

Transition in Afghanistan Post-Exit Scenarios



Islamabad Policy Research Institute

Transition in Afghanistan

Post-Exit Scenarios

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The successful completion of the conference owes much to the untiring efforts and logistical support provided by the staff of the IPRI and the HSF.

We deeply regret that this volume could not be produced within the stipulated time due to some unavoidable circumstances. Finally, our thanks are due to all those whom it would not be possible to thank individually for their help in making the conference a success.■

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIB	Afghan International Bank
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme
ANP	Afghan National Police
APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme
CAREC	Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter Insurgency Strategy
CSATTF	Central and South Asia Transport and Trade Forum
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
DABM	Da Afghanistan Breshna Mosesa
DABS	Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
EC	European Commission
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
FATA	Federally Administrated Tribal Area
FID	Foreign Internal Defence model
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HDI	Human Development Index
HPC	High Peace Council
IC	International Community
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDS	National Directorate of Security
OBL	Osama bin Laden
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom

PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PTS	Program Takhim-e-Solh
ROZs	Reconstruction Opportunity Zones
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SPECA	Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TTP	Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNF	United National Front
WTC	World Trade Centre

Introduction

**Dr. Noor ul Haq
Muhammad Hanif, Khalid Chandio & Aftab Hussain**

This volume is based on the papers read and presentations made at the two-day International Seminar on “Transition in Afghanistan: Post-Exit Scenarios” jointly organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Germany at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad on October 5-6, 2011. Prominent scholars, academicians and policy-makers from Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, India, United States of America (USA), Sweden and Germany participated and shared their views on different aspects of the ongoing transition in Afghanistan and what could be the possible post exit scenarios once the United States (US) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops withdrew from the country.

Afghanistan has been in turmoil for more than 30 years. Occupations, wars and unrest have not permitted the state to come to peace. After ten years of ‘War on Terror’ and dismantling the Taliban government in November 2001, the international community has decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. In December 2010, a drawdown plan was announced: the security responsibility for some regions would be handed over to Afghan forces in July 2011 and the first international troops would leave Afghanistan. The transition process will be completed by the end of 2014. To ensure long-term stability — the international community will, however, remain involved in Afghanistan beyond this date.

After ten years of military engagement, it has become apparent that permanent peace in Afghanistan can only be realized through a political settlement involving all ethnic groups and the Taliban who would have to renounce violence and vow to abide by the Afghan Constitution. Such an agreement also needs the input and help of neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan.

It is thus of utmost importance to understand the current dynamics of Afghanistan’s politico-strategic environment, to identify the motives and interests of involved actors and to examine the factors which demand attention and have to be addressed in the transition phase. How can political stability and good governance be ensured in the long run? What has to be done to rebuild Afghanistan’s economy? How will the Afghan government get out of its dependence on foreign aid? What is going to be the role of the international community? What are the interests of the United States, especially in view of its on-going ‘War on Terror’? How will the regional

balance of power shift? What will be the situation in the Afghan-Pakistan borderland after the withdrawal?

From a failing state to a functioning democracy, many scenarios for a post-exit Afghanistan seem possible. Which one of them is most likely? How can the best outcome be achieved? These are only some of the questions and issues that have to be addressed urgently. IPRI in collaboration with HSF organised a two-day international conference on “Transition in Afghanistan: Post-Exit Scenarios” to answer these questions.

National and international experts on Afghanistan and the region were invited to deliberate on the topic, to visualize the possible post-exit scenarios and suggest ideas and strategies to ensure the best possible outcome for Afghanistan.

The book has two parts. The first part includes the inaugural address by the chief guest, Mr. Alamgir Babar, Additional Secretary for Central Asia and Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, welcome address by Dr. Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, then Acting President IPRI, opening remarks by Dr. Peter Witterauf of the HSF, and the concluding speech in the final session by Senator Afrasiab Khattak, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights. The second part of the book consists of ten papers, presented in the conference, six from Pakistan, two from Germany and one each from Turkey and Sweden. The papers describe the experiences of these countries through case studies. They touch upon various aspects of the issue and suggest ways to remedy the situation. The papers by Pakistani scholars present the Pakistani perspective and how their authors visualize the post-exit scenarios.

Ambassador (R) Ann Wilkens, Member of the Advisory Board, Afghanistan Analysts Network, in her paper on “Governance Crisis and Institution-building” says that the international coalition’s journey in Afghanistan has been from a positive commitment to a negative commitment. There were three pillars in the beginning: security, governance and development. The military was meant to support the last two. But security became the main pillar due to a number of developments. There were three mistakes built in the very beginning: re-empowering the warlords; lack of coordination inside the international effort; and third, the lack of regional perspective, which should have been much more important from the beginning.

She quotes the Taliban who say that “you have the clocks but we have the time,” and she thinks they are right. Governance became a sort of stepchild and that enhanced the difficulties. One section in governance that was especially mistreated was justice; the same has been the strong side of the Taliban. There also have been mistakes on the Afghan side: there have been number of elections but each had been less legitimate than the previous. The turning point was the presidential election of 2009. Some

people fear the government side as much as they fear the Taliban. The relations between international community and the Afghans have become very difficult. President Karzai tells the Afghans that West's system is based on greed; thus making our position very difficult.

Ambassador Wilkens also highlights two trends in Afghanistan: the growing strengths of the Taliban and the growing weakness of the government. People in Afghanistan were thinking in 2001 that now the richest countries have combined and they are not going to fail, but now they think that they were not serious. Even women, Shia, Northern Alliance — people who don't like the return of Taliban — want the withdrawal. She raises the question that the cost of stay is enormous but what would be the cost of withdrawal?

She particularly mentions three contradictions or paradoxes that the international community has to deal with: a) they are dealing with Kabul, the people who speak English, but history tells us that the decisions are made in the villages; b) drug production, 90 per cent of heroine in the West comes from Afghanistan but still the West is pumping money; and, c) time is required for nation building but they are already about to withdraw.

Professor Dr. Lubna Abid Ali, in her paper "Transition in Afghanistan: Imperatives and the Internal and External Challenges" lists four internal challenges: 1) formidable insurgency; 2) the promotion of democracy in Afghanistan in the face of personalized groups that are not committed to democracy; 3) 98 per cent of opium is produced in Taliban-controlled areas; and, 4) trans-border infiltration.

Professor Dr. Zafar Moeen Nasir in his paper titled "Rebuilding the Economy and Post Conflict Assistance," discusses the economy of Afghanistan which is one of the world's poorest despite significant improvements since the fall of the Taliban. The country is highly dependent on foreign aid. He identified agriculture as the sector towards which reconstruction money should flow since 69 per cent population was employed in farming of which 70 per cent were women. Afghanistan's economy operated on cash only basis, it needed physical reconstruction to rid the country of dependence on foreign countries. He said that in future Pakistan's role for rebuilding Afghanistan would be critical as there were complementarities in the two economies that could be put to use to boost Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperation which would be good for the entire region.

Professor Dr. Sarfraz Khan in his paper "An all-inclusive State? The Problem of Ethnic Diversity," suggests that the ethnic problem is not the major problem of Afghanistan, though there is an ethnic aspect to the conflict. He analyses the Afghan ethnic diversity and its composition. Many ethnicities are smaller in size in Afghanistan than in neighbouring countries, e.g., Pukhtuns, Tajiks, Turkmens, and Uzbeks. The Afghan primary unit is

the tribe; since 1747 the tribe has preceded the state. The nature of the tribe and the state is different. He emphasizes that tribe is within the individual and the state is outside; the tribe is homogenous whereas the state is heterogeneous. Dr. Khan thinks that its strategic location, interference of great powers as well as neighbours are the factors that are responsible for the conflict in Afghanistan. He rejects the prospects of Afghanistan's division as this issue did not arise even when the Pukhtuns ruled the country.

Dr. S. Gulden Ayman in her paper titled "Reconciliation with the Taliban: Challenges and Possibilities" argues that the major drives that urged Obama to launch this initiative of withdrawal were: inability to acquire durable military victory, and the high cost of war in a period when US is experiencing economic stress. Since the European policy is generally supportive of diplomatic solutions, they also supported that initiative.

Highlighting the concerns of the regional stakeholders, she said that in India there was a growing apprehension about economic concerns, the Taliban's links with Indian Jihadi groups and the Uzbek Islamic Movement. Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia initially opposed a negotiated settlement feeling that the Taliban's return to power would harm their interests. In Pakistan, there was formal support of the notion, but also a concern that negotiations in Afghanistan would undermine its domestic military operations. Analyzing the reasons why reconciliation had not worked so far, she says the process has some vulnerabilities, as each actor had to do its best to influence the negotiations. The process started with ambiguity. She stressed that a grand bargain between Pakistan and the US, and Pakistan and India should never be put aside. She concludes that a pure military approach should be changed with humanitarian approach to plan a better future of Afghanistan.

Dr. Andreas Rieck's paper "Towards the Re-emergence of the Former 'Northern Alliance'?" analyses the ethnic divide in Afghanistan. He is of the view that the Pukhtun and non-Pukhtun ethnic divide is a by product of the 1980's Soviet war in Afghanistan. When the Taliban were ousted from power in Afghanistan, there was nobody to stop the Northern Alliance walkover. The task of nation building in Afghanistan was given due importance only in 2009. The withdrawal announcement had signalled the Taliban and all others concerned to prepare for the change.

He said that the Taliban did not take Karzai's efforts for reconciliation seriously. They wanted to be recognized as an Islamic emirate after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. They wanted direct negotiations with the Americans. He expected that a rollback to 1996-2001 would not happen as the Taliban would face resistance from the Afghan army. Dr. Rieck pointed out that during 1989-2001, there were no foreign troops in Afghanistan but there was no peace either. He,

therefore, rejected the Taliban claim that once foreign troops were out there would be peace.

Professor Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi in his paper titled “Pakistan and Afghanistan’s Changing Bilateral Relations,” says that indulgence in proxy wars is a dangerous practice and reliance on terrorist groups is a sure reason for disaster. The militants cannot be relied upon. About Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan, he said Pakistan had no need to play any role that the Afghans did not want. Instead, after the withdrawal of foreign forces Pakistan should focus its attention on its tribal areas where the conflict had spilled over. He said that military operation there had failed to achieve primacy without which there could be no peace.

Dr. Christian Wagner, in his paper “Rebuilding Afghanistan: Responsibilities of the International Community (NATO, UN),” says that the role of the world agencies should continue beyond 2014 and this role would be larger than that of the regional stakeholders as their role would be marred by clash of interests. He says Afghanistan would be relegated in their scheme of things and the Western countries will have greater interest in the Middle East after withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Lt. Gen. (R) Kamal Mateenuddin in his paper on “Possible Post-withdrawal Scenarios” describes the history of the conflict in Afghanistan since Daud’s fall. He emphasizes that a stable and friendly Afghanistan reflecting the demographic character would be in the interest of Pakistan. Even after US withdrawal, its covert operations will continue in Pakistan’s tribal areas and if Pakistan’s security forces continued operations in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) then retaliatory measures by al Qaeda or Taliban may also continue. He contends with the commonly-held view that refugees will go back to Afghanistan when peace will be restored. He asserts that due to lack of economic incentives they will stay in Pakistan. He identifies the interests of other states as well. He describes six possible post-exit scenarios. First, the Taliban lay down arms and negotiate a peace settlement with Karzai and the US. Second, if foreign troops leave Afghanistan and a civil war breaks out between Taliban and Northern Alliance, that would be the worst scenario. In the third possible scenario, the US will maintain military bases in Afghanistan and Taliban resistance will continue. Fourth, a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force will be stationed in Afghanistan. Fifth, Russian and Iranian forces may move into Afghanistan to fill the vacuum created by the pull out of the US troops. Sixth, Afghanistan breaks up into North and South controlled by Northern Alliance and Taliban respectively. Pakistan’s role in the war on terror will continue even after the US withdrawal. In such a situation, Pakistan would do well to stay away from the internal conflict in Afghanistan.

Former Ambassador, Rustam Shah Mohmand in his paper on “War on Terror — Success, Failure and Future,” rejects the 9/11 story and quotes

a number of eminent scholars who believe that the attack on the Twin Towers was the work of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Mossad, in order to provide an excuse for the action against Afghanistan and to get a foothold in the region. He mentions political, economic and security interests of the US for its presence in the region. He highlights the role of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and also mentions the collateral damage caused by their operations. He states that despite billions of dollars in economic assistance, the ordinary Afghans have achieved nothing and they have to go to neighbouring states for earning a living. He lays emphasis on the concerns of neighbouring countries and stresses that Pakistan has high stakes in Afghanistan. He states that FATA remained peaceful throughout the war against the Soviets. All trouble in FATA broke out after 9/11. The solution in his view lay in exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan and allowing Afghanistan to settle its affairs without outside interference.

Iranian scholar, Dr. Kayhan Barzegar spoke on “Struggle for Regional Supremacy: Competing Interests of Neighbouring Countries,” in the third session of the conference. In the same session American scholar Dr. Brian Katulis presented his paper on “The Role of the US in Afghanistan after 2014.” Both speakers highlighted different aspects of the conflict in Afghanistan. However, the papers of both the scholars could not be included in the volume due to non-availability of final texts from them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by the conference participants:

- Peace cannot be restored through bullets in Afghanistan. The solution to the conflict lies in negotiations.
- The future lies in adjusting to the new circumstances.
- The pure military approach should be changed with humanitarian approach to plan a better future of Afghanistan. A balance between military operations and reconciliation is needed.
- The conflict needs to be approached through regional perspective. However, the regional context does not mean including only regional countries; it means to include regional as well as trans-regional countries that have interests in Afghanistan.
- The United States must figure out how to reduce its centrality to the conflict in Afghanistan. The US needs to have crystal clear objectives that it wants to achieve in Afghanistan.
- Building of democratic institutions in Afghanistan is vital for stability in Afghanistan after the troops’ withdrawal.

- Sustainable power sharing arrangement in Afghanistan is needed. Diplomacy needs to be given high value for this objective.
- Outsiders should not interfere in Afghanistan.
- The share in government should be according to population proportion.
- Afghanistan's economy operates on cash only basis, so there is a need to give more attention to this sector.
- There is a need to put more money in industry so that dependence on foreign countries is minimized.
- There is a need to put more money in education.
- In agriculture sector 69-70 per cent of employees are women. So this is the area where reconstruction money should go.
- Given the geographical position, thinking of development in Afghanistan without the help from Pakistan has to be re-considered. Pakistan has a lot of infrastructure and human resources to help reconstruct Afghanistan.
- As there are lots of complementarities, Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperation would be good for the entire region.
- Pakistan should assert primacy in its tribal areas. In its tribal areas, Pakistan can use military means, take political steps, and offer economic opportunity. Pakistan should evolve a comprehensive way to address the FATA situation.■

Welcome Address

Dr. Maqsudul Hasan Nuri

Honourable Chief Guest, Mr. Alamgir Babar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Peter Witterauf, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Hanns Seidal Foundation (HSF), Munich, Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Martin Axmann, Resident Representative, HSF, Islamabad, Distinguished Participants, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome this distinguished assembly of academicians, political analysts, government dignitaries, diplomats, media persons and students to this important International Conference on Afghanistan in Transition: Post-Exit Scenarios.

This topic is very much a burning issue of the day not only for Pakistan and the region but also for the world. In fact, Afghanistan has been the theatre of an unusual conflagration for the last 30 years during which a mighty empire has fallen and a super power is staggering, its will to fight all drained. This is the strange and ironic logic of unequal combatants: David with his sling looks triumphant as Goliath leaves the field in dust and doubt.

This is where our concerns begin as we try to see through the fog of uncertainties that the exit of the main contender will leave behind. What is going to happen in this new situation? How will the things pan out? We can only hope and pray that the government in Afghanistan will be able to quell any elements of the insurgency who may be encouraged to raise their heads in the relative quiet of nascent peace. The fear that the scheduled drawdown would be interpreted as defeat of another superpower and embolden the insurgents to make another attempt on Kabul is indeed palpable. We shall need all our resources to visualize the outcome in 2014, that is, if all goes well in the course of this period and the withdrawal plans see the light of the day. At the moment, it is all very tentative, and the end game scenario is full of ifs and buts — making all prognostications very fragile indeed.

I will not be wrong if I say that not only in neighbourly Afghanistan but also here in Pakistan, and probably in this whole region, there is a very real sense of fatigue as a result of this long drawn-out conflict. There is a strong desire that this frightening situation should now come to an end. Pakistan, next door neighbour to Afghanistan, has suffered the most in this conflict, being a neighbour and a frontline partner in the ‘War on Terror’. Therefore, Pakistan sees its own peace and stability linked to the withdrawal prospects. For anyone to think Pakistan’s role will end with the departure of the American forces from Afghanistan will be very naïve. We have not flown here from across oceans and abroad to be in Afghanistan.

The Hindukush and the Khyber Pass bear testimony to our contiguous existence. And just as the US would not like a turbulent Canada or Mexico breathing down its neck, we too would want a friendly and stable Afghanistan to live peacefully with.

The present government in Afghanistan, which is to take over the country's security from the coalition forces, is in the second term of its tenure. It has been returned to power through an election, which means that democracy in a country which has had no experience of the system in the past is taking roots. And though the government's writ is limited at present, the planned expansion to nearly 4 lakh of its army by 2014 could make it powerful enough to meet any challenge to its authority. The readiness of this government to engage with the Taliban in negotiations and bring reconciliation among the warring factions is a sign of its strength and gives one the hope that a *modus vivendi* can be patched up to bring stability to the country. The change in the approach of the coalition partners in favour of a regional and multilateral solution through negotiations, and not force entirely, is a positive development that would facilitate the drawdown schedule.

In the present queer state of hopeful expectancy and fearful apprehensions, what is needed is an objective study of the dynamics of power in Afghanistan, and how the various stakeholders viz., the government, the insurgent groups, the sundry warlords with their ethnic followings and other foreign actors, are trying to shape the events to their advantage.

But this power politics would be of little relevance if Afghanistan's economy does not revive and its dependence on foreign aid or the narcotics trade does not end. The country has immense potential for growth and revival, thanks to its abundant natural resources and the trade avenues it offers to surrounding countries of South and Central Asia. But this would only be possible if it is spared the prospects of another "Great Game" by the great powers of the day. In this context, the matter of long term concern for Afghanistan and the region is the hitherto un-spelled policy and plans of the US in the post-withdrawal era. Any prolonged presence of the US would be cause for legitimate worries in the region.

For this region to become a stable and peaceful part of the world it would be necessary to keep it free from tension and allow its natural resources of commerce and economy to flourish. In other words, how to turn an arena of conflict into a hub of economic activity, trade and commerce, investment, and peace pipelines' network. These are the matters that would need this conference to deliberate upon and tell us how the events in the future are likely to unfold.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Early October is the time to enjoy the beginnings of bracing days and cool evenings of Islamabad. The autumn is

in the wings with its riot of different hues and colours. So I wish you a very comfortable and pleasant stay here in Islamabad and hope your deliberations would make it a fruitful conference.

In the end gentlemen, I thank you all for your participation and pray with Shakespeare: “may good digestion wait on appetite and health on both.” Thank you.■

Opening Remarks

Dr. Peter Witterauf

This conference on “Afghanistan in Transition: Post-Exit Scenarios” is being held after fighting “War on Terror” in Afghanistan for ten years and one year after the announcement of a drawdown and withdrawal plan of the US and NATO-led ISAF.

Now everyone is talking about what is commonly called “end-game in Afghanistan” and the air is rife with speculations on different exit and post-war scenarios.

The withdrawal of the international forces from Afghanistan in the coming months and years is a matter of fact, irrespective of their failure or success in bringing about peace and stability in Afghanistan. All governments that are militarily engaged in Afghanistan have presented exit strategies and withdrawal plans to their people.

By 2014 most, if not all, international forces will be withdrawn from the country and, as it seems right now, it is unlikely that Afghanistan will be pacified and stabilized by that time.

After the assassination of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani the chances of a negotiated political settlement of the conflict, of an intra-Afghani national reconciliation process, are dim and the entire world seems to be at a loss of how to end conflict and war in the heart of Asia.

With Pakistan and Afghanistan being something like Siamese twins joined together by history, geography and ethnicity, whatever happens across the Durand Line in Afghanistan is, of course, of great importance and consequence for Pakistan.

Therefore, we have decided to conduct yet another conference on Afghanistan, again focusing on that war-torn country, and again looking at it from both an international and a national/Pakistani perspective, as we have done last year in August when we met at this very same location to speak about “Regional Perspectives and Prospects of Stabilizing Afghanistan.”

Last year, however, our Afghanistan conference was driven by hope and excitement. After the London Conference in January, the Peace Jirga in June, the Kabul Conference in July, and the impending formation of the High Council for Peace later in October there was reason last year to believe that things were changing for the better.

The US, the international community and the Karzai administration had not only realized but openly admitted that the war could not be won militarily, that a negotiated peace settlement was the need of the time and

that all regional stakeholders should be consulted and taken on board in order to allow for negotiations and reconciliation.

In the meantime, dozens of “strategic dialogues” and numerous consultations have taken place, between Pakistan, the US, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey — to name just a few of the most important stakeholders.

In addition, media has informed us about closed-door meetings that took place in the Gulf countries, in Turkey and, perhaps, even in Germany; some of them seemingly attended by representatives of the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

However, information regarding the state of affairs and the progress of peace talks is most unreliable. One hardly knows who talks to whom, and when and where.

A break-through has clearly not been achieved.

Quite contrary, the High Council for Peace has fallen into the trap of imitators and those talks that were held with Taliban representatives seem to have been on a very low level. With Prof. Rabbani being assassinated and with the High Peace Council being without a leadership, a negotiated intra-Afghani peace settlement seems more distant than ever.

Apart from that, the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents have at all times dismissed the idea of a negotiated settlement for as long as foreign troops are present on Afghan soil. After 20 September, their disinterest and disregard for talks is more obvious than ever before.

Since our last Afghanistan conference insurgents seem to have extended their area of influence in Afghanistan and during the past year we have seen the assassination of governors and state representatives even in those northern areas of the country that were regarded as relatively safe and “Taliban-free” in the past.

We have also witnessed the assassination of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the president’s brother, in Kandahar, a brazen attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul and, most recently, we witnessed a 20 hrs assault on the US embassy and NATO headquarters in Kabul. This is just to name the most important milestones of a deteriorating law and order situation in Afghanistan and of a conflict completely getting out of hand.

Of course, thousands of civilians and hundreds of national and international troops have also been killed during the past year. The suffering of Pakistan, for that matter, has equally increased.

Pakistan has seen several cross-border raids of Afghani insurgents attacking Pakistani security forces, and even the abduction of innocent children from Pakistan to Afghanistan, as happened just a few weeks ago. Pakistan has also seen an increase of drone attacks in the tribal areas, an increase of bomb explosions and suicide attacks, and an increase of sectarian violence throughout the country.

Looking at Afghanistan and Pakistan today, one is at loss to anticipate what is still ahead of us.

Can it get any worse?

Is there any chance for peace and reconciliation?

Are negotiations possible and feasible?

What needs to be done to end more than thirty years of conflict and turmoil in Afghanistan?

And what is to happen to this region once international forces withdraw?

We have come here today to find answers to these questions or, at least, to hear different views from different people of what they think lies ahead of us.

We have structured this conference into four working sessions dealing, first, with the imperatives, secondly, discussing once again the need of a political settlement, thirdly, looking at the regional dimensions of peace and conflict in Afghanistan and, lastly, assessing prospects and challenges of a post-withdrawal Afghanistan.

This is an ambitious programme for a two-day conference, especially keeping in view the tense political atmosphere that is prevailing in this country due to the diplomatic conflict that has once again arisen between Pakistan and the US over the Afghanistan issue.

Without peace and stability in Afghanistan there will never be peace and stability in Pakistan. And without Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US arriving at an agreement, treating each other with respect and pulling in the same direction, a solution to the present conflict is unthinkable.

Thank you!■

Inaugural Address

Mr. Alamgir Babar

I am thankful to IPRI and HSF for inviting me to the event. It is indeed an important topic. I have not brought any definite answers for you today; I propose to leave you with certain assumptions, and questions. Let me touch upon several processes, timelines and major upcoming events. In terms of processes we have the Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral joint commission, Pakistan-Afghanistan-US trilateral core group, trilateral summit mechanisms with Iran and Turkey respectively and quadrilateral summit with Russia, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan. At the regional level, we have the Istanbul conference and then the wider Bonn International Conference.

Domestically, in Afghanistan the peace and reconciliation process is steered by the High Peace Council (HPC). The unfortunate and tragic assassination of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani has brought a pause in the dialogue process in Afghanistan.

US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's speech in February saw an important shift in the US approach by accepting the need for a political dialogue. The other important change has been the acknowledgement of the co-relationship between peace and economic development.

As the United States draws down by 2014, it would be accompanied by a shift from active combat to a supporting role, an increasing transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the police force. The transition phase is based on a number of assumptions, the significant among them are (i) the insurgents and militants by then would have been sufficiently weakened, (ii) progress would have been made on the political front in terms of reconciliation and reintegration (iii) both in qualitative and quantitative terms the Afghan forces would be in a position to assume security responsibility.

In the discussions leading up to the Istanbul Conference several ideas have been floated from some sort of regional security architecture to a regional political-cum-economical mechanism. Alternatively, there is also a proposal for declaration of agreed principles by the regional countries. The outcome of the Istanbul Conference will be taken to Bonn, where it will be coupled with the long term commitments by the international community for continued engagement in Afghanistan and the region. And that includes the new Silk Road initiative by the US.

The current security situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain, the road ahead is complex and difficult. Given the assumptions the post-exit scenarios ranges from return to civil strife, to tentative peace punctured by

some degree of violence and instability. As far as Pakistan is considered we consider peace and stability in Afghanistan critical for peace and stability in Pakistan. We are committed to the ‘Afghan-led’ and ‘Afghan-owned’ peace and reconciliation process. We fully support a stable, united and sovereign Afghanistan.

As we move to the post-exit phase, the interplay between several processes that I have mentioned and the ground realities will determine the contours of the eventual scenario in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. In the ultimate analysis, it will be for the Afghans themselves to make the final determination.

I wish you good luck with the conference.

Thank you very much. ■

Concluding Address

Senator Afrasiab Khattak
Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights

I thank the organizers of the conference for giving me the honour to be here. Several learned people have contributed to the conference. The withdrawal of foreign forces, which is planned in 2014, can be compared to the withdrawal of 1988, when Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan. When Soviets invaded Afghanistan, United States, the western world, and the Muslim world all decided to liberate Afghanistan, but unfortunately the Afghans were not given any role in the post-withdrawal settlement of Afghanistan.

When I compare the Soviet exit with the United States', I mean to say, there have to be three subjects, the first subject is the intra-Afghan dialogue, it has to be 'Afghan-led' and basically with Afghan directives. The second is the regional subject, in which there is a regional consensus on Afghanistan; all the regional countries should enter into dialogue to build consensus in the region. The third is the international conventions, where the UN should play its role. All these three processes should work simultaneously. Because if it doesn't, then there will be a collision of interests and one circle will attack the other as it happened in the case of Soviet withdrawal which is before us.

I emphasise that we need to revisit our foreign policy, specially our policy towards Kabul. We have been discussing the Afghan policy of the entire world. We have not discussed the policy for our country, which is more important. I think that what has destabilised Afghanistan is what has promoted extremism. This was due to wrong policies of the Western powers. The Western powers, especially the US, invested lots of money in promoting extremism in the 1980s. The Nebraska University prepared a syllabus for recruits: Grade Two mathematics was like, 2 Kalashnikovs plus 3 Kalashnikovs is equal to 5 Kalashnikovs; and if you kill 5 communists out of 9 communists how many communists are left? This also led to the promotion of Wahabism. Before that nobody knew what Wahabism in India and Pakistan was.

From our side, the support for Afghanistan was based on Islamic brotherhood and that had disastrous consequences for our country. Our people weakened the Afghan part and exaggerated the Islamic part. The Mujahideen were the first creation of this ideology and the Taliban are the ultimate product.

When the Taliban entered Kabul in 1996, what did they do? They banned the Afghan National Anthem, they banned the Afghan National

Flag; they declared that the Afghan National Jirga was against Shariah. Then Kabul became the voice of Shariah. They demolished the historic Buddha statues; they demolished everything that represented Afghanistan. Hence we need to revisit our policy towards Afghanistan, because it has not only destabilised Afghanistan, but also destabilised Pakistan. We need a rational discourse over this; we need to think of the Taliban without Talibanisation, because if there is Talibanisation in Afghanistan there will be Talibanisation in Pakistan. Similarly, if there is peace in Afghanistan there will be peace in Pakistan.

A hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan is not in Pakistan's favour, because for us there is no end to the conflict. The international community, Pakistan and regional players need to get involved in bringing an end to the conflict in Afghanistan before the withdrawal. Afghanistan can be stabilised through non-interference in Afghans' internal affairs, through regional support in economic matters, and continued constructive role of the international community.■

CHAPTER 1

Governance Crisis and Institution Building in Afghanistan

Ambassador Ann Wilkens

Background

From a Western perspective, the last ten years of international intervention in Afghanistan have formed a journey from hope to despair, from innocence to cynicism. In the beginning, the motive for the international military effort channelled through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was an optimistic one: After the struggle against the Soviet occupation during the 1980s, the ensuing civil war in the early 1990s and the damage done by the Taliban regime from the middle of that decade, Afghanistan would be rehabilitated — and not only that, it would be turned into a model democracy in a troubled region. Today, after a gradual reduction of these ideals, the motive for the prolonged military presence is largely a negative one: Fear of what would happen if all international troops were to be pulled out all at once. The transition process, the gradual handing-over of more responsibilities to Afghan security forces and authorities, is there to allay those fears, while still making it possible to do what most troop-contributing countries want to do, i.e., to end the military involvement on the ground in Afghanistan. If nothing else, in the midst of economic crisis, the financial cost of this intervention is becoming unsustainable.

Failures of the International Community (IC)

There were always three pillars in the international intervention, dealing with security, governance and development respectively. In the original design of things, these pillars were *not* at par; the military part of the intervention was there mainly to facilitate governance and development. But somewhere around the middle of the last decade, the balance tipped in favour of security and the supporting pillar gradually became the centre of the international effort, the one dominating the multitude of international meetings and conferences that were called to amend what had gone wrong. This development, where original objectives were relegated to the back-burner, had to do with growing Taliban militancy on the ground, but was also facilitated by a number of mistakes that were built into the international intervention from the very start:

- The re-empowering, in 2001, of warlords who had at that time been marginalized but were then used to provide the “boots on the ground”, carrying out the military campaign against the Taliban regime on behalf of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF);
- The lack of coordination and common objectives within the international community — certainly between the OEF and ISAF, but also between the leading troop-contributors, the US and its closest allies, and the rest;
- The concentration of IC inter-action with the Afghan side to counterparts in Kabul, preferably English-speakers, while traditionally the destiny of Afghanistan has been determined by the countryside, on the hills and in the valleys where 80 per cent of the population live and where the Taliban can penetrate more easily than the IC/government;
- The lack of regional understanding — or perhaps it was an unwillingness to prioritize the problems offered by diverging regional interests and the role of Pakistan as facilitator of militant groups, the perspective being just too much.

