nations Security Council. India's ambition for such a seat is well known. Today China often proves to be the obstacle in the way of Indian decisions and recommendations at the UNSC. China's closeness to Pakistan is another source of concern for India policy makers. For many the only way to neutralize this obstacle is for India to get a permanent UNSC seat of its own (Varma, 2015). It is out of these concerns that India tries to rally support behind her demand to be a permanent member of the UN's most important decision making body. Afghanistan's goodwill in this regard is a strategic gain for India. Inserting this goodwill as a clause in the Agreement shows its importance for New Delhi. Many considered the signing of the Agreement a landmark event in the history of bilateral relations between the two countries. Indian observers were especially optimistic and predicted the Agreement to have significant implication for India's wider neighbourhood (Gupta, 2011).

Bilateral relations, at least on Government-to-Government levels, seemed to have hit a rough patch with the arrival of the 'National Unity Government' in Kabul. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani visited China and Pakistan immediately after assuming office. Observers in New Delhi panicked. Many feared that New Delhi might be losing Kabul to Islamabad. But over the many discussions and interviews with high-ranking Afghan officials it was made clear to the author that there was a mere lack of understanding of the new Government's strategic priorities. There was no desire for any sort of a pro-Pakistan diplomatic tilt in Kabul. The Afghan leader was clear in his foreign policy objectives, and his strategy to achieve them. He clearly defined his 'five circles of foreign policy'. The first included Afghanistan's neighbours,

with India being one of them. The second circle included the Islamic world. Again India was part of it having one of the largest Muslim populations of any country. The third included the US, EU, NATO. In light of the increasing US-India cooperation on Afghanistan India was always going to be part of this circle too. The fourth circle included Asia, with focus on the region's economic future. This is surely an area where India could see itself playing an important role. The fifth circle included international organizations, corporations and non-governmental agencies. This was an area where both countries had clearly agreed to cooperate. For instance cooperation at the UN was inserted in the 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' signed between Kabul and Delhi in 2011. Both had also been working together in the 'South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation', commonly referred to as SAARC (Ghani, 2014).

President Ghani's early conciliatory approach to Pakistan had two main reasons, and neither of them should have meant a 'cold-shoulder' towards New Delhi. First, the President considered it a strategic priority to bring the Taliban to the table of negotiation. He clearly understood the role Pakistan could play in this regard. Hence it was important to have Islamabad's goodwill before setting out to achieve this goal. Second, he wished to see Afghanistan at the centre of regional and global economic cooperation. Pakistan once again held a key position in this calculus. Afghanistan's longest geographical border is with Pakistan. It was for these obvious reasons that Afghanistan needed to find common ground with Pakistan. Ghani also faced domestic backlash for his diplomatic posture towards Islamabad. Afghan mistrust of the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment has deep historical roots. But at the same time many considered this bold approach as the only hope for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Former Indian ambassador in Kabul Rakesh Sood told me President Ghani had reasons to give it and try and engage with Pakistan. For him, Ghani's decision made perfect sense from an Afghan perspective. President Ghani must have known the chances of success were minimal but he was keen on making an effort. All eyes were on Pakistan to respond positively to Kabul's diplomatic goodwill (Yusuf and Smith, 2015).

But any hopes of cooperation and goodwill from Pakistan were soon to evaporate. Very little was achieved in the four-nation 'Quadrilateral Coordination Group' meetings that were supposed to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. Pakistan had been tasked to use its influence over the insurgent group and convince them and, if needed, coerce them to hold accept peace talks. Islamabad accepted the fact that it had a degree of influence among the leadership of the movement but denied having the ability to either convince or force them to talk to the Afghan Government. The peace process itself was dealt a severe blow with the announcement of the death of Mullah Omar, the Taliban's mysterious leader, on Pakistani soil. His successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, was killed by a US drone in May 2016, again on Pakistani soil. Ghani's outreach seemed to have received little attention in Pakistan. Soon his tone regarding Pakistan also changed. In April 2016, after much effort and goodwill, the Afghan President said his Government no longer seeks Pakistan's help in peace talks with the Taliban (Khan, 2016). In recent years Ghani's tone and rhetoric vis-à-vis Pakistan has become even more critical. He has

accused Pakistan of waging an 'undeclared war' against Afghanistan. On the other hand relations between the Afghan and the Indian Government have gone from strength to strength, especially under the Government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. Mr. Modi has visited Kabul multiple times in recent years. He has openly spoken of the strong historical and civilizational ties between the Afghan and the Indian people, and of his desire to revive those ties once again. He has also inaugurated a number of key projects in Afghanistan during these visits. The most important of them was the joint inauguration of the new building of the Afghan Parliament in Kabul in December 2015.

2. Military Engagements

Security is the most sensitive aspect of Afghanistan-India bilateral relations. Over the years Afghanistan has been more than willing to accommodate Indian engagement in areas such as civilian security, military aid and personnel training. For India, being militarily involved in Afghanistan without actually putting boots on the ground would be a strategic masterstroke. This is another example of how 'relational control' has come to help New Delhi's policy ambitions. For the last two decades India has suffered directly from the nature of military developments in Afghanistan. The five years of Taliban rule and the emergence of hard-line groups with anti-India sentiments in Afghanistan proved costly for New Delhi. During this period Pakistan invested heavily in anti-India elements on both sides of the Durand Line. Many of these groups were provided safe havens in Afghanistan, under the watchful eye of Pakistan's military establishment. Many of them still exist and have not given up on undermining Indian interests. In fact they have been directly involved in attacks on Indian diplomatic installations in Afghanistan. The attacks on the Indian Embassy in Kabul in 2008 and 2009 proved the seriousness of these threats.

Military engagement between Kabul and New-Delhi has been multi-dimensional. Indian military aid to the Afghan Government started in the early years of the post-Taliban period. This, however, did not include the supply of any lethal weapons or heavy military equipment. The 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' penned between the two countries also laid out the framework of military engagement between Kabul and New Delhi. According to the Agreement New Delhi would help in the 'training, equipping and capacity-building' of the Afghan Security Forces (Swami, 2015). Over the past sixteen years many batches of the Afghan Security Forces have undergone training in India. India is also training the Afghan Forces in areas such as military tactics, intelligence gathering and logistics. The third area of military engagement, the provision of military equipment, is yet to see any serious progress. For many years, and despite repeated requests from Kabul, India refused to provide lethal and large scale military equipment to Afghanistan. This was partly because of regional and international constraints. Any such move would have rang alarm bells in both Washington and Islamabad. The last two years however have seen a slight strategic shift even on this front. In December 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kabul and, to underscore the shift in his country's strategic outreach to Afghanistan, oversaw the transfer of three M-25 attack helicopters to

the Afghan Air Force. In June 2016 Afghanistan's Ambassador in New Delhi, Shaida Abdali, told me he was confident that the nature of military engagements between Afghanistan and India will be much broader and deeper over the coming years.

2014 was a year of many transitions for Afghanistan. The presidential elections brought a new Government into power. At the same time the US and NATO started their much-anticipated military draw-down from the country in response to domestic pressures. In December of that year NATO officially ended its combat mission in Afghanistan and left the security responsibility to the Afghan Forces (Rasmussen, 2014). For many in the west the War in Afghanistan was as good as over and there didn't seem to be a need for a continued military presence in the country. For Afghans however there was no such optimism. The Taliban were still a military threat and Al-Qaeda and its leadership were still at large. To complicate the situation further, the so called Islamic state had stated to emerge on the Afghan and Pakistani fronts. Given the limited capacity and capability of its Armed Forces, and fearing a potential security vacuum in the country after the US and NATO military withdrawals, Kabul had to come up with alternatives. In its search of other sources of military aid the Afghan Government reached out to China. Beijing however did not entertain Kabul's request for military equipment due to potential concerns in Islamabad. Any such help from Russia at a time when the US is heavily involved in Afghanistan and still has boots on the ground is unlikely. India therefore was Kabul's only hope to fill this gap. Observers in India have noted Kabul's growing insistence on military assistance over the past couple of years (Kousary, 2016). The question is to what extent India would be willing to entertain Afghanistan's wish-list.

I put this question to former Afghan President Hamid Karzai during an interview in May 2016. He was confident that India will fulfil its due role in supporting the Afghan Security Forces. In his opinion, a broader and deeper military engagement with Afghanistan was only in India's strategic interest. First, the nature of the threat in Afghanistan should be a matter of concern for India as well. The emergence of new fanatic groups such as the IS could easily destabilize the whole region if not contained and neutralized early on. Second, Pakistan still considers Afghanistan a part of its territory and, if the need arises, would use it against India without any hesitation. The 'strategic depth theory', Karzai argued, was a bitter reality. Pakistan was obsessed with denying India any strategic space in Afghanistan, and both Kabul and New Delhi had to do something about it.

One of Kautilya's six '**Sadgunya'** or foreign policy approaches is '**Yana'**. It can be translated as the show of forces, or marching on an expedition. Kautilya argued that such a move is often useful in order to create panic and fear among enemy lines, or to encourage or coerce a King to behave in a desired way. Many argue that it is time for India to do '**Yana'** in Afghanistan. In recent years foreign policy experts in India have started to call for a change in New Delhi's strategic calculus on Afghanistan, arguing in favour of a broader military engagement with Kabul. In their opinion, India's fear of raising concerns in Pakistan by expanding its military ties with Afghanistan is misplaced. Pakistan will not easily give up on undermining Indian interests in Afghanistan, irrespective of the nature and scope of

New Delhi's military aid to Kabul. In fact, India's hesitant posture on this front has caused confusion and disappointment in Kabul in the past. President Ghani had genuine reasons to reassess India's role in the future of his country's security. New Delhi had repeatedly declined Kabul's request for heavy military equipment. While things such as military transport and combat assistance may still not be possible, India should not hesitate in accepting other smaller requests by the Afghans (Haidar, 2015). Such steps on India's part can not only raise Kabul's strategic confidence but an also deliver a clear message to Pakistan.

3. People-to-People Relations

The one aspect of India-Afghanistan relations that transcends both geographical borders and the nature of political ties between the two Governments are the deep historical and civilizational ties between the two people. Over the centuries these relations have been both friendly and, at times, thorny. Historically, Afghans have flooded into India for all sorts of reasons. They have come as conquerors of course, as traders, as Sufis and religious scholars spreading their faith and as ordinary labourers looking for survival. In more recent years they have been coming as tourists, medical patients and students. These historical interactions have resulted in an understanding of each other's history, culture and faith. Centuries of interaction between the two people has given birth to new knowledge and ideas, a shared art, a similar literature and an appreciation of each other's place and significance in the region and the world (Kousary, 2016). There have been 'cold periods' in between. The Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan forced millions of Afghans to flee their homes and villages and take refuge in neighbouring countries. A vast majority of them ended up in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. Others who had the will and the resources migrated to the US and Europe. Some of course went to India. New Delhi's decision to indirectly support the Soviet intervention didn't serve these people-to-people relations at all. Also, many years of refugee life in Pakistan did not help shape a positive image of India among some Afghans. However the nature of India's involvement in Afghanistan over the past fifteen years and, perhaps more importantly, the nature of Pakistan's activities in Afghanistan during the same period has heavily tilted the balance in India's favour once again.

