

## PAKISTAN BETWEEN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA RSC<sup>1</sup>

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### *Main Hypothesis*

*The strategic gap between India and Pakistan compels Islamabad to pay attention to its northern dimension, namely Afghanistan and Central Asia. For this reason, in order to avoid being threatened from the North and the South at the same time, Pakistan has always tried to get a friendly gov-*

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Najam Abbas for his insightful comments and helpful editing this article.

ernment in Afghanistan. During the 1980s and the 1990s a series of events, such as the invasion of Afghanistan, the involvement of Pakistan in the conflict and then the emergence of War on Terror, have changed dramatically the regional situation. At the end of the 1990s there were two separate Regional Security Complexes, the Central and the South Asian ones, divided by Afghanistan, an insulator state. At present, we see how these two Regional Security Complexes have converged in a common point—Afghanistan—which is the hub of a new Regional Security Complex (South-Central Asian RSC) involving these two regions.

The current situation of this huge RSC is well illustrated by the following sentence: “For this purpose, an inquiry is suggested into the nature of the <Muslim identity> of the Central Asian states, the <Russian string> attached to them, <the American fears> about the Islamic identity, <Pakistan’s hopes> to cooperate with them and the <Indian> threat to this cooperation.”<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

There are hardly any discussions on how the end of the Cold War meant a far-reaching change in the structure of the International Order. If we look specifically at Central Asia we can affirm that it is one of the regions most affected by the end of the Cold War. The demise of the Soviet Union, its 1989 withdrawal from Afghanistan and, overall, the emergence of War (so called) on Terror, have changed dramatically the situation in Central Asia. From the 1970s Afghanistan grew into a complete chaos passing from a communist state toward an Islamic regimen provoking devastation through the region.

Afghanistan was founded in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani (Pearl of Pearls). He was elected by an Assembly of Pakhtun, unifying all the tribes under its kingdom. Then he changed his title from *khan* (chief) to *shah* (king in Persian). The history of Afghanistan has been a succession of revolts, plots and continuous bloodsheds aimed at controlling this strategic enclave in Central Asia. Afghan-

istan was conceived as a buffer state between the two powers which collide in this region: the Russian and British ones. Both powers tried to dominate this fierce and courageous people but the Britons and Russians only faced disgrace and defeat.

Nevertheless it is not our task here to go into the history of Afghanistan. Our purpose is to show how Afghanistan has turned its position in Central Asia passing from an insulator to be the core of an emerging Regional Security Complex. The reason for this supposed change is, following a Waltz’s approach, a re-distribution of capabilities in this area provoked by the dramatic situation experienced in Afghanistan during the 1980s and the 1990s. Afghanistan, was once created as a buffer state, as an insulator entity, suddenly became the hub of a new Regional Security Complex called South-Central Asia. Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran and the U.S. are involved in the current situation of Afghanistan.

## 1. Theoretical Approach: RSCT

The Regional Security Complex is neither a new nor a monolithic theory. Several authors have approached the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) from very different perspectives. For

<sup>2</sup> D. Reetz, “Central Asia and Pakistan—A Troubled Courtship for an Arranged Marriage: Conflicting Perceptions and Realities,” in: M. Ahmar, *Contemporary Central Asia*, University of Karachi and Hanns-Seidel Foundation, Karachi, 1995, p. 85.

instance, Alexander Wendt tackled the RSCT from a constructivist angle, basing his personal approach on patterns of amity and enmity.<sup>3</sup> Wendt argued that regional systems depend on perceptions rather than on the distribution of capabilities/power.

In a more realistic approach, Patrick Norman and Alexander Lake also used the regional perspective to analyze their security problems using the comparative method to illustrate some results in their analyses.

One might think that the most prolific scholar working on the Regional Security Complex theory is, of course, Barry Buzan who started his research on this topic in 1983. At this point, we can select two of Buzan's definitions of what a Regional Security Complex is:

- The first one was written in 1983: "A group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another."<sup>4</sup>
- The second one was propounded with Ole Weaver some years later, in 1998. They introduced two important dynamics which are influencing the discipline of International Relations: Securitization and Desecuritization: "A set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another."<sup>5</sup> This definition is closer to the constructivist paradigm because the nature of security was defined in terms of securitization that relies on perceptions, not on capabilities.

### 1.1. The Structure of Regional Security Complex?

Following Buzan and Weaver's works, we can clearly establish four variables that embody any RSC:

1. "Boundary, which differentiates the RSC from its neighbors;
2. anarchic structure, which means that the RSC must be composed of two or more autonomous units;
3. polarity, which covers the distribution of power among the units; and
4. social construction, which covers the patterns of amity and enmity among the units."<sup>6</sup>

These four variables set the structure of any Regional Security Complex. We can say that these elements collect most of the aspects involved in the current International System. The first element, the boundary, which might denominate the geographical one, is essential to locate and differentiate any Regional Security Complex from others. For instance, in the case we are analyzing here Central Asia and South Asia Regional Security Complexes, Buzan and Weaver consider that Afghanistan is an insulator state that differentiates one RSC from another. For this reason, the geographical element is essential to define RSCs.

The second variable that embodies a RSC could be called the *international* or the *Waltzian* one. The assumption that anarchy is the force that moves units in the international system is a wink to the realist and, overall, the neorealist perspective in International Relations.

<sup>3</sup> See: A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> B. Buzan, O. Weaver, *Regions and Power. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

That said, however, it cannot be overlooked that the third variable of the RSC also goes along with neorealist postulates because in the TIP, Kenneth N. Waltz debated about the distribution of power and its role in the international structure. The distribution of power is considered as the most important asset to determine the structure of the International System. Buzan and Weaver also took into consideration the distribution of power but they do not consider it so decisive. This pattern of distribution of power, under Buzan and Weaver point of view, can be seen as an important element but not strong enough to determine the structure of the RSC.

The last variable of RSC is related to one of the newest tendencies in International Relations, the Constructivist Paradigm. Each time, perceptions are more and more important to establish relations among the units in the International System. For this reason, patterns like amity/enmity create perceptions and misperceptions among states and peoples, which in turn give rise to alliances and/or provoke conflicts.

### 1.2. Possible Evaluation of RSC

The International System, especially after the end of the Cold War, changes rapidly, every hour and, even, every minute after 9/11. An interesting example of this dynamic can be seen in Central Asia where the balance of power is uncertain, unstable and changes every moment. In this article I suggest the RSC theory as a way to understand this difficult international reality. As we have seen in the previous section, there are four main variables to consider the Regional Security Complexes and combining these variables Buzan and Weaver suggested three possible evolutions of the RSCs:

1. *Maintenance of the Status Quo*. This option does not imply any change in the essential structure.
2. *The Internal Transformation*. Buzan and Weaver affirm that internal changes (regional integration, polarity, differential growth, etc.) can affect the essential structure of the RSC.
3. *The External Transformation* is a change (expansion or contraction) in the boundaries of the RSC. This change usually affects memberships involved in the RSC.