Connected to these mistakes was the underlying problem of “the clocks and the time,” referring to a well-known Taliban saying that “you (the West) have the clocks but we (the Taliban) have the time.” The IC wanted quick results. “Quick impact projects” were intended to “win the hearts and minds” of the Afghan population but turned out largely to be counterproductive to the more complex and long-term goals of governance and development. The governance objective became even more of the step-child of the international intervention when, in the face of increasing militant activity, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and, more particularly, the Afghan National Police (ANP) proved insufficiently equipped to handle the day-to-day situation on the ground, thus leaving a vacuum for the once defeated Taliban to move back into. Security was again outsourced to local power-brokers and local militias of different kinds, a process which in many cases offered, and still offers, a rerun of the problems caused by the original re-empowering of warlords.

Within the governance sector, justice in particular was neglected. This played into the hands of the Taliban, who have always been strong on justice, albeit a harsh one. The Taliban do not normally provide much social service in terms of schools and clinics in the areas they control — on the contrary, existing schools are destroyed — but they are quick to establish Shariah courts, which provide swift judgments for free. For people who had struggled for a long time to get settlements through a corrupt state structure

or had had no access to justice at all, this brought relief and, to some extent, popular acceptance.

Failures of the Afghan Government

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) failed in similar ways. Instead of putting a genuine effort into good governance, it allowed corruption and abuse of power to grow to the extent that it now permeates more or less the whole society. In many instances, the government's behaviour has become predatory and, in many areas, it is as feared as Taliban rule. The democratic system itself is also abused. Instead of seeing progressively better and cleaner elections, we have witnessed a development where each election has been a bit worse than the preceding one. In this context, the presidential election in 2009 can be viewed as a turning point, leaving behind a legitimacy deficit at the highest level of the state structure.

The division of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government has also been upset, as the executive has seen fit to expand into the other two pillars in various ways. The debacle following the parliamentary election in 2010 has left the parliament hurting and the Presidency as well as the Supreme Court compromised.

Furthermore, the relationship between the two failing partners, the IC and the GoIRA, has become increasingly difficult. Lately, President Karzai made several statements criticising or even incriminating the IC, which feed directly into the war fatigue already characterizing the public opinion in troop-contributing countries.

The development has left the IC in a cul-de-sac, looking for the exit. On the Afghan side, the growing strength of the Taliban converges with the growing weakness of the government in criminal networks linked to both sides. The dividing lines between ideologically or religiously motivated militancy, crime and, indeed, government are increasingly blurred.

Current Situation

Thus, with the Bonn II Conference coming up in the beginning of December, we are very far indeed from the vision of the Bonn I conference in 2001. The positive messages formulated by a series of conferences since then — in Tokyo, Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, etc. — have had an increasingly hollow ring to them and have not succeeded in putting the process back on the envisaged track. It is difficult to see a valid reason to believe that the international conferences would have more clout and be more efficient now, when we are about to leave. The “red lines” of yesterday are already fading into pink: maybe negotiations *can* take place

without a prior renunciation of violence, maybe the constitution *will* have to be slightly revamped in order to accommodate opposing groups.

As the West withdraws, the role of the region moves into the forefront and the question is: Can the diverging interests of the regional powers be brought together constructively? Here, we are brought back to the problem of the clocks versus the time. Developments in the surrounding region are unsynchronized with the need for peace and stability in Afghanistan. For instance, a number of pressing issues in Pakistan and Iran would need to be solved *before* constructive regional cooperation on Afghanistan is likely to take place. But Afghanistan cannot wait for that, the troop pullout is already under way and the magic date of 2014 is drawing closer.

Squeezed between the shortcomings of the IC and the GoIRA on one hand, the problems and rivalries of the region on the other, we find the Afghan population. It has been let down again and again: When the Soviet troops left the country in 1989, Western interest quickly faded and the region was left with problems it could not handle. Internal warfare led to a renewed round of violence, as bad as, if not worse, than the one just concluded. When the Taliban rose to end the prevailing anarchy (and, at that point, were welcomed by a large section of the population), their regime soon derailed into a religious dictatorship. When, after the armed intervention to destroy that regime, the richest countries of the world undertook to reconstruct Afghanistan, it turned out that their commitment was not serious enough — at least many Afghans find it hard to believe that the combined effort by the most developed part of the world could not have produced a better result than the one we see today.

In the debris of broken promises, Afghans are left to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis, seeking survival and protection of their families from violence coming from different quarters. Civilian casualties have kept increasing for a number of years and even if the large majority of them are caused by the Taliban, civilians will consider them a consequence of the warfare, which in turn is seen as a consequence of the presence of foreign troops in the country. Most Afghans, even those who have the largest stake in avoiding a renewal of Taliban influence in the government (e.g. women and religious minorities) now want the war to end. In that, they converge with public opinion in the West.

Looking Ahead

It is important not to repeat mistakes and there are lots of mistakes to avoid repeating — in some cases, mistakes which have already been repeated once or twice. However, the scenario is now changing: Western dominance of the international effort in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, regional

powers are taking over the lead. While this is a development to be welcomed at this stage — many of the problems besetting Afghanistan are regional in nature and require regional responses — it remains vital for the West to find the right forms to pursue a constructive engagement, preferably from a place somewhere in between the indifference of 1989 and the armed intervention of 2001.

In the next phase of the Afghan drama, explicit Western support may even be counterproductive, e.g., on the project level. Luckily, the West does not monopolize positive values and, as it becomes more irrelevant, the ideological struggle *inside* the Muslim world will be decisive as to which values will prevail. However, in the sea of catch-words surrounding international dealings with Afghanistan, there are a few which should not be lost sight of: like good governance (not necessarily based on Western models), local ownership, respect for human rights. It is now up to the Afghans, in cooperation with the regional powers, to move these issues forward and to formulate the best model for a supportive role assigned to the international community at large. ■

Transition in Afghanistan: Imperatives of Handling Internal and External Security Challenges

Prof. Dr. Lubna Abid Ali

Introduction

Security is an un-contested primary objective of individuals and states. Thus, the central question of study is: does the US exit strategy erode or enhance Afghanistan's security? The central question addresses the implications of security relationship at all the three levels: domestic, regional and international. The study is divided into four parts: The Introduction incorporates the relevance and significance of the topic and theoretical framework. Part two consists of internal challenges to security in Afghanistan. Part three highlights external challenges and finally, the conclusion.

Whether high level security i.e., of the state or low level security i.e., promotion of individual security, is rooted in competing schools of thought are questions based on Hobbesian, Grotian or Kantian traditions in International Relations (IR) literature. A new approach incorporating traditional and non-traditional sources of security emerged through the "Copenhagen School." Barry Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde's work: *On Security*, has shifted the focus of IR discipline from purely state security to human security.¹

Security in this study is defined thus as a human condition, empirically verifiable through the opinion polls about what people think of their security. In addition, the collapse of Soviet Union as a result of internal "Societal Security" dilemmas and the rise of non-state actors in the Post-Cold War prompted the incorporation of sub-state groups into security studies.² Security meant "Conditions under which mostly people are free to carry on with their lives and move around most of the time without having a fear of getting killed or injured in a terrorized act." According to Etzioni, instead of assuming that democratization begets security and helps in resolving conflicts, essentially it is security that drives democracy.³

The "Security First" model focuses on basic security of not just Western life but life simply, a respect for all lives.⁴ Recent post-conflict

¹ Helga Haftendorn, "The Theory Building and Discipline Building in International Security," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 1991): 8.

² Barry Buzan, O. Waever and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Co and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 5. A. Collins ed., *Contemporary Security Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ Amitai Etzioni, *Security First: For a Muscular Moral Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 2.

⁴ Ibid, 193.

“nation-building” exercises in Afghanistan, Iraq have been notable for a militarization of development projects, with remaining armed forces being redeployed to reconstruction tasks and, “winning the hearts and minds” of the locals. In 2004, when *Medicines Sans Frontiers* pulled out of Afghanistan, it declared, “we refuse to accept a vision of a future where civilians trapped in the hell of war can only receive life-saving aid from the armies that wage it.”⁵

Etzioni’s point of view is that intervention also should be limited to provide basic security rather than changing regime and troops should not be used for national-building and reconstruction purposes.⁶

Regional Security Complex

According to Barry Buzan, a “security complex involves a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot be realistically considered apart from one another.” The regional states are interrelated in such a complex way so that the security related domestic events in any member state have a major impact on the other.

The region and securitization can be glued together positively where the members have similar threat perceptions, and negatively, when the actors view each other as part of the problem. This gives rise to two kinds of patterns either of “amity or enmity.” The distribution of power also ranges from unipolarity to multipolarity. The patterns of amity and enmity are influenced by such factors as history geography, culture and religion.⁷

The involvement of global powers is explained in terms of overlay and penetration. Another assumption of a Regional Security Complex is the “location” occupied by one or more units referred to as “insulator.” The insulator thus stands at the centre of a strong pattern of securitization and not at its edge. Therefore, it may not be confused with a buffer.⁸ The Regional Security Complex theory is related to four levels of analysis:

- i. Domestic, that focuses on intra-state relations incorporative of internal strengths and weaknesses. It deals with varying levels of state-societal interactions.
- ii. Inter-state relations. For example, relations between India, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.

⁵ Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 17.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Region and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41 – 44.

⁸ Ibid., 49-50.

- iii. The region's interaction with the neighbouring regions. For example, Central Asia, South West Asia or the Middle East connected via the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.
- iv. The interplay between powers at the systemic level and at the regional level.

Afghanistan seems to be the centerpiece or the insulator since security related domestic events have a major impact on the states located in this region. This brings us to the second part of this study which deals with the internal security challenges of Afghanistan.

Internal Security Dynamics of Afghanistan

A few challenges may be summarized as:

Insurgency

It is violent, organized and active and poses formidable challenges to normalcy of life and democracy promotion. Since 2001, the losses of foreign forces exceed 1,000 with over 600 for the US alone. Afghan security forces have grown slowly and remain undersized. Police and border security forces have followed a similar trajectory.⁹

About 30 per cent of Afghan army and 3 per cent of the existing Afghan police force rank in the top two tiers of combat readiness. Kidnapping is rampant and roads unsafe for foreigners as well as Afghan themselves. Taliban increasingly are able to disrupt normal commerce and movement. Afghan communities are destroyed on the basis of ethnic, linguistic and religious frictions due to the influence of local war lords who by coercive and covert means have positioned themselves beyond the reach of the state.¹⁰

I. Democracy in Afghanistan

In 2004-05 elections the Taliban and Pakhtuns were replaced by members of northern alliance. However, elections reveal the dominance of former Mujahideen group known as Tanzim and their control of armed factions. Both the Jamiat-e-Islami and Hazb-e-Islami as well as Shia Hazb-e-Wahdat and the Northern Uzbek

⁹ Michael O' Hanlon, "Towards Reconciliation in Afghanistan," *The Washington Quarterly* (April 2009), 139.

¹⁰ Jason H. Campbell and Jeremy Shapiro, *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post 9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, December 16, 2008), http://www.brookings.edu/foreign_policy/N/media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf.

and Turkmen based Jumbesh-e-Mili are highly personalized, factionalized and only partially committed to democratic values.¹¹

In 2009-10 presidential, provincial and parliamentary elections, warlords and Pakhtun leaders won a large number of election seats. Allegations of fraud and rigging were levelled against the Karzai government. Dissident groups and Taliban increased their insurgent activities further curbing peace and stability needed for functioning of democracy in Afghanistan.

II. The Court System

The court system is weak and only 20 per cent of civil and criminal disputes come into the formal justice system. Court processes are tainted by corruption and inefficiency. There is continuing reliance on customary practices and even preference for the popularity of *Taliban*-style courts in Afghanistan.¹² This has resulted in the re-empowering of the warlords who were defeated in 2001. The institutions of nation-building, the executive (military and bureaucracy), legislative (judiciary and police) and government (development and security) are not at par in large areas of Afghanistan. The history of Afghanistan is such that Taliban easily invest in justice instead of institution building. A Mullah or a Qazi is installed instantly though no money is invested in a school.¹³

III. Drug Trafficking, Cross-border Infiltration and Smuggling

According to the estimates of the UN office of Drugs and Crime, 2011 Afghanistan is the world's largest supplier of opium. The seven provinces in the north-west of Afghanistan — where there are permanent Taliban settlements cultivate and supply 98 per cent of Afghanistan's opium. It is in the countryside that organized crime groups profit from instability and pose serious challenges to security, governance and stability in Afghanistan.¹⁴ In addition, smuggling of banned goods, drugs and weapons from Afghanistan severely damages Afghan-Pakistan transit trade.

Drug traffickers exploit the deteriorating security situation in the tri-junctional border area connecting Afghanistan's Helmand province with Iranian Balochistan and Pakistan's Balochistan

¹¹ Brendon Whitty and Hamish Nixon, "The Impact of Counter-Terrorism Objectives on Democratisation and State-building in Afghanistan," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1: 191 – 192.

¹² United Nations Development Programme, "Afghanistan Human Development Report," UNDP, Kabul, 2007, 91-100.

¹³ Ambassador Anne Wilkens' paper. (Personal copy of the paper).

¹⁴ "UN Office of Drugs and Crime," UNODC, <http://www.unodc.org/20Sept.2011>.

province. It requires concerted efforts by the three physically connected states in the regional security complex through joint patrolling, sharing of information, industrialization and establishment of alternative development projects in poppy growing areas.

Afghan provinces like Kunar and Nuristan have become the “safe havens” for terrorists, who as a matter of routine attack and target Pakistani security forces and innocent civilians. The relevance of the Regional Security Complex theory is established in the backdrop of 100 security check-posts being established all along the border by Pakistan Army. Indeed a “low number of Afghan security posts and lack of security personnel are the main reasons for increased terrorist infiltration in Pakistan. This has affected the bilateral relations negatively.”¹⁵

Consequences for Pakistan’s Security

The imbalanced support of the US within the region has eroded Pakistan’s security vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India. The Obama administration perceives Pakistan as a failing state and by linking it with Afghanistan: the US has undermined Pakistan’s efforts against terrorism.

The collapse of Taliban regime and the triumph of Northern Alliance resulted in an increase in Indian government’s activities along the Pakistan — Afghanistan border. Pakistan believes that Indian consulates behind their humanitarian aid are creating instability in Pakistan’s already troubled areas in Balochistan through its intelligence agency Research Analysis Wing (RAW).¹⁶ A related spillover effects are the sectarian violence in Balochistan, and the politically and ethnically motivated target killings and cycles of violence in Karachi.

Domestic events in Afghanistan as an insulator state are the major cause of friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The issue of Arabs and other foreign fighters using Afghani or Pakistani territory for their campaign against the West is a great concern for both the states. The failure of law and order in Afghanistan is likely to have grave consequences for the security in the region.¹⁷

¹⁵ South Asian News Agency (SANA), July 23, 2011,

<http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/07/23/gilani-for-doubling-efforts-to-stop-border-clashes-between-Pak-Afghanistan>.

¹⁶ Frederic Gare, “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations in the Post 9/11 Era,” *Carnegie Papers* 72 (October 2006): 12,

http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cP72_grave_final.pdf.

¹⁷ Adnan Ali Shah, “Internal Dynamics of Afghanistan after 2005 Parliamentary Elections and Impact on Region,” *Strategic Studies* XXVI, no. 2 (Summer 2007), www.issi.org.pk/old_site/ss_Detail.Php?dated=392.

A cross border attack was launched from the territory of Afghanistan in Dir by some 300 to 400 militants who attacked villages and burned schools in June, 2011. Army chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani told a visiting European delegation that Islamabad will not accept a solution that undermines Pakistan's strategic interests.¹⁸

Counterinsurgency Strategy (COIN)

Counterinsurgency Strategy (COIN) adopted by Gen. Kayani, Zardari's government and the anti-terrorism bill of 2010 introduced in the Senate aims at flushing out the terrorists from Pakistan. After the success of operations *Rah-e-Haq* and *Rah-e-Nijat*, operation *Khwak ba de Sham* (I will teach you a lesson) in Orakzai was successfully completed in South Waziristan. An insurgent stronghold Damadda was also taken over by Pakistan's armed forces. To regain control over Orakzai and Khurram Agency, destroying Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leadership and to deny further safe havens to regrouping terrorists is vital for military's counter terrorism goals.¹⁹

Amid US troops withdrawal plans from Afghanistan peace talks with TTP top leaders and other militant groups across FATA have also started to take place. Karzai organized in June 2010 a grand peace *Jirga* in Kabul attended by 600 delegates including tribal elders, religious leaders and Afghan elders.²⁰

President Obama, in a major speech on March 27, 2009, unveiled a new US strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. It required a standing, trilateral dialogue among the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This meant a "Contact Group" to build better understanding and cooperation for providing regional security, by eliminating extremist groups and their safe havens.²¹

Obama administration perceives Pakistan as a failing state and by linking it with Afghanistan in the context of Af-Pak policy has ignored Pakistan's efforts against terrorism. However, on January 27, 2011 Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed on a joint commission for reaching out to Afghan Taliban and Kabul formally assigned the role of facilitator to Islamabad.

¹⁸ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Afghan Envoy Summoned by FO," *Dawn*, June 3, 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/2011/06/03/afghan-envoy-summoned-by-fo.html>.

¹⁹ Raza Jan, Nicholas Patella and Benfamin Schulz, "Daily Tracker: Pakistan Military Operations in Orakzai," May 13, 2010, <http://www.critical-treats.org/Pakistan/daily-tracker-Pakistan-military-operations-orakzai-mar-30-2010>.

²⁰ "Afghan Conference Sets Deadline for NATO Handover," *CNN News*, January 28, 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/world/Europe/01/28/uk.afghanistan/index.html>. Also; "Afghan Peace *Jirga* Back Karzai Taliban Talks Proposal," *BBC News*, June 4, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10234823>.

²¹ "Press Briefing," White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/Press-Briefing-by-Bruce-Riedel-Ambassador-Richard...Halbrooke-and-Michelle-Flournoy-on-the-New-Strategy-for-AFghanistan-and-Pakistan>.

The joint peace commission included diplomatic, military and intelligence representatives of both countries plus the deputy chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council.

Handling international security challenges thus required joint efforts on the part of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The major objective of the high level delegation of Afghan Peace Council led by Prof. Rabbani in January 2011 was to allow Pakistan the role of a peace maker by accommodating its genuine security concerns. Similarly, the Afghan president stated that any decision about permanent US military bases in Afghanistan would be subject to the wishes of Afghan people and neighbours, particularly Pakistan, China and Iran.²²

Economic Cooperation

Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement of October 28, 2010 signed in Islamabad has replaced the 1965 bilateral agreement that governed the transit of goods to land-locked Afghanistan. After PM Gillani's Kabul visit in 2010 it has also been agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade from US\$2 billion to US\$5 billion by 2015.

Two events in September 2011 exposed the effectiveness of ISAF, Afghan national army and the US. On September 13, 2011 terrorists attacked near the US Embassy in the high security zone and ISAF headquarters that lasted over 20 hours. On September 20, 2011, the former president of Afghanistan, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani was killed by a terrorist posing as intermediary of the *Taliban*. Following the terrorist attacks in Kabul the US Defence Secretary, Leon Panetta, threatened Pakistan to take the military operation to North Waziristan against the Haqqani Network.²³

It is a misperception. Pakistan does not depend on Haqqani, a non-state actor's network for its defence. According to Sirajuddin Haqqani's interview to Reuters from an undisclosed location, he has reiterated his support of Afghanistan in driving out the occupation forces. In the past the US tried to strike a deal with them by offering them lucrative posts in the Afghan government but refused as they felt secure among their own people.²⁴ The coalition forces have not been successful in their efforts to counter insurgency. Each NATO country gives priority basically to their national interest first over the alliance's. For example, while insurgency

²² Safdar Sial, "Pak-Afghan Emerging Trends and Future Prospects," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 4, no. 1 (Jan to March 2011): 27-46. *Dawn*, Feb. 14, 2011. Agreement ratified in July 2011.

²³ *South Asian News Agency* (SANA), September 16, 2011.

²⁴ Anwar Iqbal, "Focus on Haqqani Network: ISI Chief Meets Petraeus, *Dawn*, September 22, 2011. Kent Klein, "White House Calls on Pakistan to Break Links with Haqqani Network," *Voice of America* (Asia), September 23, 2011.

mounted in Kandahar, the NATO forces did not risk going into south. The Taliban successfully exploited this and intelligently applied guerrilla tactics from their sanctuaries in tribal areas, south-east of Afghanistan.²⁵

Exogenous Challenges to Security: US Unilateralism

The Bush administration authorized the CIA to carry out drone attacks inside Pakistani territory. These attacks on Taliban and al Qaeda hideouts in violation of Pakistan's sovereignty caused severe public backlash and affected Pakistan's domestic security.²⁶

A study conducted by the New America Foundation about drones in Pakistan showed 263 drone strikes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since 2004, including 50 in 2011. According to London-based bureau of Investigative Journalism, drone attacks killed 168 children in the last seven years. Only four per cent of 2900 people killed so far were militants. Drone attacks are a serious "violation of international law and undermine rules designed to protect the right of life."²⁷

Forty-five people were killed in Data Khel area of North Waziristan. This was a deadly attack against a peace jirga in the aftermath of the release of Raymond Davis.²⁸

A severe blow to Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity of its military services was struck on May 2, 2011 by the US in its covert operation in Abbottabad. Pakistan criticized it as "unauthorised unilateral action." In retaliation a naval base was attacked by the TTP.²⁹

Increased US involvement and presence in every sector of Pakistan has added to the mistrust. Following the inspection of records by the intelligence agencies in Pakistan, it was revealed that 414 non-diplomats were working in diplomatic capacity. The Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate officials had already told their counterparts in the US to be treated as allies and not satellites.³⁰

²⁵ David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance—the World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 111 – 116.

²⁶ Ibid., 248.

²⁷ New America Foundation, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>. Also see; Alice Ross, "Drones: Untangling the Data," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, August 10, 2011.

²⁸ Baqir Said Sayyed, *Dawn News*, March 19, 2011.

²⁹ Alex Roderiguez, "Pakistan Condemns Bin Laden Raid, Threatens Reprisals for Drone Strikes," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 2011.

³⁰ Express Tribune, February 28, 2011,

<http://tribune.com.pk/Story/124965/intelligence-assets-after-davis-arrest-us-operation-leaving-Pakistan>.

Regional States: Indian Interests in Afghanistan and Impact on Security

In the post-Cold War era India's interest and presence in Afghanistan is all about India's ability to emerge as an extra regional power moving towards great power status. India's engagements in Afghanistan have been broadly focused in the area of security, economy, politics and culture.³¹

Security Imperatives

India's concerns are related to the terrorist hide outs in the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the spillover of terrorism into India. The Indian objective is to secure its outer periphery and to forestall anti-Indian elements in the new Afghan political security set-up. As a member of the committee of peace building mission it has provided 85,000 troops, civilian police for peace-keeping operations and millions of dollars.³² India has deployed Indo Tibetan Police Force (ITPF) as well as army commandos to protect its embassy in Kabul, Consulates in Herat, Jalalabad and other key Indian installations and personnel.³³ India has also constructed hydro-electric project in Herat, and the Zararij-Delaram road connecting Ring Road in Afghanistan to the Iranian Port in Chahbahar. India has also sanctioned Rs. 361.87 crores for Salma Dam Power Project in Herat. It has established medical missions, opened schools, provided 400 buses for public transport, and given three aircraft to Afghanistan's airline Ariana. India views Afghanistan as a bridge between India and Central Asia.³⁴

Despite Pakistan's repeated denials India and the Karzai government have been accusing Pakistan of sponsoring cross-border terrorism and harbouring terrorists on its soil. Pakistan, on the other hand, expressed concern regarding the opening of four Indian Consulates besides the embassy in Afghanistan, particularly in Kandahar and Jalalabad along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. Though, India is the fifth largest donor in Afghanistan's reconstruction work, yet President Karzai at times tries to balance the relationship diplomatically with both India and Pakistan. He

³¹ Christian Fait, "India in Afghanistan: Strategic Interests, Regional Concerns," Oct. 26, 2010, <http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/26/India-in-afghanistan-Part-I-strategic-interests-regional-concerns> (accessed September 11, 2011).

³² M.K.Badrakumar, "Indian Security Presence in Afghanistan," *Hindu*, September 2011.

³³ "India to Send More ITBP Troops to Afghanistan," *Rediff*, March 12, 2010, <http://news.rediff.com/report/2010/mar/12/india-to-send-more-itbp-troops-to-afghanistan.html>.

³⁴ "India Funds New Projects in Afghanistan," *Project Monitor*, May 2, 2007, www.projectsmonitor.com/detailnewsasp?newsid=13319 (accessed September 12, 2011).

once stated, India is a good friend, while Pakistan is a “conjoined” twin of Afghanistan.³⁵

Iran

Persia’s historical claims on Herat are of long standing, as shown in the British foreign office documents. It had been the capital of Eastern Khorasan and geographically was not separated by any natural barrier from *Mashhad*.³⁶ Thus US intervention in Afghanistan is viewed with apprehension in Iran. It was the CIA that had helped creation of Wahabi madrassas in Pakistan in early 1990’s.³⁷

Insurgency in Balochistan likewise has serious repercussions for security in neighbouring Iran.

China

US’ increased presence in every sector of Pakistan makes it easier for them to monitor Chinese and Iranian presence. US views China as a competitor and a potential threat in the region. Pakistan and China reached an agreement under which Pakistan will have its fifth Chinese-build nuclear reactor, a deal which alarms the US.³⁸

Similarly, Iran is a neighbour and a strategic partner of Pakistan in the region. The US policies are aimed at bringing about regime change in Iran and Washington has put Iran under more sanctions targeting its energy sector. These sanctions have negative impact on Pakistan’s energy interests as well.³⁹

Then, the US military base at Ganci in Kyrgyzstan is at a stone’s throw from China. China understands US physical presence as its encirclement. It has also presented the objective to revive the old Silk Route connecting China’s Xinjiang province with the Persian Gulf. It is a Muslim majority province of China comprising Uyghur Muslims having historic cultural and religious links with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Xinjiang is thus vulnerable to penetration by extremists from Afghanistan. Therefore, China has a keen interest in the stability of Afghanistan. More so, as it has invested heavily in the Aynak copper fields in Afghanistan that has raised its stakes in countering insurgency in Afghanistan.

³⁵ Rediff, <http://news-rediff.com/report/2010/mar/11/india-is-a-close-friend-pak-twin-brother-says-karzai-htm>.

³⁶ Perouz Majtahed-Zadeh, “Knowing Afghanistan: Can There Be an End to the Saga? A Geo-Political Alternative on How to Settle this Self Inflicted Wound of the West in the East,” *International Studies Journal* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 125.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rob Crilly, *Telegraph*, November 8, 2010.

³⁹ “New Iranian Entities under UN Sanctions,” *BBC News*, June 9, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle-east/10273528.stm>.

Russia

Russia has been keen to invest in Afghanistan and restoring old ties. Russia wrote off 93 per cent of Afghanistan's Soviet era debts to strengthen bilateral relations. There seems to be a revival of frequent diplomatic visits particularly from the Afghan side and Moscow reopened its consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif. Moscow has expressed its readiness to rebuild war-torn Afghanistan and is reconstructing the 142 facilities built by the Soviet Union in the country. Russia is also eager to resume cooperation in aiding the military and offering military technical supplies.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The details of the endgame in Afghanistan are not final yet. It remains to be seen how stable the post-exit Afghan set-up would be, even in a partial withdrawal. Seth Jones, an advisor to the Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan submitted a plan before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2011. The possible scenarios are small, medium and large troop withdrawals. The Pentagon's preference is for a fair troop's presence in Afghanistan.⁴¹

The three scenarios by Andrew E. Axum, Centre for New American Security, Washington D.C., are:

The First Scenario

US Withdrawal: Return of Taliban: If the vacuum is filled by the defeated party then insurgencies, regional instability and sectarian violence would increase. It seems to be the worst case scenario having the experience of Taliban intransigence. Pakistan has realized that Post-Cold War period world has changed. Therefore, Pakistan also needs alliance with non-Taliban elements in Afghanistan.

The Second Scenario

US-Limited Engagement — Intensification of the Proxy War: The most probable outcome, with troops limited to protect key cities, a foreign internal defence (FID) model.⁴² The countryside is left open to Taliban's influence. In this case, the present geo-political competition and support for

⁴⁰ Ibid., 80-81.

⁴¹ Anna Mulrine, "Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Three options Weighed by the White House," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 21, 2011,
<http://www.cs.monitor.com/USA/military/2011/0621/withdrawal-from-Afghanistan-Three-options-weighed-by-the-White-House>.

⁴² Andrew E. Axum, www.enas.org/.../CNAS%20Policy%20Brief%20

proxies would continue. In this case there is the possibility of the Balkanisation of Afghanistan into spheres of influence.

The Third Scenario

Long Term Building on Afghan — State Capacity: It involves additional resources for training troops and institutional building by the US. Such achievement is difficult when US is hard pressed economically with diminished public support.

Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid argue that Afghanistan's problem could be resolved through regional solution of outstanding disputes like Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Lisa Curtis in her testimony before the subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, US House of Representative, on March 3, 2009 stated that transformation of Pakistan — Afghanistan ties can only take place in an overall context of improved Pakistan — Indian relations. A peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of both India and Pakistan.⁴³ The three stakeholders need to devise cooperative policies that accommodate the genuine interests and address the security concerns.

Hostility of Northern Alliance towards Pakistan

Wali Masood, the Afghan ambassador in London and the brother of Sher-e-Panjsher, Ahmed Shah Masood, stated that: "The Pakistani Government and the ISI had been responsible for backing Taliban and Osama bin Laden, even attributed the assassination of Ahmad Shah Masood to the Taliban-Pakistan nexus. The point to be realized is the independent nature of the Taliban."⁴⁴

Pakhtun Factor

It is true that all Pakhtuns are not Taliban. Yet under the "Pakhtunwali Code" protection is provided to individuals seeking shelter or refuge in Pakhtun communities. This provided the Taliban sympathizers an excuse to shelter elements associated to al Qaeda. This became the cause of conflict between Panjsheri of Northern Alliance and Pakhtuns. Pakistan's ambassador has made efforts to reach out to non-Pakhtun and invested in

⁴³ Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2009): 30-44.

Lisa Curtis, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: Understanding and Engaging Regional Stakeholders," Testimony before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, March 31, 2009,
<http://www.heritage.org/research/asianandthepacific/tst040209a.cfm> (accessed September 14, 2011).