India understands the importance of having the support and the goodwill of the Afghan people on her side. In the post-2001 period much of India's aid has been spent in the development sector, directly affecting the lives of the ordinary Afghans. Mega projects such as the construction of the Salma Dam in western Afghanistan will benefit hundreds of thousands of people by providing both electricity and water for irrigation purposes. The construction of the Zaranj-Delaram Road in southwestern Afghanistan has helped connect previously inaccessible remote parts of the country with major cities and markets. India has also built electricity power lines in the north. In the capital Kabul, the new building of the Afghan Parliament, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2015, is the most symbolic evidence of the growing ties between the two countries. Also in

Kabul, India has been running the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital for many decades now. It provides much needed health services to Afghan children. India has made sure its aid can be seen, and appreciated. This approach has helped New Delhi win hearts and minds in Afghanistan. Ask any Afghan who they think Afghanistan's most friendly neighbour is. Some public opinion polls inside Afghanistan suggest India outscores everyone else by a huge margin, as 71% of the people who were surveyed thought India had a more positive role in Afghanistan than anyone else, including the United States. Only 2% people voted for Pakistan. The poll was commissioned by international agencies and 1,500 took part in it. (Times of India, 2010). In recent years India has also experimented with what Murray (2012) calls 'sports diplomacy. India's Greater Naidu serves as the home ground for Afghanistan's emerging national cricket team. Afghanistan plays its home matches and the Indian Cricket Board has repeatedly shown its commitment to develop the game in Afghanistan. These measures have clear positive impact on how India is perceived among the Afghan public.

Medical tourism is the latest trend in these people-to-people relations. In 2005 the Embassy of India in Kabul started issuing free medical visas to Afghans seeking medical treatment abroad. Since then hundreds of thousands have travelled to the many modern and comparatively better equipped hospitals and private clinics all over India. According to figures by the Indian Embassy in Kabul more than 100,000 medical visas were issued to Afghans between 2010 and 2013, almost half of the total number of visas that were issued (Bearak, 2013). The trend has gained momentum since then and Afghans are still flooding into India for medical care. This policy has served both people well. While on one hand it provides Afghans the option to seek better healthcare services, on the other hand it has helped the medical industry in India too. For those Afghans who travel to India the cost medical treatment is within their financial range, or at least far less than what they would have to pay in the west (Bearak, 2013b). Indian cinema, art and literature and music have always been popular in Afghanistan. Afghans are huge fans of Bollywood, and the famous 'Khans' of the Indian film industry have a huge number of followers inside Afghanistan. Indian TV serials have also become extremely popular in Afghanistan over the past seventeen years, especially among the women. Educated Afghans have heard of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Kabuliwala', a short story which helped promote a positive image of the Afghans in Indian society. These are all aspects of India's 'soft-power', a policy tool it has used well in Afghanistan over the past fifteen years. While geography might be a disadvantage to India, the nature of its engagements in Afghanistan has so far ensured New Delhi has the Afghan people and the Government on its side. But many in New Delhi are starting to question whether such a 'soft-power' approach will be enough to safeguard India's long-term objectives in the country. The argument against this soft-power approach is that it turns India into a 'service provider' and does not necessarily make it a 'stakeholder' in Afghanistan. Therefore, for India to achieve its security, economic and political goals in Afghanistan it should now start using 'smart power', meaning a more visible role on the security/ military front as well (Nanda, 2016).

4. Indian Investment in Afghan Education

Kautilya talks about the different forms of power in his Arthashastra. He refers to intellectual power as a key pillar of a King or a state's wealth and strength. Kautilya defines intellectual power as the combined degree of wisdom of a King's populous. In his opinion hard power or military strength cannot be sustained without intelligent minds. Considering the sheer size of the country India herself has done well on the educational front in recent decades. This emphasis on intellectual power and education can also be seen in India's Afghanistan policy over the past sixteen years. India has reasons to invest in Afghanistan's education sector. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai completed part of his higher education in India. Given the nature of his Government's ties with India and his personal affection with the country many Indian observers have argued he was a 'smart investment' (Mullen, 2016). India has continued this legacy. The only difference is the investment is much larger in scale now. Benefiting from the educational scholarships provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), thousands of young Afghan students have flocked into Universities all over India to complete their higher education. In fact the programme, run by India's Ministry of External Affairs, provides a thousand scholarships to aspiring Afghan talent each year. They study subjects ranging from history, political science, education, agriculture, chemistry, physics, mathematics, media and computer science (Embassy of India in Kabul, 2010).

In terms of India's strategic objectives in Afghanistan, New Delhi hopes to reap the harvest of this investment for many years to come. Over the past decade many of these men and women have graduated and returned to Afghanistan, now holding both senior and low-level positions in the Afghan Government and other agencies. More importantly, most of these young Afghans have returned with a positive opinion about India and its role in Afghanistan's future. Over the past four years I spoke to a number of young Afghans who went to India and studied there on educational scholarships. I asked them what they thought of India, first as a country and second as a neighbour of Afghanistan. Many of these men and women were impressed to see the cultural similarities and shared values between the two people. They spoke of values such as social acceptance and tolerance, political maturity and intellectual wisdom. For many of these young Afghans India was by far the best neighbour Afghanistan could have wished for. One can argue that it has been a smart investment on India's part indeed. At the same time India seems to have killed another bird with the same stone. By educating and enable a new generation of young Afghans New Delhi hopes to curb the spread of hard-line radical Islamist ideology in Afghanistan. This is a 'hole India has been bitten from' twice. First, the Mujahedeen Government in the early 1990s undermined Indian interests in the region. Second, the few years of Taliban rule towards the end of the millennium was perhaps the darkest period of Indian-Afghanistan relations. It will be strategic defeat for India if any such elements, with similar radical anti-India sentiments, regain any degree of power in the future, or become part of any policy making apparatus in Kabul. India has suffered from Pakistani-backed Islamic fundamentalism both at home and abroad in the past. Given Afghanistan's strategic importance for India, New Delhi is keen on neutralizing this serious threat (Karim, 2012).

Afghanistan's Strategic Objectives vis-à-vis India

Like many other 'weak states' Afghanistan suffers from a number of structural problems. Many decades of war has caused deep socio-political fragmentation, seriously undermining Afghanistan's political identity. At the same time, the same conflict left most of its state institutions disabled and non-operational. These problems offer reinforce each other, leaving any weak state in social, political and military jeopardy (Kaplan, 2008). With the help of the international community, Kabul has invested in 'rebuilding institutions' and regaining political legitimacy over the past sixteen years. There is a long road ahead, of course. It will take many years of strong national and global commitment to put the country back on track, towards an acceptable degree of social, economic and political stability. But the current 'National Unity Government' has adopted a robust foreign policy, working hard to engage with both regional and international partners for finding a common roadmap.

Similar to Kautilya's 'circles of states' in his 'Mandala Theory', the Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's has also defined the 'five circles of his foreign policy calculus. A brief look at these circles can help in a better understanding of Afghanistan's strategic priorities and ambitions. A keen observer of the region's history and politics would easily find a natural role for India in each of these five circles, be it as a neighbour, as a country with one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, as an aspiring power in Asia or through international and regional forums such as the United Nations and SAARC (Mitra, 2015). Kabul has adopted a pro-active India policy, often at the cost of upsetting other stakeholders. The questions is whether Afghanistan has done its 'cost-benefit analysis' properly. Policy experts that sympathize with the Pakistani narrative on regional affairs argue that Kabul is in a losing position after accommodating India and cold-shouldering Pakistan on many fronts. One has to ask whether Kabul has made the right decisions on the policy front, especially vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. To answer this question one needs to look at Afghanistan's key strategic objectives vis-à-vis India. The following section discusses some of them.

1. Countering Pakistan's Influence

India's position in Kabul's strategic calculus is of extreme importance both experts as well as students of foreign policy analysis and international relation. It is important because Kabul defies all indications and theories of how weak states behave on the foreign policy front. Previous sections have demonstrated that Afghanistan, like any other weak state, often resorts to the 'pendulum approach' in her foreign policy behaviour. A brief look at the country's bilateral relations with the United States and Pakistan over the past sixteen years shows clear signs of either isolation or over-engagement. But when it comes to her ties with India, Afghanistan has shown a remarkable degree of strategic stability and foreign policy wisdom during the same period. So what makes India different in Afghanistan's strategic calculus? Has it got anything to do with the way India has approached Afghanistan? Has New Delhi, using pure Kautilyan tactics, withdrawn a desirable behaviour from Kabul? I asked former President Hamid Karzai about the significance of Kabul's

bilateral ties with New Delhi, and how they will be see in Pakistan. He couldn't be clearer.

> "*Our relations with India should not depend on Pakistan. We cannot leave India just because Pakistan would be upset. Pakistan cannot be our friend as long as we beg for help. India is a different story. We will have separate ties with the two. Abandoning India for Pakistan means we are giving up on our sovereignty. Pakistan does not have the right to tell me not to be friends with India. I never asked Pakistan not to be friends with China, or not to be America's slave. We didn't surrender our sovereignty to the Soviet Union, or to the US. So why would we surrender it to Pakistan?"*
>
> *Hamid Karzai*
> *Former President of Afghanistan*

This is a bold diplomatic posture, considering Afghanistan's immediate dependencies on Pakistan. First, more than two million Afghan refugees still live in Pakistan, according to UN estimates. At present the Afghan Government does not have the capability and the means to help them return to their country. In fact, Kabul is struggling with to cope with an ever growing number of 'internally displaced people'. Many of these IDPs have left their homes and villages in southern Afghanistan and taken refuge in the capital Kabul. Recent fighting in the north has also caused displacements, though much smaller in scale. Already under pressure from a domestic refugee crisis, Afghanistan is by no means ready to accommodate returnees from Pakistan. Second, seventy percent of Afghanistan's trade with the outside world takes place through Pakistan, mainly through the Karachi Port. Afghan markets, to a large extent, depend on Pakistan products. The industrial sector in Afghanistan has never been able to meet domestic demands, leaving the country in dire need to export. The agriculture sector does not provide much hope either. Afghanistan imports most of its food products from Pakistan. Given these realities one wonders whether Kabul is taking a risky gamble. But given Islamabad's unwillingness to cooperate and Kabul's current vulnerabilities and future ambitions, it is clear that India is far more important for Afghanistan than Pakistan is

Kabul is taking slow but well calculated steps to reduce its dependencies on Pakistan. On the refugees issue the Afghan Government has been putting indirect pressure on Pakistan, through international agencies such as the UN's refugee's agency (UNHCR) and Human Rights Watch, not to forcefully repatriate Afghan refugees from the country. In a recent press release the Human Rights Watch has asked Pakistani officials to prevent the illegal harassment of Afghan refugees by Pakistani police and other security forces. Such incidents have grown in number with the current ambiguity regarding the legal status of these refugees in Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, 2016). As mentioned in the previous sections Pakistan has often used the presence of Afghan refugees on its soil as a tactic to put pressure on not only Kabul but also Washington. A good example is the very recent escalation of

tensions between Islamabad and Washington after President Donald Trump's tweet accusing Pakistan of lies and deceit. Within a few days after President Trump's criticism of Pakistan's role in the ongoing War on Terror, Islamabad announced that all Afghan refugees must leave Pakistan by the end of January 2018. Policy officials in Islamabad clearly understand that repatriating around two million refugees in a month is practically impossible. Pakistan has used similar rhetoric and pressure tactics in the past two, and once has to confess that they have worked.

Afghanistan's other major frustration with Pakistan is over transit trade. The previous chapter of this thesis discusses the many agreements that were signed between the two countries in order to cooperate in the trade sector. It has also been discussed why how Pakistan has repeatedly refused to abide by those agreements, forcing Afghanistan into partial trade isolation. Pakistan has used this tactic as a policy tool and it has worked, just like the 'refugees card'. But in the past few years Afghanistan has managed to come out of trade isolation to some degree. Kabul has already started utilizing alternative trade avenues, via Central Asia and Iran. While most of these avenues are low capacity, there have been other major developments too. The Chabahar Port in southern Iran which was recently launched by the leaders of India, Iran and Afghanistan is another one such major development. As mentioned in previous chapters many have called it a potential game changer in the region. First, it gives India access to the Central Asian and European markets whilst completely bypassing Pakistan. Territorial disputes between the two countries meant Islamabad never entertained Indian efforts to access the above mentioned markets through Pakistan. Second, the Port will also end, or at least challenge China's trade hegemony in the region. Beijing is heavily investing in a similar Port in Pakistan's Gwadar. Chabahar therefore gives India the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. It is estimated that, once fully operational, the Port will bring down both costs and time by around 50% (Dayo, 2016). While the Port carries far greater strategic significance for India there is no doubt it will also come as a blessing for Afghanistan. At least in this case the country's geopolitical location seems to have come handy. Chabahar will enable Kabul to forge greater and stronger trade ties with the sub-continent and the Gulf in the south and with Central Asia and Europe in the north, all without having to worry about Pakistan.