In the cases of Central and South Asia, we can easily appreciate two of the three RSCs patterns of evolution suggested by Buzan and Weaver. Thus, from a Pakistani perspective there have been two important transformations which have affected the stability of the South Asia RSC:

- *The Internal Transformation*: The gap between India and Pakistan, which I called “*strategic depth*”, has become enormous. There are several factors that could be stressed as responsible for this change but the Indian economic miracle is probably the most important. With the demise of the Soviet Union, India lost its main international ally. So India adopted a reformist economic program that has helped to increase the gap between the two South Asian countries provoking a re-distribution of power in the RSC. While India is flaunting its economic growth, Pakistan is suffering an important recession.
- *The External Transformation*: In 1989, the Afghan Mujaheddin forces with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia support got to defeat the Soviet Army. Far from becoming a safer neighbor, Afghanistan turned into a serious security threat for Pakistan. So, in this way, Afghanistan left its condition of an insulator state between these two RSCs to be the main security concern for Central Asia and South Asia. In other words, the emergence of a real threat, such as the Taliban regimen, created a new security reality which is a confluence of the Central and South Asia RSCs.

## 2. Pakistan's Security Threats

Historically, Pakistan has been an encircled state between India and Afghanistan. The huge asymmetric gap with India has forced Pakistan to consider Afghanistan as a strategic partner in order to avoid being attacked from the North and the South at the same time. Again the problem depends on the way in which Pakistan perceived its security situation.

Nevertheless, the threat represented by Afghanistan is intertwined with Russia's ambitions to reach a warm water port in Baluchistan. It might seem that this Russian ambition is quite new but historically Moscow has supported the Pakhtun and Baluch nationalism to create a complicated situation in Pakistan. From the 1970s, Islamabad has tried to get a friendly-government in Afghanistan in order to secure the Northern flank. This is the main reason why Islamabad worked closely with the militant groups to undermine the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. Islamabad was one of the only three states, along with UAE and Saudi Arabia, which recognized the Taliban regime in 1994. In between supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and fighting against India, Pakistan chose to improve its relations with its northern neighbor. The "strategic depth"<sup>7</sup> with India has forced Pakistan to be more and more involved not only in Afghanistan but also in Central Asia. This decision has involved Pakistan in a more complicated security reality and it has provoked a less stable domestic situation.

### 2.1. The Indian Factor: The Strategic Depth

Right from the beginning, when India and Pakistan became independent, Islamabad has been suffering from "strategic depth" between it and New Delhi. Pakistan is a much more modest state than India which is, indeed, an emerging regional power and might once become a global one. If we compare Indian and Pakistani main features, we can easily notice that Pakistan might be considered a dwarf while India a giant:

Table 1

Asymmetric Gap between Pakistan and India

	PAKISTAN	INDIA	Surplus
Population (m)	157.90	1,103.40	945.5
GDP (\$bn)	110.70	805.70	695.0
GDP per head (\$PPP)	2,370	3,450	1,080
Area (000 sq km)	804	3,287	2,483
Av. ann. growth in real GDP in 1995-2005 (%)	4.00	6.30	2.30
Level of reserves (\$bn)	11.1	137.8	126.7

Source: "Pocket World in Figures," *The Economist*, 2008 Edition.

<sup>7</sup> R. Lal, *Central Asia and its Neighbours: Security and Commerce at the Cross Road*, RAND Corporation, Santa Mónica, 2006, p. 23.

Table 1 (Continued)

	Military Capabilities		
	PAKISTAN	INDIA	Surplus
Army	550,000	1,100,000	550,000
Navy	24,000	55,000	31,000
Air	45,000	125,000	80,000
Coast Guard		8,000	8,000
Active (Total)	619,000	1,288,000	669,000
Paramilitary	304,000	1,300,586	996,586

*S o u r c e: The Military Balance 2008, IISS-Routledge, London.*

The end of the Cold War brought about and even further widened the gap between India and Pakistan. This fact not only caused a redistribution of power in the South Asia RSC but also generated a need for Pakistan to be more involved in Afghanistan and Central Asia so as to correct this imbalance.

## 2.2. The Afghan Factor

The second strategic problem of Pakistan seems to be Afghanistan. Due to the importance of the Pakhtun population, Pakistan has maintained a special interest in Afghanistan, its northern neighbor. From Pakistan's independence, its relations with Pakistan had been characterized by "mutual antagonism."<sup>8</sup> The root of the conflict between these two states was Sir Mortimer Durand's legacy. In 1893, the then British Foreign Secretary to the Government of India signed an international boundary with Amir Abdur Rahman, The Durand Line. This agreement became the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, although an important irredentist sentiment persists. Besides, even today, there is a sizeable Pakhtun population living East and South of the Durand Line to the point that today FATA and NWFP are mainly populated by this ethnic group.

From 1947, Afghanistan has claimed for several controversial issues such as the creation of an independent Pakhtunistan, the integration of the Pakhtun areas (NWFP and FATA) into Afghanistan or the revision of the international border between these two countries which would allow it to get a warm harbor in Baluchistan. Historically, Russia showed the same interest in the Pakhtuns in a quest for achieving a warm water port like Gwadar in Pakistan or Cha Bahar in Iran. In 1969 Moscow suggested the possibility of assisting Pakistan to build a highway from Chaman (in the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan) to the Makran Coast. Obviously, Pakistan rejected this proposal due to its international commitment to the United States. For this reason, the Soviet Union changed its strategy and Moscow started to promote Baluch nationalism in Pakistan. The Soviet Union would have been interested in an independent Baluchistan that would have allowed them to take over the 750 miles shoreline along the Arabian Sea.