⁴⁴ Kim Sengupta, "War on Terrorism: The Future," *Independent*, November 14, 2001.

developmental projects in Northern Afghanistan. Pakistan's Afghan Policy is, therefore, no longer Pakhtun specific.⁴⁵

As regards another irritant between Afghanistan and Pakistan i.e. Kabul River waters, the construction of a dam is definitely going to affect the flow of water in the Indus River. It needs renegotiation of the 1921 Water Treaty.

Keeping in view the history, culture and politics in the region, peace will not emerge automatically. It is basically upto the Afghans to decide what form of government best suits them. All the stakeholders should be represented in any peace initiative to hammer out the solution and accommodate the genuine security concerns of the states of the region. Without adopting an approach based on "regional security complex" it will not be possible to maintain peace and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Afghanistan was carved out from the remnants of the Persian Empire to suit British colonial designs for the region during their geo-politics of the Great Game with Russia. But Afghanistan never proved to be a working proposition as a genuinely founded nation state. The ills of the situation however, disallow any remedy that is not based on a genuine state-building process in that country. Afghanistan needs to address the centrifugal forces that drive various ethnicities apart and find accommodation among components so as to form a genuinely designed federalism.■

⁴⁵ Marco Mezzea and Safiya Aftab, "Pakistan State-Society Analysis," Initiative for Peace Building, European Union, January 2009,
www.clingendael.nl/publications/.../20090300_cru_Pakistan_mezza.pdf
(accessed September 15, 2011).

Rebuilding the Economy and Post Conflict Assistance

Prof. Dr. Zafar Mueen Nasir

Afghan Economy

Afghanistan is among the poorest countries of the world. It has been a battle field for at least two decades. It is now recovering from decades of old conflicts and showing significant improvement in its economy after the fall of the Taliban. Afghanistan is a landlocked country and highly dependent on neighbouring countries for trade. The bordering countries include China 76 km, Iran 936 km, Pakistan 2,430 km, Tajikistan 1,206 km, Turkmenistan 744 km and Uzbekistan 137 km. Historically, there has been a dearth of information and reliable statistics about Afghanistan's economy. The available information indicates that the total size of the economy at purchasing power parity in 2009 was estimated at US \$27 billion. The economy is growing at a faster rate and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2009-10 and 2010-11 was estimated at 22.5 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. Currently, the per capita GDP is around US\$800. The economy of the country is small and mostly financed by borrowed money. Currently, it has US \$8 billion in bilateral debt and US\$ 500 million in debt to Multilateral Development Banks. Because of the state of poor economy, the unemployment rate is as high as 40 per cent and population living below poverty line is 53 per cent. The other social indicators are also in bad shape. The currency is the Afghani, which was reintroduced as Afghanistan's new currency in January 2003. At present, one US dollar equals approximately 50 Afghanis.

Agriculture is the dominant economic activity of the Afghan people and the main source of income. It also provides the raw material to Afghan industry and industrial output varies with the performance of the agriculture sector. The share of agriculture and livestock in the GDP is almost one third (31% of GDP). The major products include wheat, opium, sheepskins, lambskins, corn, barley, rice, cotton, fruit, nuts, karakul pelts, wool, and mutton. The share of industry is 26 per cent of GDP that includes small-scale production of textiles, soap, furniture, shoes, fertilizer, cement; hand-woven carpets; natural gas, coal, and copper. The services sectors make up the major share (43% of GDP) in the economy. Dominant service sector activities consist of transport, retail trade, and telecommunications. The total exports of the country stand at US \$547 million (excluding opium). Major exports include fruits and nuts, hand-woven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semi-precious gems. Major export destinations are Central Asian Republics, United States, Russia, Pakistan and India. Afghanistan imports goods worth US\$5.3 billion annually. Major

imports include food items, petroleum products, textiles, machinery, and consumer goods. These are imported from Central Asian Republics, Pakistan, United States, India and Germany. Afghanistan is rich in natural resources but no serious effort is being put to explore and develop this resource. It has huge deposits of natural gas, oil, coal, petroleum, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semi-precious stones.

In the 1930s, Afghanistan embarked on a modest economic development programme. The government founded banks, introduced paper money, established a university, expanded primary, secondary and technical schools and sent students abroad for education. The Soviet invasion of 1979 and ensuing civil war destroyed much of the country's limited infrastructure and disrupted normal patterns of economic activity. Gross Domestic Product fell substantially because of loss of labour and capital and disruption of trade and transport. Continuing internal strife hampered both domestic efforts at reconstruction as well as international aid efforts.

However, Afghanistan's economy has grown at a fast pace since 2001 especially after the fall of the Taliban regime, albeit from a low base. GDP growth exceeded 12 per cent in 2007 and 3.4 per cent in 2008 increasing to 22.55 per cent in 2009-10. Despite these increases, unemployment remains around 40 per cent and factors such as corruption, security, and shortage of skilled workers constrains development and the conduct of business. In June 2006, Afghanistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed on a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility programme for 2006-2009 that focused on maintaining macroeconomic stability, boosting growth, and reducing poverty. Afghanistan is also rebuilding its banking infrastructure through the Afghanistan National Central Bank.

The present paper looks into different sectors which can play an important role in rebuilding Afghan economy if these sectors are focused in the rebuilding phase by the provision of assistance. The economy is divided into three major sectors i.e. agriculture, industry and services. The role of Pakistan and international assistance is discussed in the promotion of these sectors. As agriculture is the largest sector of Afghan economy, the assistance in this sector can be significantly useful.

Agriculture, Livestock and Forestation

As indicated earlier, agriculture is the mainstay of Afghan people and an estimated 85 per cent people depend on it and related businesses for their livelihoods. Opium poppy production and the opium trade continued to have a significant monetary share in the country's agricultural economy. However, both this share and the number of farmers growing poppy continue to decline as more farmers are taking advantage of opportunities to

produce and market alternative crops. Licit commercial agriculture is playing a significant role in increasing the income of rural populations. Major food crops are corn, rice, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. Major industrial crops include cotton, tobacco, madder, castor beans, and sugar beets.

Irrigation in Afghanistan is primitive and agricultural production is constrained by an almost total dependence on erratic winter snows and spring rains for water. Relatively little use is made of machines, chemical fertilizer, or pesticides. Almost 80 per cent of Afghanistan's agricultural sector is dependent on some form of irrigation system as it has traditionally low rainfall levels. Improved water resource management is vital to sustainability of the agricultural sector, particularly with regard to food security. Forests, the other important resource, have greatly depleted due to illegal logging practices and local fuel demands. Currently, forest cover accounts for only 2 per cent of its land, although when considering conservation and environmental factors, it should account for at least five per cent.

Livestock rearing (sheep, goats, cattle, and camels) is another important activity of the Afghan people providing an alternative livelihood to farmers in case of agriculture crop failure. It has significant contribution in the Afghan economy. Karakul sheep are raised in large numbers in the north. The tight curly fleece of Karakul lambs is used to make Persian lamb coats. Other breeds such as the fat-tailed sheep and goats are also raised in the country. The major challenge now is to maximize the natural regeneration of herds. This can be done by ensuring that the animals are healthy and well fed, and that there are adequate breeding males or artificial insemination available. Animals are also being imported from neighbouring countries. Without adequate veterinary control, there is a risk of spreading infectious diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and Peste des petits ruminants, which could adversely affect the recovery of the national herd. Afghan government has to enhance the capacity of the public veterinary services to manage these disease risks.

Food security is a big challenge and 45 to 55 per cent of children before the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition due to food shortage. To become self-sufficient in food production, cereal production must improve, especially for wheat, which requires high-cost irrigation systems and technological support. Among crops, wheat is the most important crop, followed by barley, corn, and rice. Cotton is another important and widely cultivated crop. In the reconstruction phase, agriculture must be given priority for food security. In this respect, Afghan farmers need financing to buy quality inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and equipment for higher agriculture yield.

The international community including Pakistan is providing help to re-establish banking and credit services to farmers. The outreach has increased significantly and now nearly two-thirds of the country's provinces are receiving these services. The data shows that as of September 2009, more than 52,300 agricultural loans had gone to small businesses, with a repayment rate of 94 per cent. Of these, 49 per cent (27,700 borrowers) of loans had gone to women-owned businesses. The programme's success has encouraged commercial banks to extend revolving loans for agribusinesses. Funds have been provided for leases and to promote agro-processing and support for crop exports.

Trade and Industry

The industrial base of Afghanistan is small and only a few industries currently operate in the country. The major industries include food products, cotton textiles, cement, coalmining, chemical fertilizers, small vehicle assembly plants, processed hides and skins, carpet making, sugar manufacture, leather and plastic goods. These industries provide some employment opportunities to the growing labour force of the country. Afghanistan is endowed with natural resources, including extensive deposits of natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, and precious and semiprecious stones. Unfortunately, ongoing instability in certain areas of the country, remote and rugged terrain, and an inadequate infrastructure and transportation network have made mining these resources difficult. At the same time there have been few serious attempts to explore or exploit them. The first significant investment in the mining sector is expected to commence soon, with the development of the Aynak copper deposit in East-Central Afghanistan. This project tender, awarded to a Chinese firm and valued at over US \$2.5 billion, is the largest international investment in Afghanistan to date. The Ministry of Mines also plans to move forward with oil, gas, and possibly iron ore tenders early this year.

The most important resource has been natural gas, first tapped in 1967. At their peak during the 1980s, natural gas sales accounted for US\$300 million a year in export revenues (56% of the total). 90 per cent of these exports went to the Soviet Union to pay for imports and debts. However, during the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, Afghanistan's natural gas fields were capped to prevent sabotage by the mujahidin. Restoration of gas production has been hampered by internal strife and the disruption of traditional trading relationships following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition, efforts are underway to create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs). ROZs stimulate badly needed jobs in underdeveloped areas where extremists lure fighting-age young men into

illicit and destabilizing activities. ROZs encourage investment by allowing duty-free access to the US for certain goods produced in Afghanistan.

The long conflict of three decades severely disrupted availability of secure energy supplies in Afghanistan. The power generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure was destroyed and what remained was stretched far beyond capacity. More than 90 per cent of the population had no access to electricity. In January 2009, with the help of the Asian Development Bank and the Indian government, electricity began to flow into Kabul along a newly constructed transmission line running from neighbouring Uzbekistan. For the first time in more than a generation, the majority of the capital's 4 million people enjoy the benefits of power. In 2001, Afghanistan produced 430 megawatts of electricity. Today the country produces more than 754 megawatts. International statistics maintained by the World Bank indicate the ratio of GDP growth to electrical production is approximately US\$ 1,000 to 300 kwh. The Afghan government's current power plan sets a goal to deliver sufficient electricity to meet the needs of an economic growth rate of nine per cent per year. Additionally, the Afghan government anticipates that approximately 90 per cent of urban businesses will have access to electrical power by the end of the year 2012. Finally, the plan's objective is to provide access to electricity to 65 per cent of urban and 25 per cent of rural households by early next year.

The United States government is on the forefront to provide assistance to help develop new electricity generation capacity and provide 24-hour power in key cities including Kabul, Lashkar Gah, and Kandahar. Major projects carried out include refurbishment of power generation capacity at Kajaki Dam in the south and opening the Kabul power plant. Under the US and its partners' supervision, the Afghan government has transferred all assets, liabilities, and personnel from the troubled, state-run power utility Da Afghanistan Breshna Mosesa (DABM) to the new corporatized national electricity utility Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS). The move was a significant breakthrough in Afghan government and donor efforts to modernize and begin to commercialize the national electricity sector. Reliable, affordable electricity is vitally important to Afghan economic growth, prosperity, and stability. The energy infrastructure needs immediate attention of the government to improve the business environment and quality of life of the Afghan people.

Regional Trade Potential

Afghanistan is neighbour to a number of countries including Pakistan, Iran, South/Central Asia and in part of some important regional trading blocs such as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), Shanghai Organization Cooperation (SCO), Central and South Asia Transport and Trade Forum (CSATTF) and the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). This shows that the country has great trade potential but political hurdles are impeding all the efforts. Pakistan is the most important trading partner of Afghanistan having 85 per cent of the trade. China, Japan, Germany, India, Russia, UK, and South Korea are other important trading partners of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's chief exports are natural gas and dried fruit. Other exports include carpets, fresh fruit, wool, and cotton.

Most of the foreign trade of Afghanistan is controlled by the government or by government-controlled monopolies. It imports basic manufactured goods and foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, petroleum products, fabrics, clothing and footwear, medicine, metals, fertilizers. Because of the poor infrastructure in Afghanistan, access to banking facilities is limited and unreliable. That is the reason behind "cash-only" basis for most transactions in Afghanistan's economy. Plastic money (Credit card transactions) is not yet available along with limited international bank transfers. Only a few ATM machines exist at Standard Charter Bank and Afghan International Bank (AIB) in Kabul. As far as banking sector is concerned, the government must take aggressive stance to improve these services. This will help the Afghans to expand their trading links with rest of the world.

Transportation

The transport sector is very important for controlling insurgency and bringing stability in the country. Afghan government has to expand its road network because of the very reason that "where road ends, the insurgency begins." Currently a good network of roads exists in the country. The 10,000 km of roads network along with ring roads are keeping the major cities away from insurgency. The work on the restoration of the "Ring Road" linking Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat with the northern cities of Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz is in progress. Much of the road has now been completed, including economically vital stretches linking Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. The Amu Darya (Oxus) River, which forms part of Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, has barge traffic. The Soviets have completed a bridge across the Amu Darya during their occupation of the country. The Shirkan Bandar Bridge providing vital trade routes between Afghanistan and Tajikistan was closed during the Soviet occupation but reopened in 2007.

There is no functioning railway in the country. The Hairatan to Mazar-e-Sharif railway project is in progress. The project aims to increase

trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, reduce transport costs, increase vehicle operation savings, and create job opportunities in the project area. It will improve Hairatan's marshaling yard and railway station, construct a new single-track railway line of about 75 km from Hairatan to Mazar-e-Sharif, construct a new transshipment terminal facility at Mazar-e-Sharif, install signalling and telecommunication systems, install safety features for efficient operation, develop institutional capacity of the railway sector, and provide construction supervision and project management consultancy. Afghanistan's national airline, Ariana, operates domestic and international routes, including flights to New Delhi, Islamabad, Dubai, Moscow, Istanbul, and Tehran. Civil aviation has been expanding rapidly and several private airlines now offer an alternative to Ariana and operate a domestic and international route network. The first, Kam Air, commenced domestic operations in November 2003.

Social Sectors Development

Afghanistan has one of the highest mortality rates in the world i.e., one in five children dies before the age of five. Similarly, one out of every eight Afghan women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth each year. Life expectancy is only 44 years for both men and women. While these statistics are tragic, there has been progress. Recent reports indicate that 85 per cent of the population has access to basic health services within 1 hour of travel to a health facility (68% for those on foot) — up from nine per cent in 2002. More than 1,650 professional midwives are employed by the ministry of public health, providing health care and childbirth services across Afghanistan. This has helped reduce infant mortality rates by 23 per cent, saving 80,000 newborn lives each year. Child mortality has also fallen, down by 26 per cent since 2002. The Afghan government with the help of donor nations has implemented health programmes to help meet the immediate health care needs of the population by strengthening the health care service delivery system; addressing the management leadership and stewardship capacity of the Afghan health care system at the central, provincial, district, and community levels; and increasing demand for and access to quality health products and services through the private sector — 60 per cent of the population receive health care from the private sector.

The border areas of Afghanistan are badly affected by insecurity, especially in the south, which led to an increase in polio cases from seven in 2004 to at least 24 in 2009. Afghanistan's National Polio Eradication Initiative to strengthen immunization communication, service delivery, and surveillance networks is underway and bringing change in the life of the people. As a result of this assistance, more than 7 million Afghan children, or 90 per cent of children under the age of five, have been vaccinated

against polio. The international community is also supporting the initiatives on tuberculosis (TB) detection, treatment, and control efforts in 13 target provinces using the Directly Observed Therapy, Short Course (DOTS) methodology. Globally recognized as the best way to cure TB and control its spread, DOTS is a 6-to 8-month programme in which health providers directly administer medication and closely monitor patient progress.

The private sector in health services, especially private hospitals, pharmacists, and pharmaceutical manufacturers, are getting support from government and donors in the development. This is positively affecting the social indicators. In 2001, approximately 18000 women were dying annually due to pregnancy complications and only a small fraction i.e. eight per cent of Afghans had access to at least basic health care. The situation has improved significantly and today about 85 per cent healthcare facilities are with a doctor and 81 per cent with a nurse or midwife. As a result 89,000 more Afghan children and 40,000 more mothers live each year. There is a drop of 25 per cent in infant mortality. Approximately five million children receive vaccination, 4,000 new health clinics have been added in the network of health and Polio has been nearly eradicated.

The progress in the education sector is also phenomenal; more than 10,000 schools are providing education services to 6.3 million children. This shows a six-fold enrolment growth since 2001. During the Taliban regime no girls were registered in schools. Today, 36.3 per cent of the student population is girls. Similarly, the number of teachers has increased seven-fold to 142,500, of whom nearly 40,000 are women. Adult literacy activities increased rapidly in 2009. Learning centres grew from 1,100 to 6,865, and activities expanded from 9 to 20 provinces, bringing literacy and financial services to over 169,000 beneficiaries (62% female). From a situation of total illiteracy, these learners can now read, write, form simple sentences, and do basic mathematical calculations. Ongoing support of literacy and basic education is paramount, as well as the quality and preparation of teachers in order to close the literacy gap left by 30 years of conflict. The current situation is encouraging; more than six million children are now in school, 34 per cent among them are girls. Around 700 per cent more teachers are imparting quality education in schools. More importantly, 28 per cent of teachers are female. The number of schools, rebuilt or newly built is 3500, showing a significant increase. The education sector has to go a long way because 80 per cent of Afghanistan's schools are in sub-standard buildings; one-third of schools are under a roof; nearly five thousand have no buildings.

At tertiary level education, there is also a significant improvement. University enrolment has grown from 4,000 in 2002 to over 76,000. Kabul University was reopened to both genders. American University of Afghanistan is now taking students from Afghanistan and the neighbouring

countries. A new military school has started operation with the goal of properly training and educating soldiers. With all these achievements, educational opportunity is limited because only one per cent of GDP is spent on this sector compared to five per cent in the US and six per cent in Canada. This lack of funding is the main obstacle. Besides, unsafe school buildings, cultural norms and lack of women teachers are the other main obstacles.

Women participation in agriculture sector is approximately 70 per cent. This indicates Afghanistan's agricultural sector is made up of women, particularly in the livestock and horticultural sectors. Special programmes should be initiated for skilled women to have high remunerative jobs so that women get empowerment.■

CHAPTER 2

An All-inclusive State? The Problem of Ethnic Diversity

Prof. Dr. Sarfaraz Khan

Civil War/Conflict and State Failure

The end of the Cold War period coinciding with a sharp rise in intra-state wars¹ prompted scholarly research into the causes and consequences of civil wars.² For some, the old notion of ethnic, political or economic injustices are still at play alienating groups to challenge the state violently, termed the grievance model. Others find the presence of large natural resources on the periphery and the motive to make huge profits a better explanatory variable for armed internal conflict, termed the ‘Greed Model’. Still others consider resource scarcity or deprivation to act as a precursor of war. The catastrophic impact of civil wars in infrastructure destruction, human and capital flight, erosion of state authority and legitimacy has destabilized regimes and states.³

The Grievance Model

Political victimization, ethnic discrimination, repression, economic inequities, income concentration are grievances that may enrage groups of

¹ Only 7 out of 108 armed conflicts in the 1990's, were interstate. See Thomas S. Szayna and Ashley J. Tellis, "Introduction," in *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict: Application of a Process Model*, ed. Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000), 1. In 1994 alone, 44 civil wars were recorded in almost one-quarter states in the world. See James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others," *Journal of Peace Research*, 42/3 (2004): 275.

² The various studies adopt different benchmarks for defining civil wars. Most adopt Singer and Small's measurement of one thousand combat related deaths in a year, with both an identifiable rebel organization and government suffering at least five percent of these casualties. Others rely on Uppsala Conflict Data Project interpretation of a conflict producing 25 or more battle related fatalities per year and some (Fearon), measure the start and end of a conflict by 1000 directly related deaths over the course of the conflict and 100 directly related deaths per year. See J. D. Singer and M. Small, "Correlates of War Project: International and Civil War Data, 1816-1992," Ann Arbor, Michigan, Consortium for Political and Social Research (1995); UCDP/ PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v4-2009 CSCW, [http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed.Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/...](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed.Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/); and James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Wars Last So Much Longer," 278-285.

³ Though, to quote Wallensteen, state failure can take place without a civil war and there can be a civil war without state failure. Peter Wallensteen, "Beyond State Failure: On Internal and External Ways of Ending State Failure" (paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, Purdue University, Florence, 7-19 April 2000). Sri Lanka stands as an example, where after 15 years of civil war, government was able to reestablish control over Tamil North without facing failure.

citizens and minorities to challenge state authorities in an armed conflict.⁴ Davenport et al., in their study of 149 countries (1976-99) find grievance to be a positive indicator of civil war, but in specific economic contexts and in reference to specific forms of urban dissent.⁵ For some, grievances along ethnic lines are more positively related to the civil war onset.⁶ For others, ethnic grievances emanating from state exploitation of lands and mineral resources of minorities inhabiting the peripheral areas are not only longer in duration but also difficult to end.⁷ Ethnic identities may be politicized because of governance failure; inability to ensure security and economic wellbeing motivates leaders to manipulate group fears and compel people to shift their political identity from citizens of the state to members of the ethnic group.⁸ Weak states lack the capacity to accommodate group and ethnic grievances and therefore, face secessionist and separatist movements. The concentration of a state's core ethnic group (20-60% of its population) in a particular region provides not only institutional resources and regional governments that can organize rival claims to sovereignty but also threaten other minorities and claim secession on the basis of the idea that it can politically exist apart from other regions of the state.⁹ Both ethnic-fractionalization theory and that of ethno-federalism hold true in the case of East Bengal's secession from the state of Pakistan in 1972. The state's inability and unwillingness to accommodate ethnic grievances pertaining to

⁴ See; Ted Robert Gurr, *People versus States: Minorities at risk in the New Century* (Washington DC,: USIP Press, 2000); and, Nicholas Sambanis and Annalisa Zinn, "From Protest to Violence: An Analysis of Conflict Escalation with an Application of Self Determination Movements" (paper presented at the Annual meeting of the Political Science Association, Washington D.C., September 1, 2005).

⁵ See; Christian Davenport, David A. Armstrong and Mark I. Lichbach, "Conflict Escalation and the Origins of Civil War," (paper presented at the annual meeting of The Mid West Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, 2005), http://www.allacademic.com/meta/86747_index.html.

⁶ Elbadawi and Sambani's empirical study (1960-99), found ethnic fractionalization to be positively related to civil war onset; regime change and poverty increased the risk of civil war, whereas democracy and high economic development reduced civil war risks, regardless of the level of ethnic diversity. For greater details, see; Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, "How Much War Will We See? Explaining the Prevalence of Civil War," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46/3 (June 2002): 307-334.

⁷ This finding was based on a study of 128 cases of civil war between 1945-1999. The estimated median and mean durations for sons of soil cases are 23.2 and 33.7 years. See; James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Wars Last So Much Longer," 278-285.

⁸ State failure in Rwanda and Yugoslavia affected the identity consciousness of its citizens. See; Abby Stoddard, "Ethno-nationalism and the Failed State: Sources of Civil State Fragmentation in the International Political Economy," *E-merge: A Graduate Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 3 (January 2000): 2-43.

⁹ For example, Bengalis in East Pakistan and Russians in the former Soviet Union. See; Henry E. Hale, "Institutional Sources of Ethno-federal Survival and Collapse" (paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 29, 2002); and Svante E. Cornell, "Autonomy As a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective," *World Politics*, no. 54 (January 2002): 245-276.

fair distribution of economic and administrative resources and the concentration of Bengalis in the Eastern wing physically separated from its Western counterpart acted as strong incentives for civil war and separation.¹⁰ Giley, is critical of the theoretical and empirical justifications of ethnicity-based political studies; conceptual problems arise from application of vague definitions and the failure to point to a distinctive causal explanation for given instances of political contestation and empirically, ethnic civil wars are associated with largely the same factors as non-ethnic civil wars.¹¹

Geo-politics and State Failure

How does geo-politics influence a state's stability and what role territorial variables play in its failure?

Geo-politics is the study of influence of a state's geographic features over its national politics and external relations.¹² To Osterid, geo-politics is: relating political power to geographical space with the underlying assumption that military and economic competition exists between states for raw materials and the need for national power; both states and alliances balance each other through physical occupation or by securing political influence within a geographical space; and that geography represents the greatest determinant of political relationship.¹³ Cohen describes geo-politics as the analysis of the consequences arising from the dynamic and

¹⁰ In Pakistan's case, presence of a hostile neighbor with a history of animosity and an interest in destabilization of its neighbor provided a cushion to insurgency by offering sanctuaries, finances and training and safe passages.

¹¹ Constructed ethnicity, being a moving phenomenon, provides contested explanations of political conflicts and in structural ethnicity conflicts, the causes of conflict are structural deprivation issues whether economic, political or social. Ethnic conflict can only be applied on instances where ethnically distinct groups are involved in sustained and violent conflict on issues that are integral to one ethnicity. Tamils rebelled in Sri Lanka and not in India's Tamil Nadu because they were systematically denied basic political, economic and cultural rights from mid 1950s onwards and not because they were inherently antagonistic to Sinhalese. Similarly, the Muslim insurgency in the Southern Philippines in the 1970s started in response to state sponsored land evictions and religious freedom limits. See; Bruce Gilley, "Review: Against the Concept of Ethnic Conflict," *Third World Quarterly*, 25/6 (2004): 1155-1166.

¹² Rudolph Kjellen, a Swedish political geographer, coined the word "geo-politics" around the dawn of the 20th Century to refer to great power rivalry and expansion and power politics of geographical attributes of the states later expanded and made prominent through Halford Mackinder's Heartland Theory of 1904, wherein, he emphasized the significance of controlling Eurasia as a source of world power, because of its strategic resources and geographic advantages. See; Osterid Oyvind, "The Uses and Abuses of Geo-Politics," *Journal of Peace Research*, 25/2 (June 1988): 191-199; and "Geo-politics in the High North," *Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies*, www.ifs.mil.no.

¹³ "Geo-politics in the High North."

influencing interaction between geographical settings and perspectives, and political processes.¹⁴

Geography

As for the influence of geography over a state's success or failure, Li, considers territorial variables — topography, demography and ethnicity as sources of instability: Absence of topographic features — mountains, seas consume more resources for war preparation and generate internal tensions; rapid demographic changes coupled with low productivity may strain resources and contribute to instability; and ethno-nationalism in the face of regionally concentrated political groups with secessionist agendas and declining coercive power of the centre may contribute to state break-up. An “interior state” surrounded by powerful enemies is geopolitically disadvantaged, suffers from resource shortfalls, accumulating national debts (war preparation), loss of profitable markets or sources of external financial aids coupled with population pressures and recession directly bears on its coercive capacity increasing centre-periphery conflict and prospects of a break-up.¹⁵ Fazal emphasizes location as determinate of a state's survival and gives example of a buffer state, whose powerful rivals are interested in maintaining its sovereignty only in peace time; as war begins, it is likely to be conquered, annexed and occupied for gaining strategic advantage.¹⁶

Location also affects the nature and duration of civil wars: conflicts adjacent to international borders, in countries with larger areas and encompassing natural resources tend to be larger in scope.¹⁷ Conflicts adjacent to international borders are prolonged in another manner: non-state armed groups interested in perpetuation of conflict, form networks of alliances with criminalized economic actors in the peripheries of failed states and their neighbours;¹⁸ these are often involved in illegal trade of

¹⁴ Cohen, 2003, quoted in Leonhardt van Efferink, “The Definition of Geo-politics-Classical, French and Critical Geographic-Publications,” January 2009, <http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Publications>.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion on geo politics and state fragmentation, see; Jeili Li, “State Fragmentation: Towards a Theoretical Understanding of the Territorial Power of the State,” *Sociological Theory*, 20/2 (July 2002): 139-156.

¹⁶ Of the 202 buffer states (1816-1992), 50 suffered death in the form of formal loss of foreign policy making to another state. See; Tanisha M. Fazal, “State Death in the International System,” *International Organization*, 58/2 (Spring 2004): 311-344.

¹⁷ The dataset includes 265 civil conflicts over the period, 1946-2000. See; Halvard Buhang and Scott Gates, “The Geography of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 39/4 (July 2002): 417-431.

¹⁸ A case is that of failure of the Afghan state, wherein, sets of conflicts and actors have formed networks across borders in neighbouring states of South Central Asia. See; Andrea Armstrong and Barnett R. Rubin, “The Great Lakes and South Central Asia,” in *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance*, eds. Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur, 79-99.

contraband items, organized crimes, natural resource exploitation of neighbouring territory, arms trafficking and the like. Regional conflict formations escalate political violence by encouraging militarization of society; deprive the state of its sources of revenues and help export instability to neighbouring states. It is no surprise that majority of conflicts spread from its state of origin to neighbouring ones.¹⁹ About 80 per cent of state failure consequences are, therefore, borne by the neighbouring states.²⁰

Afghanistan's geography in terms of its location, size, topography, climate, boundaries, and demographic and ethnic and tribal composition has acted as a major determinant of state making as well as unmaking. Afghanistan's location at the juncture combining Central Asia with Middle East and South Asia, on the cross roads between east and west, subjected it to countless invasions and incursions, from the time of Alexander the Great, Seleucid, Greco-Bactrian, to Safavid and Mughal times. The varied invasions and incorporations by empires, gave it a character of ethnic and religious heterogeneity, political instability and economic volatility. The terrain of Afghanistan and its topography (rocky mountains, difficult passes) complicated the task of bringing Afghan people under one central government; all the pre-modern dynasties faced problems in subduing Afghan people and retaining their areas for long. Absence of prolonged central government, repeated change of dynasties, and military invasions and conquests, adversely impacted the economic and cultural growth of the areas comprising later day Afghanistan. The absence of central authority, repeated wars and decline of commercial importance of its urban centres from 16th Century onwards contributed to the growth of tribal autonomy and tribal groups' resistance to Mughal and Safavid rule and conversely the autonomy these enjoyed even when loosely aligned with these empires. The difficult physical terrain has created difficulties in the way of effective communication and contact between groups. Its physical terrain has also created structural constraints by way of raising the costs of laying infrastructural overheads such as roads etc. for the promotion of export and industrial sector. This in turn depressed the sources of income for the state from domestic economy, where 50 per cent of the GDP was contributed by agriculture (before 1978) and more than 80 per cent of the population depended on it directly or indirectly as a source of income.