2. Finding Alternative for US's Role

The US is keen on finding an exit strategy from the current Afghan quagmire. Both the US and NATO have already withdrawn most of their combat Forces from Afghanistan. Over the coming years Washington wants to scale-back its engagement in the country, focusing on small-scale military training and counter-insurgency objectives. But the actual military situation on the Afghan battlefield does not provide any hope for peace and stability in the country. Afghan Security Forces have so far done well to repel major attacks by the Taliban and other insurgent groups such as the so-called Islamic State. But many question whether Kabul will have the military might to continue this fight in the long run. These concerns have

given rise to the question of who will, or rather, who can replace the US militarily in Afghanistan. The US itself has repeatedly called on Afghanistan's neighbours and other regional powers to play a more dominant role in the country's political and military future. But, as many observers argue, it will be difficult for regional countries to shoulder the task of bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. Others are more hopeful, and even have suggestions. Former President Hamid Karzai, during a visit to Moscow in 2015, said that Russia should work together with China and India to stabilize Afghanistan. In his opinion, the US had failed in bringing peace to his country. It was now down to Afghanistan's regional partners to put an end to the ongoing crisis (Surkov, 2015). India once again seems to be part of Afghanistan's strategic calculus. Observers in Kabul do understand it will be impossible for India to replace the US alone, either in military or financial terms. India, at present, has neither the military capability nor the economic muscle needed to carry out Afghanistan's rebuilding mission on her own. But they argue that by engaging in broader regional efforts, and by boosting cooperation in areas such as trade, military training, intelligence sharing and capacity building India can play a far more significant role in Afghanistan (Kousary, 2016b).

Speaking of Taliban, Afghanistan has shown willingness to give India a place on the negotiating table with the insurgent group. The initial proposal was put forward, once again, by former President Hamid Karzai during a trip to New Delhi. His remarks have been discussed in detail in previous chapters. Interviews with other Afghan officials suggest the idea makes sense to many others too. Afghanistan's former ambassador in India told the author it was an option that should be looked at. However he, like many others in India, believe it will be very unlikely for India to find a place for itself in peace talks with the Taliban. A former Indian ambassador in Kabul told me New Delhi will be more than happy to sit on the negotiating table if an invitation was extended. He insisted however that both Afghanistan and the international community should not expect much from India on that front. His argument has already been explained in the previous chapters. Pakistan and China will never accommodate India in a process they want to control. Irrespective of what Washington, Beijing and Islamabad make of it, Kabul is happy to give New Delhi a greater role in the Afghan peace process. For the Afghans India's presence in peace talks with the Taliban carries much more symbolic than actual significance. Afghanistan seriously doubts Pakistan's sincerity in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. Despite pressure from international community Islamabad has refused to give up on the Taliban as a foreign policy tool. Policy elite and the military establishment in Pakistan are happy to wait and see how things develop in Afghanistan, both on the political as well as military fronts. This policy has understandably left Kabul frustrated. Afghans have no doubt that Pakistan has hijacked the peace process with the Taliban. Neither accusations nor goodwill gestures from Kabul have encouraged Pakistan to change its stance and cooperate with Afghanistan and the international community in bringing an end to the Afghan crisis. India on the other hand insists Afghanistan should both 'own and lead' the process. This is exactly the type of rhetoric Kabul needs in order to counter Pakistani influence.

3. Exploiting India's Unique Status

The details of India's development aid to Afghanistan have been discussed in the previous chapter. The scale and nature of this aid have also been explained before. Here the argument is that India is a unique aid provider in the current Afghan context. Some key reasons as to why other regional, even international partners, cannot play the same role or operate in the same way as India can in Afghanistan will also be discussed. Before setting out on any ambitious journey towards future prosperity and stability Afghanistan first needs to preserve what is already available. For this to happen Afghanistan must ensure long-term Indian engagement. This engagement is becoming even important as the international community starts to scale-back its involvement in Afghanistan and eventually withdraws. While India many not be able to match the financial generosity of Afghanistan's other donors, especially the US, there are many reasons why India can do better than even the US on the development and reconstruction front.

First, public opinion in Afghanistan is strongly in India's favour. Many of its developmental projects have been concerned with improving the lives of ordinary Afghans. Its engagement has been pretty much benign in nature. The fact that India does not have a military presence in the country has helped this cause. Opinion polls referred to earlier in this chapter suggest Afghans consider India to be their best 'international partner'. This is important. To survive and operate in a society like Afghanistan it is crucial to have the support of ordinary Afghans. It gives an aid agency or a donor a much needed breathing space. Afghanistan's Government institutions are still not fully functional, especially at provincial and district levels. This means that, in most cases, aid agencies have to deal with the local people in order to operate and complete their projects. While such a decision will have the backing of the Government in Kabul it is far less likely that officials will directly control or monitor the process of aid delivery. India therefore needs to count on low-level local support and goodwill in order to implement her developmental projects in rural Afghanistan. Importantly, this public goodwill for India is spread around the country, transcending tribal, ethnic or regional borders. This has helped India expand its activities in Afghanistan. This is a unique status for India. Many other countries involved in the current Afghan quagmire, including the US, have failed to rally 'large scale public support' for their engagement in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's other immediate neighbours also do not have such a status. Russia still has not come out of the Soviet Union's shadow in Afghanistan. Pakistan's obsession with influencing Afghanistan's internal political developments and treating Afghanistan as a part of its 'greater territory' has left a bad mark on the Afghan mind-set. China has so far shown little interest in expanding its engagements in Afghanistan beyond her own trade and economic interests.

Second, civilizational and historical ties between India and Afghanistan mean Indian aid workers operating in Afghanistan have a better understanding of the country's culture, traditions and religious sensitivities. This is one area where western countries and their militaries failed badly. A major reason for the resurgence of the Taliban after 2007 is said to be the nature of military operations by US and NATO Forces in Afghanistan. These operations were often conducted at night, in

clear violation of Afghan customs and traditions. It usually triggered a backlash, both among the Afghan people and within the Government in Kabul. Night raids by foreign forces severely damaged former President Hamid Karzai's relations with the US (Green, 2011). A better understanding of these sensitivities has clearly helped India run aid projects in Afghanistan without any major obstacles. Many in Afghanistan, irrespective of how educated they might be, speak some degree of Urdu or Hindi. This is partly because of the many decades of refugee life in Pakistan. For Indian aid workers this comes handy, as communicating and negotiating with the Afghan population and getting the message through becomes much easier. Having the second largest Muslim population itself, India also understands and appreciates the importance of religion in Afghan society. In fact New Delhi can choose to deploy Muslim aid workers in certain projects. Other donors and aid agencies do not always have this option available to them.

Third, India is able to deliver far greater services with a relatively smaller budget. India has used her financial aid in Afghanistan smartly (Mullen, 2016b). But Afghanistan can benefit from India's 'cost-efficient' strategy beyond the scope of financial aid. In fact Kabul believes India can play a major role in many of the reconstruction projects the Afghan Government wishes to complete from its own budget. At present the Afghan Government runs on minimal financial resources. This means making the best possible use of what is available. On the development and reconstruction front it is only natural for the Afghan Government to work with partners who can achieve targets within the limited financial resources. India has been tried and tested in delivering results under such circumstances. All these factors make India an ideal partner for Afghanistan. The Afghan Government understands India's special status. India has the cultural and religious know-how, the political will and, within certain parameters, the financial muscle to help Afghanistan stand back on its own feet. India has shown the ability to operate where others have failed, and has delivered what others couldn't. It is only in Afghanistan's strategic interest to maintain the current status of friendly bilateral ties with India and, at the same time, boost them further. Afghanistan can do so by allowing India a broader and deeper role in her military and economic future. The key to India's strategic success in Afghanistan would be to exploit the special status that it has in Afghanistan, and safeguard her own interests vis-à-vis Kabul.

4. Institutional and Capacity Building

In the long run it will be down to Afghanistan's own ability as a state to complete the difficult process of Institutional and capacity building. Post-conflict structural constraints in weak states can make this a daunting task, often taking decades to achieve. At the same time, social fragmentation and domestic pressures usually bring about other external constraints with them. For Afghanistan to prevent such external constraints it will be important to get things right at home first. For this to happen Afghanistan must find her own institutional capacity and human resources. This capacity is needed to not only run a state but bring it out of political and military turmoil (Ludin, 2016). Most of Afghanistan's state institutions need to be re-

established from scratch. Take the judiciary as an example. At present the Kabul Government neither has the courts nor the required number of qualified and trained judges to fully operationalize the judiciary and legal system in the country. Whatever capability and resources exist in this sector are already under enormous pressure. This imbalance between social needs and institutional services often paves the way for other menaces. In Afghanistan's case the judiciary is one of the most corrupt institutions in the country. Such institutional corruption has had a direct negative impact on the country's security. In many areas people are either unwilling or unable to seek help from Stat's judicial system. The situation is rural areas is especially concerning. People often to refer to Taliban courts to seek justice. These informal form of justice is both quick and free, making it more effective than the formal legal system. The problem for the Afghan Government is that it seriously undermines the Government's authority and control, and gives legitimacy to armed groups such as the Taliban. India is not only training Afghan judges but a huge number of young Afghans are currently studying law at different Indian universities. This future generation of young Afghans will help rebuild the country's judicial system.

The public health sector is also in crisis. More than half of the country's population still does not have access to basic healthcare services, despite billions of dollars spent by donor agencies over the past sixteen years. Majority of Afghans seeking medical treatment need to travel to neighbouring countries, often to Pakistan. In recent years a huge number of them have also started to seek healthcare services in India. This has been discussed in detail in previous sections. The legislative assemblies are also an area of concern. Many of those who find their way to the country's parliament and provincial councils are uneducated. They often lack a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Many also find their way to these assemblies through their ethnic, tribal or regional affinities. Their work and decisions are often influenced by political sympathies or opposition. For many MPs the Sharia and Koranic teachings still remain the most important sources of legal and legislative knowledge, hence making choices in light of these teachings. This ambiguity, lack of professional know-how and the very slow working rate of the law-making institutions often hinder legislative decisions, which then slows down and disrupts the work of the Government (Fleschenberg, 2009). Indian support can therefore go a long way in training a new generation of Afghan lawyers, legislators, healthcare professionals, civilian bureaucrats, security personnel and teachers. These are exactly the areas India is focussing on at present, allocating most of its scholarships to candidates wishing to pursue higher education in the above disciplines. But the current Afghan professional workforce is still modest, unable to provide key services to a population of more than 30 million people (Faizi, 2015). Afghanistan requires India's long-term commitment to help rebuild state institutions and educate and train the human workforce that will eventually run and manage these institutions. For reasons discussed earlier in this chapter India has the capacity and the know-how to undertake such a task. At the same time it has genuine strategic objectives in seeing a stable and secure Afghanistan, with a strong central Government and fully operational state institutions.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

By looking into the historical and civilizational roots of India's strategic thinking, and by highlighting the key factors that influence this thinking, this thesis has demonstrated that India indeed has a distinct strategic culture. But, as has been also demonstrated, despite having a rich strategic culture India may not always think strategically. This is partly because of her reluctance to rise up to the military expectations which are attached to her economic growth. Many in the country's strategic community are of the opinion that India will not be able to fulfil the expectations of the western world. Also, Indian strategic thought, or her military and foreign policy apparatus is isolated from external influences, and hence difficult to grasp. Even Indian think-tanks and the strategic community are kept out of the real business of 'policy making'. Hence it is more a matter of a lack of understanding or clarification regarding India's strategic culture, rather a complete absence of 'strategic thinking'. Ancient Indian Civilization, geography and the British Raj have historically shaped Indian strategic thinking. Their influences are still evident in Indian foreign policy behaviour. More contemporary sources of Indian strategic culture/ thought and their influences on India's strategic behaviour can also be highlighted. Experiences of conflicts, both at home and with her neighbours, have to a great degree determined India's position along the 'ideological spectrum' which ranges from benign pacifism to hard-core realism. Technological advancements, especially in the military sector, and economic growth at home have given India more confidence in her strategic behaviour.