In general, we could think that should Russia have achieved its objective in the Arabian Sea, Moscow would have changed its historical land-locked problems in this region. Concerning the Cold War, a control of the warm water port by Russia would have changed the distribution of power and,

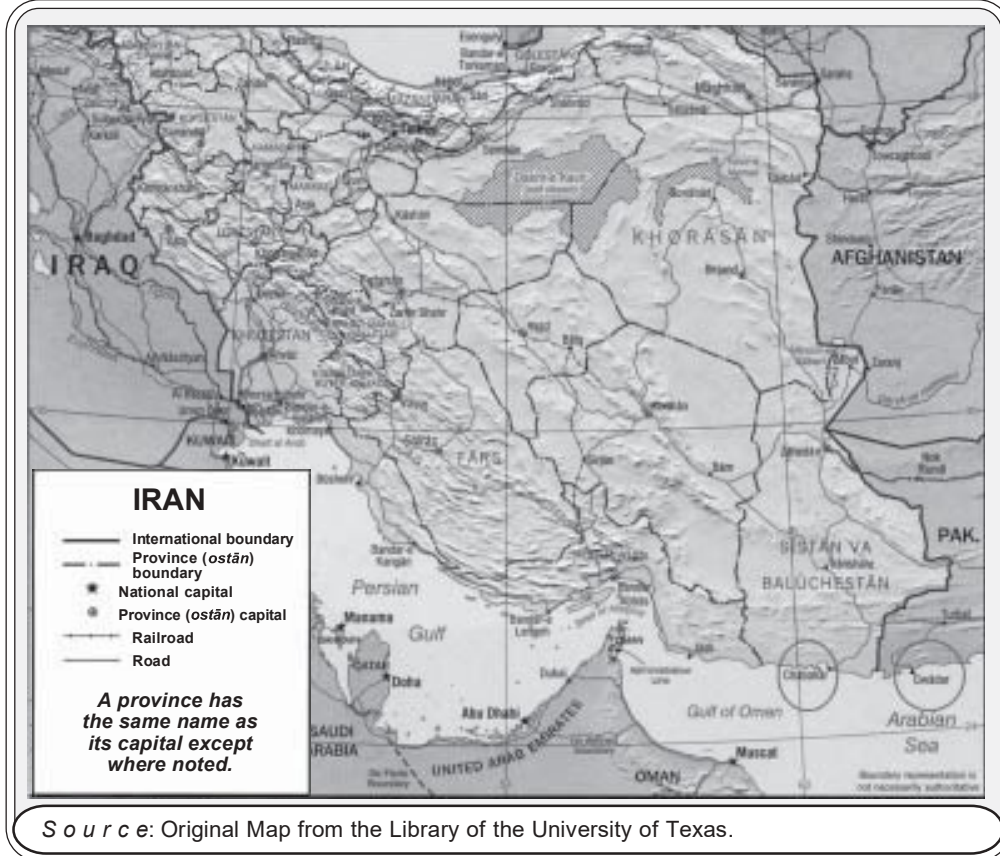
<sup>8</sup> A.L. Hilali, *US-Pakistan Relations. Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005, p. 42.

Pakhtunistan Project





## Russian Quest for Warm Water Ports



probably, the world might have taken a different direction. This fact explains the importance of Afghanistan and Pakistan for Washington and Moscow.

### 3. Pakistan's Interest in Central Asia

Pakistan is located in a very strategic place which belongs to Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. Several rulers, from Alexander the Great to Timurid prince Babur, tried to invade “*Hindustan*” to get the South Asian all-season (wet) ports. Pakistan has multiple dimensions because it is located at a crossroads between South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East.

From the beginning of the existence of Pakistan, when Islamabad gained its independence from the colonial rule, Soviet Central Asian republics were considered as its rivals. All the then five Soviet Central Asian republics belonged to the Soviet Union and their relations were organized under the pattern of enmity/amity even if Pakistan and these republics shared the same religion. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Pakistan started to show a growing interest toward this region to balance its “strategic depth” with India.



Many sources agree that the beginning point of Pakistan's cooperation with Central Asian states was the official visit of the then Pakistan's Minister of State for Commerce, Sadar Assef Ahmad Ali, in December 1991. Nevertheless, it can be said that during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan already started its relations with Central Asia though, in this case, it was not under the amity pattern but under the enmity one. Pakistan supported militancy and religious fundamentalism in Central Asia with the considerable help from the Central Intelligence Agency. These are two different models of relations, one based on the amity pattern and the other one on the enmity one, but both prove that Pakistan has maintained a great interest in Central Asia to compensate its "strategic depth" with India. In other words, in order to balance the distribution of power existing in the South Asia RSC, Pakistan has tried to provoke an enlargement of its RSC toward the Central Asia one. It could be said that Pakistan has tried to compensate its internal changes, namely the Indian gains, with an external one, namely the creation of a new RSC involving South and Central Asia.

Pakistan's approach is neither new nor current. In the 1970s after the loss of Bangladesh, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to change the western orientation of Pakistan looking more toward the Muslim World. For this reason, the Islamic Summit was held in Lahore in 1974 to build the image of Pakistan. Indeed, Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto tried to work out an agreement with President Mohammed Daud Khan for the recognition of the Durand Line as an international border. What Zulfikar Bhutto wanted to do, again, was to create a better security situation to balance "its strategic depth" with India by signing a "peace agreement" with its other "enemy", Afghanistan.

During the 1980s, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the situation in Pakistan was really terrible because Islamabad was afraid of being attacked by Moscow in order to get to the warm water port, Gwadar. For this reason, Zia-ul-Haq asked for the American help under any circumstances. At the end, it would contribute to create even a bigger security problem in Afghanistan. From 1979 up today, Afghanistan left its condition of an insulator state to become an independent unit involved in RSCs of the zone.

After the Soviet withdrawal, as I mentioned above, Pakistan started a new approach to Central Asia but while maintaining the same objective, balancing the "strategic depth" with India. For this reason, Islamabad tried to enlarge the South Asia RSC toward Central Asia supporting a friendly-regime in Afghanistan, the Taliban. Nevertheless, Islamabad's recognition of and support to the Taliban regime created several security concerns in Pakistan: a chaotic situation in border areas (NWFP, FATA and Baluchistan), religious extremism (Wahhabism and Salafism) drug trafficking and arm smuggling coming from Afghanistan. All these problems are also affecting the ex-Soviet republics because all of these units are also part of the same RSC.

According to Buzan and Weaver's RSC definition, these security problems affect a number of units and cannot be resolved individually. For these reasons we can affirm that a new Regional Security Complex has emerged in these regions. This is what has happened in this area and the best example is the Taliban regimen itself and its spread over South and Central Asia. When the Taliban took over Kabul all the Central Asian states decided that the Taliban was a security threat and they needed to cooperate if they wanted to avoid the spread of the Taliban ideas. Concerning Pakistan, some authors like Ashley Tellis, affirm that Pakistan is suffering from a process of Talibanization. This and other problems are affecting both regions and they are contributing to the creation of a new Regional Security Complex.

#### 4. Security Problems in the South-Central Asia RSC

One summary of the current situation asserts that all the Central Asian countries, Pakistan and India are affected by the same security problems. Drug trafficking, arm smuggling and Islamic radi-

calism are some of the common security concerns affecting all the countries of this new Regional Security Complex. This article will analyze three of the most important security problems of the South-Central Asia Security Complex: Narcotics, Islamist Radicalism and Rivalry.