¹⁹ According to one estimate, 11 out of 15 most deadly conflicts spilled over into their neighbouring states. See; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2002: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.

²⁰ Geographical proximate states suffer from political instability, domestic unrest, militarization and criminalization. See; Zaryab Iqbal and Harvey Starr, "Bad Neighbours: Failed States and their Consequences" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, March 2008).

Afghanistan's geography has made it a landlocked country dependent on its neighbours for successful passage of its imports and exports, a weakness that Pakistan has too often exploited to its advantage and Afghanistan's disadvantage. Its geographic location has made it a centre of struggle between competing major powers. This is true of the British and Russian great game in the 19th century. The demarcation of boundaries under major power influence divided ethnicities across multiple states and created problems in the elite's attempts at promoting national integration and encouraged cross border interference by neighbouring states in its domestic politics. This interference became pervasive in the wake of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and reached its peak in the civil war that followed the 1992 fall of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime. Foreign interference was one of the major factors that prevented the stabilization of the Afghan state in the last decade of the 20th Century.

The failure of Afghan state to exercise effective authority over its periphery has encouraged armed groups and criminal actors to form networks and alliances on their territory and ties with criminalized economic groups across borders in neighbouring states. These trade in grey and black market and trafficking in narcotics, arms, organized crimes and natural resource exploitation of neighbouring states. Such regional conflict formations escalate political violence by encouraging militarization of society; deprive the state of its sources of revenues and help export instability to neighbouring states.²¹ This is true of Afghanistan too where drug trafficking has created a shadow economy with regional basis and approach. Almost 50 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP is today contributed by opium production and trafficking with adverse impact on the stability and cohesion of the state.

The physical environment and ecological conditions also determine the nature of the people and their approach towards the central authority. The basic unit organizing political and social life for the Afghans is the tribe — a larger kinship group unified through belief in a common descent. One of the major governance problems for Afghanistan has been the relationship of the tribe with the state and the difficulties of extending centralized control over tribal autonomy. The Afghan state was a tribal creation. The tribe preceded the state. It was a tribal confederation of Abdali tribes that made the Afghan state in 1747; onwards, the tribe and state have been in a love-hate relationship. The tribe has made and unmade the Afghan state. The difference between the tribe and the state arise from their nature

²¹ Armstrong and Rubin explore the role of regional conflict formations in state failure. See; Andrea Armstrong and Barnett R. Rubin, "The Great Lakes and South Central Asia," 79-99.

and mode of organization. “Tribe stresses ties of blood, culture and ascribed factors, while state is impersonal, and recognizes contract, transaction and achievement. The tribal model is socially homogenous, egalitarian and segmentary; the state is heterogeneous, egalitarian and hierarchichal. Tribe is within the individual, state external to him.”²² States, to Khoury and Kostiner, demand loyalties of a more complex kind than tribes based on ties of kinship can provide; in order to become states, tribes must undergo radical transformation in their tribal ethos.²³ The State and tribe in Afghanistan have existed in a relationship of mutual existence and coexistence though the relationship has come under considerable strain. Under early Afghan rulers, the tribe supported the state for the favours bestowed on it by the king’s person. Political legitimacy was gained by treating the state as an extension of the tribe; all important state offices were occupied by prominent tribal leaders. The rulers’ power depended on tribal support which was in turn contingent on the privileges and favours a ruler could bestow on his tribesmen. Any withdrawal in tribal subsidy meant the tribe would withdraw its support from the incumbent ruler and throw its weight behind another contender to the throne. This resulted in countless succession disputes with destabilizing impact on the political system. The state on its part tried to control and centralize the tribes through different mechanisms: distribution of state titles and other concessions (complementary relationship); appointment of various non-Pakhtun and non- royal administrators/governors and personal guards from smaller Durrani tribes and from among Shiite Qizilbash as Ghulamishah’s — the king’s slaves (contending); creation of new administrative divisions — provinces, districts and sub districts; not conforming to ethnic or tribal divisions; transferring of rebellious Pakhtun tribes to Northern Afghanistan for surrounding these by hostile ethnicities and making these loyal supporters of the central government; use coercive apparatus of the state against recalcitrant and rebellious tribes (conflictual).

These shrewd policies showed attempts by Afghan rulers at state making independent of tribal manipulation. The state kept tribal energies in check either by engaging these in external expeditions of conquests and invasions or by giving these a taste of power-sharing through state offices and appointments in decision-making bodies. Tribal quest for domination was also kept in check by developing coercive apparatus/standing armies ready for use against tribal ambitions. The failure to give attention to a

²² See; Dr Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and Foreign Intervention* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group), 225-226.

²³ Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, “Introduction: Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East,” in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London & New York: I. B. Tauris & CO LTD Publishers, 1990), 4-7.

strong central army led to destabilization of regimes (Amanullah's case). Conversely, tribes have supported regimes and stabilized political system through raising tribal lashkars at times when army failed to quell revolts and insurrections.

The relationship between the state and the tribe in Afghanistan has been based on a delicate balance. The state exercised loose control over the tribes; these were confirmed in their positions of autonomy in their respective regions and areas and they continued organizing social and political lives around traditional informal governance structures and mechanisms, especially in the rural areas. The tribes on their part owed loyalty to the state only till the time when the state confirmed their autonomy within their domain of authority; attempts at over centralization immediately aroused the jealousies of the tribes and placed them in a conflict mode towards the state. Therefore, tribes have not necessarily been in a relationship of opposition to the state. Both have created and maintained each other though their relationship has often bordered on hostility rather than cooperation.

As for the role of ethnicity in stability or otherwise, ethnic conflict is not peculiar to Afghanistan, although ethnic diversity has hampered elite efforts for raising a common Afghan identity over and above Pakhtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazarah, Turkomen and multiple other ethnic identities. There is a regional dynamic to the issue of multi-ethnicity in Afghanistan and that is all the major ethnic groups have their larger ethnic kin across international borders. As for the issue of whether ethnic heterogeneity causes fractionalization in the state and fuels conflicts in Afghan society, several scholars, including Misdaq, and Glatzer assert that ethnicity is not a factor for instability in Afghanistan. This is because in their opinion, ethnic conflicts and strife are not peculiar to Afghanistan.²⁴ This assertion is acceptable because with the exception of the civil war of 1990s, which was termed as ethnic war by some scholars and journalists, we don't see ethnic heterogeneity as a precursor of war and conflict in Afghanistan. The rulers have traditionally come from the dominant Pakhtun ethnic group and a preferential treatment of the same in terms of state appointment and tax relaxation has been the norm in Afghan political history, however, the bulk of day to day administrators came from Qizilbash and Tajik Persian or Darri speaking urban settlers.²⁵ The terming of 1990s civil war as an ethnic

²⁴ Nabi Misdaq and Bernt Glatzer, "Is Afghanistan on the Brink of Ethnic and Tribal Disintegration," in *Afghanistan and Taliban: The Rebirth of Fundamentalism*, ed. William Maley (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998).

²⁵ In some instances, for example under Amir Abdur Rehman, the Hazara agricultural and pastoral land was allotted to Pakhtun clans and chiefs and Pakhtun administrators, landlords, merchants extracted resources from the area till 1979, when Hazarah's denied entry to Pakhtuns to Central Afghanistan, resultantly, Pakhtun nomadism suffered a

competition for capturing the central government is an over simplification of a very complex reality. It can be contested with several arguments: The Islamic parties that fought the Soviets never recruited along ethnic lines and none of these claimed exclusive representation of a particular ethnic group, though Shia Hizb-e-Wahdat was exclusively Hazara and the Jumbesh of Dostum was mainly Uzbek, none promised to create an ethnic state.²⁶ Olivier Roy rightly asserts that ethnic polarization or crystallization was a product and a consequence of the 15 year war, of strategic alignments with foreign countries and of the need for small solidarity groups to identify themselves with the larger units.²⁷

The rise of Taliban movement needs to be understood in the backdrop of the failure of Mujahideen parties to set up an Islamic state and to provide a modicum of stability to Afghanistan. There is no denying the fact that it was a Pakhtun dominated movement but it did not entertain ethnic overtures and never subscribed to establish an ethnic state. As Glatzer argues that anti-Pakhtun sentiments were fomented among the Persian and Turkic speaking minorities as a last resort for activating and raising their morale against the Taliban which backfired because it alienated the Pakhtun supporters of the Northern alliance.²⁸ It was after 1979 that ethnic identities were politicized and particularly after 1992, when the scramble for power and control over central government made the Mujahideen groups seek regional countries' support and blessing for capturing the centre. ■

decline because it depended to a large part on summer pastures in that part of the country. See; Bernt Glatzer, "Is Afghanistan on the Brink," 170-171.

²⁶ See; Olivier Roy, "Has Islamism a Future in Afghanistan," in *Afghanistan and Taliban: The Rebirth of Fundamentalism*, 199-209.

²⁷ Ibid., 199-209.

²⁸ Bernt Glatzer, "Is Afghanistan on the Brink."

Reconciliation with the Taliban: Challenges and Prospects

Dr. S. Gülden Ayman

“An exit strategy is not a political strategy and that is precisely needed to ensure the future stability of Afghanistan and the volatile region that surrounds it.”¹

Introduction

In December 2009, President Barack Obama set a target date of July 2011 to begin withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan and handing over responsibility for security to the Afghan forces. The fighting fatigue and the cost of the war were the most important drivers of this decision. The US war in Afghanistan is now the longest in the US history. It has claimed the lives of more than 2,000 NATO troops, including at least 1,228 Americans² and it is costing the US taxpayers nearly US\$100 billion per year, roughly seven times more than Afghanistan’s annual gross national product (GNP) of US\$14 billion.³

The fundamental question for the US is to withdraw its military forces and achieve some sort of “peace with honour” in Afghanistan, without having reached its core political objectives. For this reason many think that negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent groups are necessary. Many insurgencies actually end with a political settlement and not a military solution. However seeking negotiations with the insurgents in such circumstances was also problematic since it would only suggest that the coalition accepted the inevitability of defeat and would evoke either more outrageous Taliban conditions or simply a dismissal of coalition entreaties because victory is already at hand.⁴ The US needed a withdrawal that was not a defeat and it decided to increase the cost of war for the Taliban through a sharp rise of NATO air strikes against insurgents. The surge of more than 30,000 US forces was ordered by President Barack Obama in order to shake the Taliban enough to coax them into negotiations.

¹ Ahmed Rashid, “Security vs. Reconciliation: The Afghan Conundrum,” (briefing for the Munich Security Conference, an annual gathering of foreign ministers, heads of state, and other security experts, February 3-5, 2012),

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2012/feb/13/afghan-conundrum-taliban-talks/>

² “Operation Enduring Freedom: Coalition Military Fatalities by Year,”

<http://icasualties.org/oef/>.

³ CIA, *The World Fact Book*, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> and “Congressional Research Service,” July 16, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>.

⁴ Ashley J. Tellis, Reconciling With the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2009.

The American pilots dropped 2,100 bombs on Taliban positions between June and September 2010, a near-50 per cent increase in the same period in 2009.⁵ In the fall of 2010 a diplomatic initiative as a parallel path that aimed at persuading the Taliban — or large parts of the movement — to make peace with the Afghan government emerged.⁶

Previous Efforts to Disarm and Reintegrate the Taliban

At the January 28, 2010 Afghanistan Conference in London, the Afghan government pledged to develop an official programme to engage elements of the insurgency in negotiations, reconciliation, and reintegration. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) signed by the Afghan President Hamid Karzai in June 2010 was the latest in a series of efforts since 2001 to disarm insurgents and reintegrate them into Afghan society, and to bring an end to the violence. Previous efforts included the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP)'s Disarmament and Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR); Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) and, since 2005, the Afghan-led The Programme Takhim-e-Solh or Strengthening the Peace Programme (PTS).

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

The idea to reintegrate insurgents is not totally new. It is interesting to see that its history goes back to the period following the initial successes of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Such a programme emerged as a considerable option under the conditions of the urgent need for a new strategy in the midst of the deteriorating security situation in the war-torn country. President Hamid Karzai's interest in reaching out to the disaffected Pakhtuns was also one of the driving forces. Karzai himself was eager to explore some kind of compromise with the Taliban even before he was elected to office. In part, this was due to his close relationship with many Taliban figures that became more evident after his election in 2002.

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme was undertaken from February 2003 to July 2006. DDR was a core part of Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP), a United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) initiative responsible for security sector reform (SSR). Achieving the DDR programme's goals was an integral part of enabling the Afghan government to establish a monopoly on the use of force, a crucial step in its efforts to protect citizens from threats

⁵ Dexter Filkins, "US Uses Attacks to Nudge Taliban Toward a Deal," *New York Times*, October 14, 2010.

⁶ Ibid.

and uphold the rule of law. Convincing insurgents to give up their arms and dismantle their forces constituted an important part of it. In the two years after the Bonn Agreement was signed the security situation in the country was relatively stable, the society supported efforts to establish peace, and the politicization of the security sector that began once the agreement was signed had not yet become fully entrenched. Unfortunately, this opportunity was not seized, and the international community's failure to engage fully with the DDR process limited the positive effect of DDR on SSR, as well as generating problems for the state-building process.⁷

Takhim-e-Solh

PTS or the “strengthening peace initiative” was formally introduced in February 2004. Broadly speaking, it offered those rank & file insurgents willing to renounce violence against Afghan and coalition forces and pledge support to the Afghan state the opportunity to rejoin their tribal communities. The programme rested on the assumption that many combatants did not join the Taliban for ideological reasons and can therefore be persuaded to lay down their arms.⁸

High-level Taliban and individuals accused of war crimes were deliberately excluded from this process. Only mid-and-low-level insurgents were eligible for the programme. Takhim-e-Solh petitioners had to undergo background checks to ensure that they are not accused of any serious crimes against the Afghan people or coalition forces.⁹ As a result of this programme over 2,000 individuals laid down their arms. It should also be added that PTS was not initially a programme open to detainees in US custody but in 2005 its scope was expanded.¹⁰

Despite limited success at the initial stage the PTS programme suffered some major setbacks. The experience with the rank-and-file and

⁷ See, Caroline Hartzell, “Missed Opportunities: the Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan,” *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report no. 270, Washington DC: USIP, April 2011.

⁸ According to the interviews conducted by the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) in March 2010, many young men join insurgent groups for a regular income and a sense of empowerment and identity they cannot find elsewhere, rather than for ideological reasons. The findings of the report reveal that in Afghanistan these young men have a number of serious, legitimate grievances - corruption, civilian casualties, a lack of jobs and services, and a failure to establish the rule of law – which have created high levels of anger among civilian populations. See; “Operation Moshtarak: Lessons Learned,” *Small Wars Journal*, smallwarsjournal.com/.../moshtarak1.pdf.

⁹ “Ex-Taliban Insurgents Pledge Allegiance to Afghan Government,” *American Forces Press Service*, US Department of Defense, May 28, 2005, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31552>.

¹⁰ Luke Coffey, “Detainee Operations in Counterinsurgency Operations: Lessons from Afghanistan 2005-2006,” *Small Wars Journal*, September 1, 2009, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/282-coffey.pdf>.

medium level insurgents failed to create a durable reconciliation eliminating the possibility to return to conflict. The reasons were various. Procedural deficiency included lack of institutionalization and adequate structures of the demobilization process. It was unable to appropriately validate insurgent credentials. Besides, an effective monitoring mechanism was absent. Providing socio-economic opportunities presents even a tougher problem given the hard task of job creation in a devastated economy. Paying the fighters not to fight can hardly be a remedy, too. First of all because the external actors' financial support does not last forever and those Taliban who are not deeply integrated into the new political system could join criminal groups or start fighting again once the international money ran out. Providing security to defectors is equally difficult since the Taliban have systematically targeted those who have defected so far, killing many.¹¹ In principle those who successfully completed the programme were supposed to be given support to settle and live peacefully. However in several cases the participants of the programme were not actually kept safe and some of them were not treated by international security forces in keeping with the PTS agreement that resulted in the erosion of the trust between the Taliban that were willing to reconcile and the government. The achievement of the programme remained limited due to other factors as well. Finally, the PTS programme progressively lost its credibility due to Afghan leadership's shortcomings and larger governmental failures which led the United Kingdom, Netherlands and the USA to abandon their financial support.¹²

What is New?

Talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban marked a clear departure from previous US policy in the sense of considering the three key US conditions (the militants must renounce violence, end any alliance with Al Qaeda and agree to respect the Afghan Constitution) demanded for the exploratory talks as "desired outcomes".

In a speech to the Asia Society on February 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave strong signals of this approach declaring that Washington was launching a diplomatic surge to move this conflict toward a political outcome that shatters the alliance between the Taliban and al Qaeda, ends the insurgency. Clinton announced that the United States was willing to hold talks with the Taliban even without an initial agreement with

¹¹ Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Negotiations and Reconciliation with the Taliban: The Key Policy Issues and Dilemmas," *Brookings*, January 28, 2010, 2,
http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/articles/2010/0128_taliban_felbabbrown/0128_taliban_felbabbrown.pdf.

¹² Michael Semple, "Reconciliation in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, Perspectives Series, Washington DC: USIP Press, 2010.

these words: “As military pressure escalates, more insurgents may begin looking for alternatives to violence. ...Both we and the Afghans believe that the security and governance gains produced by the military and civilian surges have created an opportunity to get serious about a responsible reconciliation process, led by Afghans and supported by intense regional diplomacy and strong US-backing.”¹³

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme

The APRP is an attempt to respond to some of the criticisms of the previously implemented and not highly successful reintegration programmes. It awarded greater leadership roles to Afghan institutions, sub-national governance structures, local actors and communities. It also devoted significant attention to the communication and coordination between different implementing partners, included concerns about individual and community security and grievance resolution, and made an effort to understand and address the reasons behind why men join the insurgency.¹⁴

The APRP has two pillars: on the one hand, it aims at tackling the issue of rank and file soldiers — defined as “reintegration” — and, on the other it targets “reconciliation,” that is understood as political talks with the more senior leaders of the Taliban. The APRP strategy is based on the assumption that reintegration will lead to a de-escalation of conflict, because of disarming insurgents, result in better security conditions and a corresponding strengthening of the rule of law. At the same time it rests on the premise that insurgent leaders will be interested in “reconciling” because of the incentives being offered, such as amnesties and third-country settlement.¹⁵

Though there seems to exist a shared understanding of the terms “reintegration” and “reconciliation” between government of Afghanistan and international stakeholders they differ in their understanding of the sequencing of the two processes. While the government of Afghanistan believes that both disarming the insurgents and initiating political dialogue with the insurgency need to take place simultaneously to bring the conflict to an end, international stakeholders generally tended to classify reintegration and reconciliation as independent, rather than interrelated, processes, anticipating a level of sequencing for them to be effective.¹⁶

¹³ “On US-Taliban Talks, Look at 2014 and Work Back,” *Global News Journal* Reuters, February 20, 2011, <http://blogs.reuters.com/global/tag/talks/>.

¹⁴ Deedee Derksen, “Peace from the Bottom-Up? The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program,” PRIO Paper, Oslo: PRIO, 2011.

¹⁵ Tazreena Sajad, “Peace at all Costs? Reintegration and Reconciliation in Afghanistan,” *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, Issues Paper Series, October 2010, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid, 27.

Ripeness for a Negotiated Solution

According to the academic literature parties to a conflict enter into a negotiation process because they believe there is a possibility of obtaining a better outcome than is offered by the status quo. Willingness to engage in negotiation increases especially when maintaining the conflict requires greater and greater costs. In other words, when a “mutually hurting stalemate” occurs that urges parties to realize that they cannot escape from the deadlock by escalating the conflict.¹⁷ Such a stalemate is especially motivating if augmented by a recent or impending catastrophe.¹⁸ Secondly, for the parties to be receptive to negotiation some optimism is also required. The minimum level of optimism which is necessary for the start of negotiations often derives from a belief that the other side is also motivated to achieve a settlement and therefore likely to make some concessions.¹⁹ However, in order to achieve reconciliation optimism must increase as negotiations go along. It was not possible because of the continued level of military escalation by both sides. For optimism to be sustained outlines of a possible agreement should also be worked out.²⁰

What Motivated the Taliban to Enter into Talks?

The Taliban leadership was interested in talking to Afghan government not because of the unbearable cost of enduring the conflict but to explore ways to accelerate US withdrawal from Afghanistan. What encouraged the US was not an optimism emanating from a belief that the Taliban are motivated to achieve a settlement but rather pessimism with respect to the unwinnable war in Afghanistan. On the Taliban front the US decision to withdraw constituted the main source of optimism.

The Taliban leaders had never believed that the High Peace Council (HPC) was intended to negotiate a political settlement. The Taliban declared on the website of the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” how they viewed HPC with these words:

“The very structure and endeavours of the peace high council is cosmetic, being part and parcel of the American war strategy in view of the fact that they do not consider the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan as their main objective nor they recognize it as an important

¹⁷ I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict Resolution in Africa*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

¹⁸ Moorad Mooradian and Daniel Druckman, “Hurting Stalemate or Mediation? The Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, 1990–95,” *Journal of Peace Research*, no. 36, 1999, 709–27.

¹⁹ Herbert C. Kelman, “Some Determinants of the Oslo Breakthrough,” *International Negotiation*, no. 2, 1997, 183–194.

²⁰ For the “Readiness” concept developed by Dean G. Pruitt See; Dean G. Pruitt, “Whither Ripeness Theory?,” Working Paper, no.25, *Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, George Mason University, 2005.

and vital item of the agenda. However, it is the essential demand of the majority people of Afghanistan and of the region. Still more, they do not follow a roadmap that would lead to a decisive stage where peace and reconciliation will become a must and indispensable.”²¹

The Taliban’s uncompromising stance *vis-à-vis* the reconciliation process could also be understood in the following remarks:

Nowadays, we hear two hot topics: the negotiations between the Taliban and US and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. But unfortunately, America wants to pave way for elimination of the current armed Jihad and resistance under the name of negotiations and further ensconce them in Afghanistan under the pretext of drawdown. These ploys can be read on the faces of the top brass of Pentagon, the rulers of the White House and their caressed surrogate Karzai.²²

In fact, the Taliban leadership opened the door to deal with the High Peace Council in order to affect the central issue of foreign troop presence. Regardless of the fact that the talks were “preliminary” rather than substantive the Taliban certainly posed the question whether the United States was prepared to offer a timetable for withdrawal in substantive negotiations.

The “road map” proposed by the Taliban assumed that the United States would have to play the key role in any negotiations. Assuming a step by step approach, the Taliban argued that first of all, there should be confidence-building measures before any negotiations and called on the United States to end its night raids while the Taliban would stop attacks on government personnel and infrastructure. The Taliban considered negotiation on the central issues of the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban’s renunciation of ties with al Qaeda after the implementation of such measures. According to this approach only after an agreement reached on foreign troops and al Qaeda, negotiators would tackle the question of an internal political settlement, which would revolve around changes to the Afghan Constitution.²³

²¹ “Peace Council’s Efforts, Symbolic and Dictated,” *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*, January 11, 2010, http://shahamat-english.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4339:peace-councils-efforts-symbolic-and-dictated&catid=2:comments&Itemid=3.

²² “Negotiation or Ploys, What is it?,” *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*, May 28, 2011, http://shahamat-english.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7919:negotiation-or-ploys-what-is-it&catid=3:articles&Itemid=5.

²³ Gareth Porter, “Will Rabbani Hit Derail Afghan Peace?,” *Al Jazeera*, September 26, 2011.

Escalation within Negotiations

“Escalation within negotiation” can be a bargaining strategy. The costs inflicted or that could be inflicted are a lever either to bring the other party back to the negotiation table or to obtain the concessions it was previously unwilling to make. However, escalation and negotiations are opposite actions, one to increase conflict and the other to decrease it. Not only do they head in different directions, but they also demand different attitudes and convictions: one to beat the enemies and the other to come to terms with them. They thus seem to be mutually incompatible.²⁴

The West believed that killing Taliban fighters keeps up military pressure that might eventually lead to a negotiated outcome. Obama’s surge increased the killing and capture of Taliban, but killings by the Taliban have surged even more steeply. For their own reasons the Taliban also see military pressure as sound strategy. The Taliban have managed to sustain a high level of violence in Afghanistan despite the US troop surge. Violence rose 51 per cent from spring 2010 to spring 2011 — putting the Taliban in a position where it might credibly claim its military strategy successful in advance of diplomacy.

Once the Taliban leadership became aware in early August of the outlines of the “strategic partnership” pact between the US and Karzai government allowing for the maintaining of US bases in Afghanistan until 2024, they saw no reason to continued negotiations with the HPC, and on September 20, 2011 Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated by an unidentified attacker blowing any chance of reconciliation with the Taliban.

Major Challenges

The US “strength” is reflected in the fact that it is presently killing and capturing more Taliban than ever and its “weakness” in the fact that it will hand over the fight to Afghan security forces, regardless of what the enemy does, by 2014.

The US escalation strategy proved counterproductive. Rather than choosing escalation, enforcing a ceasefire would have been the serious gesture to convince Taliban leaders that the West is genuinely interested in peace. As argued by Braithwaite and Wardak, in case the ceasefire was enforced and reduced the killing, that advantage would be strong, even if it were not reciprocated by the enemy. Continued suicide bombings in the

²⁴ I. William Zartman, “Structures of Escalation and Negotiation,” in *Escalation and Negotiation in International Conflicts*, eds. I. William Zartman and Guy Oliver Faure (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 165-185.

face of a NATO ceasefire would undercut the Taliban's claim of being on the side of the people.²⁵

No matter negotiations with the leadership and reintegration of the rank and file sought simultaneously or subsequently, the two processes are not mutually supportive unless negotiations with the leadership of the Taliban are fruitful. Otherwise the leadership cadres would likely sabotage the reintegration and reconciliation of the rank and file insurgents.

From a narrow counter-insurgency perspective, it may be asked if these negotiations split the Taliban leadership, and thus weaken its operational and command structures? It is difficult to give a positive answer since the Taliban, including the leadership, are already far from monolithic but in fact are a label that is applied to many armed groups and individuals that are only loosely aligned.

Ironically, the identification of the Taliban poses one of the biggest problems to officials who engage in talks with senior commanders. Talks often collapse after discovering that they are dealing with an impostor as in the case of the secret high profile talks with Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, a senior commander of the Taliban. He was not Mansour at all and was not even a member of the Taliban leadership.²⁶ Of course the worst was the assassination of Rabbani by a fake senior Taliban.

As a process, the exploratory talks with the leadership of the Taliban have several other setbacks too. First of all, in an open-ended process where there is no victory and no defeat for both sides, the degree of stress emanating from uncertainty is likely to be very high. In such situations parties are more inclined to increase their leverage against each other using all their capabilities including violence.

Reintegration of the rank and file, the process by which ex-combatants gain civilian status and sustainable employment is the last stage of the applied strategy of Disarmament (the physical removal of the means of combat from ex-belligerents), Demobilisation (disbanding of armed groups) and Reintegration (DDR). Since reintegration is a critical component of post-conflict peace-building, successful outcomes can hardly be expected in an environment of instability and continued violence.

Most importantly Afghanistan cannot achieve sustainable peace without broader support from the Afghan people themselves that necessitates including all stakeholders in the process and addressing their grievances. Polls indicate that a large majority of ordinary Afghans support

²⁵ John Braithwaite and Ali Wardak, "Is Killing Taliban a Good Idea?," *Inside Story*, December 7, 2011, <http://inside.org.au/is-killing-taliban-a-good-idea/>.

²⁶ Dexter Filkins and Carlotta Gall, "Taliban Leader in Secret Talks Was an Impostor," *New York Times*, November 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/23/world/asia/23kabul.html?pagewanted=all>.

a peace deal in which the Taliban share power but do not dominate. Putting Taliban at the core of any peace process underestimating other ethnic groups' grievances could widen the ethnic divide in the country that may explode after the NATO withdrawal.

The success of reconciliation in Afghanistan requires an enduring victory in regard to the state and nation-building efforts already under way. The concept of reconciliation is being used in the narrow sense to express a political settlement. However realities on the ground prove that Afghanistan's needs can only be fulfilled in a comprehensive peace building process that involves reconciliation that entails efforts to develop a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society, to acknowledge and deal with the past, build positive relationships, achieve significant cultural and attitudinal change, and substantial social, economic and political change.²⁷

Afghanistan's neighbours remained among the most fervent opponents of the idea. India, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Russia opposed any negotiated arrangements that would permit the Taliban either to be treated as a legitimate force in Afghan politics or to return to power in Kabul after having been ejected from the capital by force. However despite their considerable differences, they share a common interest in preventing Afghanistan from either being dominated by any single power or remaining a failed state that exports instability.

In order to make external actors a part of peace-building efforts in Afghanistan, these efforts should be coupled with diplomatic initiatives to ensure their commitment to Afghan neutrality and resolve existing border disputes. Ideally, the United States should also use its influence to reduce tensions among the various regional actors — and especially India and Pakistan — in order to decrease their tendency to see Afghanistan as an arena for conflict or to view the Taliban or other non-state groups as long-term strategic assets. In other words, a multi-dimensional political strategy has to be developed by Afghanistan's neighbours as well to foster dialogue and achieve an agreement to limit their interference in Afghanistan.■

²⁷ Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, "Reconciliation: A Working Definition, Democratic Dialogue," September 2004, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/papers/dd04recondef.pdf>.

Towards a Re-emergence of the Former “Northern Alliance”?

Dr. Andreas Rieck

Ethnic Polarization in Afghanistan and the Emergence of the “Northern Alliance,” 1992-2001

The modern state of Afghanistan in its borders finalized in 1893 is an ethnic mosaic, which has been clearly dominated by the Pakhtuns until the 1980s. For almost a hundred years, Pakhtun supremacy was never seriously challenged by the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and other non-Pakhtun ethnic groups, which have also intermingled and often intermarried with Pakhtuns in Kabul, Herat and many other parts of Afghanistan. The current ethnic divide and new assertiveness of non-Pakhtuns was largely a by-product of the conflicts which started with the putsch of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April 1978 and the Soviet invasion of December 1979.

Resistance against the PDPA regime and later against the Soviet invasion was organized locally, mainly in the rural areas of Afghanistan, and remained fragmented throughout the 1980s. Internal divisions went far beyond the seven mujahidin “parties” recognized by Pakistan — six of them with mainly Pakhtun followers — and the, at times, eight Shia Hazara “parties” supported by Iran.¹ In reality, it was not the “parties,” but rather a new class of local and regional mujahidin commanders who called the shots in their respective areas of control, often fighting not only their common enemy, but also rival mujahidin groups. Only two mujahidin “parties” were able to establish larger networks of loyal supporters in a number of Afghan provinces, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar’s Hizb-i Islami (mainly Pakhtun) and Burhanuddin Rabbani’s Jam’iyat-i-Islami (mainly Tajik), the latter boosted by the ambitions and prestige of Ahmad Shah Massoud, who extended his influence from his native Panjshir valley to other northern provinces with a so-called “Supervisory Council” (Shura-ye Nazar) formed in 1984.

