

**Hrishabh Sandilya: The US' AF-PAK Strategy and its  
Implications for India**

(PhDr. thesis supervised by doc. Miloš Calda, defense to be held in October 2011)

(supervisor's assessment by Miloš Calda)

**Characteristics:**

Hrishabh Sandilya set out to analyze the strategy of Barack Obama's administration towards Afghanistan and Pakistan (abbreviated in the American strategists' jargon as „AF-PAK“) and the impact of the strategy on India.

Hrishabh's thesis consists of five chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) The U.S. AF-PAK strategy, (3) the role of Pakistan in AF-PAK, (4) India's Afghan strategy, and (5) Implications and scenarios of future U.S. policy in the region.

The United States faces many challenges in the region. The main question is centered around the problem how to reconcile its policies vis a vis India and Pakistan. The U.S. has a long-term strategic stake in good relations with India. However, any pro-India policy raises Pakistan's concerns. On the other hand, it is impossible to deal with the situation in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support, even if tacit. The author states the purpose of his thesis in the following manner: „...the purpose of this thesis is to answer the questions posed above and look at their implications for India, which as the hegemony in the Regional Security Complex has the most to lose and yet remains under-utilized by the US in its seeking of a regional solution to its problems.“

It should be pointed out here that India's relations with Afghanistan have traditionally been far better than those with Pakistan.

Hrishabh Sandilya formulates his research questions very clearly and logically (p. 4f):

*„Research Question 1* What were the salient features of the AF-PAK policy and what are the specific implications of this strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan and on the US' greater South Asian strategy?

*Research Question 2* What is the basis of Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan, its policies and how does this impact Pakistan's strategic objectives concerning India?

*Research Question 3* What is the nature of India's engagement in Afghanistan and how does Afghanistan fit into the concept of an Indian 'Grand Strategy'?

*Main Research Question* What are the implications of the AF-PAK strategy for South Asia and India's (and Pakistan's) endgame in Afghanistan?"

Hrishabh's writing is very well argued, logical, well-structured. His language standards are very high indeed. I also appreciate the section he devoted to literature analysis (1.2 Literature Review). He proved that he is able to assess strengths and weaknesses of the current U.S. strategy in the region.

The thesis uses a more than adequate number of relevant literature sources.

**Remarks:**

Hrishabh's Conclusion could have been more extensive, it is too brief in my opinion. I was unable to find a clear statement of the result of the thesis. I would have liked to read more in the Conclusion about the „implications of the AF-PAK strategy for South Asia...“ Also, I would have welcomed more treatment of the domestic factors which affected Obama's security strategy. The domestic factors could become a valuable subject of the discussion during the defense.

p. 16: „The Obama regime“ – I would not call Barack Obama's governance a „regime“.

**Evaluation & conclusion:**

The submitted thesis meets all the requirements placed on theses at this level. I propose to grade the thesis as „excellent“ (1).

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(doc. M. Calda)

October 12th, 2011.