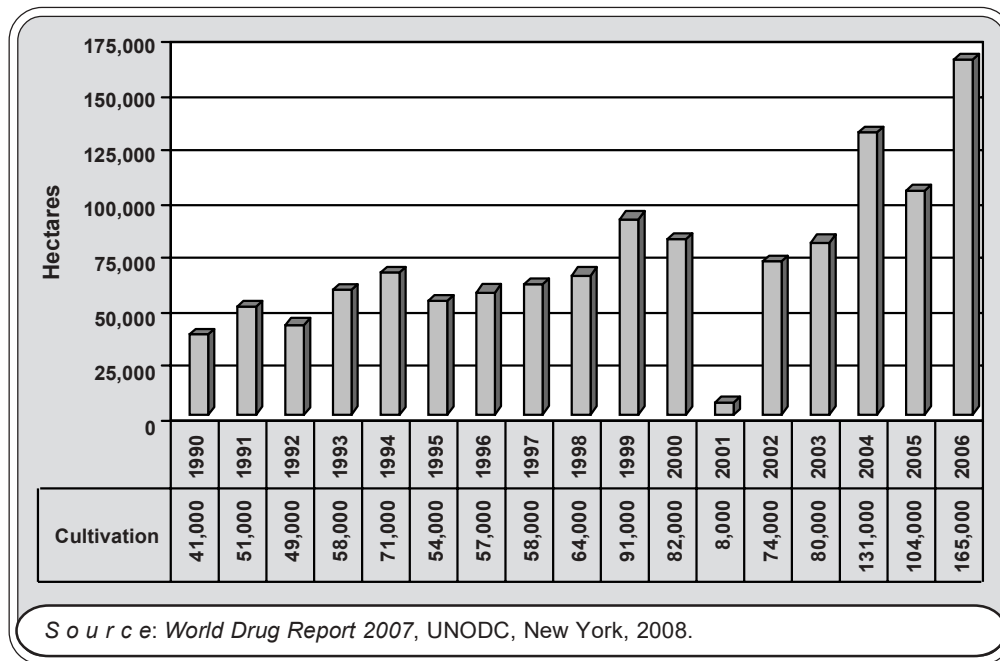
#### 4.1. Narcotics

The trafficking of narcotics is very significant in Central Asia. The traditional poppy growing areas were Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, along with parts of Kazakhstan. At the present Tajikistan,<sup>9</sup> which has turned into a “narcotic state,”<sup>10</sup> plays an important place in the trafficking of narcotics. An example is the Tajik economy which is based on three pillars: remittances from migrants, trafficking of drugs and international solidarity. Nevertheless the relation of Tajikistan with drugs is not new. During the Soviet Union era, soldiers used to pay bribes to get posted in Tajikistan.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the main center for drug production is still Afghanistan. Afghanistan is estimated to produce around the 90% of the world’s supply of opium which currently amounts to almost half of Afghanistan’s GDP.<sup>12</sup> From 1990 to date there has been a dramatic increase in the opium

Graphic 1

Afghanistan Opium Poppy Cultivation 1990-2006 (hectares)



<sup>9</sup> “The Tajik economy has been dependent on three main sources of revenue, none of which bodes well for the long-term viability of the country’s economy: remittances from Tajik migrants, trafficking of narcotics and international aid” (M. Fumagalli, “Tajikistan and the EU,” *CEPS Policy Brief*, No. 130, June 2007, p. 3).

<sup>10</sup> E. Marat, “Impact of Drug Trade and Organized Crime on State Functioning in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,” *China and Eurasia Quarterly Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2006, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> See: Sh. Akiner, *Tajikistan. Disintegration or Reconciliation*, RIIA, London, 2001, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> See: R. Zeb, “Cross Border Terrorism Issues Plaguing Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2006, p. 69.

poppy cultivation. In only 16 years, Afghanistan has raised its opium poppy cultivation four-fold rising from 41,000 hectares in 1990 to more than 165,000 hectares.

Indeed, the poor performance of NATO in Afghanistan has not helped to solve this problem. There has been an increase in the net opium poppy cultivation, in the total percent of agricultural land dedicated to poppy, in the number of provinces involved in these activities, etc. The narco-trade structure is not helping at all to stabilize the country and the region, as criminal organizations are using the situation in their favor. The drug trafficking business is what finances the violence against the government and the international forces in Afghanistan.

Table 2

**Current Opium Situation  
in Afghanistan**

	2005	Difference	2006
Net opium poppy cultivation	104,000 ha	+59%	165,000 ha
In percent of agricultural land	2.30		3.65
In percent of global cultivation	62		82
Number of provinces affected (total: 34)	26		28
Eradication	5,000 ha	+210%	15,300 ha
Potential production of opium	4,100 mt	+49%	6,100 mt
In percent of global production	87		92
Number of households involved in opium cultivation	309,000	+45%	448,000
Number of persons involved in opium cultivation (23 million)	2.0 million		2.9 million
In percent of total population	8.7		12.6

*S o u r c e:* *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006* (UNODC/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Afghanistan, October 2006).