In the late 1980s, the Najibullah regime added other elements to what would later become known as the phenomenon of “warlordism” in Afghanistan through the mobilization of pro-regime militias with a local or ethnic base, the strongest and most reckless among them an Uzbek militia led by Abdul Rasheed Dostum. With the help of such militias and the still intact Afghan regular army, Najibullah was able to stay in control of all

¹ These rivaling Hazara groups, whose contribution to the resistance against the Soviet troops had been quite modest, formed a “Unity Party” (*Hezb-e-Wahdat*) on Iranian instruction in 1989.

important Afghan towns and supply lines for another three years after the last Soviet troops had left in February 1989. It was only after arms and other supplies from the (meanwhile dissolved) Soviet Union were cut off in early 1992 that Dostum joined the opposition, and army garrisons all over Afghanistan negotiated their surrender to local mujahidin commanders. This set into motion a chain of events which has shaped ethnic polarization in Afghanistan until today.

When the victorious mujahidin finally entered Kabul in April 1992, almost immediately fighting broke out there. Although Pakhtuns had made the largest contribution to the “jihad” of the 1980s and had also suffered the highest civilian losses through Soviet retaliation, it was the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara armed groups who won the race for the capital, attracting also the lion’s share of the disintegrated regular Afghan army units along with their equipment to their ranks. Hikmatyar’s Hizb-i-Islami, then still the strongest mainly Pakhtun group, tried to challenge the new balance of power with ruthless shelling of some quarters of Kabul, but failed to make headway even after allying itself with Dostum in early 1994. Instead, Tajiks led by Ahmad Shah Massoud gradually gained full control over Kabul, fighting off their Pakhtun, Uzbek and Hazara rivals,² while Rabbani, who had been elected President for a six-months-term only by a mujahidin council in mid-1992, found pretexts to extend his term in 1993 and again in 1994. Ismail Khan, another Tajik “warlord” and Rabbani supporter, had established control over Herat and adjoining north-western provinces in 1992. Dostum consolidated his grip over a number of Northern provinces, while Hikmatyar continued to besiege Kabul from its southern outskirts, but without much support from other Pakhtun mujahidin leaders. Most Pakhtun commanders throughout the southern half of Afghanistan had instead confined themselves with “reaping the fruits of victory” in their respective areas of influence, taxing the local population and highway traffic and often even indulging in outright plunder.

The failure of the former “freedom fighters” — as the Afghan mujahideen were viewed not only in Pakistan, but also in western countries — to agree on a new national order after the defeat of the Soviets and their Afghan allies in 1992 thus further entrenched “warlordism” as a new political reality. Already in 1992-1994 there was also a clear north/south or Pakhtun/non-Pakhtun divide in Afghanistan, although the northern “warlords” continued to fight among themselves, too, and some Pakhtun

² Until March 1995, fighters of the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* still controlled parts of Kabul, but they were driven out by Massoud’s troops after having facilitated the entry of the Taliban in some Kabul suburbs. In July 1995 Massoud could shortly expand his influence even to the central provinces with the help of a faction of the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* led by Mohammad Akbari, thus linking up with Ismail Khan.

leaders of the south and east were still loyal to President Rabbani. This divide became more clear-cut with the ascendancy of the Taliban movement.

When the Taliban emerged as a new group in the province of Qandahar in the fall of 1994, they had a simple but ambitious agenda: getting rid of “warlordism” and its abuses, pacifying and unifying Afghanistan and imposing “implementation of the Shari'a” according to their narrow fundamentalist world-view. They were remarkably successful in the Pakhtun heartland of southern and eastern Afghanistan, winning over or defeating the local “warlords” and forcing Hikmatyar to leave his outpost near Kabul within a few months, but they were rejected and initially repelled by non-Pakhtun forces both in Kabul and Herat. One reason was that anarchy had been much less a problem in the northern half of Afghanistan than in the Pakhtun south. More importantly, most northerners scorned the Taliban's brand of Islamic fundamentalism and rightfully sensed that they had also an undeclared agenda of re-establishing Pakhtun hegemony by the force of arms.

The Taliban, however, had not only unified the Pakhtuns, but also re-invigorated their age-old fighting spirit, leading them to a series of military conquests between 1995 and 2000. With combination of missionary zeal, ruthlessness and support from Pakistan, including thousands of volunteer fighters, they gained control first of Herat and the north-western provinces (September 1995), followed by Jalalabad and Kabul (September 1996) and most northern and central provinces (starting from 1997). By September 1996 the Taliban had already become so strong that Massoud's forces evacuated Kabul overnight without a fight to avoid possible encirclement. However, the latter were able to hold a frontline against the Taliban just 30 miles north of the capital for another five years, regardless of their losses in other former strongholds in the north. The Panjshir valley, which even the Soviet troops had failed to conquer in the 1980s, remained a sort of impregnable fortress even after the Taliban were more or less in control of 90 per cent of Afghanistan since the summer of 2000.

In October 1996, the northern “warlords” Massoud, Dostum, Karim Khalili³, Ismail Khan and others joined hands for the first time in a so-called “United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan,” better known as the “Northern Alliance.” While the Taliban had proclaimed an “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” immediately after their conquest of Kabul, the latter was not recognized officially even by Pakistan before mid-1997, with only Saudi-Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joining Pakistan's move until 2001. By contrast Rabbani, backed by the “Northern Alliance,” continued to claim that he represented “the legitimate government of Afghanistan” and kept such important assets as recognition

³ Khalili has been the leader of the majority faction of the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* since March 1995.

by the United Nations and most countries of the world with interests in Afghanistan and even a monopoly on distributing Afghan currency notes which remained in use also in the Taliban areas. Iran, Russia, India and Uzbekistan openly supplied the “Northern Alliance” with arms and other goods, but nevertheless it lost much more territory in the following years. After the Taliban had conquered Mazar-i-Sharif and Bamiyan in 1998, Dostum left Afghanistan for three years,⁴ Isma’il Khan,⁵ Karim Khalili and Mohammad Mohaqeq⁶ organized a shaky guerilla resistance in some western and central provinces, and only Massoud and his followers were able to defend some north-eastern provinces against further Taliban offensives, losing even Taloqan, the capital of Takhar province, in September 2000.

In the meantime, the Taliban’s “Islamic Emirate” remained internationally isolated. The US, Western Europe and Central Asian states became increasingly hostile towards the Taliban because they insisted on providing shelter to Osama bin Laden and thousands of extremists from Arab and other Muslim countries, which also joined their military campaigns against the “Northern Alliance.” In 1998 and again in 2000 the US and Russia joined hands in imposing UN sanctions against the Taliban, and already months before the 9/11 terrorist attacks the US had explored possible collaboration with the “Northern Alliance.” The latter had been on the verge of total defeat in the fall of 2000, but appeared upbeat in the summer of 2001.⁷ Then two Arab terrorists sent by al Qaeda succeeded to assassinate Massoud on September 9, 2001.

Reversal of Fortunes, 2001-2005

As it turned out, the murder of Massoud, which might have led to the disintegration of Tajik resistance against the Taliban under different circumstances, was just a prelude to the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US which completely reversed the political and military landscape of Afghanistan for the coming years. Shortly after US President Bush

⁴ Dostum had already fled to Turkey after the first short entry of the Taliban into Mazar-i-Sharif in May 1997, but had returned in October that year. In August 1998, when the Taliban conquered Mazar and all former strongholds of Dostum, he left again for Turkey and did not return until September 2001.

⁵ Ismail Khan had been arrested by a renegade commander of Dostum in May 1997 and given into custody of the Taliban. He could escape from a Qandahar prison in March 1999.

⁶ Mohaqeq was deputy leader of the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* since March 1995 and became a rival of Khalili for Hazara political leadership after 2001.

⁷ In April 2001, Massoud was invited to Paris, Brussels and Strasbourg and received by the French foreign minister and the president of the European Parliament. At the same time armed resistance against the Taliban in all northern and central provinces of Afghanistan had intensified.

delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban leadership and, after its rejection by Mullah Muhammad Umar, ordered a full-scale military attack on the “Islamic Emirate” starting from October 7, 2001. This so-called “Operation Enduring Freedom,” however, was mainly launched in the form of aerial bombardments, while most fighting on the ground was done by a re-invigorated “Northern Alliance” with US logistic support and some expertise provided by US Special Forces. Even backed up by the US Air Force and renewed supplies, it took them more than a month to re-conquer the first northern town, Mazar-i-Sharif, from the Taliban on November 9, 2001. But this set off a chain reaction, with Taliban forces retreating from almost the whole north of Afghanistan within a few days while such northern commanders who had cooperated with the Taliban switched sides quickly. Thus Ismail Khan’s followers regained control of Herat (Nov. 12) and the adjoining provinces of Farah, Ghor and Badghis, those of Dostum over the provinces of Balkh, Jozjan, Samangan and Faryab, the Hezb-e-Wahdat over some central provinces, and the Tajiks, now led by Mohammad Qasim Faheem, could re-enter Kabul unopposed on November 13. Only in the northern town of Kunduz the Taliban and their non-Afghan allies resisted for another two weeks, until November 25.⁸ Even in the southern and eastern provinces, local Pakhtun commanders abandoned the Taliban one after another, until the remaining loyalists of Mullah Umar had to surrender in Qandahar on December 7. The core Taliban leadership and many of their fighters went underground or fled to Pakistan.

Thus “warlordism” was re-established not only in the north, but more or less in the whole of Afghanistan. The northern “warlords” obviously took the greatest advantage, however. Contrary to what had been agreed on when President Musharraf abandoned the Taliban and allowed the US Air Force to attack their strongholds via Pakistan’s airspace, the “Northern Alliance” was allowed to re-occupy Kabul, temporarily extending their reach even to the neighbouring Pakhtun provinces of Wardak and Logar and beyond. Rabbani once again took up residence in the Kabul presidential palace and initially resisted relinquishing his post as “President of Afghanistan” when a conference in Bonn (Germany) negotiated a road-map for rebuilding a political order of the country in December 2001. The “Northern Alliance” was strongly represented in that conference and also in the Afghan Interim Authority agreed on in Bonn, getting 16 of 29 ministries in Hamid Karzai’s first cabinet, among them Defence, Foreign Affairs and Interior.⁹ The

⁸ Kunduz, which has a significant proportion of Pakhtuns among its mainly Tajik and Uzbek population, had already been occupied by the Taliban in June 1997 together with Mazar-i-Sharif and held even after the Taliban were temporarily expelled from Mazar in the same month.

⁹ The other 13 ministries went to the so-called “Rome Group,” made up of supporters of the former Afghan king Mohammad Zaher Shah.

Ministry of Defence, which remained in the hand of Faheem until December 2004, became a new power centre of the Tajiks, especially those from the Panjshir valley, and remained so for the following years. Ismail Khan was made Governor of Herat, where he ruled like an “emir” until forced to take up a ministerial post in Kabul in 2004, and Dostum was made Deputy Minister of Defence, besides remaining the strongman in some Uzbek majority provinces of the north.

Having been returned to power with the help of foreign forces, the “Northern Alliance” as such ceased to exist. Old rivalries between the northern “warlords” resurfaced, most notably between Dostum and the Tajik Muhammad Atta in Balkh province.¹⁰ In June 2002, however, all “warlords”, including some pro-government Pakhtuns, got an opportunity to consolidate their new-found hegemony over their respective areas through their strong presence in the Emergency Loya Jirga of more than 1,500 delegates and the “Afghan Transitional Authority” which came out of that assembly. The UN-led commission responsible for naming the Loya Jirga delegates had allocated seats to dozens of the most prominent “warlords” at the eleventh hour, contradicting its own rules and regulations. The very presence of those “warlords” was intimidating for many ordinary delegates, who feared reprisals in case they voted against their interests, and the failure of the international community to rein in the “warlords” at an early stage of the post-2001 nation-building, was strongly criticized by many experts of Afghan politics. This laxness was, however, a logical continuation of a US policy implemented since October 2001, with Afghan allies or proxies doing most of the fighting against the Taliban and being rewarded for it. In the summer of 2002, the US government had already set its eyes on Iraq, which was invaded in March 2003 and continued to demand much more American attention and resources than Afghanistan for the next five-six years. The task of nation-building in Afghanistan was not given due importance by the US until 2009, when problems such as bad governance, corruption, lack of authority of the Afghan state and resurgent violence and insecurity had grown out of proportion.

In 2002, there was also a violent backlash against Pakhtuns which led some 30.000 of them to leave the Northern provinces temporarily. The chain of mutual violent persecution and counter-persecution had started in October 1996, when the Taliban burned down Tajik villages near the frontlines north of Kabul. The Taliban’s first entry into Mazar-i-Sharif in May 1997 through the betrayal of one of Dostum’s commanders ended with a massacre of Taliban fighters in that town, to which the Taliban retaliated

¹⁰ These led to occasional heavy fighting in 2002-2003, until both surrendered most of their heavy arms to the *Afghan National Army*.

with a massacre of Hazaras when they re-occupied Mazar in August 1998.¹¹ During their campaigns in central Afghanistan the Taliban also burned down the bazaars of Bamyan and other towns. In December 2001, fighters led by Dostum committed another massacre of Taliban and foreign auxiliaries who had surrendered in Kunduz.¹² Thereafter, many Pakhtun civilians were harassed by non-Pakhtun armed groups in the north. Peaceful coexistence was gradually restored after 2002, only to be challenged through the return of a Taliban insurgency to the Northern provinces some years later.

The years 2003-2005 nevertheless saw some noteworthy achievements in the rebuilding of Afghan state institutions. A programme for “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration” was launched in 2003, resulting in the surrender of most heavy arms by the northern Afghan “warlords” and reintegrating of more than 50,000 of their armed followers into civilian jobs until mid-2005.¹³ The training of new units of the Afghan National Army, which had been rebuilt to reach the strength of only 7,000 in 2003, was accelerated in the following years, and the ethnic balance in its officer corps was gradually restored after the Pakhtun General Abdul Rahim Wardak replaced Faheem as Minister of Defence in December 2004. (However, the ANA had problems in attracting Pakhtun recruits in later years because of pressure from the resurging Taliban on the Pakhtun population). Most importantly, a fairly representative Constitutional *Loya Jirga* assembled in Kabul in December 2003 after careful preparations, and a new constitution was passed in early 2004, introducing a parliamentary system with a strong position of the directly elected president, which favoured the Pakhtuns as the largest ethnic group. In October 2004, Hamid Karzai, who had been elected interim president by the Emergency *Loya Jirga* in 2002, won 55.4 per cent in the first round of a fairly democratic contest against 15 other candidates. These first Afghan elections after decades of autocracy and civil war clearly showed the different political preferences of each of Afghanistan’s then 34 provinces. Karzai’s Tajik rival Yunus Qanooni bagged only 16.3 per cent of the votes but won in seven mainly Tajik provinces, with a record 95.1 per cent in Panjshir. The Hazara leader Mohammad Mohaqeq came third with 11.7 per cent, winning in two provinces and achieving good results in seven others, including Kabul. Even Dostum got 10 per cent of the votes and won in four Northern provinces. Karzai, who had named Ahmad Zia Massoud (a brother of late

¹¹ Afghanistan Justice Project, “Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, 1978-2001,” 2005, <http://www.afghanistanjusticeproject.org/>.

¹² See; Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dasht-i-Leili_massacre.

¹³ Peter Dahl Thruelsen, “From Soldier to Civilian: Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration in Afghanistan,” *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2006, <http://www.diiis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2006/RP2006-7web.pdf>.

Ahmad Shah Massoud) and the Hazara leader Karim Khalili as his running mates, bagged between 86 and 96 per cent of the votes in the Pakhtun provinces, but also a majority of votes in four northern provinces, including Herat and Kunduz. In September 2005 the first post-civil-war parliamentary elections could be held (also for provincial councils), producing many surprise representatives in the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) in addition to the known “warlords.” Ethnic minorities often reached more than their expected share in provincial Wolesi Jirga seats because they focused their votes on fewer candidates. Pakhtuns won only 112 of 236 confirmed seats,¹⁴ Tajiks 54, Hazaras 37, Uzbeks 19 and other ethnic groups 14 seats. In December 2005, Yunus Qanooni was elected president of the Wolesi Jirga with 122 votes against 117 for the Pakhtun candidate Abdulrab Rasul Sayyaf.

Resurgence of the Taliban, Gradual Western Disengagement, and Growing Apprehensions of Non-Pakhtun Afghans, 2006 to Present

By 2006 the Taliban, which had been almost dormant in 2002, had regrouped and grown to a serious armed insurgency, then still very much focused on the southern and eastern Pakhtun heartland. They had threatened to disrupt both the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2004-2005, albeit with little concrete action on election days, which was then seen as a proof of their weakness.¹⁵ In the following four years, however, the Taliban insurgency spread to almost all parts of Afghanistan, including its northern provinces, where it has since been active mainly in pockets of Pakhtun population.¹⁶ The reasons for this development are manifold, including growing dissatisfaction of ordinary Afghans with both the Karzai government and its foreign backers and loss of trust in their ability to provide security. The Taliban and other insurgent groups, for their part, have skillfully harped with their propaganda on growing popular resentment, while at the same time applying a ruthless strategy of intimidation to obstruct all kinds of what they called “collaboration with the foreign invaders and the Afghan puppet government.” By October 2009, the US

¹⁴ The regular strength of the *Wolesi Jirga* was 249 seats, but the winners of 13 seats were not confirmed in 2005.

¹⁵ Bill Roggio, “Toothless Taliban,” *The Long War Journal*, September 19, 2005, http://www.longwar-journal.org/archives/2005/09/toothless_talib-print.php.

¹⁶ Maria Golovnina and Mohammad Hamed, “Taliban Expands Grip Over Northern Afghanistan,” September 7, 2009, <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFSP49963220090907>; Wahidullah Mohammad, “Taliban Expand Insurgency to Northern Afghanistan,” *The Jamestown Foundation, Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 7, issue 36, November 25, 2009, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35774.

intelligence community estimated that 19,000 to 27,000 insurgents were operating in Afghanistan, a roughly tenfold increase from 2004's estimate of 1,700 to 3,200.¹⁷

An equally important development of the last years has been the shift towards an exit strategy from Afghanistan by both the US and its NATO allies. Immediately after his inauguration in January 2009, President Obama ordered a review of the US strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,¹⁸ which he presented to the public on March 27, 2009. Its seven major points were: tackling the Taliban and al Qaeda sanctuaries in Pakistan while promoting governance and democracy; a surge in military and civilian forces in Afghanistan; bolstering the Afghan security forces; reconciliation; Afghan governance; and international support.¹⁹ Regarding the Taliban insurgency, Obama sought to divide its reconcilable elements from the irreconcilables, for which he wanted "to have a reconciliation process in every province," and then defeat the hard core elements. His plan included to accelerate the expansion of the Afghan National Army from an estimated 80,000 troops to 134,000 and the police force to 82,000 policemen by 2011.²⁰ At that time, Obama had already committed the deployment of 17,000 additional US troops, on top of the 38,000 then serving in Afghanistan.²¹ In June 2009 General Stanley McChrystal was appointed as new commander of US troops in Afghanistan. On August 30, he submitted a sober "initial assessment" of the situation, pleading for the dispatch of 40,000 additional US troops for an ambitious counter-insurgency strategy, focusing on protecting and winning over the Afghan civilian population.²² But his plea, backed by the US military command, was watered down by President Obama in a speech on December 1, 2009. Obama announced that he would send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan in the coming months, but also vowed to start bringing American forces home in the middle of 2011, saying the United States could not afford and should not have to shoulder an open-ended commitment.²³

¹⁷ Sean D. Naylor, "Afghanistan Insurgency Has Grown 10-fold," *Army Times*, October 31, 2009, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/10/military_afghanistan_foreign_insurgents_103109/.

¹⁸ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 76-79.

¹⁹ Thomas Joscelyn & Bill Roggio, "Analysis: US Outlines New Afghanistan Strategy," *The Long War Journal*, March 27, 2009, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/03/analysis_us_outlines.php.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ David Brunnstrom, "US Wants Afghanistan Exit Strategy," *Reuters*, March 23, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/03/23/us-afghan-idUSSP46785620090323>.

²² Bob Woodward, "McChrystal: More Forces or 'Mission Failure,'" *Washington Post*, September 21, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/20/AR2009092002920.html>.

²³ Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Helene Cooper, "Obama Adds Troops, but Maps Exit Plan," *New York Times*, December 2, 2009,

The general perception after Obama's December 2009 speech by both friends and foes was that the "endgame" in Afghanistan had begun. It stiffened the resolve of the Taliban to step up their "jihad" until the expulsion of all foreign forces and their "puppet regime." President Karzai, for his part, multiplied his offers of reconciliation to the "disenchanted brothers" of the Taliban. He had often repeated such offers since assuming office in 2002, but starting from early 2010 they reached a new degree of urgency and sincerity. At the same time Karzai moved closer to Pakistan, while repeatedly provoking strong American disapproval.

Relations between Karzai and the US had already soured in the initial months of 2009, with senior members of President Obama's national security team deeming Karzai to be a "mercurial and vacillating chieftain" who had tolerated corruption and failed to project his authority beyond the gates of Kabul.²⁴ They further deteriorated after the flawed 2009 presidential elections in which two former ministers, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah²⁵ and Dr. Ramazan Bashardust,²⁶ were the most successful among Karzai's 40 contenders. Dr. Abdullah had been the candidate of the United National Front (UNF), a political bloc bringing together most members of the former "Northern Alliance" with some former communists and other opponents of Karzai.²⁷ Karzai, however, managed to split the UNF by luring the former defence minister Faheem to his side again, making him his first vice-presidential candidate, while Khalili, another UNF member, remained his second running mate.²⁸ The elections in August 2009 were marred by widespread ballot-stuffing and other severe irregularities. Karzai's share of valid votes, initially announced to be 54.6 per cent, was downgraded to less than 50 per cent after partial recounting, obliging him to

²⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/02/world/asia/02prexy.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁵ Anwar Iqbal, "US No Longer Trusts Karzai," *Dawn*, May 7, 2009, <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/99659>.

²⁶ Dr Abdullah had been Foreign Minister from December 2001 to 2005. He has a Pashtun father and grew up in Qandahar, but since the 1980s he had been closely associated with Ahmad Shah Massoud.

²⁷ The Hazara Dr. Ramazan Bashardost had been Minister of Planning in 2004 but resigned shortly after, strongly criticizing the role of foreign NGOs in Afghanistan. His populist "crusade" against corruption won him the third place among 390 candidates in Kabul in the 2005 *Wolesi Jirga* elections, and again the third place in the 2009 presidential elections.

²⁸ Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: New Political Bloc Unites Old Adversaries," *Radio Free Europe*, April 5, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1075718.html>. Among the demands of the UNF are to amend the 2004 constitution to allow political parties to stand in elections, to change the electoral system from a single non-transferable vote system to a party-list electoral system and to hold direct elections for provincial governors; see, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_National_Front_\(Afghanistan\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_National_Front_(Afghanistan)).

²⁹ Thomas Ruttig, "Another Day without an Orange Revolution," *The Afghanistan Analysts Network*, September 10, 2009, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=314>.

accept holding a run-off vote.²⁹ However, Dr Abdullah, whose share had initially been announced to be 27.8 per cent and later calculated to be near 32 per cent, decided not to run for a second round because he saw no chance for more effective precautions against fraud on short notice.³⁰

While it is doubtful that Dr Abdullah would have stood a chance to win against Karzai even in a completely fair contest, Karzai provoked further ethnic polarization with his subsequent overtures towards the Taliban. In response to Obama's exit strategy, he laid out the principles of his government's reconciliation strategy at an international conference on Afghanistan in London on January 28, 2010. He won support and initial pledges of US\$140 million for a scheme to lure Taliban insurgents back to mainstream life with offers of cash, jobs and other incentives, with parts of the funds to be spent on projects to develop the fighters' villages and building roads to their communities.³¹ In Afghanistan, however, opposition to Karzai's plans was immediately voiced. Some worried that funneling millions of dollars into Taliban-held villages in the south could unfairly benefit Pakhtuns and reward those who had fought the government. Others feared that accommodating the Taliban leadership could bring a retreat from women's rights. According to the UNF spokesman Sayyid Fazil Sanjarki, "The money will not help, and it will give more power to the Taliban. Americans should not waste their money providing job opportunities for the Taliban, they should create job opportunities for all Afghans."³² Dr Abdullah complained that those calling for reform were ignored, while terrorists were rewarded: "Asking for an independent election commission in a country which claims to be following democratic process, what is the reaction, what is the response? Other people which are killing people on the streets in the villages of Afghanistan and have taken the whole effort of the international community and the hope of the Afghan people as hostage into their hands, there are calls for them to come and join us and we will bribe you and pay you."³³ According to Sima Samar, chairperson of the

²⁹ Martine van Bijlert, "AAN Election Blog No. 31: We have a Result – Sort of – and Some Very Frayed Relations," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, September 17, 2009, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=336>; "'Deadlock' as Karzai Digs in Against Fraud Ruling," *Times Online*, October 19, 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article68806.html>.

³⁰ Aunohita Mojumdar, "Interview: Abdullah Abdullah," *Al Jazeera*, November 12, 2009, <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2009/11/20091112695962767.html>.

³¹ Mark Landler and Alossa J. Rubin, "War Plan for Karzai: Reach Out to Taliban," *New York Times*, January 29, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/29/world/asia/29diplo.html>; Joshua Partlow, "Karzai's Taliban Reconciliation Strategy Raises Ethnic, Rights Concerns at Home," *Washington Post*, February 4, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/03/AR2010020303737.html>.

³² Ibid., *Washington Post*.

³³ Ben Farmer, "Hamid Karzai's Rival Warns Him Not to Cut Deals with Taliban," *Daily Telegraph* (London), February 21, 2010,

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, it was "...just legalizing impunity. Nobody is accountable, not for the past crimes and not for future ones. Anybody can come and join the government and they will be protected."³⁴

While Karzai went ahead with preparations for a "National Consultative Peace Jirga," concern about his objectives grew also among the Americans.³⁵ On March 28, 2010, Obama made an unannounced visit to Bagram Airbase and to Karzai in Kabul, believed to be mainly intended as a serious face-to-face admonition.³⁶ A comment from the Taliban's *Voice of Jihad* website was telling: "Obama's visit to Afghanistan in the darkness of evening and even not informing Hamid Karzai, the head of the Kabul puppet administration, until he was in a helicopter on his way to the Afghan presidential palace for a 25-minutes long meeting with the surrogate, shows how arrogantly the Americans behave with their henchmen. The surrogates may obediently betray their religion, honor and conscience but still they would not obtain pleasure of their masters — who are not ready to consider them an entity of any stature to reckon with."³⁷ In spite of the contempt he still faced from the side of the Taliban, Karzai shortly after was reported to have said that "If I come under foreign pressure, I might join the Taliban" at a closed-door meeting with selected Wolesy Jirga members.³⁸

On June 2-4, 2010, 1,600 delegates from all parts of Afghanistan met in Kabul for a "Peace Jirga" and approved a draft proposal prepared by Karzai's government after examining it in 28 different committees.³⁹ Dr. Abdullah and 60-70 members of his parliamentary bloc boycotted the *Jirga*, but a number of UNF members did attend, most important among them

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7285526/Afghanistan-Hamid-Karzai-is-rival-warns-him-not-to-cut-deals-with-Taliban.html>.

³⁴ Karen De Young and Joshua Partlow, "In Afghanistan, Karzai's Invitation to Taliban Creates Discord and Confusion," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/02/AR2010030204101.html>.

³⁵ Con Coughlin, "Hamid Karzai is Making Some Pretty Unpleasant Friends," *Telegraph* (London), April 2, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/concoughlin/7546693/Hamid-Karzai-is-making-some-pretty-unpleasant-friends.html>.

³⁶ Alissa J. Rubin and Helene Cooper, "In Afghan Trip, Obama Presses Karzai on Graft," *New York Times*, March 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/29/world/asia/29prexy.html?pagewanted=all>.

³⁷ Tony Prudori, "Short and Sharp from the Taliban on Obama's Visit," *The Long War Journal*, March 31, 2010, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2010/03/short_and_sharp_from_the_talib_1.php.

³⁸ Amir Shah and Christopher Bodeen, "Karzai to Lawmakers: 'I Might Join the Taliban,'" *Associated Press*, April 5, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36178710/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/karzai-lawmakers-i-might-join-taliban/.

³⁹ Ron Synovitz, "Afghan Jirga Backs Call For Peace Talks With Taliban," *Radio Free Europe*, June 4, 2010, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/2061576.html>.

Burhan-uddin Rabbani.⁴⁰ The Taliban, which had denounced the “*Peace Jirga*” as a ploy by foreign occupiers, sent a hit-team of suicide bombers and launched mortar attacks on the first day of the sessions, but an unimpressed Karzai calmed down the delegates and stuck to his message that “They are not the enemy. They are the sons of this land.”⁴¹ Some days later he readily accepted the resignations of Interior Minister, Hanif Atmar, and the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief, Amrullah Saleh, who took responsibility for not having prevented the attack.⁴²

In an interview given on June 12, Amrullah Saleh alleged that Karzai “...did not accept the evidence about the Taliban attack in which the Haqqani network was involved. We discussed the evidence from the Peace Jirga. I consider this act by the president an insult to the hard work of the Afghan security forces.” Saleh also stated that “It has been some time that President Karzai’s and my visions in analysis and ideas toward the situation and the definition of the enemy and friend have differed, and I was thinking that I would break this stalemate by bringing evidence and other information. But when I realised that this stalemate was unbreakable, it was my moral duty to resign.” Saleh gave further explanations for his decision as follows: “There was a specific time when the President was supporting us. He was supporting the reform in the NDS and was praising our improvements and achievements. During that time, when the president was backing the fight against insurgents and improvements in the NDS, I proudly was his employee. I had no political connection with President Karzai’s opposition group. I am honest about it. When the president chose a soft policy, we had no problem with it if this policy resulted in honourable peace. I think this policy will not bring honourable peace. Showing a soft stance with a murderer who has killed more than a thousand does not seem like an honourable peace. Even I do not think that this soft stance results in peace. This soft behaviour makes the enemy’s intention even stronger and makes the confidence of friends shaky.”⁴³

Amrullah Saleh, who had headed the NDS since 2004⁴⁴ has subsequently shown strong political ambitions and has become, together

⁴⁰ Kate Clark, “Peace Jirga Blog 4: Who’s Come to Town...and Who’s Staying Away,” *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/print.asp?id=787>.

⁴¹ Ernesto Londoño, “Suicide Bombers Try to Disrupt Start of Afghan Peace Meeting,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/02/AR2010060200263.html>.

⁴² AP Report, “Officials Resign in Afghanistan Over Attack by Militants,” *New York Times*, June 6, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2010/06/06/world/AP-AS-Afghanistan.html>.