By taking up India's Afghanistan policy as a case study this study has demonstrated that many aspects of India's civilizational strategic thinking still influence and shape her modern-day foreign policy, especially her Afghanistan policy. India has chosen to pursue a policy of 'relational control' rather than 'direct control' in Afghanistan. The concept of 'relational control', as explained by Maya Chadda (1997b), seeks to create a favourable strategic environment for safeguarding national interests. Using this approach India has indirectly tried to influence Afghanistan's policy options, in a way that best suits India's own strategic objectives in the country. Focusing on development aid and avoiding military entanglement are key features of a 'relational control' approach. In doing so India has gained the respect of the Afghan people and the Government. India's calculated approach has also resulted in greater trust from Washington. The US has finally shown willingness to allow India a broader role in Afghanistan, including on the military and security front. India has displayed the ability to 'think strategically' in Afghanistan. At the same time New Delhi's

engagement in Afghanistan has implications for India's greater interests in the region. India treats Afghanistan as an important part of a greater strategy, India's Grand Strategy. India's Afghanistan policy, just like the concept of Indian strategic thought itself, has both its strengths and weaknesses.

1. Strengths

This thesis has demonstrated that India's sees Afghanistan's stability in the best interest of her own security and economic interests. Sticking to the Kautilyan tradition of seeking security outside her immediate borders, India has reached out to Afghanistan in order to neutralize threats emanating from Pakistan. These threats are both military as well as economic in nature. Policy experts believe that a militarily unstable Afghanistan can once again serve as a safe haven for anti-India elements in the region. Pakistan would be quick to exploit any degree of instability in Afghanistan and use it to undermine Indian interests in the region. We have discussed why India is keen to invest in Afghanistan's Security Forces. India has not been able to play a more militaristic role in Afghanistan for structural reasons. But it is training Afghan Security Forces and has recently provided military helicopters to the Afghan Air Force. This demonstrates India's more confident strategic posture towards Afghanistan in recent years. It has also been demonstrated that this change in India's strategic behaviour is partly down to her increasing economic and military strength at home. New Delhi believes the best way to deter Pakistan from any sort of military adventurism is by pursuing a forward policy both in Afghanistan and the wider region. Kautilya suggests that a King should apply the '**Yana'** approach to foreign policy in order to discourage the enemy from aggression. The '**yana'** approach simply advises the King or the state to march on an expedition beyond its borders and seek her security interests elsewhere. By pursuing a more forward and confident policy in Afghanistan India is sending a clear message to Pakistan. India in 2018, unlike the India under Nehru's pacifist regime, has both the confidence and the ability to utilize hard power for safeguarding strategic interests.

Thematically, Indian strategic culture/ thought emphasise on notions of self-reliance and non-alignment and deterrence. Some of these notions can be traced back to India's ancient civilizational thinking, while other concepts such as non-alignment are much contemporary in nature. After the collapse of the Taliban regime India gave up on her decade long policy of siding with the anti-Pakistan elements in Afghanistan's military and political quagmire. For years India had invested in and supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban hard-liners. But since 2001 India has once again shown 'non-alignment tendencies' in her Afghanistan policy. Over the past sixteen years New Delhi has made sure it stands behind and supports the central Government in Kabul. India has also made serious efforts to build bridges with the Pashtun political elite. Observers argue that India lost the sympathy and the goodwill of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan by over-engaging with non-Pashtun ethnic and political groups. India has tried and succeeded in making amends now. Themes such as 'non-alignment' and 'self-interest' can sometimes overlap with each other, both

influencing foreign policy thinking at the same time. Kautilya, for example, greatly emphasized on the importance of 'self-interest' in politics. In his opinion a state did not need to forge permanent friendship or enmity with another state. Instead it should behave in a way that suits her interests and neutralizes long-term threats from an enemy state. Patrick Garrity (2015) argues that the current Indian policy or concept of non-alignment is actually 'a reflection of Kautilya's advice to seek self-interest first'. He argues that India has tilted towards the maxims of the Arthashastra since the end of the Cold War, and has sought to work towards her own interests more often. It has been explained that in recent years Indian has shown a willingness to even talk to the Taliban in Afghanistan in order to put an end to the current political and military crisis in that country. Though nothing significant has been achieved on this front as yet, India believes that a peaceful solution to the Afghan quagmire will only serve her own trade and economic interests in the region. For many in New Delhi, talking to the Taliban therefore makes sense.

Another strength of India's current Afghanistan policy is that it is very much aid driven. Kautilya strongly argued in favour of using gits and compensation if it could serve the King's interests. He believed that, under certain circumstances, such a policy could be more beneficial than resorting to military force. The study has demonstrated that, due to structural constraints, India could not play a more militarist role in Afghanistan over the past decade or so. While New Delhi ignored Afghanistan's demands for greater military aid, she generously donated billions of dollars towards Afghanistan's reconstruction. By doing so India has not only won the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and their Government, but has also gained the trust of the international community. For many years the United States was wary of allowing India to play a broader role in Afghanistan. But New Delhi showed strategic patience and stuck to the cause. That strategic patience finally starting to pay off. In recent years high-ranking US officials have repeatedly called on India to play a more dominant role in Afghanistan's future. In the event of a potential military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States can count on India as a stabilizing force in Afghanistan. India's financial aid and developmental projects inside Afghanistan has also reinforced her positive image among the Afghan people. Unlike the billions of dollars spent by western countries, India has spent her money wisely in Afghanistan. She has invested in projects that have an immediate impact on the lives of ordinary Afghans.

Another aspect of India's civilizational strategic culture is the emphasis on intellectual power. Kautilya argues that states intellectual power, or the collective wisdom of its people, is important for safeguarding strategic interest as hard power or military strength. In Kautilya's opinion intellectuals play an important role in shaping foreign policy. But the same can be true for a rival or neighbouring state. Sticking to the Kautilyan traditions India has invested heavily in Afghanistan's educational sector in recent years. New Delhi believes that the future generation of Afghanistan, especially the educated elite, will determine the country's future by choosing their friends and enemies. India has a strong desire to invest in Afghanistan's future elite. She is providing thousands of university scholarships to Afghan students every year. These young men and women go to India and study a

variety of subjects, from law to journalism, healthcare to politics and international relations and so on. By speaking to a number of young Afghans who went and studied in India the study has demonstrated in the previous chapter that most of them return with a very positive image of India. Surveys have shown that Afghans consider India their best regional partner and neighbour. By investing in Afghanistan's educational sector India is also neutralizing the threat of extremism and religious fundamentalism. Such threats often emanate from the religious madrassas inside Pakistan. Hundreds of thousands of young Afghans attend these religious madrassas every year. Once enrolled, these young men are often at risk of being radicalised. Many of them develop serious anti-Indian sentiments during this time. Both the Afghan Government and the international community have repeatedly expressed concerns about the radicalization of young Afghans in Pakistani madrassas. These religious institutions, many of which are not registered and operate without any legal jurisdiction, provide military manpower to insurgent groups both in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Many Afghans send their children to these madrassas due to a lack of formal educational institutions inside Afghanistan, and not out of choice. For decades now Pakistan has been playing a dangerous game with the religious extremists coming out of these madrassas. These elements not only go and wage war against India and Afghanistan but have also targeted religious minorities inside Pakistan (Thames, 2014). India has tried hard over the past sixteen years to change this situation. By building schools inside Afghanistan, India is actively preventing a future generation of Afghans from being brainwashed and poisoned with the Pakistani narrative of religious fundamentalism and anti-India rhetoric.

2. Weaknesses

Strategic caution and confusion is another aspect of India's contemporary strategic behaviour. Her Afghanistan policy since 2001 also shows symptoms of strategic confusion. Unlike other regional players involved in the Afghan quagmire India does not have any direct contacts with the Taliban insurgent. Over my numerous discussions with Indian diplomats and foreign policy experts I hardly heard anything from them on the subject. This is one front where India has lost ground to Pakistan. Even Russia and China are ahead of New Delhi. We have discussed that, in recent years, Russia has shown a willingness to engage with the Taliban in order to form a joint coalition against a newly emerging enemy in the region, the so called Islamic State. China has been an active member of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group tasked with holding peace talks with the Afghan Taliban. China has even initiated shuttle diplomacy between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran is often accused of have links with the Taliban insurgents. The Islamic State poses a similar threat to Iranian interests too. It is only natural for Tehran to back the Taliban against a much deadlier enemy. India, for a variety of reasons, has lagged behind. Former Indian diplomats have time and again emphasized on the fact that the movement is directly influenced by the military establishment in Pakistan. However, they do say whether India has ever made serious effort to engage with the Taliban.

Former Indian ambassador to Kabul Rakesh Sood believes India would be willing to accept a seat on the negotiating table with the Taliban if she was invited to. Given the current circumstances on the ground such an invitation may not be coming any time soon. India, he argues, should therefore also look for other avenues in order to establish some sort of contact with the Taliban. Observers such as Farooq Wani (2014) argue that India is still wary engaging with the Taliban. He believes that the group's operational success has a direct impact on the situation in Jammu & Kashmir. Taliban sympathizers who are active in Kashmir are no longer simply interested in independence. In fact, their aim now seems to be the establishment of a sharia system there, an agenda which has striking similarity with what the Taliban and other groups such as ISIS have been asking for. Some Indian policy elite are also under the influence of Nehru's pacifism, still. For them, it is morally incorrect for India to engage with a militant groups that has terrorized the region for years. Such beliefs and perceptions, and foreign policy contradictions have undermined India's strategic significance in the Afghan political and military quagmire. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, India holds a special place in Afghanistan's strategic calculus. She enjoys the sort of trust, both from the Afghan Government and the people that no other regional country has ever enjoyed. While Kabul is wary and critical of links between the Taliban and neighbours such as Pakistan and Iran, few eyebrows will be raised if New Delhi also tried to establish some sort of contact. High ranking Afghan officials have themselves demanded that India be included in the peace process. Former President Hamid Karzai made this very clear on numerous occasions. India, instead of waiting for an invitation to arrive, must make her own efforts to become part of the Afghan peace process. This could be the first step towards establishing some kind of a direct contact with the insurgent group.