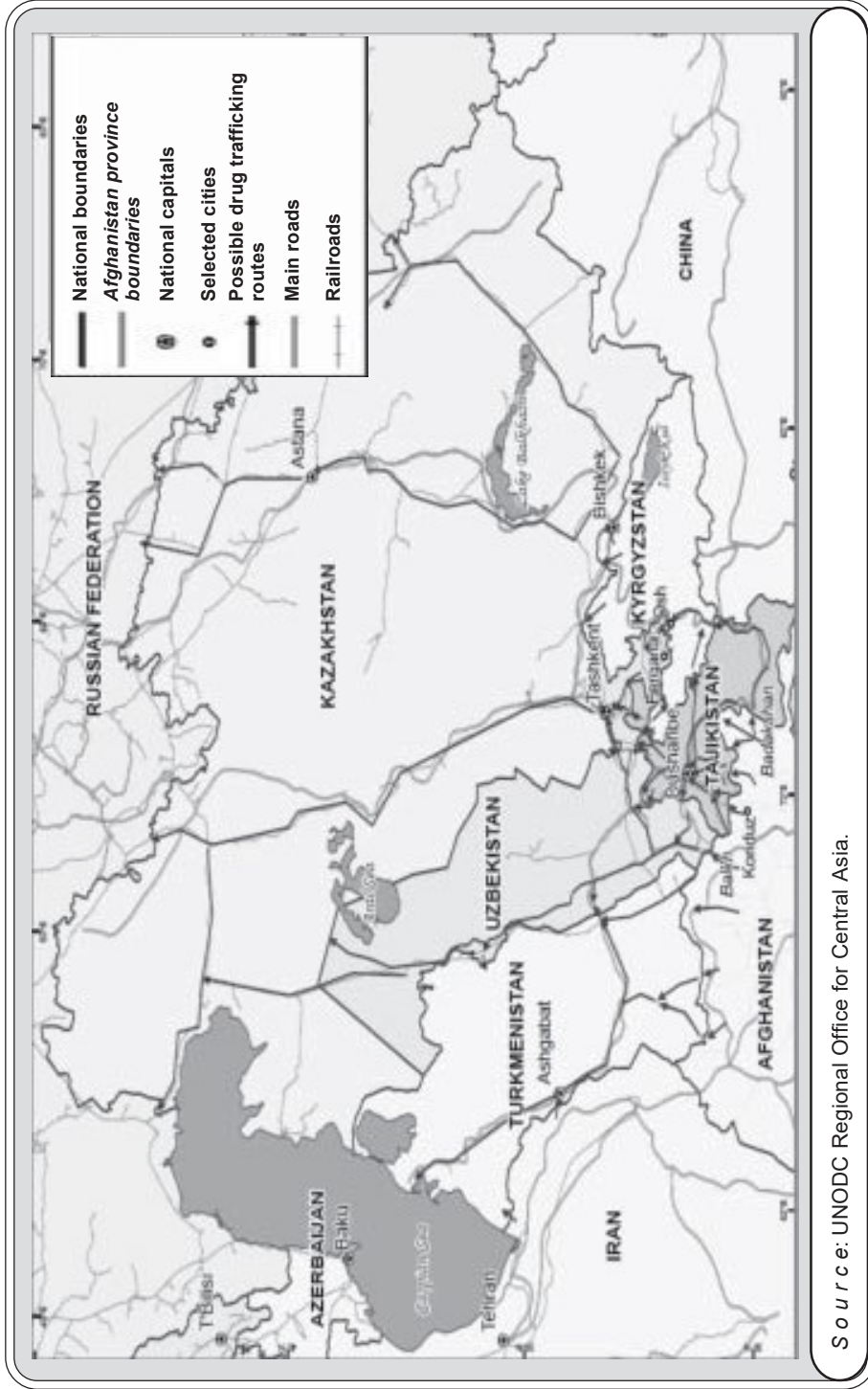
The complicated situation makes drug proliferation a serious regional security problem which is harming all the countries in the region. Apart from security concerns related to narcotics such as organized crime or terrorism funding, there are two important problems that are affecting most of the units of the Regional Security Complex. The first one is drug trafficking and the second one is the social consequences derived from drug addiction.

Concerning drug trafficking routes we have to say that there are at least six routes all along this new Regional Security Complex. Of these six routes, two run through Pakistan and Iran and the other four through Central Asia. Those going through Central Asia are considered to be in Tajikistan and the other one through Turkmenistan.

The Central Asian routes have a clear destination—the Russian Federation which has one of the highest rates of opiate use in the world. Russia has 1.6 million heroin users consuming up to 80 mt of

Map 3

Central Asian Routes to the Russian Federation



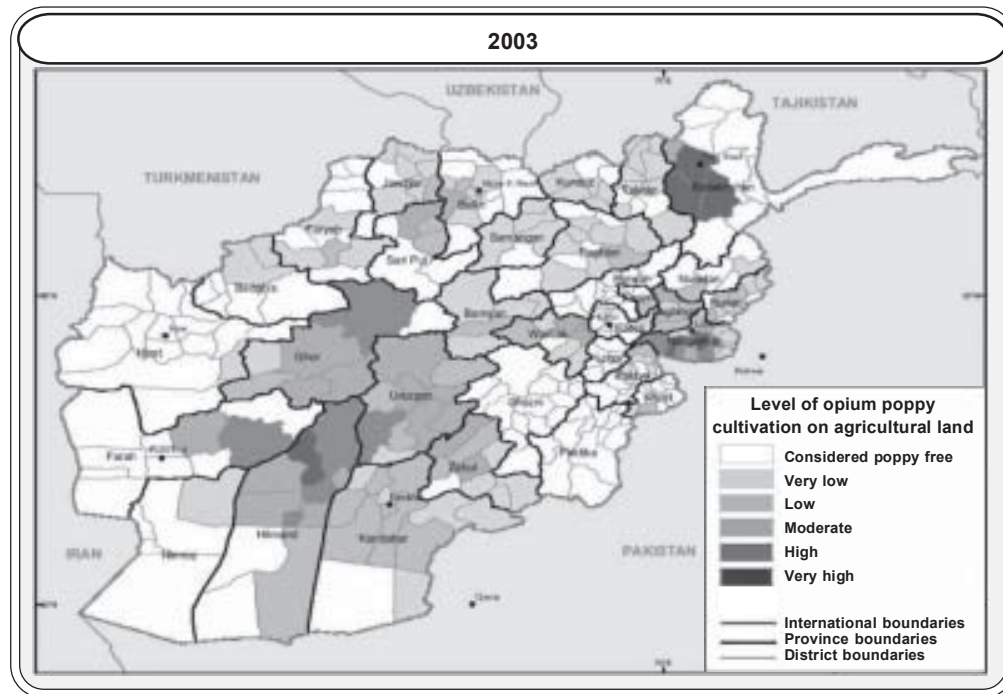
Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia.

heroin each year.<sup>13</sup> About 0.9% of Russians were estimated to be abusing opiates in contrast with other transit countries like Croatia, Bulgaria or Latvia with registered opiate abuse rates between 0.8% and 0.6%.<sup>14</sup> In the former Soviet Union the levels are even worse. Tajikistan, which has been described as a narcotic state holds opiate abuse rate above 2%. In other countries, the situation is slightly better (Georgia, 1.2%, Kazakhstan, 0.9%, and Uzbekistan, 0.7%)

In addition, the other two routes go through Pakistan and Iran. The problem started in the Pakhtun areas where most of the laboratories to process opium into heroin are located. The existence of these laboratories explains why the opium production has increased in southern province like Hilmand, Nimroz and Kandahar. In the North, important laboratories have been found in the border area of Nangarhar/Khyber Agency which is controlled by Shinwari tribe. The Shinwaris are the second largest tribe of the Khyber Agency and they have important links with the inhabitants of Nangarhar. All these areas are also those the Taliban presence is stronger<sup>15</sup> showing us the relation between these militants and the trafficking of narcotics. Following the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, the first route is based on Pakistani transport facilities. Trafficking groups based in Pakistan smuggle multi-ton shipments of drugs to Europe. Most drug-couriers take some of the drugs out of Pakistan through its international airports and the important port of Karachi; the remainder is sent along Pakistan's coast along the Arabian Sea to Iran and then to Turkey.

