Introduction

South Asia, particularly the Afghanistan–Pakistan sub-region, is a hotbed of regional and global terrorism. It exports and imports terrorism, both intra- and extra-regionally. Not only the South Asian states, particularly the major ones – India and Pakistan – have fallen victim of terrorist violence, it has also profoundly affected regional and international security. The threat of terrorism, owing to a variety of reasons, is likely to continue as a major source of concern for the South Asian states at least in the foreseeable future.

Not only the region’s internal factors make terrorism in South Asia a complex issue, its complexity specifically accentuates due to its international linkage. A global fight against terrorism began soon after the Al-Qaeda-led terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001. Since then, the Afghanistan-Pakistan region has been a key theatre of global fight against terrorism. The anti-terror war that began in Afghanistan in October 2001 still continues. The America-led NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces are scheduled to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but it is certain that the withdrawal will not be the end of the fight against terrorism there. Afghanistan in all likelihood will remain unstable in the foreseeable future; it may even descend into a civil war – a repeat of the post-Soviet Afghanistan in the 1990s. Also significant, the country is strongly likely to remain as a battleground for competing regional and international interests in the years to come. It implies that Afghanistan will continue to be a source of concern for South Asian security and stability.

It is intriguing to assess how the anti-terror war in Afghanistan has affected South Asia’s regional dynamics and its security landscape.
In this context two propositions can be advanced. First, the war in Afghanistan has complicated South Asia’s regional security because India and Pakistan since the war began have vigorously competed for influence in Kabul. It implies that the anti-terror war in Afghanistan has intensified Indo-Pakistani strategic rivalry and, by extension, increased the pattern of conflict in the region. The alternate proposition is that terrorism is a common problem for all the South Asian states which has created a platform for the regional states to come together to fight the problem jointly. They have already identified terrorism as an area of cooperation in the programme of actions of the regional grouping – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The terrorist groups operating in the Afghanistan–Pakistan region are a common threat to both India and Pakistan, hence it has laid a ground for both the countries to come together and confront the common enemy. This scope will become more potent in the future once the international forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan at the end of 2014. The Indo-Pakistani collaboration to fight against terrorism means that the anti-terror war in Afghanistan would strengthen the pattern of cooperation in the region.

The key objective of this chapter is to explore the implications of the anti-terror war in Afghanistan for South Asia’s security and the changing dynamics of the regional international relations. It explains how the war has affected the Indo-Pakistani relationship and specifically whether it has widened their strategic fissures or whether it has brought the two countries together because it is a common problem for both of them. It will also assess its impact on the region’s transformation, focussing on whether the war in Afghanistan has contributed to creating a peaceful regional order or reinforced the historic pattern of conflict in the region.

This chapter proceeds in the following manner. First, it discusses the interests, objectives and approaches of India in Afghanistan. Similarly, the interests, objectives and approaches of Pakistan are discussed in the following section. The third section assesses the policies of the two countries and seeks to explain whether it has contributed to the development of a pattern of cooperation or conflict between India and Pakistan, and by extension the region. Finally, the conclusion presents the key findings of the chapter.

**India’s interests, objectives and approach in Afghanistan**

**Interests and objectives**

India has a multiplicity of interests and objectives – geopolitical, strategic and economic – in Afghanistan, although the containment of Pakistan’s