⁴³ Parwiz Shamal, “Afghan Intelligence Chief Resignation Details,” *Quqnoos*, June 12, 2010, <http://nawaaye-afghanistan.net/spip.php?article12179>.

⁴⁴ Born in the Panjshir valley in 1972, he had worked for Ahmad Shah Massoud since the late 1990s and joined the NDS in 2002; see;

with Dr. Abdullah, the most vocal opponent of Karzai's "soft" approach in seeking peace and reconciliation with the Taliban insurgents. In a November 2010 interview with an American journalist he explained his attitude towards the Taliban as follows: "My view is there must not be a deal with the Taliban." There must be a process. And according to that process, based on that process, Taliban should become part of the society and play according to the script of democracy. They should be demobilized, disarmed, reintegrated the way Northern Alliance was...And also they should denounce violence. And that process will bring a lasting stability. Minus that, if there is a deal, deals never bring stability. They create fragile peace. ...What I have been saying so far — and I have been misinterpreted — that if there is a deal, we will resist against the deal, "we" meaning all the forces who fought the Taliban. ...And if our enemy after 10 years is brought back to do a deal, what did we fight for all these years? We were not tissue paper."⁴⁵

In September 2010, Karzai named the 68 members of a High Peace Council entrusted with following up the programme of the "Peace Jirga." Its members included Ismail Khan, the Vice-Presidents Faheem and Khalili, Mohammad Mohaqeq and some other former "Northern Alliance" men who had so far remained allied to Karzai, but hardly any people with contacts to the Taliban or mediation skills.⁴⁶ Burhanuddin Rabbani, whom Karzai appointed as head of the High Peace Council in October 2010, may have been a good choice with a view to re-assuring non-Pakhtuns about possible concessions to the insurgents, but the Taliban had never trusted him since the mid-1990s, and the council made almost no progress during the 11 months until Rabbani's assassination on September 20, 2011. Rabbani himself is reported to have lost faith in the Taliban's willingness to find an end to the war and to have intended to resign from leadership of the High Peace Council shortly before his assassination.⁴⁷ Dr Abdullah summed up the sentiments heard from many former "Northern Alliance" figures in the wake of the assassination: "This is a lesson for all of us that we shouldn't fool ourselves that this group, who has carried out so many crimes against the people of Afghanistan, are willing to make peace...We

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amrullah_Saleh.

⁴⁵ Martin Smith, "The Spy Who Quit: A Conversation with Amrullah Saleh," *Frontline*, January 17, 2001, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/2011/01/video-amrullah-saleh-spy-who-quit.html?utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FrontlineEditorsNotes+%28FRONTLINE+Editors%27+Notes%29&utm_medium=feed&utm_source=feedburner

⁴⁶ Martine van Bijlert, "Warlords' Peace Council," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, September 28, 2010, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=1175>.

⁴⁷ "World Leaders Condemn Assassination of Former Afghan President Rabbani," *Radio Free Europe*, September 20, 2011, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24334470.html>.

have to be realistic about what we are up against. We are up against people who don't believe in any humanity. They assassinate people on the streets of Kabul; they assassinate those trying to achieve peace.”⁴⁸

Ominous Developments and Possible Future Scenarios

At the Lisbon summit of November 19-20, 2010, NATO heads of state have agreed to gradually withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan with a completion date of 2014. While NATO members have also reaffirmed their commitment to remain in Afghanistan to provide training and advice to Afghan forces and police, it is clear that neither the US nor any other NATO member state will be ready to deploy anything comparable to its present military strength in Afghanistan beyond 2014. All conflicting parties and stake-holders in Afghanistan are preparing themselves accordingly.

It has also become clear that President Karzai's courting of the militant insurgents has not produced any results. Whatever genuine and noble his intentions may have been for national reconciliation with the “disenchanted brothers” of the Taliban, the latter have shown no interest in even talking to Karzai and his government or his “High Peace Council,” because they consider him plainly irrelevant. If at all, the Taliban leadership would seek negotiations, not with the current Afghan government, but with the US, mainly with a view to gaining official recognition as the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” and to hasten a total retreat of the US and other NATO forces.

The US, for their part, probably cannot afford economically to maintain a strong military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014, but they are by no means “defeated” militarily, and they will try their best to safeguard as much as possible of the strategic gains of their decade-long investment. They have already stepped up their efforts to make the Afghan National Army a capable fighting force, and they would prefer to keep some long-term military bases in Afghanistan. Depending on the ability of Afghan regular forces to keep in check the insurgency in different parts of the country, the US might be tempted to focus on such areas where they can count on loyal allies which have a genuine stake in preventing a return of the Taliban to power.

Already in July 2010, Robert D. Blackwill, a former US ambassador to India, has made a radical suggestion, namely that “the US polity should stop talking about timelines and exit strategies and accept that the Taliban

⁴⁸ Alissa J. Rubin, “Assassination Deals Blow to Peace Process in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, September 20, 2011,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/world/asia/Burhanuddin-Rabbani-afghan-peace-council-leader-assassinated.html?pagewanted=all>.

will inevitably control most of its historic stronghold in the Pakhtun south. But Washington could ensure that north and west Afghanistan do not succumb to jihadi extremism, using US air power and special forces along with the Afghan army and like-minded nations.”⁴⁹ After explaining why he did not believe in possible alternative strategies, Blackwill elaborated on his preferred strategy as follows:

We would stop fighting and dying in the mountains, valleys and urban areas of southern Afghanistan. ...But we could be ready to assist tribal leaders on the Pakhtun periphery, who may decide to resist the Taliban. We would then focus on defending the northern and western regions — containing roughly 60 percent of the population. These areas, including Kabul, are not Pakhtun dominated, and locals are largely sympathetic to US efforts.

We would offer the Afghan Taliban an agreement in which neither side seeks to enlarge its territory — if the Taliban stopped supporting terrorism, a proposal that they would almost certainly reject. We would then make it clear that we would rely heavily on US air power and special forces to target any al Qaeda base in Afghanistan, as well as Afghan Taliban leaders who aided them. We would also target Afghan Taliban encroachments across the de facto partition lines and terrorist sanctuaries along the Pakistan border.

Though careful analysis is needed, this might mean a longtime residual US military force in Afghanistan of about 40,000 to 50,000 troops. We would enlist Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and supportive Pakhtun in this endeavour, as well as our *NATO* allies, Russia, India, Iran, perhaps China, Central Asian nations and, one hopes, the UN Security Council. We would continue accelerating our Afghan army training. We would devote nation building efforts to the northern and western regions, where, unlike the Pakhtun areas, people are not conflicted about accepting US help and not systematically coerced by the Taliban. There might even come a time when a stronger Afghan National Army could take control of the Pakhtun areas.⁵⁰

Such a scenario may still look far-fetched today, but in April 2011 Amrullah Saleh had made suggestions to an American audience which aim into the same direction, although he avoided propagating “a de facto partition” of Afghanistan:

⁴⁹ Robert D. Blackwill, “A De Facto Partition for Afghanistan,” *Politico*, July 7, 2010, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0710/39432.html>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Obama administration has not tried the one strategy that will work, however: the reconstitution of Afghanistan's anti-Taliban constituency, both to recreate a political context for the NATO mission and to force Karzai to choose sides between the Taliban and Afghanistan. The anti-Taliban constituency is not an ethnic alliance against the south, but rather a political umbrella for all Afghans who seek a pluralistic society and oppose the Talibanisation of the society as part of a so-called reconciliation deal. Perhaps 80 per cent of Afghans oppose the Taliban. Such an umbrella will be Afghans' best representative in any talks with the Taliban, since Karzai and his High Peace Council lack credibility among Afghans who experienced the Taliban's oppressive rule. Acquiescence to the Taliban's return has demoralized society and fuels further conspiracy theories about America's true intentions. Karzai's embrace of Taliban rehabilitation also deprives ISAF and NATO of vital political support in Afghanistan. An anti-Taliban constituency can mobilize society around the grand strategy of a prosperous Afghanistan largely immune from Talibanisation. The massive flow of international aid and ISAF support for Karzai undercuts efforts to solidify an anti-Taliban constituency which would best promote Afghanistan's interests, justify the American investment in Afghanistan, and protect the national security of both countries.⁵¹

As a matter of fact, mobilizing and supporting the "anti-Taliban constituency" has become an official NATO policy already since early 2009, with the introduction of a so-called "Afghan Public Protection Force." After seven years of efforts to disarm local militias and break the power of the "warlords," an opposite direction has been taken in 2009, starting with pilot projects in 40 out of 365 Afghan districts where 8,000 local militiamen were trained in phase one.⁵² One year later the "Community Defence Initiative" (another official term) had mushroomed, with newly armed and trained local militias countering the Taliban insurgency more effectively than the Afghan National Army or regular police in many Afghan districts, including Pakhtun areas in the south and east.⁵³ This new strategy has been

⁵¹ Amrullah Saleh, "The Anti-Taliban Constituency — The Key to Success in Afghanistan," *National Review*, April 6, 2011,
<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/263960/anti-taliban-constituency-amrullah-saleh#>.

⁵² CJ Radin, "The Afghan Public Protection Force Pilot Program is Underway," *The Long War Journal*, March 25, 2009,
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/03/afghan_public_protec.php.

⁵³ Dexter Filkins, "Afghan Militias Battle Taliban with Aid of US," *New York Times*, November 21, 2009,

criticized for creating a new burden for the civilian population with another undisciplined armed force collecting arbitrary taxes and committing abuses,⁵⁴ but it seems to have found larger acceptance as a suitable alternative to the regular police in remote rural areas.⁵⁵ Dostum and some other leading military commanders of the former “Northern Alliance” have already offered to step up their fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda if the US sends them more money and weapons.⁵⁶ However, so far NATO prefers dealing with smaller local units and not with the known “warlords.”

Currently there are wide-spread apprehensions, especially among non-Pakhtuns, about a possible “rehabilitation” of the Taliban which could be just the prelude to a return of the civil war, because the Taliban are nowadays even more ruthless and appear even more ambitious to conquer all of Afghanistan than in the 1990s. But these apprehensions have not yet translated into a common political front comparable to the “Northern Alliance,” which came into being in 1996 only after the Taliban advance was rightfully perceived as an existential threat for all “warlords” of northern Afghanistan. A comparable situation is not yet in sight, even in 2014 or 2015, but it cannot be ruled out once NATO troops would leave Afghanistan completely. In such a scenario the opponents of the Taliban are unlikely to surrender, but would rather mobilize all available forces for a new round of the Afghan civil war.■

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/world/asia/22militias.html?pagewanted=all>; Carlotta Gall, “Afghans Answering the Call to Fight”, *The New York Times*, 03 January 2010; URL:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/world/asia/03kunduz.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁵⁴ Thomas Ruttig, “Afghan Militias: The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’s Genies,” *Foreign Policy*, November 30, 2009,

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/11/30/afghan_militias_the_sorcerer_s_apprentice_s_genies; Joshua Partlow, “US Initiative to Arm Afghan Villagers Carries Some Risks,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/06/AR2011020602496.html>.

⁵⁵ CJ Ranan, “Afghan Local Police remain Key to Coalition Strategy,” *The Long War Journal*, July 1, 2011, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/07/afghan_local_police_important.php.

⁵⁶ Jason Motlagh and Sara A. Carter, “Afghan Warlords will Fight if US Gives Weapons,” *Washington Times*, September 22, 2009,

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/sep/22/afghan-warlords-will-fight-if-us-gives-aid/?page=all>.

CHAPTER 3

Pakistan And Afghanistan's Changing Bilateral Relations

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The narrative of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations often begins with an emphasis on historical and cultural relations, a shared religion and population overlap. Is this enough to provide a solid basis of relationship of cordiality and trust? The track record of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations does not suggest that these factors are the firm basis of cordial relationship. These factors are helpful if the considerations of statecraft, internal and external security and diplomacy make it imperative for the state to pursue cooperative security and cordial and supportive bilateral interaction. These imperatives have more far-reaching implications than other factors. As these imperatives change, the relationship can reflect variations over time, modifying the impact of historical and cultural ties and shared values and population.

The following six propositions help to understand the changing bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the last three decades or so:

1. The imperatives of statecraft, regime goals and interests, and security pressures in the regional and global context have played a decisive role in shaping Afghanistan's disposition and its relations with Pakistan.
2. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have sought external support to pursue their foreign policy agendas. Their external dependence has played an important role in shaping their policy choices.
3. Internally weak and divided nations have a tendency to externalize their internal problems. The notion of a "foreign devil" works well to unite people, albeit, temporarily. If there is a stronger state in the neighbourhood in terms of military power and economy, the weaker state tends to develop a strong streak of negative disposition towards that powerful neighbour.
4. The proliferation of transnational militant groups and their activities challenge the state both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, compromising their capacity to manage their affairs in an effective manner.
5. These transnational militants do not recognize state boundaries both for ideological and operational reasons. This is in addition to

the traditional tribal and Pakhtun ethnic identities and their linkages across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

6. The withdrawal of US/NATO troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 is an opportunity for Pakistan and Afghanistan to demonstrate that they can manage their relations within the framework of enlightened self-interest and work together to address the challenge of militancy that will outlive the exit of the allied troops. Afghanistan will not be able to find an enduring solution of internal strife by playing up the external conspiracy theme. Pakistan can cope with the negative fallout of the strife in Afghanistan by establishing control over the tribal areas by the time US/NATO troops quit Afghanistan and taking advantage of its geography and Afghan bilateral and transit trade rather than using some militant groups to pursue its agenda in Afghanistan.

Statecraft, Regime Interests and Security

The initial thinking underlying the US attack on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 was that it was going to be a short exercise. That the new regime would be installed which would consolidate itself with the help of the international community, making it possible for most US troops to withdraw in a year or so. Hamid Karzai was selected to head the new government in the Bonn Conference (November-December 2001) because he was more acceptable to Afghan groups and the US.

There were positive signs in the beginning. The new Afghan government dominated by the Northern Alliance was able to frame a constitution, hold elections and install a president in two years despite some signs of dissension. Two significant developments adversely affected the initial optimism and the hope of the Kabul government commanding the situation began to wane.

First, confident of their success in dislodging the Taliban government in Kabul, US policy makers began to give a serious consideration in the summer of 2002 to dislodging the Saddam government in Iraq by military action. They launched the military operation in March-April 2003 and succeeded in overthrowing the Saddam government. Saddam was arrested in December 2003. However, they got bogged down there that diverted their attention from Afghanistan.

Second, the deep involvement of the US administration in Iraq diverted its attention from seriously pursuing Afghanistan's economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. The promised new era of reconstruction and economic fortune did not usher in, causing much disappointment and alienation of the Afghans, especially the Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan. The US and the Karzai government could not give "hope" to the

people with the exception of a small number of people in Kabul and some other cities. This set the stage for re-emergence of the Taliban gradually in 2003-2004 who had gone in hiding in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The return of the Taliban was gradual mainly in the rural areas and small towns where the hold of the Kabul government was non-existent or very weak. This was failure of the US and the Karzai government to win over the hearts and minds of people who accepted willingly or unwillingly the resurfacing of the Taliban who began to challenge the American military and the Kabul administration through sporadic attacks and acquired control over territory by 2009.

The relations of the Karzai government towards Pakistan are being shaped primarily by the disposition of the dominant Northern Alliance that represents primarily the Tajik and Uzbek minorities, internal insecurities caused by the Taliban pressure and the uncertainties of the ‘Day After’ the US/NATO troops withdraw. As the impact of these factors varies over time, the Pakistan-Afghanistan relations manifest ups and downs. There are more frequent Afghan complaints against Pakistan than vice versa.

The Kabul administration is dominated by the Northern Alliance people who are over-represented in the bureaucracy, foreign office, police and the Afghan National Army, especially at the officer level. The Northern Alliance leadership has traditionally been opposed to Pakistan because the latter supported the Taliban government in Kabul while it fought against the Northern Alliance in the pre-2001 period. Pakistan expressed reservations with the US when the Northern Alliance took over Kabul as US troops marched into Kabul in November 2001.

Even when the Afghan Presidency adopts a moderate disposition towards Pakistan, a large number of its officials, especially those in the foreign office, continue with anti-Pakistan campaign at the international level, describing Pakistan as the main source of Afghan problems. At times, these officials have argued in the US that the US, India and Afghanistan should develop strategic partnership to counter Pakistan’s “support to terrorism” in the region.

Their opposition to Pakistan also aims at protecting their dominant position in the Kabul Administration because Pakistan is seen as a supporter of the Pakhtuns who will have to be accommodated in the Kabul’s power structure if there is accommodation between Kabul and some Taliban groups.

The Kabul regime’s insecurity also plays a role in shaping its disposition towards Pakistan. As the Taliban resistance engages in guerrilla tactics more often against US/NATO troops and the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Kabul government finds itself under pressure. The US trained Afghan National Army has been expanding and the US has transferred security responsibilities to it in eight or nine safe districts. It is also

undertaking joint operations with the NATO/US troops against the Taliban. However, the capacity of the ANA to stand on its own against the Taliban is not yet tested. Most experts express varying degrees of reservation about the professional capacity of the ANA and the Police that is also being trained by the Americans.

Three Taliban attacks in Kabul in 2011 (Hotel Intercontinental on June 28, suicide attack and gun battle near the British Council on August 19, and the attack on September 13-14 in the vicinity of US Embassy, ISAF Headquarters and the Afghan intelligence agency office), raised serious questions about security problems in Kabul. A few days later, Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated in a suicide bomber attack. The US accused Pakistan of supporting the Haqqani group that was blamed for the September attack. Later, the Kabul government blamed Pakistan for the assassination of Rabbani.

As the insecurities of the Afghan government increase, it is expected to continue blaming Pakistan for its inability to address its internal security problems. This approach fits well with the disposition of the civilian bureaucracy and the military dominated by Tajik and Uzbek minority who see Pakistan as an adversary for their own reasons as well.

External Support

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have sought external diplomatic, economic and military support to pursue their foreign policy agendas, making it possible for them to play an oversized role. Their political and foreign policy choices have partly been influenced by their dependence on external sources. This paper cannot go into the details of how Pakistan and Afghanistan cultivated the US and the former Soviet Union respectively in the 1950s and the 1960s that influenced bilateral relations. Afghanistan adopted belligerent disposition towards Pakistan in pursuance of its Pakhtunistan demand. Pakistan was no less strident in rejecting the demand and dealt toughly with periodic border skirmishes and tribal clashes in the 1950s and early 1960s. The two countries severed their diplomatic relations twice in 1955 and 1961.

International support played a key role in building up Afghan-Islamic resistance to the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, 1979-1989. Pakistan's tribal areas and the Frontier Province (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) were the main venues for housing and training of Afghan-Islamic resistance with the active cooperation of Pakistan, the US, other Western countries and conservative Arab states. Without such massive external support the Afghan resistance could not have succeeded against the Soviets. This served the nationalist aspirations of the Afghans as well as the regional and global agendas of all those supporting the Afghan resistance.

The latest Afghan tirade against Pakistan in connection with the assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani is an offshoot of the US campaign against Pakistan for the latter's alleged links with terrorist groups that threaten peace and stability and American lives in Afghanistan. Encouraged by American pressure on Pakistan, the Kabul government, especially President Hamid Karzai, decided to take on Pakistan. This has adversely affected the efforts to normalize bilateral relations since 2008.

Any critical analysis of religious extremism, militancy and terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the last decade cannot be done without taking into account what happened in the region, especially in Pakistan in the 1980s. Militancy and terrorism have developed strong roots in the regions and the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan can neither get rid of it by engaging in negative polemical exchanges nor by depending on external support. Both will have to work together in a long term framework combining military strategy with political measures and economic opportunities.

Internal Weakness and Nationalism

The experience of the developing countries suggests that internally weak and divided countries facing internal dissident or separatist movements have a tendency to attribute this to their external adversaries. The attribution of internal problems to foreign devil(s) makes it possible to avoid answering difficult questions about internal failures and poor governance. Instead, everything is explained with reference to the policies of other states, some superpower, a neighbouring country or a confluence of several countries. The state-nationalism in such countries often reflects negative sentiments against a powerful neighbouring state that is viewed as domineering and assertive.

These trends can be noticed in the domestic and foreign policies of several developing countries including Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the context of 2011-12, Afghanistan's official and semi-official circles use Pakistan as a scapegoat for their internal weaknesses and failures. The attacks by the Taliban in Kabul in September 2011 have raised serious questions about the capacity of the Kabul government to provide security as US/NATO troops withdraw. It was not surprising that Pakistan was directly and persistently blamed for the killing of Burhanuddin Rabbani. The officially backed marches targeted Pakistan for criticism and raised anti-Pakistan slogans.

This fits into the established pattern of expression of Afghan displeasure and anger with Pakistan from time to time. The process kicks off with tough statements against Pakistan by Afghanistan's high officials, including President Hamid Karzai, followed by a propaganda campaign and

anti-Pakistan protest marches. At times the protesters attempt to attack Pakistani embassy in Kabul or consulate in some other cities.

Afghanistan's economic and transit-trade dependence on Pakistan is often resented to by the Afghan elite. Some of them may have visited or lived in Pakistan or have relatives and friends in Pakistan but they feel that Pakistan attempts to overawe Afghanistan and restrict its foreign policy choices. Therefore, Afghan nationalism manifests streaks of anti-Pakistan sentiment which is not surprising because many countries feel that way against their bigger and powerful neighbouring states. It is an issue of perception which may or may not coincide with reality.

Pakistan need not over react to periodic criticism from Afghanistan's official and semi-official circles because it is inherent in the dynamics of Afghanistan's internal politics. Pakistan should stay engaged with Afghanistan and help it to overcome its real or perceived insecurities. However, a distinction needs to be made between criticism and negative propaganda campaign and protest marches in Kabul. Pakistan should not be used as a scapegoat for weaknesses and deficiencies in the Afghan system. Afghanistan would need greater Pakistan cooperation after the foreign troops leave. A sustained propaganda against Pakistan is not going to be helpful to Kabul

Transnational Militancy

The transnational militant Islamic groups dating back to the 1980s pose a serious challenge to Afghanistan and Pakistan. This conflict emerged after September 2001 when Pakistan officially disowned the Taliban and they lost power in Afghanistan in November. Afghanistan's new government headed by Hamid Karzai also viewed them as adversary and joined hand in fighting them.

As the militant groups have proliferated in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is increasingly difficult for the two governments to keep their track. The original groups and leaders of the 1980s enjoyed material and political support of Pakistan, the US and many other countries as well as a large number of Afghan leaders and groups. Today, these groups have proliferated because some new groups have emerged and the older ones splintered into breakaway factions. The Post-Soviet Afghan and Pakistan militants hardly pay any attention to what Pakistan and Afghanistan suggest to them.

Most of these groups are ideologically motivated by a literalist and narrow vision of Islam combined with tribal traditions. Therefore, they have strong reservations about the political systems in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They also refuse to recognize the Pakistan-Afghanistan border for ideological Islamic reasons, i.e., the land of the Muslims. The movement

across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border helps them to deflect military pressure. When Pakistan's military undertakes operations against the militants, they cross over to Afghanistan and when the US and Afghan forces take action against them in Afghanistan they flee to Pakistani tribal areas.

The movement of militant leaders and their fighting personnel causes friction between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as between Pakistan and the US. Each country complains of the other country's involvement with the militant groups, that the other side does not control them.

These transnational militant groups were at the core of the diplomatic row between Pakistan and the US. Afghanistan also accused Pakistan of letting these groups operate from its tribal areas. Pakistan has complained several times since June 2011 that militants based in Afghanistan resort to armed attacks on Pakistani security check posts on the Pakistan-India border and adjoining villages. It complains about the inability or unwillingness of Afghanistan and the allied troops based in Afghanistan. Their polemical exchanges continue on the activities of transnational militant groups.

Traditional Tribal/Pakhtun Transnational Linkage System

There is another transnational linkage system between Pakistan and Afghanistan which is older than militancy. The Pakhtun tribes across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border share tribal, cultural, family and linguistic ties. For them, the border hardly means anything because they neither need passport nor visa to cross it. These linkages have remained operational even in the situation of diplomatic breakdown between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Similarly the two-way smuggling of goods has always been there.

These linkages also make it difficult to apply the notion of territorial state and its boundaries between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, the complaint about the failure of Pakistan to stop all movement of people across the Pakistan-Afghanistan is unrealistic and does not take into account the ground realities. These tribesmen and militant factions in their peculiar manner pursue different objectives but they crossover both ways at will. Even when the regular crossings are temporarily closed, the tribesmen and militant traffic continues through non-formal routes.

These transnational linkages make it difficult to control militancy without active cooperation between the US/NATO troops based in Afghanistan and Afghanistan's security forces on the one hand and Pakistani security on the other. It is their shared responsibility to ensure that these transnational linkage systems do not become a channel for increased terrorist activity in both countries. Pakistan alone cannot control this problem.

Post-Withdrawal Issues

The withdrawal of US/NATO troops by the end of 2014 creates challenges and opportunities for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afghan government will have to demonstrate its capacity to control at least the major cities and the communication networks linking these places and maintain relative stability in rural areas within local and tribal framework that may also give some space to the Taliban groups. It is difficult to suggest if the Kabul government would be able to evolve such a loose state system with its centrality.

Most analysts of the Afghan situation are talking of the possibility of internal strife in parts of Afghanistan that will keep the Kabul government under serious strains. The worst case scenario suggests that different groups may be controlling different regions of Afghanistan or the Taliban taking-over Kabul, although they will not have all of Afghanistan under their control. In any case, internal disorder and instability is viewed as a major possibility after the foreign troops withdraw.

Instability in Afghanistan will have negative ramifications for Pakistan. Its tribal areas will be directly affected whose impact will reach the mainland Pakistan. This will also embolden the Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups based in the tribal areas. As the linkages between the groups based in the tribal areas are well established with the militant groups in the mainland, the latter would also feel encouraged to assert themselves in the mainland and strengthen their ties with the militant groups in the tribal areas and Afghanistan.

A major temptation for Pakistan's security establishment could be reliance on some militant groups as their proxy in Afghanistan or in the tribal areas. This strategy may or may not succeed in enhancing Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. It is a sure recipe for increased militant activity on the Pakistani side of the Pakistan-Afghan border. If Pakistan's establishment bets on some group, the latter's rival will oppose the policy and confront the establishment as well as its favourite group. Further, the experience of militancy in Pakistan has clearly shown that these groups pursue their ideological and power agenda and cannot be a reliable instrument for pursuing Pakistan's agenda.

If Pakistan wants to control the spillover of the Afghan strife after 2014, it does not have to play any direct or indirect role in what happens in Afghanistan. Rather, it should focus on controlling the tribal areas. After expelling the militants from South Waziristan by the beginning of 2010, Pakistan's security forces have been fighting the militants in five tribal agencies without succeeding in controlling any tribal agency. They are engaged in military activity periodically in these tribal agencies. The key question is why have not the military and paramilitary been successful in

expelling the militants from these agencies? Why have not they registered a clear victory after Swat and South Waziristan? Is it a problem of incapacity or the policy of letting these groups survive? What are the gains for Pakistan in the current situation?

Pakistan has three years to establish its firm control over the tribal areas. If the present stalemate continues in the tribal areas by the time US/NATO troops leave Afghanistan, Pakistan is likely to lose the tribal belt to militant groups as they resurge in Afghanistan after 2014. Any escalation of civil strife in Afghanistan will cause a link-up between Afghanistan-based Taliban and the tribal areas-based Taliban, making it extremely difficult for Pakistan to sustain its control over the tribal areas.

Pakistan's priority should be to establish its primacy over the groups and territory in the tribal areas by a combination of military means, political dialogue and offer of better economic opportunities. Rehabilitation and reconstruction of the tribal areas along with the restoration of the centrality of civilian administration should be the target in the tribal areas. The control of the tribal areas will help to insulate Pakistan from the strife in Afghanistan.

Pakistan should use its economic ties with Afghanistan, trade and transit-trade to strengthen its relations with this neighbour. Geography and economic ties give Pakistan a clear advantage in Afghanistan over other neighbours, including India, provided Pakistan wants to build on non-military approaches. Pakistan should demonstrate more interest in Afghanistan's reconstruction; it needs to launch more development projects rather than staying worried about India's influence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan can keep Afghanistan engaged not only through direct interaction but also through common friends like Turkey, Iran and China who have strong interest in the stability of Afghanistan. A comprehensive regional approach with positive thinking will help Pakistan to cope better with the future challenges in Afghanistan. ■

CHAPTER 4

Rebuilding Afghanistan: Responsibilities of the International Community (NATO, UN)

Christian Wagner

The debate about the endgame in Afghanistan and the various exit options tend to overlook one fundamental aspect. No matter what the future scenario in Afghanistan will be, the international community will stay engaged in one way or the other. Scenarios on Afghanistan's future oscillate between the poles of consolidation of the democratic regime and another civil war like in the early 1990s. In both cases and the many other forms in between the international community will stay engaged. In the peaceful option, international community will stay engaged beyond 2014 in order to support and foster the economic reconstruction of the country. In the civil war option, there is a great likelihood that countries like the United States or neighbours will support their respective allies.

Looking at the international community, it is necessary to demystify or deconstruct that entity. The international community is not a homogenous group but consists of different states and international institutions with different interests in different fields. For our purpose, it is enough to differentiate between first international organizations and donors like the United Nations, the World Bank or the Asia Development Bank. Second, the Western countries like the United States, Europe and NATO, and thirdly the neighbours with all their different interests. With this very rough differentiation, the paper will look at the commitments and challenges of the international community in Afghanistan in the field of economic recovery and security.

International Commitment

Economy: International Organisations and Donors

The economic recovery of Afghanistan will require a long term commitment with more and sustained efforts of international community. The economic reconstruction is also regarded as one of the pre-requisites for a successful political solution.

The economic situation has improved with a growth rate of 8.2 per cent in 2010/11. Afghanistan could also improve its rank on the Human Development Index (HDI) although it is still on rank 155 of 169 countries. But Afghanistan will need more economic support to revive its economy, to

invest in infrastructure projects and to tap the resources in the country. Moreover, a greater amount of transparency and accountability will be necessary to bring down corruption.¹

The variety of organizations from the UN like United Nations Development programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or World Health Organisation (WHO) will remain active in Afghanistan in order to support the social and economic reconstruction. Donors like the World Bank or Asian Development bank (ADB) will be necessary to fund the infrastructure projects. International actors like the European Union (EU) will also continue their engagement. “The European Commission (EC) is one of the major donors providing official development assistance (ODA) as well as humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. “The EC’s support to Afghanistan from 2002 to December 31, 2009 amounted to €1.55 billion excluding €247 million in humanitarian assistance.”²

In recent years, the EU has put a special focus on areas like rural development, governance and health, social protection, mine action and regional cooperation. 30 per cent of the budget between 2007 and 2010 went into rural development, another 20 per cent in the health sector.³ The European Commission (EC) supports national programmes for rural development, especially in the traditional poppy-rich provinces in eastern and north-eastern Afghanistan meeting the need of an alternative economy. The EC already supported animal health and horticulture programmes to further the existing food security and employment creation projects targeting groups affected by food insecurity. The general objectives shall guarantee the contribution of the rural sector to the economic growth of the country and reduce economic dependence of rural households on illicit poppy production. Furthermore, the EC, in its support for poverty alleviation of the rural population, will contribute to increased food security. The specific objective is to ensure productivity and the income from rural production on a higher scale, which will be achieved through the recovery and growth of the livestock and perennial horticulture sectors on central, regional, and farmer levels.