Map 4

The Evolution of the Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan

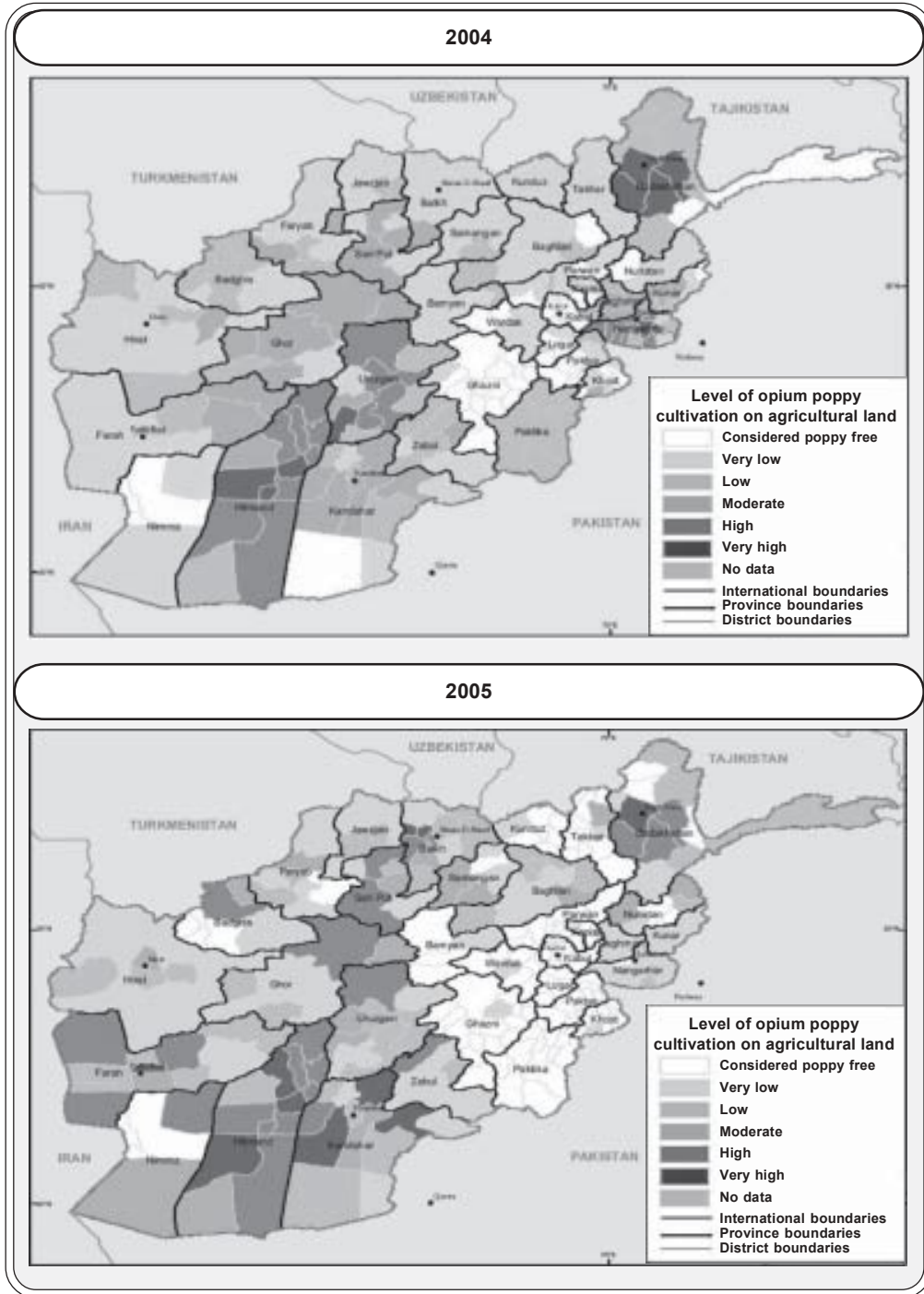


<sup>13</sup> See: *World Drug Report 2007*, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Central Asia: Drug and Conflict*, ICG Asia Report No. 25, 26 November, 2001, pp. 3-4.

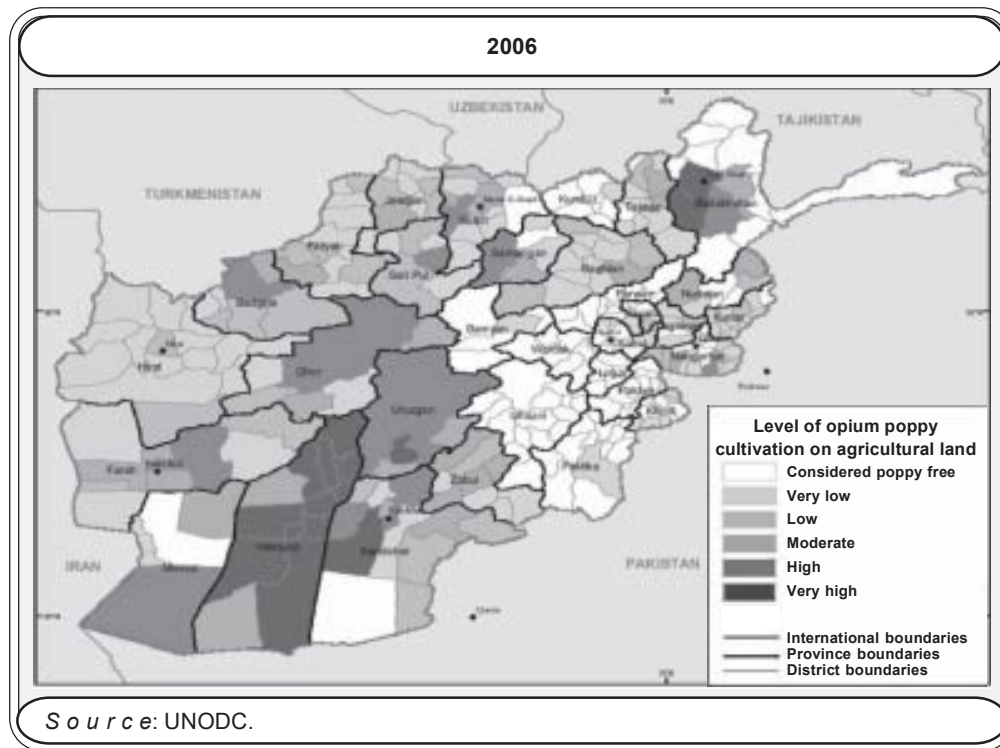
<sup>15</sup> See: H. Abbas, "Profiles of Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies," *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. IV, Issue 20, 19 October, 2006, p. 20.