Also, Indian policy elite are still not comfortable talking about the country's strategic priorities and interests. There is an unnecessary tradition of secrecy or silence when it comes to Indian's foreign policy behaviour in certain countries. The same goes for her Afghanistan policy. High-ranking Indian officials were wary of discussing India's trade and economic interests in Afghanistan. They were also deliberately underestimating the Pakistani factor in India's Afghanistan policy. I talked to former Indian ambassador Rajiv Dogra for the purpose of this thesis. He has also written extensively on India-Afghanistan relations. He emphasized that India's role in Afghanistan was one purely based on goodwill towards the Afghan people. I asked him about Pakistan's spoiler role, and the extent to which the Pakistani factor influences India's Afghanistan policy. He, and many other Indian diplomats refused to admit that Pakistan was a major factor in India's Afghanistan policy. Indian policy experts and independent analysts on the other hand are very clear about both India's strategic objectives in Afghanistan and her ambition to become a regional power broker. During my interviews with a number of these analysts I often came across terms such as 'rising power' and 'Central Asian energy resources'. Unlike Indian diplomats, foreign policy experts in the country seem to have a clear idea of where India wants to be, and how it is trying to get there. They openly admit the severity of the Pakistan threat facing Indian strategic interests in Afghanistan and the wider region. This contradiction in Indian rhetoric reinforces the argument made in previous chapters. Indian foreign policy elite are an isolated group

of technocrats, diplomats are politicians who are often wary of any sort of external influence on their job. They do not openly discuss the country's foreign policy priorities and objectives. Indian foreign policy experts and think-tanks find it hard to engage with the actual policy making apparatus in New Delhi. As discussed already, the same is true when it comes to India's strategic objectives and her foreign policy rhetoric vis-a-visa Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Foreign Policy Behaviour

As discussed in previous chapters two major factors drive Afghanistan's current foreign policy agenda. First and foremost Afghanistan strives for security and peace. Second the country wants to boost economic growth and end her reliance on foreign aid. Kabul as well as her allies cannot afford to lose the war against terror. Afghanistan simply cannot afford to become a safe haven for regional and international militant groups again. Threats emanating from Afghanistan are now a regional and international concern rather than just an Afghan issue. The isolate Afghanistan as it did in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Terrorist groups hiding and training in Afghanistan have threatened the security and economic interests of other nations in distant parts of the world. Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours are in no position to fight terrorism alone. They not only lack military and economic capability to fight this war on their own, there is also a lack of will to take decisive action against militant groups among some of Afghanistan's neighbours. Second, Afghanistan wishes to encourage regional trade and boost economic growth at home. Kabul knows it cannot rely on foreign aid forever. The country has remained in a state of war for more than three decades now. Such a prolonged conflict has destroyed all pillars of the country's economy. The international community and donor agencies have taken an active part in Afghanistan's economic development since the War on Terror began in late 2001. At present foreign aid counts for almost 90% percent of Afghanistan's annual budget.

A recent survey conducted by the Asia Foundation identifies the US, Germany, Japan and India as the four largest financial donors to Afghanistan. India, being the smallest donor out of the four, has contributed $2 billion to the war torn country (Asia Foundation, 2011). A US Senate report published in 2011 shows that US foreign aid to Afghanistan had reached $18.8 billion by then. This aid played an important role in increasing the number of children in schools and improving the health sector. The report states that US aid is mostly spent on projects which are 'necessary, achievable and sustainable'. Since then the US has spent billions of dollars ore in Afghanistan. This aid is crucial for building basic state capacities in Afghanistan. The World Bank has time and again warned international donors against cutting foreign aid to Afghanistan. Any such cuts, the Banks warns, can destabilize the country and leave the government in Kabul unable to provide basic services and pay its police officers and soldiers. In 2011 the World Bank and the Afghan Ministry of Finance estimated that the Government in Kabul will need up to $7 billion per year for at least another decade in order to

cover the expenditure on security forces, basic services and development projects (Partlow, 2011).

Out of Afghanistan's top ten donors, India is the only regional country to have pledged any genuine financial support to the Government in Kabul. Financial pledges and actual aid from other regional countries, including Iran and Pakistan, have been minimal so far. This shows for itself the lack of regional interest or capacity in terms of foreign financial aid to the country. It clearly indicates that the key to Afghanistan's financial stability and future economic growth is outside the region. In the absence of this crucial financial aid, Afghanistan will not be able to meet even some of its very basic needs. All the basic services provided by the government, including health, education, reconstruction, agriculture, infrastructure rebuilding and most importantly security depends directly on foreign aid. Current Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has time and again spoken about his economic plan for the future of his country. As discussed in previous chapters there is great potential for Afghanistan to exploit its geopolitical position and benefit from regional economic cooperation. But any such future regional cooperation will not happen overnight. It will take at least another decade for Afghanistan to gain revenues from the mega economic projects discussed in the previous chapter. For the time being, the harsh reality is that foreign aid makes up to 90% of Afghanistan's annual budget. The bulk of this aid from non-regional donor countries, which proves that multilateralism and international cooperation remain the most sensible foreign policy options for Afghanistan. While there is ambition as well as potential in Kabul to boost economic growth, the current security crisis in the country has overshadowed all other domestic and foreign policy priorities.

On the foreign policy front Afghanistan has shown signs of strategic confusion as well as stability over the past sixteen years. We have discussed how bilateral relations with the US and Pakistan have gone from one extreme to another. Afghanistan has demonstrated both isolation as well as over-engagement in her foreign policy behaviour towards the US and Pakistan. These are well known signs of strategic behaviour in weak states. But at the same time, and despite being a weak state, Afghanistan has demonstrated a remarkable degree of strategic stability in her India policy over the past sixteen years. Despite both structural and domestic constraints the two constraints the two countries have done well to remain engaged. This engagement is multi-dimensional in nature, taking place at many different levels. On government-to-government levels the two countries have established cordial ties since 2001. At the same time India is finally seeking a broader and deeper military role in Afghanistan. People-to-people ties are also centuries old. It has been demonstrated that Kabul has clear strategic objectives vis-à-vis India. It has clearly identified the areas where it needs Indian support. Kabul counts on New Delhi in its efforts to counter Pakistani influence in its internal affairs. Afghanistan has even shown a willingness to accommodate India in the ongoing peace talks with the Taliban. This is a bold step given the sensitivities of some other countries involved in this process, especially China and Pakistan. Afghanistan also sees an important role for India once the international community scales down its operations

in Afghanistan and western military forces withdraw. Kabul wishes to see India join hands with other regional stakeholders in bringing stability to Afghanistan. The Afghan Government is happy with the nature of India's engagement with Afghanistan. The view in Kabul is that India can deliver on many of the fronts where other donor countries and agencies have failed. Afghanistan understands and appreciates India's role rebuilding Afghan state institutions and strengthening the Government's capacity and ability to run the affairs of the state.

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APPENDICES:

1. ***Transcript of interview with Hamid Karzai, former President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Full interview transcript. (London, May 2016)***

Q	*How did you manage to strike a balance in Afghanistan's ties with Indian and with Pakistan? Did you ever try to balance these two countries?*
A	Our relationship with India should not be looked at from a Pakistani angle. We cannot take our hands off India just because we want to befriend Pakistan. I don't think Pakistan's words can be taken seriously. They will never be friends without a hidden purpose. India is just an excuse. We will establish our own separate ties with India and Pakistan. If we fear Pakistan and therefore limit our ties with India then we have given up our sovereignty.
Q	*But Pakistan did ask you to limit your ties with India. It was one of their conditions for cooperation.*
A	Yes. They made this demand from the very first day. And I refused to accept it from the very first day. I have never asked Pakistan to stop her friendship with China. I have never asked them to stop being American slaves. Is Pakistan America's agent or not? They have been American agents for sixty years. They gave Islam a bad image because of their friendship with the Americans. So Pakistan does not have the right to tell us what to do with our friends. This is about our sovereignty. We didn't give this right to the Soviet Union. We didn't give it to the Americans. Why would we give it to Pakistan then? If we want to be a sovereign nation then we shouldn't listen to anyone. But if we want to be American slaves too then we would do whatever Pakistan says. So we are to take our hands off one country in order to befriend another then why not make friends with the Americans? Why not befriend China? What can Pakistan give us? Nothing? They have destroyed our country. They destroyed our culture. They flamed ethnic divisions in Afghanistan. They have been our obvious enemies. They have killed our people.
Q	*How much can we expect from India in the military sector. Do you think they can equip us to a degree where we can then take care of our own security?*
A	We do not expect anything from India. We should give up this mentality. We should not make friendship with others so that they can defend us. As long as we are dependent on others we will never be secure. We should establish broader ties with other countries. Within that broader framework we should safeguard our interests, just like we used to in the past. This was the case in the days of Zahir Shah and Daud Khan, even during the regimes of Khalq and Parcham. We had a regime back then. We cannot leave ourselves to the mercy of India. This is not possible. We will build our canals, we will improve our agriculture, and we will

	build our country. We will cut our coat according to our cloth. Our friendship should be based on strategic partnership and interests. India cannot give us everything we want. They will not undermine their own interests for us. No country will do so. So we should give up this mentality and take care of ourselves. If anyone wants to be friends with us, they are most welcome.
Q	*But how do you break the deadlock. Terrorism happens in Afghanistan. Pakistan denies involvement. This has continued for fifteen years. The Afghan President even goes to Rawalpindi and lays flowers at the military academy. But nothing changes. Don't you think there is a need for a U-turn?*
A	No, there is no need for a U-turn. Let me tell you about the deadlock. Pakistan has been using India's presence in Afghanistan as an excuse for the past fifteen years. But what about the period before that? There was no India in Afghanistan fifteen years ago? Did Pakistan cooperate with us then? Why did they destroy our country during the Taliban era? Why did they hurt us during the Mujahideen regime? Pakistani Army came and made camp in Kunduz. Were they fighting Indians there? The Americans came after 9/11 and later allowed the Pakistani Army to evacuate via aircrafts. At that time India didn't even have an embassy in Afghanistan. They reality is Pakistan considers Afghanistan a part of her territory. Pakistan wants to use Afghanistan as a base against India. They will not give up on this policy as long as we are weak.
Q	*So you believe in Pakistan's strategic depth theory?*
A	Absolutely. Strategic depth is a reality. It is one of the reasons why I didn't sign the bilateral security agreement with the United States. The Americans will not help us stand up to Pakistan. They wanted bases inside Afghanistan but they didn't equip us enough so we could secure ourselves.
Q	*Question posed by another BBC colleague:* *You said we should stand our own feet and build our country. We couldn't do so with all the financial aid in the past fourteen years. Do you see any hope for the future?*
A	Yes, I do. Our made as much progress in fourteen years as possible. Imagine a child who is born today. In fourteen years' time he or she will be finishing school. That is what has happened in Afghanistan too. Do you know how long it took the United States to stand on her own feet? In the beginning of my term as President I used to push former US President George Bush for aid in all sectors. I used to ask him to build us roads and dams and this and that. One day he told me, 'Do you know it took us 350 years to build our country?'

2. ***Transcript of interview with Aimal Faiz, former spokesman to the ex-Afghan President Hamid Karzai: Not the full transcript. (From London via telephone, December 2016).***

Q	*How do you see Afghanistan's bilateral relations with India in the post-9/11 scenario? What are the important features of this relationship?*
A	The history is still alive and it is in front of you. Politically India and Afghanistan were close even during the days of the Afghan Jihad. But let us come to your question and talk about it in a post-9/11 scenario. There are a few important factors here. Starting with the collapse of Dr. Najibullah's Government in 1992 and all the way until the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the period of the Afghan civil war was not a good one for India. Indian officials thought that Pakistan had full control over Afghan affairs and did not give India breathing space in Afghanistan. So this period, from the end of Najibullah's Government to the fall fo the Taliban regime proved to be a difficult one for India. During the days of the Taliban India backed the Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masood both financially and politically. Those in New Delhi thought that Pakistan was using the Pashtoons in Afghanistan for their own good. It was therefore a natural choice for India to back the opposition which, in this case, were the Northern Alliance. At the time this seemed to be the only option as well. But fortunately the fall of the Taliban regime gave India a golden opportunity in Afghanistan. It was important for India to take this opportunity which came after so many years. It was essential for New Delhi to start establishing some influence in Afghanistan and once again have diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. The decisions made in the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan did help India in a way. Many of the major ministries in the interim Afghan Government were given to the Northern Alliance. These included the ministries of defence, interior and foreign affairs. India, having lost-standing ties with the Northern Alliance therefore found it easier to establish its diplomatic ties with Kabul and have some degree of influence over Afghan affairs. Another factor that helped India was the person who was eventually chosen to lead the interim and then the transitional Government in Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai, though a Pashtoon, had studied in India and had a very positive opinion about the country. So this was another golden opportunity for India to establish stronger ties with Afghanistan. I think Karzai's presence was important, starting with the interim and transitional Governments and then during his presidency all the way until 2014. So let me come back to your question on what factors have influenced India's relationship with Afghanistan over the past decade or sol. I think both these