Individual Western countries will also continue their development assistance to Afghanistan after 2014. Since 2009 Germany has achieved a number of successes in Afghanistan: More than 40.000 people got access to micro credits in order to start economic activities, more than 100.000

¹ See the contribution of Professor Zafar Moeen in this volume.

² http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/eu_afghanistan/development_cooperation/index_en.htm.

³ http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/eu_afghanistan/development_cooperation/index_en.htm.

households got access to drinking water, and more than 300 schools have been built for more than 460,000 students. Despite all efforts and achievements so far it is obvious that these will remain areas in which the international community will remain active.

Regional Economic Cooperation: The Neighbours

In order to support the international efforts, the neighbouring countries and regional institutions will have to play a more prominent role. At present regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) or Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) are not very promising. Nevertheless it must be in the common interest of the neighbours to prevent Afghanistan from sliding back into civil war after 2014 as it happened in the early 1990s after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. SAARC and ECO have their focus on economic cooperation which must be strengthened in order to support the economic recovery of Afghanistan.

Pakistan has an important role to play because of its location. Pakistan can develop into an important transit between Afghanistan on the one hand and India on the other hand. India is one of the most dynamic countries. An intensified trilateral trade between Afghanistan, India and Pakistan will also benefit Pakistan's economic development and reconstruction after the floods in 2010.

The European Commission has always supported a closer regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours mainly by trade distribution channels through international and regional trade fairs, seminars and workshops. To represent Afghanistan adequately at these occasions, the European Union is furthermore promoting the development of regional chambers of commerce and public as well as private institutions and facilitating the Afghan participation in regional fora, such as the ECO and the SAARC. The expected results of Europe's aid efforts for the Afghan regional cooperation include improved inter-ministerial and inter-governmental awareness, capacity, and cooperation on cross-border issues concerning economic, social, environmental, and law enforcement sectors. Simultaneously, the improved cross-border cooperation should also reduce trade barriers between Afghanistan and its neighbours, facilitating cross-border trade with enhanced security. This could also serve as a legislative framework to handle the refugee and migratory flows between Afghanistan and its concerned neighbouring states.

The most important conditions for the success of this regional cooperation project are stable relations with the neighbouring countries and an internal stability in Afghanistan itself; without these preconditions being met, the reconstruction of the Afghan economy and bilateral relations

cannot be sustainably developed. The European Commission has contributed about 1-2 per cent of its annual funding of National Indicative Programme (NIP) (2007-2010) for the regional cooperation programme and will work in close cooperation with the regional economic organizations.⁴ The efforts of countries like Turkey to look for new regional approaches are therefore welcomed. The challenge will be to establish a new regional framework which offers a viable platform for the diverging interests of the neighbours.

Security: Western Countries

The international community and Western countries will continue their military cooperation beyond 2014. The transition will be based on conditions, and will not be driven by the calendar. Any political settlement can only be achieved with strong Afghanistan national security forces. Therefore, the training of the Afghanistan security forces by Western countries will continue. Moreover, the military cooperation by Western countries in counter-terrorist operations is also likely to continue in order to support the process of political reconciliation. The basic principles of this process, i.e., the renunciation of violence, the severing of links to international terrorist groups like al Qaeda and the recognition of the Afghan constitution will be supported by the prolonged military presence of individual Western countries.

NATO has already announced that it would stay engaged in Afghanistan beyond 2014. At the summit in Lisbon in 2010, NATO and Afghanistan signed the declaration on enduring partnership. This will be the framework for future cooperation especially in the field of capacity building of the Afghan national security forces and security sector reforms. Individual Western countries like the United States will also be present in Afghanistan with troops beyond 2014. The basis will be the strategic partnership between the US and Afghanistan. This will have to be managed on a bilateral understanding between the Afghanistan government and the respective countries.

The training of the Afghanistan police forces will also continue by Western countries. The provision of security by the Police is much more important in order to win the hearts and minds of the people. The European Union will most likely continue its efforts to monitor, mentor, train and advise the Afghan national police.

⁴ See; “National Indicative Program 2007-10 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,” *European Commission*, 19-22.

Challenges to the International Community and its Commitment

Domestic Problems

The political situation in Afghanistan has improved but the process remains shaky. This was illustrated again by the recent attacks in Kabul and the assassination of Rabbani in September 2011 who was negotiating with parts of the Taliban. The future course of the country is unclear and scenarios range from (a) consolidation of the Karzai government, to (b) an inclusion of the Taliban in a negotiated settlement, to (c) an outbreak of another civil war, like the situation in the early 1990s, or (d) to the reconstruction of the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban.⁵

A peaceful political settlement like in scenario (a) and (b) that would include parts of the Taliban that are willing to participate in the political process would certainly be supported by the international community. Violent scenarios like (c) or (d) would trigger a new phase of deliberations on the future international support for the country.

Regional Challenges

The bigger picture reveals that most neighbours have diverging rather than converging interests in Afghanistan.⁶ These rivalries among Afghanistan neighbours may undermine the lack of ownership that will be necessary to support the process of economic cooperation. Therefore, the danger exists, that the peace process in Afghanistan may fail and the country will slip back into civil war. This will also create backlashes for the neighbouring countries because of the spill-over effects of the civil war on their territory and another wave of refugees from Afghanistan. Pakistan has a long experience and history in dealing with the repercussions of conflicts in Afghanistan. It should therefore be in the interest of the country and its stakeholders that these experiences will not be replicated again.

The Changing Context of the Global Arena

The long term commitment of the Western countries will be constrained by the financial crisis in the west and the emergence of new crises scenarios. For Europe, the changes in the Arab world will be a much more immediate challenge that will require huge political and financial investments in the future. Therefore, there may be a trade-off between regional disputes like

⁵ See; C.D. Maass and T. Ruttig, "Is Afghanistan on the Brink of a New Civil War? Possible Scenarios and Influencing Factors in the Transition Process," Berlin 2011, (SWP Comments 2011/C 21, August 2011).

⁶ See; A. Tellis and A. Mukharji, eds., "Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Washington, 2010.

Afghanistan and immediate crises in the neighbourhood of Europe. This will not question the Western and European commitment for Afghanistan's economic reconstruction but it implies the challenge that Western support will be decreasing rather than increasing in the long term perspective.

Prospects

The start of the transition in Afghanistan in 2011 should have strengthened the authority of the Afghan government. The beginning of the troop withdrawal of the United States in summer 2011 should not be regarded as the end of the support of the international community for Afghanistan. The experience of the late 1980s when the country fell back into civil war after the pull out of the Soviet Union will not be repeated by the international community. At the summit in Lisbon in November 2010 NATO has underlined its long term commitment towards Afghanistan even beyond 2014. The European engagement in Afghanistan will therefore change in the midterm perspective. The military engagement may be reduced if a sustainable improvement in the security situation is achieved.

Is the continuing engagement of the international community "good" or "bad" news for Afghanistan? It is bad news for those who think that they can impose their will against the democratic aspirations of the Afghanistan people or transform the country into a battleground of regional rivalries in order to gain strategic benefits. The continuing engagement of the international community is "good" news for those who share together with the Afghan people the common interest in the economic and political reconstruction of the country which may have positive spill-over effects for the neighbours as well. ■

Transition in Afghanistan: Post-Exit Scenarios

Lt. Gen. (R) Kamal Mateenuddin

Introduction

As the day for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan draws near the world watches, with great anxiety, to see what will be the post-exit scenario in and around that war-battered country.

Will the bloody power struggle, which ensued soon after the last soldier crossed the Oxus into his own country, in December 1979, be repeated or better sense will prevail this time amongst the power seekers in Afghanistan?

The power struggle, which began with the bloody coup against President Daud Khan by the pro-communist leaders, continues till today. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 was resisted by the Afghans. The erstwhile Afghan Mujahideen jointly succeeded in evicting the Soviet troops from their country, but began to fight against one another, immediately thereafter.

This paper examines the possible responses of the Afghans after the pull out of foreign forces from their country in the light of what happened in similar circumstances in recent Afghan history. It focuses on the likely attitude of those so-called militant organizations, which are presently not included in the US-sponsored reconciliation process. It looks into the steps, which the outside powers are likely to take to protect and promote their national interests in Afghanistan and in the region beyond 2014 and finally it analyses the impact of the various post-exit scenarios on Pakistan's security.

Background

The unfortunate land astride the Hindukush has witnessed continued death and destruction since the Saur Revolution of April 1978. Internal strife and outside intervention, has largely contributed to tearing apart the delicate fabric of the Afghan nation.

The United States and the Saudi government supported General Zia ul Haq in organizing the largest clandestine operation against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Foreign fighters from far and near came to the Tribal Areas of Pakistan to take part in the Afghan Jihad. Many of them are still present in these rugged mountains. Afghan Mujahideen, jointly succeeded in evicting the Soviet troops from their country, but began to fight against one another, immediately thereafter.

Pakistan could not remain unaffected by these developments in its neighbourhood. Its northwest-territory was used as a safe haven for those fighting against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Today, in this area Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been formed since last six-seven years and its members are fitting against Pakistan government in reaction to its decision of becoming part of global war on terror being fought in Afghanistan. As alleged by the US and coalitions members, Taliban from Afghanistan also come and seek refuges with TTP and then they go back to attack US and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

The problem is the soft nature of the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, often referred to as the Durand Line. The scene astride this frontier will not substantially change after the pull out of US troops from Afghanistan. Why is that so?

The Durand Line

The 1,900 kilometres line drawn by the foreign secretary of British India, Sir Mortimer Durand, in 1893 runs, for most part of its length, along high mountain ranges, steep slopes and deep gorges. It stretches from the Iranian border in the south to the Wakhan corridor in the north, where it touches China. Some portions of this boundary were un-accessible then and beyond the reach of ground forces today.

The Durand Line was not based on sound topographical data as there were differences between the maps of that area and the position on the ground.¹ The border even bisects villages, which lie along the Durand Line. It cuts across the tribes, which are living on either side of the demarcated frontier. The Waziris and the Mohmand tribes are divided. To them the Durand Line does not come in their way in meeting their families across the border nor does it stop them from coming to the assistance of their ethnic brethren in times of conflict. It is a border where flying the Pakistani and Afghan flags become a source of conflict.

There are numerous passes across the border in addition to the five recognized ones. Hence movement of smugglers, drug dealers, militants and anti-state elements takes place with relative ease, despite the deployment of the security forces along the border. Even after the exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan cross-border movement will continue. It was an open border during the Afghan Jihad. It remained so when a civil war erupted in Afghanistan in 1990 with each side seeking safe havens in Pakistan. The sanctity of the border was not given any significance, even when the

¹ Dr. Azmat Hayat Khan, *The Durand Line, Its Geostrategic Importance* (Peshawar: Area Study Centre, Russia and Central Asia, University of Peshawar, 2000), 149.

Pakistan-friendly Taliban were in power, as to them there are no borders between Muslim countries.²

To help us in making a realistic assessment of things to come, it is necessary to examine the objectives of the various elements in Afghanistan and recall the national interests of those outside nations, which will be affected by the unfolding events in that war-ravaged country.

Current Situation in Afghanistan

There are four main parties in the country, each having its own aims. These are (1) The Karzai Regime. (2) The Taliban. (3) Gulbadin Hikmetyar's Hizb-e-Islami operating from inside Afghanistan. (4) The Haqqani Network alleged to be sending fighters into Afghanistan from his safe haven in North Waziristan and the most controversial of all, the uninvited United States Forces in a foreign land.

The Karzai Regime

Hamid Karzai is a Popalzai Pukhtun from Kandahar. He has studied in India and, therefore, besides other factors, like all other Afghan rulers before him, except the Taliban, he has friendly relations with the Indian government. On the other hand his association with Pakistan runs deeper as he was part of the Afghan Mujahideen during the Afghan Jihad, though he did not actively participate in the fighting against the Soviet forces. He was the deputy foreign minister in the Afghan governments before the Taliban regime.

He seemed to have been acceptable to the Taliban as well, for they offered him the post of Afghanistan's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, which he rejected. In fact he turned against the Taliban and began to organize an anti-Taliban movement from his base in Pakistan. Karzai later decided to carry forward the revolt against the Taliban from within Afghanistan.

After the fall of the Taliban regime Karzai was made the head of an interim administration in Afghanistan at a conference of outside powers at Bonn, to which the Taliban were not invited. His position as the President of Afghanistan for the next five years was confirmed by a Loya Jirga in June 2002. He was again elected President in a controversial election in 2009 for another term of five years. Presidential elections will be due in 2014 again, but Karzai will not be eligible as a candidate for the presidential

² Interview by Lt. Gen. Kamal Mateenuddin, Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1987.

post, as according to the Afghan constitution a person can only hold this prestigious appointment for two terms only.

The Karzai regime has indeed the trappings of a democratic political set up. The country has a constitution; it has held parliamentary and presidential elections. People's representatives are running the affairs of the nation. But the writ of the Karzai government does not run beyond the capital. His security forces are still not able to deal with the militants without the support from foreign troops. Most of the actions against the al Qaeda and the Taliban are conducted jointly by the US and Afghan forces. His cabinet and other government organizations including the up-coming Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police are filled with non Pukhtun, despite the fact that the Pukhtun are in a majority in Afghanistan. While all nations, developing and developed alike, have amongst them corrupt officials but Karzai's government has the dubious distinction of being notoriously corrupt.

According to some reports billions of dollars are given as bribes for the economic development of the country, which has been siphoned away by unscrupulous government officials. It is claimed that only a small percentage of funds allotted for reconstruction reach the object for which it was intended, Dyn Corporation International takes away most of it.³ US\$ 360 million have been lost to insurgents and criminals, says an Afghan News Channel report.⁴ Even the United States is reported to be giving millions of dollars to the insurgents as protection money.⁵ Corruption has spread to doctors and nurses.⁶

Karzai and his successor will face difficulties after the exit of US forces as the government of Afghanistan is unable to raise enough resources to be able to meet its expenses. Presently he is receiving US\$ 2 billion each year which keeps the wheels of his government churning. Any future government will be totally dependent on outside support, mainly from the US for the economic development of its war-torn infrastructure.

Afghan National Army

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is shaping up but it cannot deal with the Taliban insurgents alone. All operations against the militants are joint US-Afghan Army operations. The post-exit scene for the new government will look bleak, if the US withdraws before the ANA is strong enough to

³ *Afghan National News*, August 19, 2011.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Daily Times*, June 23, 2010.

⁶ *Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2011.

withstand the pulls and pressure that will arise after the dead line passes away.

The strength of the ANA, which is going to be around 170,000 is presently being trained at the Regional Military Training Centre in Herat. The training of the Afghan National Army began in real earnest in November 2009. According to the NATO Commander responsible for training the ANA, around 85% of the force will be equipped by March 2012. Between August 2011 and March 2014 US plans to deliver 22,000 vehicles; 44 war planes/ helicopters and 40,000 weapons and a large amount of radios and wireless equipment.⁷

This should be taken with a pinch of salt as plans are not always fulfilled. In the meantime reports of defections, corruption, lack of proper training and shortage of modern military hardware are coming in. According to a military analyst one in seven Afghan soldiers deserted during the first half of 2011.⁸ It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the ANA will be strong enough in the next three years to bring about the much-needed peace and stability in Afghanistan

Role of the Northern Alliance

The Northern Alliance had not only welcomed the ouster of the Taliban regime by the United States, but with their assistance occupied Kabul.

Some years back I was part of a delegation headed by Dr. Shireen Mazari, who was then the Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies. We had gone to Kabul to take part in a meeting with some members from the Kabul University. The Afghan delegation was also headed by a lady.

Shireen Mazari opened the meeting and referred to the American troops in Afghanistan as occupiers. Before she could proceed further she was stopped by the leader of the Afghan delegation who said “Dr Shireen Mazari, the American forces in Afghanistan are not occupiers but liberators. Please do not comment on the actions of a third country in this bi-lateral meeting.” She was of course a Tajik.

The non-Pukhtun, who form more than 50% of the population, have tasted the fruits of governance. They would like to retain their hold over the country and not hand over the reins of government to the Pukhtun-dominated Taliban. To remain effective they would like to fill the new Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police with non-Pukhtun, who they hope will provide them security after the exit of US forces.

⁷ *Afghan News Channel*, August 23, 2011.

⁸ *Washington Post*, September 2, 2011.

The Taliban

The most significant element, however, in Afghanistan are and will remain the Taliban, who are still an effective body and remain a very important actor on the Afghan stage. The Taliban strength in the early 90s was estimated as round 500. It grew substantially as the years rolled by. NATO commanders estimate the strength of the Taliban in 2011 as being around 25,000.⁹ According to them their strength has remained the 5,000 more were added in 1998. These figures could vary as no one has carried out a serious study of their strength recently. It is said that there are no special features of the Taliban to distinguish them from the ordinary citizens. The Taliban go about their daily work like any other person in Afghanistan. But pick up arms when a task is given to them to join the freedom fighters.

This should not mean that the Taliban are a rag tag outfit- each one on its own. There is a central leadership and all directives from the *Ameer-ul-Momineen* (Leader of the Faithful) Mullah Omar are strictly followed. They are well organized and operate like a semi-government. They have a shadow cabinet. There is a Taliban, who look after foreign affairs and political affairs. There is an interior ministry and a Taliban leader responsible for security. Mullah Omar has designated commanders for various regions through whom orders and directives are implemented.

- They have shown their effectiveness by staging a series of attacks against the US/NATO forces recently. The 4,000 additional US troops sent into Afghanistan in 2011 by President Barak Obama in order to negotiate with strength did not have any effect on the military prowess of the Taliban. The intensity and frequency of the attacks by the Taliban is increasing as the W day (withdrawal dead Line) draws near.
- The most daring being the attack on the US Embassy and NATO Headquarters and on the Afghan Intelligence Agency. Taliban kept the Afghan army and US forces at bay for more than twenty hours on 13 September 2011, having occupied a five storied under-construction building. Though the attack was repulsed and not many casualties occurred but it showed that the Taliban can carry out their attacks even in heavily defended areas. As expected the US military commanders in Afghanistan stated, without any concrete evidence, that the attackers were from the Haqqani network based in Pakistan
- Earlier the Taliban attacked a NATO base in Wardak province wounding 77 US soldiers. NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh

⁹ Johnathon Landlay and Burton Hall, *Seattle Times*, October 15, 2009.

Rasmussen, speaking from Brussels is confident enough to indicate that the transfer of security from NATO to Afghan forces will not be derailed by these attacks implying that by 2014 NATO would be able to make the Afghan National Army capable of providing security to its people after, the exit of US forces from Afghanistan.

The successes of the Taliban against the US and Afghan forces are due to the fact that Mullah Omar is still alive and in command despite that the US is willing to give US\$ 25 million for his capture or his assassination.¹⁰ He keeps sending out messages to his supporters to continue the struggle against the current rulers. The most recent one was on the occasion of this year's Eid ul Fitr asking his people to continue the Jihad against the foreign forces. Attacks by the Taliban on the US forces and the current rulers are continuing.

The Taliban are not going to accept foreign forces on their soil, not even if they are limited in number. They will, most probably, try to achieve their long standing aim of establishing an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, using force, against those opposing them, if necessary. They would strive to replace the existing constitution with the *Shariah* (Islamic legal code). As a minimum they would like to be the dominant partner in the post-exit government in Afghanistan.

Taliban do have fissures and some have divided them into die hard and moderate Taliban. It is the good Taliban who are believed to be talking to the British and the Americans to arrive at an agreement of sorts. The reconciliation effort is believed to have taken place in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. The Taliban leadership, however, has denied such meetings having taken place.

Many Western strategic analysts claim that the ISI is funding, training and equipping the Taliban but without any concrete evidence. According to Matt Waldman the relationship between the ISI and the Taliban is far deeper. The ISI is blamed for running with the hare and hunting with the hound. This may not be true although Pakistan considers that after the exit of US forces from Afghanistan it is the Taliban who would be of use in keeping India's activities in Afghanistan against Pakistan in check.

Rashid Ahmed and Barnet Rubin maintain that the ISI allows the Taliban to raise funds, recruit fighters and that they actively support the Taliban.¹¹ Taliban's ambassador in Islamabad, Abdus Salam Zaeef, writes

¹⁰ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 7.

¹¹ Ahmed Rashid & Barnet Rubin, *Fragmentation of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 58

in his book that the ISI maintained close relations with the Taliban but gave weapons to those who were against us.¹²

Engineer Gulbadin Hikmetyar

In addition to Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden engineer Gulbadin Hikmetyar is also resisting the presence of US troops in Afghanistan. Hikmetyar, who was born in 1947, is a Gilzai Pukhtun from the northern province of Kunduz. He, like all other Afghan leaders, is deeply religious. He did want Afghanistan to become an Islamic state but he is not an ultra conservative like the Taliban. He came to Pakistan in 1973 along with Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and President Bhutto used him to destabilize Daud's regime as he (Daud) was supporting the Pukhtunistan stunt.

Hikmetyar is the head of Hizb-i-Islami which was once the strongest and most effective anti-Soviet militia during the Afghan Jihad. Much of which was due to the full support of Pakistan's premier intelligence agencies.¹³

It was Hikmetyar who received billions of dollars and most of the weapons given by the United States, which backed him, during the struggle to evict the Soviet Forces from Afghanistan. He reportedly even dealt directly with US Congressman, Charlie Wilson, to secure supplies of weapons from Israel. His party was the most organized, most disciplined and the most effective organization during the Afghan Jihad said the former ISI head.¹⁴

Hikmetyar is a maverick, who felt no qualms in making and breaking alliances joining sometimes one party sometimes another. Hikmetyar was unwilling to accept whatever his foreign supporters wanted of him it is because of this that Washington began looking at him with suspicion. He turned against the United States when they began to stop giving him military support, which they were giving him earlier. US officials involved in the Afghan jihad felt that Hikmetyar would turn Afghanistan into a fundamental Islamic state. Reportedly the CIA even attempted to assassinate him in 2002.

Brigadier Mohammad Yusuf, author of the book *The Bear Trap*, claims that Hikmetyar was never forgiven for his public refusal to meet President Ronald Reagan during his 1985 visit to New York. Though he was persuaded by Pakistan and other nations to relent for his undiplomatic

¹² Abdus Salam Zaeef, "Living with the Taliban," 125.

¹³ "Interview," Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul, former Director General, Inter Services Intelligence Directorate.

¹⁴ Ibid.

behaviour to the head of a country, which was giving substantial assistance for the Afghan Jihad, but he did not show any remorse.¹⁵

He strongly believed that having done most of the fighting during the Afghan jihad he should be given the right to occupy a place of authority in any future political set up in his country. He did not want the non-Pukhtun to be in a position from where they could have a major share in shaping the destiny of the nation after the withdrawal of the Soviet Forces from his country and that could have been the cause of a bitter struggle with Ahmed Shah Masood, the Lion of Panjsher, who was a Tajik.

Although Hikmetyar had signed the Islamabad Declaration, according to which Sibghatullah Mojeddidi had been appointed interim President of Afghanistan he waged a war against him. He also fought against the Taliban, when they tried to overrun his base at Char Asiab in 1994. In September, when Kabul fell to the Taliban he went into exile in Iran. Two years later he was back in Mazar-e-Sharif but went back to Iran soon thereafter. Presently, he is in Afghanistan and is struggling to evict the foreign forces from his country.

He is now using his position as the head of a very significant faction of the erstwhile Afghan Mujahideen to compel the US forces to leave his country. He is fairly religious minded but he does not favour the Taliban. What will be his attitude after the exit of the US forces is an open question?

The Haqqani Network

As the end game draws near the US military commanders in Afghanistan are still very concerned about the activities of what is called the Haqqani network.

Jalaluddin Haqqani, a Pukhtun from the Afghan province of Khost, was a well known field commander affiliated with the Yunus Khalis faction of the Hizb-e-Islami. He had established a very well fortified base in Zhawar, 20 kilometres south of Khost, on the Afghan-Pakistan border in southern Afghanistan, where he had, during the days of the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, assembled a force of around 10,000.

Haqqani welcomed the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban. He became a minister in the Taliban regime, which also appointed him as a military commander. He apparently did not approve of the US-supported Karzai government and rejected an offer by Karzai to join his team. Jalaluddin Haqqani, who fought so valiantly against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, is once again fighting against the occupiers of his country. He is reported to have around him a group of 3,000 fighters including Chechens, Uzbeks,

¹⁵ Mohammad Yousaf & Adkin Mark, *The Bear Trap* (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1992), 41.

Arabs and others who are embedded with the Haqqani network. These foreign volunteers are not likely to go back to their countries and will remain in the Tribal Areas even after the pullout of US troops from Afghanistan.

According to US commanders, the Haqqani network has al Qaeda connections and that it is based in and operating from North Waziristan. They blame the government of Pakistan for not acting against the Haqqani network, which they contend, without any evidence, has the moral support of the ISI. Pakistan denies this assertion and calls such findings as unfounded and baseless.

Jalaluddin Haqqani is now old and frail and is finding it difficult to bear the burden of organizing the struggle against the US forces. His son Sirajuddin Haqqani has taken over the mantle from his father, with the aim of evicting the foreign forces from his soil. The United States consider Sirajuddin as the most lethal enemy of the United States. Washington has put a bounty of US\$ 5 million on his head.

The Haqqani network is a thorn in the US back and that is why Pakistan is being pressed to send its troops into North Waziristan to remove this irritant. US Defence Secretary, Leon Panetta's remarks that Washington would attack the Haqqani network in Pakistan if Pakistan does not do so soured the US Pakistan relationship further.

The Pakistan army is already overstretched and is currently not in a position to open another front. North Waziristan is a mountainous area and presents a very difficult terrain for regular troops. It is an ideal guerilla country with high mountain ranges, deep gorges and valleys overlooked by mountain peaks. It is the stronghold of the Haqqani network and will be a difficult nut to crack even by regular troops supported by aerial attacks.

Even then the Pakistan Army has not refused to start a military operation in North Waziristan as well, provided real time and actionable evidence is provided by the US intelligence agencies. An important member of his group Naseeruddin Haqqani has been arrested by the Pakistani security forces. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, is right when he says that Pakistan is an independent country and will chose its own time to carry out military operation against the militants acting against the interest of the state.¹⁶

Sirajuddin claims that his group is no longer located in North Waziristan and has moved into Afghanistan, as they now feel safe in their own country. A softening of their rigid stand on not negotiating with the US before all foreign forces leave his country appears to be taking place as

¹⁶ General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani's statement at the Commanders conference on Afghanistan held in Spain in September 2011

according to a *BBC* report Sirajuddin Haqqani is willing to talk to the US if the Taliban do so. If true this is a major shift from the long standing stance.¹⁷ Sirajuddin is reported to have said that he would accept whatever the Shura members suggest for the future of Afghanistan

The Haqqani network, whether located in Waziristan or in Afghanistan will continue to support the Taliban whether the American troops leave Afghanistan or not.

The Quetta Shura

When the US launched a full scale attack on Afghanistan in October 2001 many senior Taliban leaders including Mullah Omar escaped to Quetta in Pakistan determined to carry on the struggle against those forces, which had occupied their country. With the help of those who had fled to Quetta along with him he formed a Shura (a Consultative Committee) in that border city to give guidance and to control the activities of the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.

The Quetta Shura has been dubbed as a militant organization by the US. General Stanley McChrystal, Commander of US forces in Afghanistan, claims that the Quetta Shura is directing the so-called insurgency in Afghanistan from its base in Quetta. US ambassador in Pakistan Anne W. Patterson also made similar remarks when she said "The Quetta Shura is high on our list." The US Senate Armed Forces Committee had called for Haqqani network and the Quetta Shura to be blacklisted.¹⁸ A London School of Economics report also contended that the ISI is officially representative on the Quetta Shura.¹⁹ Their statements gained some credibility when Abdul Rahim Mandokhel, a senator from Zhob acknowledged the presence of the Quetta Shura when he said "The whole war in Afghanistan is being waged from here, meaning Quetta.

The Pakistan government initially denied that the Quetta Shura existed but later the ISI accepted the fact that some Taliban leaders were indeed present in Quetta and in the cities. Ahmed Mukhtar, Pakistan's Defence Minister in the Gilani government acknowledged its presence in Quetta. A number of Shura members were indeed arrested or killed including Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, Mullah Abdul Baradar, Mullah Abdul Rauf, Mullah Abdul Kabir and Mullah Mohammad Yunus. There is no evidence, however, to prove that the ISI is cooperating with the Quetta Shura.

¹⁷ *News*, September 18, 2001.

¹⁸ *AFPAK channel*, July 14, 2010.

¹⁹ *Daily Times*, June 14, 2010.

War on Terror

Despite the fact that the United States was protected by two mighty oceans and overseen by dozens of US satellites circling the globe mainland America was subjected to an attack from an unexpected direction by a bunch of stateless hijackers.

As an act of revenge the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces unleashed the mightiest army of the world on to a hapless nation three thousand miles against an alleged mastermind of the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. Dozens of Afghan cities were destroyed. Communication network was uprooted. Thousands of innocent men women and children, who had never even heard of the Twin Towers were killed and maimed. But Bush could not prevent the prime target Osama bin Laden and the top leadership of the al Qaeda and the Taliban from escaping into the rugged mountains of Waziristan across the international frontier. The War on Terror started by the United States moved into Pakistan.

Pakistan became a full-fledged partner of the United States in its War on Terror when President, Pervez Musharraf, was cautioned by the US “You are either with us or against us.” Fearful of a US attack on Pakistan itself, if he refused to cooperate, Musharraf made a U turn in his Taliban policy. He broke off diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime in Kabul and handed over its ambassador, Mullah Mohammad Zaeef, in Islamabad to the Americans. He also banned a number of religious-oriented political parties.

The Pakistan armed forces began military operations against the militants in Pakistan, who reacted by carrying out bomb blasts and suicide attacks. These were directed against not only the security forces but also against civilians to put pressure on the government to stop all military operations against one’s own people. Over 35,000 civilians have died and 5,500 security persons have lost their lives in the War on Terror in Pakistan. Many political leaders and senior retired military officers in Pakistan are convinced that Pakistan is fighting America’s war and killing its own people in support of US interests. If this be true the War on Terror should end after the US troops leave Afghanistan?