Map 4 (continued)





Map 4 (continued)



The second route for smuggling Afghan-produced opiates from Pakistan, namely the nonprocessed drug, goes overland from Pakistani Baluchistan across the border into Iran. Then, drug passes through the Kurdish north-western region in Iran through the “desert of death,” and finally into laboratories in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> In Turkey the opium is processed as heroin to be sold in Eastern Europe or Russia.

#### 4.2. Islamic Radicalism

Before getting into the substance of discussion, it would be helpful to say Islamic radicalism is another problem for the whole RSC. The post-Soviet states are home to important Muslim-majority communities. Since the early 1990s, Islam has emerged as an important political force as a reaction to the Communist approach to religion. Many of the “official muftis” found their position in the new independent states but others, more radical opted for several forms of radical Islamism.

Although Afghanistan is not the cause of this Islamic revival we could affirm that it is the main source of Islamic Radicalism. During the 1980s the U.S., with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, sponsored jihad in Afghanistan. After a decade fighting in that Pakhtun majority state Mikhail Gorbachev decided to give up this ambitious adventure and subsequently the Soviet Union collapsed.

<sup>16</sup> See: C. Gall, “Desert Drug Route Stymies Afghan Police,” *The New York Times*, 2 January, 2005.



Nevertheless, Afghanistan and Pakistan were left with armies of Islamic fundamentalists. This problem remained hidden until the Taliban took over Kabul in Afghanistan in 1996.<sup>17</sup> A movement of Islamic students, Mullahs and tribesmen had taken over not only the Eastern province but also the capital of Afghanistan. This crisis, which had started during the 1980s in the NWFP and Baluchistan (Pakistan), arrived at the border of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The CIS activated its regional security mechanism because the Taliban turned into a real threat for the Central Asian states. "If fundamentalism comes to Afghanistan war will continue for many years. Afghanistan will turn into a center of world smuggling for narcotic drugs."<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, it is said that the chaotic situation in Afghanistan not only produced the Taliban movement but also helped to radicalize the Islamic opposition in the Central Asian states. Islamic radicalism spread over most of the republics of the region coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, another important source of Islamic radicalism was Tajikistan and its Civil War.

In this sense we must remember that though with the establishment of the Soviet Union any kind of religion was brutally repressed, Islam survived in some remote areas such as Tajikistan.<sup>19</sup> A lot of Muslims from Central Asia sought refuge in Tajikistan to avoid being repressed by the Soviet regime. After World War II, the Soviet Union softened these restrictions creating an "Official Islam."<sup>20</sup> A limited number of mosques were opened although this initiative did not satisfy the aspiration of the Muslim population of the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, probably influenced by Afghanistan/Pakistan and Iran, an Islamic revival movement, that had worked underground, began to converge. Nevertheless, there is a more moderate Central Asian orthodoxy based on native thinkers such as al-Bukhari or at-Tirmizi.

After the independence of the Central Asian republics there was a revival of Islam. This revival represents a return to the spiritual values after several decades of Atheism promoted by the Soviet Union. Prof. Akiner divides Post-Soviet Islam into three categories: Traditional Islam, Government-Sponsored Islam and Radical Islam.<sup>21</sup> As far as this article is concerned we will focus our attention on the latter, Tajikistan being one of the places where we could find this phenomenon. Nevertheless, we should avoid a simplistic approach. Concerning Tajikistan, the Civil War that broke up there should be understood as a set of elements since Islamic fundamentalism was not the only cause though it got an important position.

In Central Asia, apart from Tajikistan, there are some other places where radical Islamic groups (IMU, the Islamic Movement of Turkistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir, etc.) have emerged as a threat for the New Independent States (Southern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). Concerning Uzbekistan, President Karimov has been the number one enemy of Islamic groups such as the Deobandi or the Islamic Brotherhood.<sup>22</sup> The Deobandi is a movement created in South Asia (Pakistan) in the nineteenth century. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the Deobandi network enjoying considerable control of several madrassahs in Pakistan allowed the indoctrination of several mujaheddin cadres against the Soviet soldiers. For this reason Deobandi clergies got an important presence also in Afghanistan inspiring, somehow, the Taliban movement.

<sup>17</sup> See: R. Magnus, "Afghanistan in 1996: The Year of the Taliban," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2006, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> A. Khalid, *Islam after Communism. Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> "In Tajikistan, however, Islam survived somewhat better than in most other parts of the region" (Sh. Akiner, op. cit., p. 29).

<sup>20</sup> Sh. Akiner, "The Politicization of Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2003, p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>22</sup> See: R. Zanca, "Believing in God at Your Own Risk: Religion and Terrorism in Uzbekistan," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 33, March 2005, p. 72.

Even today, some Deobandi elements enjoy a special relation with the Pakistani government as some of these groups are operating in Kashmir against India.<sup>23</sup> For instance, two of the most important terrorist groups acting in Kashmir such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed received military training not only in Afghanistan but also in other Central Asian camps where they interacted with other terrorists from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Xinjiang.<sup>24</sup>

The above notwithstanding, the United States consider that Afghanistan is not the main hub of Islamic fundamentalism in region. The former U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte stated that Pakistan “remains a major source of Islamic extremism and home for top terrorist leaders.”<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, although Pakistan is a state where terrorism is an important security concern, this threat is highly intertwined with the same phenomenon in Afghanistan. Col. Chris Vernon, NATO’s chief of staff for Southern Afghanistan, suggested that the Taliban have established their main headquarters (Shura) in Quetta. Apart from this council, they have a series of subsidiary *shuras* based in Quetta, Miran Shah, Peshawar and Karachi.<sup>26</sup>

Having analyzed the Islamic radicalism in this region we can affirm that it is a problem for the whole RSC and, overall, that any solution would imply a coordinated and comprehensive approach involving all the units of the RSC.

The trafficking of narcotics and the emergence of radical groups are strongly intertwined. During the Tajik civil war the IMU cooperated with some “drug barons” to establish routes for crossing the border in Kyrgyzstan’s Osh region. The IMU was very involved in the opiates trade in this country, controlling 2/3 of this traffic.<sup>27</sup> The actions of the IMU went beyond the traditional limits of Central Asia. During the 1990s Uzbekistan’s efforts to combat the IMU were annulled by the ISI that supported them. For instance, Tahir Yoldosh<sup>28</sup> was moving along Pakistan from 1995 to 1998. After the American intervention in Afghanistan, several hundred members of the IMU, who were operating in this country, fled to Pakistan to avoid being captured by the American forces.<sup>29</sup> In 2004, members of the IMU were arrested in South Waziristan and Multan, while some Tajik and Uzbek<sup>30</sup> fundamentalist militants are acting in the NWFP to destabilize the Afghan government. All these links show us how both RSCs are united in a new one. Just two days before Asif Ali Zardari was elected as president of Pakistan an American ground assault killed at least 15 people in South Waziristan. It was the first known foreign attack in Pakistan against a Taliban haven.