	factors, I mean the coming to power of the Northern Alliance in the first few years and the leadership of President Karzai helped India find its feet in Afghanistan.
Q	*Than you Mr. Faizi. You mentioned an important point about India taking the chance that was provided to her in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. Let us say, hypothetically, that the Northern Alliance had not received some of the important ministries that you mentioned earlier, and let us assume that Hamid Karzai had not studied in India. Do you still think India would have been as courageous in grabbing the new opportunity as it was in 2001?*
A	I am sure it would have been the same case. I said those two factors were 'important' but they are not the only factors. First of all, people-to-people ties between India and Afghanistan are strong and have a long history. These relations are important and play as a major factor. Although we do not share a border with India but the people of the two countries have always been very close to each other. Second, they had the Northern Alliance in power and third Mr. Karzai had close ties with India. So let me come back to your question. Do I think India would have acted as courageously as it did if these factors were not available? I think she would have. Remember that Afghanistan's geographical local is very important for India. After 14 years it is very much possible that some of the European countries will drag their feet out of the Afghan war and Afghanistan as a whole. The United States has come here with a long-term plan but India also cannot ignore or get out of Afghanistan. It is because of Afghanistan's geographical location which as I said is very important for India. Other countries can reduce their aid and change their policies towards Afghanistan. But India cannot do so for geostrategic reasons. For instance if Pakistan starts to increase its influence or even control over Afghan affairs then it will once again created the same problems for India as before. India sees Pakistan as a threat. So security is also a major factor here. It is because of this fear of Pakistan that India cannot abandon Afghanistan. Instead I believe it will try to find its feet and establish even stronger ties with Afghanistan.
Q	*Thank you. Let me briefly ask you whether you think India has learned anything from its past experiences. Do you think New Delhi now, instead of investing in individuals or groups and securing their national interests through them, has started establishing closer ties with the central Government in Afghanistan now?*
A	Let me clarify something about my previous remarks. I did not mean to say

	that India traditionally or historically did not have good ties with the Pashtoons in Afghanistan. That is not the case. What I was referring to was a specific time period in which India had to rely on certain individuals or groups in order to secure her interests in Afghanistan. The reason for this was purely political, and not because India did not like the Pashtoons. India did her calculation of the Afghan crisis during the days of the Taliban regime. They concluded that both the Taliban and other Pashtoons dominated groups in Afghanistan, like the Hezb-e-Islami and others, where under the influence of or controlled by Pakistan. They needed to find a counter-force which had some degree of influence among the Afghan people and cold also fight. The only such option on the table was the Northern Alliance. So it was more out of necessity rather than choice. However, with the emergence of Hamid Karzai as the new leader the situation changed once again. In his presence India was once again able to establish ties with the Pashtoons in Afghanistan. I mentioned some factors earlier which helped India do so. Karzai was studied in India, he had lived there and he was a Pashtoon. So his presence helped in the revival of the historical relationship that India enjoyed with the Pashtoons in Afghanistan. As I said this relationship was weakened during a specific time-period.
Q	*Thank you Mr. Faizi. I asked that question deliberately because I wanted to highlight that most of the literature that one comes across is misleading to a degree. The reality is, as you mentioned, that India has always had good ties with the Pashtoons but there was a period when she did not have any options available to her on the ground in Afghanistan and hence this relationship was weakened. Anyways, let me come to my next question. How much can Afghanistan expect from India? At present it looks like a gamble, a balancing act. Perhaps Afghanistan's major demands will be security related. India has promised a few things and there are positive signs. But no major step has been taken in this regard yet. Do you think India is still wary of provoking Pakistan? Do you think Pakistan is still part of India's calculation when it comes to Afghanistan?*
A	This was India's official policy during the previous (Congress) Government. I mean India did not want to do anything in Afghanistan that would provoke Pakistan. New Delhi did not want any sort of unrest in Kashmir or terror attacks on Indian soil. At the same time India did not want an increase in attacks on its diplomatic establishments in Afghanistan, like Indian Embassy and its Consulates. India is also involved in many reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. That is why the previous Government under Manmohan Singh was very cautious about this issue. I remember we had many important meetings with the previous national security advisor to the Indian PM. Mr. Spanta (Afghan National Security Advisor to President Karzai) and the President (Karzai) himself tried hard to encourage India play a broader role

	in Afghanistan. Afghanistan wanted India to expand her training of the Afghan Security Forces. Kabul also wanted New Delhi to provide heavy weaponry in military aid, besides the light ammunition that was given to Kabul at the time. But India's previous national security advisor was very cautious about this topic. His advice to Prime Minster Singh was to be very careful in Afghanistan. He did not want to provoke Pakistan because he believed there will be a significant increase on Indian targets both in India and in Afghanistan. This is one reason why India previously did not help a lot in the military sector. It wasn't because she did not want to. India did want to help but couldn't do so because of those concerns. There were others things as well. For instance the United States did not want India to help Afghanistan militarily. With the current Government in India things have changed a bit. Let us talk about the military gunship helicopters that India provided to Afghanistan. This was not an easy decision. A lot of work had to be done behind the scenes. India herself does not manufacture these helicopters. They are Russian made. There were prolonged discussions between India and Russia in order for Moscow to agree and allow the helicopters to be given to Afghanistan. I believe that the current Indian Government does want to help Afghanistan in the military sector. Remember that the United States was against the supply of military gunships helicopters to Afghanistan. They did not want India to help in this sector. But despite that India purchased the helicopters from Russia and gave them to Afghanistan. The actual shipment of the helicopters will take place very soon. The money has been paid and all documentation is ready and complete. The final delivery is just a matter of time. This is a hope and a sign that the current Government will not follow the policy of the previous one. Also, the current Indian national security advisor is an active person and he has a deep knowledge of Afghan and Pakistani affairs. His stance regarding regional politics and the fight against terrorism is different. So the whole policy of the current Government seems to be different. So let us wait and see what other steps the Modi Government can take in regards to Afghanistan. Indian help in other sectors is very obvious and I am sure you know all about it. It has done a lot to help Afghanistan over the past decade. Let us go back to 2001. The first financial aid of $500 million was given to Afghanistan by India. At the time that money was crucial for an Afghan Government that had just risen from the ashes. President Karzai really appreciated this. He knew that India, traditionally, was not a country capable of major financial donations but that aid in 2001 was really important. From then on a sequence of financial aid started. So let me come back to your question. The current Government does want to help Afghanistan despite fears of provoking Pakistan.

	But there are different problems facing India right now. New Delhi is not a hundred percent sure about President Ghani's Government. They were much more confident dealing with the previous Afghan Government. That confidence has unfortunately gone down a bit. The reason for this, I believe, is that the current Afghan Government and the President are giving mixed signals in relations to Pakistan. Both the Afghan people and India find these signals a bit confusing. For example in the beginning President Ghani got really close to Pakistan. He wanted to work with Islamabad. But then in August there was a hundred-and-eighty degrees change in his stance because he realized that Pakistan was not cooperating. Now again, during his recent trip to Pakistan, he has changed his stance again. This confusion does not help anyone. No one understands what he really wants. There is also another problem here. What President Ghani and his Government are doing right now is not entirely out of choice. In reality the United States and Britain are asking me to cooperate with and get closer to Pakistan once again. Now these things may not be obvious to the public. But India has a proper understanding of affairs in the region and knows what factors influence President Ghani's decision making vis-à-vis Pakistan. To cut a long story short the current confusion created by the Afghan Government and the mixed signals it has been giving have not gone down well in India. New Delhi is not confident enough. But it does want to help Afghanistan and cooperate in different sectors.
Q	*Foreign policy takes years to establish. Securing national interests and maintaining good relations with neighbours is not always ready. The Afghan Government did some work on this area since 2001, especially when it comes to dealing with India. Some of the Indian commentators that often discuss Afghanistan do believe that New Delhi has somewhat cold-shouldered Kabul. Do you think there is a risk that all the good work of the previous fourteen years might go in vain?*
A	I referred to this in my answer to one of your previous questions too. India has to continue helping Afghanistan and trying to establish its influence in the country to whatever extent it may be possible. It does not have another alternative. There is no other choice. I mentioned earlier that other countries have a choice. They can leave Afghanistan when they want to, though most of them are looking up to the United States and waiting to see what Washington decides to do about Afghanistan. But India does not have that choice. India has to stay in Afghanistan irrespective of the presence or absence of the United States or NATO. As long as there is Pakistan India will need to stick to Afghanistan. This will be the case even if we have a Pakistan friendly regime in Kabul, or even if a future Afghan Government does not want to engage a lot with India. India will try her best to engage and stay in

	touch. There will be problems of course. Pakistan will try to block India's efforts to spread its influence in Afghanistan. The current Afghan Government also does not have a stable policy towards India. But all this will not stop India. India simply cannot turn away from Afghanistan.

3. Transcript of Interview with Dr. Shaida Abdali, Afghanistan's ambassador in New Delhi. Not full transcript (from London via telephone, 8 June 2016)

Q	*Why do you think Afghanistan has failed to institutionalize its foreign policy?*
A	There are a number of reasons for it. Your question is really interesting because when I was working as the deputy national security advisor I tried to establish a national security policy that would drive our foreign policy. We brought together 26 different Government agencies. For a period of almost six months we worked on the country's national security policy. The aim was to document the policy, get it signed by the President and then mark clear guidelines for how Afghanistan should treat each region. The problem is that it's difficult for countries which face daily security challenges to have a stable or permanent security policy. Anyhow, we prepared a draft document. However, as I said earlier, in countries facing serious security challenges the situation can change on a daily basis. Therefore it is not possible to have a permanent policy. However we did manage to identify some of the basic features of our security policy. Then came the new Government. I talked to the new National Security Advisor Atmar some time back and he said he was working on the same document which we had prepared. So I agree that a Government should have clear policy guidelines. However, depending on the situation on the ground such a policy document should constantly be reviewed. In other countries such a review takes place every time the Government changes. For us it would be necessary to review our policy constantly, based on evolving political and security situation particularly in the region. If changes need to be made then they should be made.
Q	*Afghanistan and India signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2011. Do you see any potential in this document? Do you think it can turn into a more serious and long-term partnership?*
A	I was working at the National Security Council when this agreement was signed. Afghanistan has always been cautious about signing such documents in the past. But when it comes to India there is a lot of trust between the two countries. In other cases we were always a bit fearful. I remember that the National Security Council passed the document on the first day when it was presented to us. The reason for this was the trust between us and India. This document highlights some of the basic features or principles of our bilateral ties with India. However this is a document about our strategic partnership with one single country, and hence it cannot represent a country's general and broader foreign policy. It is a strong document I have to say, and as a Government official I carry out my duties within the framework of that document.
Q	*When I talked to former Indian ambassadors in Kabul and some Indian academics they pointed to some constraint factors which prevented India from playing a more confident role in Afghanistan. For example they mentioned Pakistan, the United States' unwillingness to give India a broader role in Afghanistan. Does Afghanistan also face such constraint factors in her relations with India?*

A	Unfortunately the situation is like that. Many countries of the world are active in Afghanistan in the form of a coalition. The situation in Afghanistan is very unique. There were pressures on the Government in regards to our foreign policy. I have to say that the previous Government was more independent in her foreign policy affairs than the present one. When we wanted to do something we did it despite outside pressure. Now it's a different situation. It's not like a few years ago. It is obvious then that some of that stuff that happens in terms of foreign policy decisions is because of the pressure from other countries. Our foreign policy is under the influence of other countries, especially the United States. There are also sensitivities between us and other countries in the region. We have to take these factors into account when devising our foreign policy.
Q	*You mentioned the difference between the previous and the current Afghan Governments in terms of foreign policy. There was a 180 degrees change in Afghanistan's India policy when the current Government took office. It kind of made India concerned. Although things have gone back to normal now but do you think Indians still have any concerns regarding Afghanistan's foreign policy behaviour?*
A	Since this is an academic interview I will be very frank. The new Government completely changed our India policy in the beginning. There were reasons for this. Our friendship with India is strong and stable. But efforts were made to bring Pakistan on board as well. Pakistan obviously has concerns regarding India's role in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government wanted to assure the Pakistani and seek their cooperation for the purpose of bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. But unfortunately we have not seen any change or improvement over the past two years. We could not defuse the sensitivities in Pakistan. In fact the situation has worsened. Some of our neighbours have basic concerns regarding Afghanistan. Those concerns are still there. Things have changed in terms of our ties with India too. Some of the issues which were peripheral in the past are now being mentioned more clearly now. But unfortunately such is the situation in Afghanistan. Our policy preferences change. As for India I can say that our partnership with them is extremely important. This, however, should not come at the cost of us disengaging ourselves from our other neighbours. India's assistance has been very crucial for Afghanistan, both in the economic and other sectors. I believe we should have stable and strong ties with India.

4. ***Transcript of interview with Rakesh Sood, former Indian ambassador in Kabul: Not the full transcript (from London via telephone, 6 June 2016).***

Q	*In September last year former President Hamid Karzai said India should be part of the four-nation process tasked with starting peace talks with the Taliban. Many in India believe it is only rhetorical, and that Pakistan and China will never accommodate India in that process. My question is whether India herself is willing to be part of it, and whether she has the capacity to do something positive.*
A	First of all we have always maintained that it is to be an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. In that sense it is for the Afghan Government and authorities to tell us that they would like us to be present. And I am sure that if they invited us then we will be present at these talks. However, because we have made it very clear that it should be an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process therefore we cannot tell them 'please give us a seat at the table'. That is a very clear difference here. Secondly, if we look at the quadrilateral make-up of this process (US, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan) it is very clear, and my Afghan friends have informally told me, that they are in a minority of 1. So clearly there is a sense of unease, which is why the Afghan Government has been talking from time to time about making this process broader. They were also very keen on getting a road-map for the quad, a road-map which laid certain responsibilities on part of the Pakistanis. The responsibility was that not only Pakistan will bring people to the table but also, if certain elements refused to come to the table, the Pakistani authorities will take action against them.
Q	*And is it true Mr. Ambassador that the United States itself is not clear about what role it wants India to play in Afghanistan? Have you felt like that?*
A	I think the US is clear about what role it does not want India to play. It does not want India to play a role that would increase Pakistan's nervousness. And I think that is about it. Short of that I think the US will encourage India to play a role because India is perceived in a positive sense and has played a constructive role. That is where the difference is. In any case, the US at present is interested in ensuring that the situation remains stable. There is going to be a change of administration in Washington at the end of this year or in early January next year. So the US's primary interest at this stage is that the situation does not spin out of control.
Q	*And the second part of my first question was whether India had the potential and capacity to play a positive role if given a place at the table during peace talks.*
A	India can certainly play a positive role but we do not have the same influence on the Taliban. Their families and leadership are not living in Mumbai or other Indian cities. Sartaj Aziz said Pakistan had certain level of influence over the Taliban. They had accommodation there and received medical care and their families were there. We don't have that but we can certainly help in bringing a certain amount of weight to the table because we have the experience of negotiating with insurgent movements in India. How do we go about giving up arms, giving up hostility, giving up on violence and coming on board. I mean these are things which we have dealt with successfully within our own country.

Q	*India's energy needs make a main part of her Afghanistan policy. How important do you think projects such as TAPI can be? Do you think Afghanistan is the best route for India to reach Central Asia?*
A	Iran and Afghanistan are the optimal routes for us to reach Central Asia. Of course if relations with Pakistan were normal then the land route via Pakistan would be the easiest and the shortest to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia. But since Pakistan has made obstacles we have to look at it via Iran. So you have the international North-South Corridor and you have the Chabahar Port which goes through Zaranj and Delaram in Afghanistan and all the way to Hairatan.
Q	*And many say that Chabahar and TAPI can be potential game changers. Is this pure over-excitement or do you see enough potential in such projects?*
A	Well, there is a lot of potential in Chabahar and you cannot deny that. But whether or not it will be a game changer depends on how efficiently we implement the project. When I say we, I mean both India and Iran together.
Q	*A lot of the good work that you just mentioned seemed to have been wasted within the first few months of President Ghani's coming to power. He seemed to be tilted more towards Pakistan, and he had his reasons of course. But how much did that period damage India-Afghanistan relations, and are you still concerned about some of his diplomatic postures?*
A	I think President Ghani knew one thing and it was very clear. His election did not have the same degree of legitimacy because the election results were never announced. What happened was that, with US mediation, a post for a CEO was created and this kind of an arrangement was done. So that legitimacy which comes from a solid electoral victory was in fact missing. President Ghani knew that at the end of 2016 was a US election and he had two years to see if he could cement himself. He had to achieve certain things, and the most important of them was security. That is why he tried really hard in 2014 to reassure Pakistan and its Army Chief to kick-start the peace talks. Two things happened in 2015. The Taliban did not listen to his requests and started a strong military offensive. Second, though peace talks began, Ghani wanted those talks to have the authority of Mullah Omar. But it turned out that Mullah Omar had died two years ago. So the peace talks derailed. With Mullah Omar dead the NDS requested the Pakistanis to please not have another Amir. But Mullah Mansour designated himself as the new Amir-ul-Momineen. I think it was clear last year that President Ghani had lost his trust in Pakistan. What had happened by then was that he had moved so forward in pleasing Pakistan that he had lost domestic support. I mean his compulsions were such that he could not carry the country with him in terms of the overtures that he had made towards Pakistan. It also strained the National Unity Government because I don't think the CEO Dr. Abdullah was on board in many of these initiatives. This year again you can see that the Taliban have launched their spring offensive and Mullah Mansour has been killed in a drone strike. It is quite clear that the Americans knew they could not get the peace process started with Mullah Mansour. So the situation is starting all over again. The message to Pakistan is quite clear. You either bring these guys to the negotiating table or we start carrying out drone strikes.

5. Transcript of interview with Jawed Ludin, former Afghan diplomat and advisor to ex-President Hamid Karzai (From London visa telephone, February 2016)

Q	*Can you talk me through the main features of Afghanistan-India relations over the past fifteen years? Is it all about financial and military aid? What other issues tie us together? Also, why has Afghanistan failed to devise and document a stable India policy over the years? Is it just an academic failure or is the Government to blame for the lack of a coherent policy document on India/*
A	Thank you brother. Let me make one important point first. I think you were trying to say earlier that most of the work regarding Afghanistan-India relations has been either done by Indians or by westerners. This might be true when it comes to written or documented academic work. But let us not forget that sometimes governmental policies and related activities are also part of the same process of devising foreign policy. So I agree that Afghans may not have written a lot about the bilateral relations of the two countries but that, however, does not mean that the Afghan Government has not done enough work on its India policy. But Governmental activities or the jobs they do in this regard does not always get published and is not properly documented. Let us look at the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and India over the past fifteen years. I mean there is a lot of talk about financial and military aid and cooperation in the security sectors. These are all obvious things. But I have to say that these are the side issues of a much larger policy or strategy between the two countries. After the fall the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the emergence of a new democratic system India has remained the closest country or society to Afghanistan from an ideological point of view. I say this because India has had a stable democratic system for over sixty years now. Their society is now used to that kind of a system of governance. It has worked well for Afghanistan. No other country in the region has seen that type of democratic stability over the past few decades. In Afghanistan we were taking the first steps in the same direction after 2001. So there was obviously a lot we could learn from India, there was a lot India could offer. That is why India and Afghanistan always felt close to each other right from the beginning of the new regime in Afghanistan in a post -9/11 scenario. This was not the case between Afghanistan and other countries of the region. Let us for example consider the Central Asian states. They were not sure how to react to the new government or the new system of governance that emerged in Afghanistan. Over there things had been run differently since their emergence as so called republics. They were somewhat wary of new democratic experiment that was taking place in Afghanistan at the

time. Iran was a completely different case and there was nothing common between the regime that was in power in Iran and the one that emerged in Afghanistan. We can say the same about Pakistan. It was a totally different case and had nothing in common with what Afghanistan was trying to achieve in those early days. Hence India was the only country we could look up to and that is why the two countries were close from day one.

The second issue is about security. We know that security makes an integral part of any country's foreign policy, especially issues of national security. So one of the main reasons why Afghanistan and India were so close from the beginning was that both countries shared the same threat to their national security. When it came to security issues of priorities Afghanistan had more in common with India than with any other country at the time. The United States came to Afghanistan fifteen years ago in order to ensure her own national security. It was obvious that stabilizing Afghanistan was in the interest of American security. But I can tell you that even with the United States we did not share as many common goals or priorities as we did with India over matters of national security. I say this because the details and dynamics of America's national security strategy are quite different than those of Afghanistan. In this regard we were much closer to India.

When I was at the foreign ministry in Kabul I tried to make this point very clear to my Indian counterparts over repeated meetings and discussions. We tried to tell them that our national securities were entangled in a way. We were tied up to each other and could not do without each other. No other country in the region was nearly as close to us as India. These are two main features of Afghanistan-India relations over the past fifteen years. Of course there are other issues as we. Our historical ties with India also play an important role. We have a lot in common in terms of culture and society. The people of both countries have similar opinions about the existence of Pakistan as a country or as a political entity. Both Afghans and Indians think that Pakistan is a temporary menace which is not meant to stay forever. I mean I do not necessarily agree with everything that is said or written over this subject but we cannot deny the fact that such a mentality exists both in Afghanistan and in India. There are also shared economic interests and other issues that closely tie the two countries with each other but these were the main one. There is a long list of other things that can be added but to summarize it I would say that cooperation and aid in financial and military sectors are side issues. These take place because of common requirements or shared priorities on both sides. But at a deeper level there are other common interests or similarities that have brought India and Afghanistan so close to each other over the past fifteen years. As I mentioned earlier these are the actual bonds that tie us to India. In order to understand this bond we need to go down to a deeper level and try to understand our bilateral relations with India.

Q	*Thank you Mr. Ludin. I said earlier that there is a lot missing in the western literature on India-Afghanistan relations. There are issues that only someone like you can shed light on, someone who has remained part of the system or the Government. You mentioned common interests and priorities between India and Afghanistan. You also said that there were common threats that both the countries faced. So let us talk about India's potential or her capacity to fill a potential military or economic vacuum in Afghanistan. Can India fulfil that role? Can she replace the international community's military and economic presence in Afghanistan? Do you see that sort of potential in India/*
A	Let us be clear about one thing. No one can play the role the United States is playing in Afghanistan right now. Look at the level of their financial aid to Afghanistan. Look at the level of their military engagement in the country. There troops are here. They are training our troops at the same time. They are paying for our troops. The United States provides more than seventy percent of Afghanistan's military budget at present. No other country can or will do that much for Afghanistan. That is clear. I know that India has great strategic interests in Afghanistan. In some cases India's interests are even greater than those of the United States. But do not forget that India itself is a developing country. It cannot over-engage in Afghanistan, be it in a financial or military sense. There is a limit to what India can provide and do in Afghanistan. So if you are asking me whether India can fill the vacuum that might be left by the United States then the answer is 'no'. Tt cannot do that. But what India can do is help the International community in a smooth withdrawal from Afghanistan. This is an important role for India and I believe that the Americans should work really closely with regarding any future potential withdrawal from Afghanistan.
Q	*Let us talk about how Afghanistan devises its India policy. I have discussed this subject with a couple of ex-Afghan officials. From what they have told me I get a feeling that Afghanistan's India policy has largely remained an 'individualistic adventure', limited to the President's office only. Is this a good practice? I mean the former President (Hamid Karzai) had lived and studied in India. He had also lived in Pakistan. He knew and understood the dynamics of regional politics. But the current President (Ashraf Ghani) may not understand these dynamics that well. He has spent most of his life in the west. So don't you see a risk here? Why has the Afghan Government failed to accommodate opinion and advice from academics and experts on this issue? Why has the Government not built institutions that could advise on issues of foreign policy?*
A	This has been a common problem in Afghanistan. I mean it is not only limited to Afghanistan's policy towards India. It is a similar case with the