Another important issue that is structuring the region is the potential transport cooperation. The most important project is a gas pipeline going from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and then India. The feasibility of the project is still under consideration due to its financial requirements, which would be several billions of dollars.<sup>31</sup> Apart from these economic problems there are at least two security concerns. The first problem is the instability and the lawless situation of Afghanistan that makes it more difficult to build a project so ambitious. The second one is the

<sup>23</sup> See: A.J. Tellis, *Pakistan and the War on Terror. Conflicted Goals. Compromised Performance*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C, 2007, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> See: D. García, G. Abad, “Estados Unidos y China en Asia Central: El nuevo Gran Juego,” *Política Exterior*, No. 123, Mayo-Junio, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> See: *The Military Balance*, Routledge/IISS, London, 2008, p. 325.

<sup>26</sup> See: A.J. Tellis, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> See: Z. Baran, F.S. Starr, S.E. Cornell, *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington-Uppsala, 2006, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> See: V.V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle*, Rowman & Littlefield Inc, Oxford, 2005, p. 107.

<sup>29</sup> See: R. Lal, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> “We know that Pakistan has some Uzbek terrorists in its area and I have assured the president that Pakistan will not allow the use of its soil by any terrorists from Uzbekistan against your national interests” (*BBC*, 6 March, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> See: M.A. Durrani, “Gwadar Deep Sea Port, a New Transportation Hub for Central Asia,” *CACI Forum*, 13 February, 2008.

rivalry between India and Pakistan. India does not want to depend only on Pakistani good will for its oil supply.

In addition, there are other important transport projects to connect Central Asia with Pakistan, especially through the Gwadar port. Pakistan is trying to build a road network alongside Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) to ease their Russian dependence. The Karakorum highway could easily connect the Arabian Sea with most of the capitals of Central Asia. This possibility might allow Beijing to establish a transport network from the Persian Gulf, through Pakistan to China avoiding the conflicting Straits of Malacca. Thus, this project not only would imply a more important role for Pakistan but also a new tool for China to control this vast area.

Another example that shows us the expansion of the RSC is the Indian-Pakistani rivalry. Both governments are trying to achieve the maximum influence over Central Asia not only to improve its own situation but also to avoid a rise of the rival one. Indeed, Pakistan has ameliorated its relations with all the Central Asian republics. Initiatives such as "Made in Pakistan"<sup>32</sup> in Tajikistan are contributing to enhance the image of Islamabad in Central Asia. Concerning Uzbekistan-Pakistan cooperation, Islamabad and Tashkent are cooperating in several and very important fields such as cotton production,<sup>33</sup> civil aircrafts<sup>34</sup> (IL-76 and IL-114) or counter terrorism. President Karimov and former President Musharraf<sup>35</sup> have paid official visits to Uzbekistan and Pakistan in order to improve their bilateral relations.

Besides, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are also cooperating with Pakistan in some fields, especially in energy. Although Kazakhstan and Pakistan maintain an excellent relation<sup>36</sup> the unresolved murder of a Kazakh diplomat in Islamabad has affected to the relations between Islamabad and Astana.

On its own, India has been working on its relations with Central Asian states, including Afghanistan. While Pakistan was trying to promote a friendly government in Afghanistan supporting the Taliban, India was looking for the contrary. During the Afghanistan war, Delhi kept a secret hospital in Farkhor (Tajikistan) for the treatment of Northern Alliance militants injured by the Taliban.<sup>37</sup> The Indian ties with the Northern Alliance have helped India to establish an important "proto-alliance" with Tajikistan. In 2002, India and Tajikistan started to cooperate in the field of defense. Every year Tajikistan sent 50 cadets to India for military training as engineers, paratroopers or signalmen.<sup>38</sup> In 2003, India and Tajikistan signed an agreement to establish an Indian air force base in Farkhor<sup>39</sup> where the Northern Alliance Hospital where located during the war in Afghanistan.

In spite of the special relation with Tajikistan, India has developed important agreements with all the other Central Asian Republics. For instance, India has signed several important economic agreements with Uzbekistan in the energy, pharmaceutical and the air traffic sectors. India and Kazakhstan are also working on energy cooperation through India's public sector using the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) and the Gas authority of India Limited (GAIL).

Taking into account these developments we can affirm that India and Pakistan have launched a competition for influence in Central Asia, including Afghanistan. This is another example of the emergence of a new RSC in South-Central Asia.

<sup>32</sup> In April 2005 Pakistan promoted an exhibition in Tajikistan to promote economic cooperation.

<sup>33</sup> Uzbekistan is the fourth largest cotton producer in the world and Pakistan is one of the largest cotton consumer in the world.

<sup>34</sup> See: A.Sh. Khawaja, "Uzbek President Karimov Visits Pakistan," *CACI Analyst*, 31 May, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> See: "Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, Making the First Visit by a Pakistani Head of State for Almost a Decade, Welcomed a Bright New Future," *BBC*, 6 March, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> See: "Kazakhstan is Keen to Expand Bilateral Trade with Pakistan," *CACI Analyst* 5 March 2008.

<sup>37</sup> See: R. Lal, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> See: G. Luthra, "India to Base Planes in Tajikistan: Engineers Working to Strengthen Runway," *Indian Asian News Service*, 15 October, 2003.

## 5. South-Central Asia RSC

Finally, we see how these two Regional Security Complexes have converged in a new one (South-Central Asia RSC) with the following characteristics:

1. *“Boundary, which differentiates the RSC from its neighbors;”* We can include inside the RSC boundaries all the Central Asian states plus India and Pakistan. Afghanistan is now the center of the RSC and Russia, China and, in somehow, the U.S. are considered as external units;
2. *anarchic structure, which means that the RSC must be composed of two or more autonomous units;”* The logic of the relation among the units is the anarchy because it is an international system.
3. *polarity, which covers the distribution of power among the units;* Of course, it is a multipolar system and all the three external units are trying to control the RSC. Besides, India and Pakistan are trying to extend their rivalry to Central Asia. For this reason they are competing for influence in countries like Tajikistan, Afghanistan or Uzbekistan; and
4. *social construction, which covers the patterns of amity and enmity among the units;”*<sup>40</sup> Inside the system there are allies and enmities.

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<sup>40</sup> See: B. Buzan, O. Weaver, op. cit., p. 53.