	rest of our foreign policy. I agree that in Afghanistan there should be institutions that do the business of policy formulation. All these policies, all these issues and opinions and decisions should in the end go through a filter. The good thing about such institutions is that they remain intact. What they formulate remains relevant even when Governments change. What they advise does not completely change with the change of individuals at the top. So such institutions are a requirement in Afghanistan and unfortunately not much has been done in this regard yet. Talking of India I think we were lucky as a country to have a President who understood India, who had studied there and was aware of the many dynamics and features of Indian politics and society. It was important to have him because, as you mentioned earlier, we did not have institutions in Afghanistan that could study and evaluate foreign policy options and decisions, and India was a close ally of Afghanistan at the time. So I think the presence of President Karzai had a positive impact on our relations with India. The lack of policy making institutions was not the only problem. We actually had a very poor relationship with India during the days of the Mujahideen and later during the Taliban regime. India was completely side-lined and was not treated as an ally at all. This did not have a good impact. India did not have a choice but to start investing in certain groups or individuals in Afghanistan. It was out of necessity. New Delhi clearly knew Pakistan's influence over the Mujahedeen groups and the Taliban movement. They needed to find an alternative ally in Afghanistan and therefore had to reach out to individuals or groups. So that first challenge that the Afghan Government faced after 2001 was to establish state-to-state or Government-to-Government relations with India. Our ties with India had remained under the control of certain groups. We had to break that control and give the central Government the authority to do business with India. This was not an easy job at all. But a lot of work was done during President Karzai's regime and the results were very good. One of our most trusted and stable relationship over the past fifteen years was with India. It was a relationship built on trust and common interests or threats. For example whenever we discussed bilateral issues Pakistan was part of the discussion from both sides. We were always under pressure from Pakistan. They wanted us to limit our ties with India so that we could win Islamabad's trust. But our relationship with India remained cordial and strong. I think it was for two reasons. First I think that we in Afghanistan did not act out of emotions or sentiments and tried to be sensible. But at the same time India was also very patient. They were sensible too and never tried to push us too hard. They never put us in a situation where Afghanistan had to choose between India and Pakistan. So think credit should go to India too. Their attitude helped Afghanistan a lot I think.

6. Transcript of interview with Rani Mullen, author and Indian foreign policy expert: not the full transcript (From London via telephone, 20 March 2016)

Q	*Why does Afghanistan matter for India?*
A	Well, as you can see both in terms of the foreign aid allocation by India and the interactions between the heads of states of the India and Afghanistan over the past decade, I think India's seems Afghanistan as very important in terms of its own security, in terms of its own economy and growth possibilities, and in terms of building new democracies. So I think there are different levels and different angles. Afghanistan is important to India in the larger South Asian scheme, even beyond South Asia. On aid allocation, as you know, India is the largest regional donor to Afghanistan and the fifth largest in the world. Often when one looks at aid they look at it in dollars. But we should look at India aid in terms of power parity. What can you buy with a dollar from the US and a dollar from India? I think you can purchase more with the Indian aid. Even in terms of training courses for Afghan civilians and Government officials. I think there are more than 2,000 training slots that India annually allocates to Afghan students and bureaucrats. That is the largest contingent of any country. So I think India committing 2 billion dollars to Afghanistan is a substantial sum, considering the fact that India has her own poverty issues. But I think India doesn't just look at this as helping things where they can. I think India also sees this as opportunity. As you know it is difficult for India to do trade with Afghanistan through Pakistan. That is why India has now started investing heavily in the Chabahar Port in Iran so it can trade with Afghanistan via that route, and then through Afghanistan to Central Asia and beyond. So I think there is a sense that once there is stability in Afghanistan bilateral relations will also be quite important on the economic front. So India looks at her aid in terms of stability and democracy but also in terms of economy. For example India is one of the most popular destinations for Afghans for healthcare services outside of Afghanistan. One can get a fast-track visa to go to India. That of course benefits India too. People who come to India may also bring their families in the future and that benefits India economically. But I think people forget that the realization of the importance of Afghanistan both strategically and in terms of her security started when the Indian plane was hijacked during the Taliban period and landed in Afghanistan. At the time India had no ambassador in Afghanistan to negotiate with the hijackers. So I think that really crystalized it for India to remain engaged and to see what kind of threat the Taliban could pose to India and to invest in democracy in order to make sure there won't be any chance of returning to that sort of a regime.

Q	*Let me ask a straight forward question. Who makes India's Afghan policy? How much is the military involved? Is it just the elite group in the foreign ministry which is isolated from the rest of the policy making apparatus? Who has the biggest say in India's Afghan policy?*
A	Right now? Prime Minster Modi …. (Laughter). We are having a conference about Indian foreign policy under Modi, and how it has been centralized and how Mr. Modi gets involved in everything. But you are right. The military really does not play much of a policy role in India. It is much different in that way from Pakistan. Traditionally much of this work is done by the Ministry of External Affairs. The first contact point is always the ambassador. That is how the policy making takes place at the MoEA. The Indian ambassador in Kabul will be the first point of contact. If there are any new ideas, or investments or requests he would send them over to the director at the MoEA who is responsible for Afghanistan. Then they will pass it on and a decision will be made within the ministry. But Mr. Modi has taken charge more than the previous Prime Ministers on the foreign policy front. Since coming to office he has been going to many countries with his shuttle diplomacy. So there is more concentration on wanting to engage with other countries and showing India's economic potential by traveling to many countries. I can't really say whether that has really changed the dynamics of relations with Afghanistan. I think much really changed with Ashraf Ghani coming to power rather than Modi coming to power. For many internal reasons within Afghanistan Ghani had to give priority to Pakistan. So India was put on ice and the relationship cooled down a little bit during that initial period. My sense is that in Afghanistan that dynamic has changed over the last two years. Afghanistan is more interested in India because it's frustrated about its relationship with Pakistan. There is an effort to rekindle the relationship that was very warm during the Karzai period because of his background and also because his wife and kids lived in India for a significant amount of time period. So on a personal level the relationship is different. On regional level Afghanistan had to give preference to Pakistan because Pakistan had influence over the Taliban and Afghanistan had to talk to them. That was the dynamic over the past one and a half year but I think that is now changing.

7. ***Transcript of interview with Dhruva Jaishankar, Fellow and Brookings India and Indian foreign policy expert. Not the full transcript (From London via telephone, 23 March 2016).***

Q	*What are India's interests in a post-9/11 Afghanistan? And what are the limitations in regards to safeguarding those interests?*
A	It is an interesting question and there are different ways of looking at it. We should see whether India's motivations in Afghanistan been fulfilled since 2001. First, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11 there was a sense in India that terrorism is a bad thing. India had been a victim of it before that and after that. So there was a sense that India should support any global coalition that was going to fight terrorism. Secondly, I think India had very specific terrorism related interests with respect to Afghanistan. In many ways it was informed by the 1999 high jacking of an Indian Airlines plane which went to Kandahar. The then Indian Foreign Minister had to go to Kandahar to exchange hostages. So India had a very specific experience of terrorism linked to the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Hence it wanted to make sure that the Taliban did not regain control. The third interest is because of the strong sense that Afghanistan is part of India's neighbourhood. You see them in terms of a lot of Afghans living in India and the Indian film industry being popular in Afghanistan. The fourth interest was to see a stable Afghanistan that would be able to accommodate the minorities, especially the Tajiks and the Uzbeks. Only that sort of a stable Afghanistan could prevent a return to Talibanization. So I think in the post-9/11 period those have been India's major interests in Afghanistan.
Q	*So do you think because of the War and because of its interests in the region Washington depends so much on Pakistan that it is even willing to dictate to India how to behave in Afghanistan?*
A	I think that was completely true earlier on, let's say between 2001 and even up to 2010. For many years that was right. I think it started to change a little bit a few years into the Obama administration that is around 2011. It certainly changed after the Bin Laden raid. So although early on the US tried to convince India to have a smaller profile in Afghanistan because of sensitivities in Pakistan but I don't think Washington buys that line

	anymore. For instance we saw the US-India joint agreement according to which Washington now wants India to play a bigger role in Afghanistan's reconstruction. That change came very late.
Q	*Comparatively speaking, do you think there has been any major shift in India's Afghanistan policy before 9/11 and after 9/11?*
A	I think it is difficult to make that comparison because before 9/11 India did not have any ties with the Taliban, who controlled most of the country. Though India had very good relations with the Tajik Northern Alliance and Ahmad Shah Masood. In fact Masood was taken to an Indian hospital when he was assassinated. So I think it is not because of the nature of India but the nature of Afghanistan which changed significantly after 9/11 and it now dictated a different kind of engagement. In the 1980s India largely backed the Soviet-backed Government then. So I think the changing international context in the 1980s and 1990s and the changing nature of Afghanistan dictated India's engagement with that country. It was not so much about a change in Indian attitudes.
Q	*Do you think India has learnt a lesson, in the sense that it to deal with a more centralized Government rather than smaller ethnic groups or siding with specific militias? Do you think it is behaving more maturely in a political sense?*
A	I certainly think it has been diversifying. In the mid-2000s India tried to reach out to a lot of the Pashtun groups. A lot of the Indian aid went to Pashtun areas, and also there was more political outreach. I think India took some time because she had made very strong relations with the Tajiks in particular. But I think over time India has diversified her relationships in Afghanistan.
Q	*Is 'Mandala Theory' still relevant when we talk about India-Pakistan-Afghanistan triangle? Is there an attempt to sandwich Pakistan?*
A	I would say 'Yes' and 'No' again. India wants a friendly Afghanistan but wants it for two very different reasons. First I think India would have wanted a friendly Afghanistan even if Pakistan did not exist. India considers Afghanistan a part of her extended neighbourhood. There is also goodwill between the people of the two countries. So even if Pakistan was not a factor at all you would see India doing much of what it is doing now. That being said I think there is an element of 'realpolitik' to this as well. The larger objective for India is to dissuade Pakistan from supporting terrorist

	groups in India's neighbourhood, and both India and Afghanistan have been victims of that. So both India and Afghanistan have a shared interest in dissuading Pakistan from the policy that it has currently.
Q	*So can we say that India's objectives in Afghanistan are Pakistan-dependent and others? What are India's other objectives in Afghanistan?*
A	I think there is a clear counter-terrorism objective in Afghanistan, most of which relates to Pakistan. India also wants a stable, pluralistic and unified Afghanistan. It wants that stable unified Afghanistan to be on good terms with India. So I think those are the broader objectives and even if there was no Pakistan you would still see India aid coming to Afghanistan and India building this entire infrastructure to connect Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean. You would still see India considering Afghanistan a possible gateway to Central Asia. I think you are right to separate Indian objectives into those two categories, one relating to Pakistan and another independent of Pakistan. But I think both sets of objectives are related.
Q	*Chabahar is very important. We Afghans are absolutely delighted about it. But speaking from a purely Indian perspective do you think it is an effort to neutralize Pakistan? Or is it just a gift to the Afghans? Does India also have its own strategic objectives in building the Chabahar Port?*
A	I think it is a win-win situation for both India and Afghanistan. Afghanistan would obviously have a new transit route through Iran which will help trade. But it also benefits India's commercial and strategic interests. One, it gives India the chance to do large scale trade with Afghanistan. Right now it has to be done via air. It is obviously much more expensive and therefore it's smaller in scale. But of course it also has a strategic objective. Much of this is born out of necessity. India would have loved to see a transit trade agreement that would allow Indian trucks to reach Afghanistan via Pakistan. But it seems like the Pakistani establishment is not willing to give India that sort of access. So some of this is not born as a result of strategic calculations but because of attempts to find an alternative solution. Pakistan has not shown a lot of interest in cooperating so India has to find alternative solutions with Iran and Afghanistan.