Despite having given tremendous sacrifices in supporting the War in Terror Bob Woodward blamed Pakistan for duplicity. “Pakistanis are a dishonest partner of the United States in the Afghanistan war. They are all lying” writes Woodward.²⁰

²⁰ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 3.

Drone Attacks

The US government has been carrying out drone attacks against alleged militants in Pakistan's Tribal Areas since 2004 in fulfillment of its War on Terror. The aim is to defeat and dismantle the al Qaeda and Taliban leadership in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan. Notwithstanding the fact that these leaders have been pushed out of Afghanistan and into Pakistan by the Americans themselves by US attacks on them in Afghanistan.

The frequency and lethality of the drone attacks have increased manifold from only 1 in the year 2004, when the first drone attack took place to 118 in 2010. The major increase in the number of drone attacks is the result of President Barak Obama's policy of degrading the effectiveness of the al Qaeda and Taliban before the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

While public announcements by Pakistani leaders condemn these attacks there appears to be a tacit understanding between the two governments to continue these attacks as they are directed against terrorists, which are a bane both for the US and Pakistan.

Prime Minister, Yusaf Raza Gilani made a public statement saying "we are seeking the help of friendly countries to have these drone attacks stopped but he looks the other way when the Predators and Reapers take off from the Shamsi Airbase in Baluchistan to strike targets in Waziristan. General Kayani, acclaims that this is complete violation of human rights but pays no heed to the demand of many political leaders and retired senior officers to shoot down the drones, since the PAF have the capability to do so. The Foreign Ministry proclaims that such attacks are counterproductive and they only contribute to strengthening the hands of the terrorists, but are not willing to even down grade relations with the United State not even by a notch lower. The reason is that Pakistan is dependent on the United States for aid and military assistance and is unwilling to cross the red line. In fact the ISI is working closely with the CIA in the "War on Terror."

Ovais Ghani, Governor of Pukhtunkhwa, opined that drone attacks are killing militants and those taking shelter in the tribal areas and therefore supportive of Pakistan's interests.²¹

Since it was becoming quite embarrassing for the government to keep denying the fact that the drones were operating from Pakistan the Americans were finally told to hand over the base to the Pakistan Authorities. Shamsi air base in Baluchistan was evacuated by the Americans on 21 April 2011. The drones are presumably now operating from an American base in Afghanistan.

²¹ Informal interview Mr Ovais Ghani, Governor of Pukhtunkhwa, July 2, 2010.

Drone attacks have indeed killed many foreign terrorist who were operating from the Tribal areas against the Americans in Afghanistan. An Egyptian, Hamza al Jufi Saleh; al Somali; Abdul Haq Turkestani; Abu Ubayda al Tunisi. Hatham al Yemeni; Tahir Yeldshev head of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan were all killed by US drone attacks. A drone attack also killed Abu Hafs al Shari who was to become the deputy of al Qaeda. Pakistan Army admits that most of these were hardcore terrorists. In addition to these there are Arabs, Chechens and many others from Muslim countries still present in the Federally Administered Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. These foreigners are not acceptable in their own country but appear to be welcome in the Pakistani tribal belt.

Will drone attacks stop after the pull out of US troops from Afghanistan? The harsh statements made by US military commanders and by the White House itself about the alleged cooperation between the ISI and the Haqqani network indicates that if US military bases remain in Afghanistan the possibility of drone attacks against the Haqqani network purportedly based in North Waziristan are likely to continue even after the exit of the bulk of the US forces from Afghanistan.

The War Lords: They would retain their hold over their domain even after the pull out of the US troops. They will continue to maintain local militias; engage in drug trafficking and extract money for providing security to the passersby, irrespective of who sits on the throne in Kabul. The scene is unlikely to be different, even when no US boots are on the ground, as far as the authority of the war lords is concerned.

The Expatriates: As the clock ticks towards the withdrawal of the US troops the Afghan intellectuals and professionals who had returned to their homeland after the Taliban regime had been removed are concerned about their stay in Afghanistan if the Taliban gained ascendancy again. According to some recent reports a majority of them want a binding security pact with the United States that would keep American troops in Afghanistan indefinitely

Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan after the Exit of US Forces

The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan still remain unfriendly. Both blame each other for interfering in their internal affairs. First Pakistan was alleged to harbour terrorists operating in Afghanistan now it is Afghanistan, which is providing a safe haven for the militants living in the border areas of Pakistan. In September 2011, Afghan forces kidnapped 30 Pakistani students in the Kunar sector when they inadvertently crossed into Afghan territory. Afghan forces are entering into Pakistan territory and

clashes are taking place between the two forces. It is doubtful if such forays will stop after 2014.

Pakistan would like to see a stable and a friendly Afghanistan government in place reflecting the demographic character of Afghanistan. The ethnic factor, however, must not be overplayed and Pakistan must ensure good neighbourly relations with whatever rulers the Afghans chose for themselves, as long as they do not allow their soil to be used by India to destabilize Pakistan. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad acknowledges that Pakistan has played a vital and a troubling negative role in Afghanistan. He also opines that Pakistan is working to ensure that pro-Pakistan forces have the upper hand in Afghanistan after the US troops leave the country.²² The ambassador is known for his ant-Pakistan views hence his assertion at best a half truth.

Prospects of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Pipeline may look brighter if, after the exit of the US forces, peace and stability returns to the country. Trade with Central Asian Republics (CARs) may also become a possibility. President Asif Ali Zardari during his recent visit to Dushanbe expressed his desire for developing long-term cooperative programme between CARs and Pakistan including establishing communication network, increasing trade and economic activities. This dream can only mature if after the exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan there is a friendly government in place in Kabul.

Pakistan's Internal Scenario after the Exit

If US and NATO troops really leave Afghanistan the anti-American sentiments in Pakistan may not totally melt away, but will most likely simmer down. The main cause of the anger against the Americans is the presence of US troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan's support to the US on its War on Terror. If this irritant is removed their present attitude towards American policies may subside somewhat.

Al Qaeda and the Taliban: America's paranoia against al Qaeda will remain. It will continue to believe that al Qaeda and its affiliates are a serious threat to the United States and that they have a safe haven in the Tribal Areas. That being so they would still search out al Qaeda elements in Pakistan, even after their troops pull out from Afghanistan. Their War on Terror would most likely continue inside Pakistan with the CIA and the ISI working together. The US will not reduce their presence in Pakistan especially those involved in secret activities.

²² *New York Times*, October 19, 2010.

After US troops leave Afghanistan the frequency of suicide attacks, bomb blasts, kidnappings and target killings in Pakistan may reduce. If our forces continue to carry out military operations against anti-state elements in Waziristan, retaliatory measures by the al Qaeda and the Taliban will most probably continue.

Afghan Refugees: I do not think that the Afghan refugees will start going back to Afghanistan after the exit of US forces. I recall interviewing Afghan refugees in a refugee camp outside Akhora Khattack in the year 2000 when the Taliban were in control in Afghanistan. I asked them as to why they left their country when peace had been restored by the Taliban and Shariah had been imposed by them? They said “yes there is peace but there is no work available in Afghanistan. So we had to come here for earning our livelihood.” Much the same situation can exist even after the US troops leave Afghanistan. It is doubt full, therefore, if the refugees would like to go back to their country even after the US troops have withdrawn from their land.

Withdrawal Deadline

Towards the end of the Soviet occupation; Pakistan wanted the Soviet forces to remain in the country till an Afghan Interim Government is formed. Because they feared that there would be an internal conflict unless an interim government acceptable to the majority is formed.

Uvgeny Primakov, who later became the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, told me at a meeting in the Kremlin in 1988 to inform General Ziaul Haq that the Soviet forces would leave Afghanistan whether he likes it or not. General Zia had to work overtime to cobble up an Interim Afghan Government before the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan. But neither the Peshawar Accord nor the Islamabad Declaration worked as despite agreements in-fighting began as soon as the foreign forces had left the country.

Granted that things are not the same and the situation in Afghanistan today is very much different than what it was at the end of 1989. Today, Afghanistan does have a Constitution but the Taliban have not accepted it. They are determined to impose the Shariah. This is a sure recipe for clashes to occur between them and the more moderate factions in Afghanistan after 2014. There is a government in Kabul but its writ does not run much beyond the capital. Not much will change in its effectiveness after it is on its own. The Security forces of Afghanistan are being trained and equipped but it is doubtful if they would have the capability of preventing the Taliban from overrunning the country if it comes to a civil war after the US withdrawal.

An international conference on Afghanistan was held in London in January 2010. Representatives from 70 countries and organizations attended. The Conference was held under the auspices of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The participants recommended transferring primacy to the Afghan forces and to talking to the Taliban and encourage better governance.

United States, Aims in Afghanistan after their Exit from Afghanistan

The US has around 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. More than 1500 US soldiers have died in this longest war in US history. It has cost the Washington around US\$ 13 billion yearly.

US's Afghan policy was revised in what was referred to as Af-Pak II in December 2009. President Barak Obama believed that the Taliban gains had been reversed and the US forces in Afghanistan were degrading the ability of the Taliban to hurt US interests in Afghanistan. The new policy envisaged better protection of the Afghan people, which meant enlarging the responsibilities of the US troops. For this, he approved a surge in the strength of US troops in Afghanistan. He also announced the beginning of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan from July 2011.

Obama reversed a previous decision of not talking to the Taliban till they lay down their weapons and decided on a policy of reconciliation with the "good" Taliban (It was not clear what was the criteria of dividing the Taliban into good Taliban and bad Taliban). The US President now planned to give greater importance to economic development and good governance in Afghanistan. But he did not give up the use of force. Drone attacks were to be increased in the Tribal Areas. Surge and exit is Obama's latest policy. Negotiate through strength is what he intends doing.

US forces would continue to try and destroy, disrupt and decimate the remnants of al Qaeda network in Afghanistan before they leave; put pressure on Pakistan to prevent Haqqani group in North Waziristan from sending fighters into Afghanistan; establish a pro-US government in Kabul; continue to build up the ANA and Afghan police through US trainers in Afghanistan; oversee US funded development work in Afghanistan; maintain and expand its contacts with important personalities in Afghanistan; and continue drone attacks on the Taliban leadership in FATA.

A peace deal with the Taliban where both sides make compromises is also being tried before the US pulls out its forces. The United States

officials have secretly met the Taliban so far three times.²³ The High Peace Committee headed by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani received a set back after he was assassinated on September 19, 2011 in Kabul. It is perhaps for these reasons that the US ambassador in Kabul is reported to have said that US troops must stay in Afghanistan.

There is also a talk of a strategic partnership agreement with the United States, which would bind the Americans to a long term commitment to ensuring peace and stability and economic development and assistance in the field of education and health. Afghans are, however, divided on the question of the retention of some US troops in their country.

The United States are withdrawing by stages handing over the security responsibilities to the Afghan National Army as they withdraw. The withdrawal time table is flexible. It will depend how the situation develops. It could even be delayed if the US military commander feels that the ANA are not yet strong enough to resist the takeover of the country by the die-hard anti-American Taliban elements.

The United States has spent trillions of dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan says Maleeha Lodhi, former ambassador of Pakistan to the United States. Obama has requested for an additional US\$ 33 billion for funding another 4,000 troops into Afghanistan.²⁴ Who will get the contracts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan; USA, India, Russia or Pakistan. Is this what the outside powers are only interested in after the Exit?

Pakistan-US Relations Post Exit

Pakistan US relations came under strain after the violation of Pakistan's sovereignty on May 2, 2011, when US helicopter borne US special forces penetrated Over 200 Kilometers into Pakistan and killed Osama Bin laden in Abbottabad taking away his body without taking Pakistan into confidence. The trust deficit increased and relations soured further when a US non-diplomat, Raymond Davis killed two Pakistanis in Lahore. It then came to light that he was not alone but there were a very large number of US private security agents prowling around Pakistani cities trying to watch over the activities of anti-US elements in Pakistan. The conspiracy theory, which had no foundation stated that the Americans were planning to neutralize Pakistan's atomic capability gained ground further raising the temperature of US hatred among the people in Pakistan.

After the attack on the US Embassy in Kabul on September 13, 2011 Washington put the entire blame on the ISI. Senior US officials including

²³ *Afghan News Channel*, August 27, 2011.

²⁴ *AFPAK Channel*, July 2, 2010.

US Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, Chief of Joint Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen and the US CIA head Leon Panetta threatened to attack the Haqqani network in North Waziristan if Pakistan did not do so. Prime Minister, Yusuf Ali Gilani, denied any complicity with the Haqqani network and said that Pakistan strongly rejects such allegations. General Kayani reportedly told General James Mattis, head of US Central Command that the US allegations against Pakistan were a great cause of concern, which should stop immediately and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Hina Rabbani Khar warned the United States against crossing the Red Line.²⁵

The recent arrests of some prominent al Qaeda leaders from Quetta, as a result of joint intelligence between the ISI and American intelligence agencies points to a continued close cooperation between the two spy agencies even after the US pull out from Afghanistan. Both countries need each other to maintain peace and stability in Afghanistan and to keep al Qaeda and Taliban suppressed. Despite this dependence on each other in their common goal of fighting terrorism The Kerry Luger Bill may have to overcome more hurdles after the exit of US forces from Afghanistan. The US plan of establishing Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) in FATA may also face the same fate.

Pakistan has allowed nearly 300,00 containers destined for US troops in Afghanistan to pass through its territory till June 2010. Around 7,000 containers are passing through every month destroying the infrastructure and encouraging smuggling.²⁶

India's Post — Exit Position in Afghanistan

New Delhi has donated a billion dollars for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and is presently engaged in carrying out development work in that country. India is bidding to extract iron ore deposits in Afghanistan. Washington supports India's engagement in Afghanistan and believes that India should be given a greater role in Afghanistan's economic development. General David Petreus, commander of US forces in Afghanistan also believes that India has a legitimate interest in Afghanistan.²⁷

According to one report "India's aims are to strengthen Karzai's hand: develop deep contacts with all sections of the Afghan people; intensify coordination with regional powers; and reach out to the Pakhtuns

²⁵ News, September 25, 2011.

²⁶ News, July 3, 2010.

²⁷ Times of India, July 1, 2010.

and develop contacts with the Taliban. According to one report Indian entrepreneurs are setting up IT centre in Herat on the lines of Bangalore” India will continue to establish a strong foothold in that country, after the exit of US forces.

Indian leaders are concerned with the decision of the US to leave Afghanistan prematurely. Indian Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh, is reported to have stated “I hope the world community stays engaged in Afghanistan. Premature talk of exit would only embolden terrorists” India’s defence minister reportedly said “The December 2014 deadline for US troops withdrawal will encourage terror groups including India specific Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish Mohammad (JeM) to play a waiting game.”

Russian Interests in Afghanistan Pull-Out

Russian interest in maintaining its presence in Afghanistan is evident from the fact that it has troops in Tajikistan. It would not allow other regional powers to have a free hand in Afghanistan. The Russian ambassador in Kabul also does not want the United States to flee Afghanistan. It is not clear whether his views are to benefit Afghanistan or to see US bleed even more in the Afghanistan quagmire like his own country suffered when they had occupied the country.

China

China’s interest in Afghanistan, after the withdrawal of US forces, would mainly be of an economic nature. Beijing is keen to obtain rights for mineral exploration in Afghanistan

Possible Exit Scenarios

Scenario 1

The Taliban lay down their arms and a negotiated settlement is arrived at between the Karzai administration and the Taliban. The ANA and ANP achieve the required strength, are well trained, and well equipped to be able to ensure relative security and stability in Afghanistan by the time foreign forces completely leave the country. If this comes to pass this will be the best Post-Exit scenario for Pakistan and for stability in the region.

Scenario 2

The worst case will be if the American/NATO forces leave Afghanistan without any settlement with the Taliban and a civil war breaks out between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in which outside powers including Pakistan get involved. Islamabad will be hard pressed to prevent the Pukhtun living in the Tribal areas from coming to the aid of the Pukhtun dominated Taliban. Such a situation will breed instability throughout the region.

Scenario 3

The third scenario could be that the bulk of the US forces withdraw by 2014, leaving behind military bases. This scenario is based on the belief that the US would like to maintain Afghanistan under its sphere of influence and keep Russia and China out of its area of interest.²⁸ The presence of US troops may not lead to a civil war but the Taliban would continue their struggle to evict foreign forces from their soil resulting in continued instability both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Unfortunately, this appears to be the most likely Post-exit scenario

Scenario 4

The Russians and Indians move into Afghanistan in a big way with money and military hardware, technical assistance and expertise to explore the mineral wealth of the nation and cease the opportunity to fill the space which will be provided when the US forces pull out from the country. This scenario will be a source of concern for Pakistan as it may result in its security forces facing in two different directions.

Scenario 5

The United Nations steps in and provides a UN Peace Keeping Force from Muslim countries acceptable to the Afghans, to maintain peace and stability in Afghanistan till the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police is capable of ensuring internal security. The issues of financing a UN force in Afghanistan will be a problem? Will the freedom loving Afghans accept foreign forces on their soil even if they be blue helmeted?

²⁸ James Rothenberg, May 26, 2010.

Scenario 6

Though least likely and harmful to all parties to the conflict Afghanistan could even disintegrate as a result of a prolonged civil war into a Tajik controlled North and a Pukhtun dominated South.

Whatever be the scenario Pakistan must not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and must accept whichever government the Afghans chose for themselves. Pakistan must, in cooperation with the Afghan National Army, make every effort to prevent its soil being used by non-state actors against the interests of Afghanistan. Hopefully that will stop the blame game, which is harmful to both countries.

Islamabad must not make the mistake of putting all its eggs in the Pukhtun basket again but must mend fences with the Northern Alliance. While use of military force against militants will have to continue, dialogue both with the Taliban and the Haqqani network must be opened

Conclusion

If the fate of the power struggle in Afghanistan between now and 2014 is to be decided by a volley of bullets or burst of anger or continued mistrust and misunderstandings then one can expect the worst case scenario to take place. If, however, power sharing between all parties to the conflict is accepted; if tempers cool down; if the sound of bomb blasts and explosives dies away then peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region can be expected after the last foreign soldier leaves the country. That will be the best scenario for the people of war-ravaged Afghanistan and for its neighbours.■

Afghanistan: War on Terror — Success, Failure and Future

Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand

History is full of instances of unnecessary wars. These have resulted from either the capricious whims of despots or the collective error of judgment of those who are deemed to be authorized on behalf of the people to take vital decisions.

Ten years down the line we still don't have any authentic assessment of the perpetrators of the atrocity of 9/11. The writings of such scholars and writers who are highly respected for their integrity, intellectual grasp and insights have created deep suspicions about the whole US government narrative about the 9/11 attacks which does not stand the test of any rigorous scrutiny in terms of consistency or in the realm of practicability.

We do not know whether the 9/11 attacks were a genuine expression of deep anger by some deeply frustrated Arab youths or whether these were carefully orchestrated for conditions to be created for refashioning the world.

Paul Craig Roberts, is a former US assistant secretary of treasury and a well-known columnist and author. He writes: "Recently, a professor of Nano chemistry from the university of Copenhagen made a lecture tour of major Canadian universities explaining the research, conducted by himself and a team of physicists and engineers that resulted in finding small particles of unreacted Nano-thermite in dust samples from the wreckage of the World Trade Centre towers which, in addition to other evidence, the professor and the research team regard as conclusive scientific proof that the towers were brought down by controlled demolition."

No American university dared to invite him, and as far as I know, no mention of the explosive research has ever appeared in the American press.

I find it astonishing that 1500 architects and engineers who actually know something about buildings, their strength and weaknesses, and who have repeatedly requested a real investigation on the destruction of the World Trade Centre (WTC) buildings, are regarded as conspiracy kooks by people who know nothing about architecture, or engineering or buildings. The same goes for large number of pilots who question the flight maneuvers carried out during the attacks, and the surviving firemen and "first responders" who report both hearing and personally experiencing explosions in the towers, some of which occurred in sub-basements.

A large number of high ranking political figures abroad don't believe a word of the official 9/11 story. For example, the former president of Italy

and dean of the Italian senate, told Italy's oldest newspaper, *corrireredela sera* that the intelligence services of Europe know well that the disastrous (9/11) attack has been planned and realized by the American CIA and the Israeli Mossad... in order to put under accusation the Arabic countries and in order to induce the Western powers to take part in the invasions.

One doesn't have to be a scientist, architect, engineer, pilot or firefighter to notice consistent anomalies in the 9/11 story. Assume that the official story is correct and that a band of terrorists outwitted not only the CIA and FBI, but also all 16 US intelligence agencies and those of our NATO allies and Israel's MOSSAD along with national security council, air traffic control and airport security four times in one hour on the same morning. Accept that this group of terrorists pulled off a feat worthy of a James bond movie and delivered a humiliating blow to the world's only superpower.

If something like this really happened, would not the president, the congress, and the media be demanding to know how such an improbable thing could have happened? Investigation and accountability would be the order of the day. Yet president Bush and Vice President Cheney resisted the pleas and demands for an investigation from the 9/11 families for one year and even longer before finally appointing a non-expert committee of politicians to listen to whatever the government chose to tell them. One of the politicians resigned from the commission on the grounds that "the fix is in." Even the two chairmen and the chief legal counsel of the 9/11 commission wrote books in which they stated that they believe that members of the military and other parts of the government lied to the commission.

Thomas Keane, chairman of the commission said: "federal officials advanced an account of 9/11 that was untrue...we, to this day don't know why they told us what they told us...it was just so far from the truth."

Vice chairman, Lee Hamilton said: "We had a very short time frame...we did not have enough money. We had lot of people strongly opposed to what we did. We had a lot of trouble getting access to documents and to people...so there were all kinds of reasons we were set up to fail."

As far as I know, not a single member of the government or the media made an issue of why the military would lie to the commission. This is another anomaly for which we have no explanation.

The greatest puzzle is the conclusion drawn by a national audience from watching on their television screens the collapse of the WTC towers. Most seemed satisfied that the towers fell down as a result of structural damage inflicted by the airliners and from limited, low temperature fires. Yet what the images show is not buildings falling down, but buildings

blowing up. Buildings that are destroyed by fires and structural damage do not disintegrate in ten seconds or less into fine dust with massive steel beams sliced at each floor level by high temperatures that building fires cannot attain. It has never happened, and it will never.

British writer Robert Fisk is only the latest of highly respected writers who has added his powerful voice in support of ascertaining the truth and removing the many inexplicable inconsistencies.

And then it was admitted very emphatically that the people who ruled Afghanistan then had no hand in planning the attacks and indeed had no prior knowledge about the impending strikes.

Even if it is conceded that OBL was one of the principal movers of the 9/11 strikes, does it follow that a country is invaded, its territory occupied, its population terrorized, thousands of innocent civilians killed, its infrastructure dismantled — all because of the perceived role of one individual!

This is a sordid saga of hegemony, of betrayal, of access to resources, of containing China, of intimidating Iran and of watching, from a position of strength and force, Pakistani nukes. It has to do with stifling, choking or destroying any system that has to do with the Muslim faith. Because the contagion could spread!

That is the rationale for occupation of poor, defenseless country!

John le Carre, a former British spy and writer says: The imminent war was planned years before Bin Laden struck. He goes on to add: American public is not merely being misled. It is being browbeaten and kept in a state of ignorance and fear.

The war in Afghanistan is being waged in pursuance of a grand design to reshape the world's political order to suit the global economic and security interests of the United States of America.

In every such undertaking there are doubtless some gainers and some pluses. Since the occupation of that country a large amount of fund has been injected into the Afghan economy. It is perhaps not fair or morally justified to count pluses and gains made while the country has lost its freedom. This however will be done most reluctantly because of a number of reasons including the vicious propaganda that is carried out *ad-nauseum* of the "revolution" that has taken place.

Some progress is visible. A network of roads has been established. Kabul-Mazar-i-sharif road through Salang is now restored; Kabul-Qandahar road is operational; Torkham-Kabul road has been rebuilt and improved; work on Qandahar-Herat road is progressing etc; power plants have been commissioned; electricity from Uzbekistan is now transmitted to Kabul and the residents of the city now get a steady supply of electricity; hospitals have been renovated, expanded, equipped and relatively well staffed;

thousands of Afghans have received training in many different sectors in many parts of the world including the US; human capacity has been created in such sectors as banking, IT, engineering, medicine, agriculture, communication, science and technology, accounting, public administration, education etc; more universities have been opened; IT centres have been established ; female and male literacy rates have gone up; a constitution is in force and an elected parliament is in operation; an elected president is holding office; provincial councils have been established; the judiciary has been reorganized; an Afghan national army has been raised and a police force has been created and trained; an anti-narcotics department, very well resourced and equipped with the latest technology has been established.

But behind this veneer of visible progress lies the other side of the real world. People in Afghanistan have never accepted the fraudulent election either to the parliament or for president. The election commission held nearly 30 per cent of the election result as bogus. In all, nearly half of the results were considered to be manipulated. In the election for president last year such was the scale and magnitude of fraud and deception that the UN chief in that country could not keep silent, had to express his views openly and was fired for being forthright. Indeed the parliament, created as a result of a flawed process, designed to promote a certain vested interest and sustained by generous policy of rewards, bribes and patronage has not connected with the masses it claims to represent. And it has consequently failed, at least thus far, in taking the country out of a crisis of such monstrous proportions.

So much for an elected parliament and an elected president!

Despite the deployment of 142000 troops, backed by the most lethal and sophisticated weapons and relentless bombing, shelling, killing and destruction of villages, for nearly ten years now, the insurgency has not been defeated. On the other hand, it has expanded, deepened and has become more threatening.

More than 120,000 people, mostly innocent civilians have been killed; a larger number having been wounded, crippled and disabled for life. Torture cells operate all over the country with prisoners regularly being subjected to merciless and brutal torture techniques. Scores, indeed hundreds have been tortured in the infamous Guantanamo camp as well as Bagram. Not only that, scores have been outsourced for torture to middle east countries as well as some east European countries.

Gen. MaChrystal, the former US commander in Afghanistan, introduced the abominable method of establishing death squads in Iraq for carrying out assassinations of those who would not cooperate with the occupation army. Gen. MaChrystal applied this technique in Afghanistan as well. And the same practice was perfected by that much admired General

Patreaus in Afghanistan by carrying out murders of all those who were believed to be sympathetic to the resistance.

It has been widely reported in the press that more than 900 individuals, supposed to be providing moral or political support, were killed in cold blood by MaChrystal's night raiders in their homes and later by Gen. Patreaus's forces.

The much touted ANA now nearly 170,000 strong and growing, has an attrition rate of 20 per cent. Morale is low and motivation is lacking. Instances are not lacking where the army units demand bribes and food from the poor villagers. The police force now standing at 142,000 is doing no better. Drug addiction is common and corruption rampant.

In the last nearly ten years a colossal amount has been invested in the creation of these security forces. Afghanistan would need nearly US\$ 4 billion for the maintenance of its army and police annually. Could a country which generates only US\$ 1 billion annually as revenue, maintain such a large force?

Despite billions in economic assistance there has been no discernible improvement in the daily life of most Afghans. The US\$ 57 billion that has been injected into Afghanistan seems to have made little difference in the lives of most ordinary Afghans. On an average about 1000 men, trying to enter Iran for daily wages, are turned back because they don't have travel documents.

Some have benefited from the huge infusion of money. With very little monitoring and still less accountability, a large proportion of investment has gone into the coffers of the ministers, governors, civil and military bureaucracy and of course big companies, foreign contractors, consultants and NGOs. No wonder a powerful constituency supporting the presence of the coalition forces has been created.

More than 65 per cent of the country is under the control of the resistance. UN bodies and many NGOs cannot operate in areas that are hardest hit by the insurgency and have consequently left the areas. This has resulted in a very uneven dispersal of investment particularly in the infrastructure and rural development. It has led to severe distortions in the economy.

The convoys of government security forces as well as the coalition forces convoys have to pay a mutually agreed amount of tax to the resistance for safe passage. This constitutes a source of income to the resistance, the other sources being donations and zakat from the community.

The areas under control of the resistance have an administrative infrastructure including an efficient judicial system. The courts established by the resistance deliver decisions quickly so that people have developed a

strong desire to have their cases settled by the people's courts or the courts of the resistance.

When the previous government was in power the opium production had almost vanished. In the last year when the resistance was ruling Afghanistan the total quantity of the opium produced was only 100 tons. Out of this 50 tons was produced in the area held by commander Masood. This near elimination of opium was achieved not by punishing or convicting people but by a simple decree issued by rulers who were held in high esteem by the populace and whose orders were willingly obeyed. Under the US watch and with plenty of paraphernalia including substitution crops, loans, seeds, workshops, mobile theatres etc. the opium production has gone up to 6000 tons!

Governance has remained dismally weak, lopsided and hugely compromised. One of the constant irritants is the appointment of half literate but prominent people to key positions in the government. The policy of appeasement, pursued with such steadfast devotion, has played havoc with the whole fabric of administration.

Although large number of professionals have received training, many have left for greener pastures, perhaps never to return.

There is a pervasive lawlessness and crime rate has gone up alarmingly. This has induced a deep sense of insecurity and fear amongst the population.

Because of persistent killing, in bombing and rocket attacks of innocent civilians, the coalition forces have driven many by-standers into the lap of the insurgency. And it has also created enormous hatred against the coalition forces.

But the mayhem, the lack of good governance, the opium poppy, the ascendancy of non-Pukhtun to eminence and power is not the reason for the insurgency. There is only one major reason for the insurgency and that is the presence of the coalition forces. Unless this fundamental issue is addressed and resolved, the insurgency in Afghanistan would not go away.

Into the tenth year and the insurgency, as stated before, is extending to new areas. It has taken hold in such provinces as Kapisa, Parwan, Balkh, Jozjan, Badghis etc. Other provinces like Baghlan, Laghman, Kunar, Qundus, Wardak, Logar, Ghazni, Zabul, Uruzgan, Qandahar, Helmand, Fara, Herat, Ningarhar, Khost, Paktika and Paktia are in the grip of insurgency.

The theory or assumption that the insurgency continues because of support from the alleged safe havens in the tribal area is wholly invalid. Firstly the Haqqani group that is mostly blamed for the attacks on coalition forces operates only in the three provinces of Khost, Paktia and Paktika. How would we explain the insurgency in more than two dozen other

provinces? Secondly if there is such a constant flow of militants from north Waziristan into Afghanistan then on how many occasions in the past 10 years, have the coalition forces confronted, captured or killed such insurgents on their way to Afghanistan or on their way back to the tribal area. If there has been no such incidents in 10 years despite the possession of high tech equipment, radars, night goggles, human intelligence, constant electronic surveillance, then one has to conclude that the insurgency is wholly indigenous and is not dependent on support from the tribal area which is extensively covered by a huge security force of more than 120,000 men and about 1100 check posts on the border.

A solution to the conflict would lie in recognition of the root cause and reversing the policy that has given rise to this crisis of such magnitude. There are, besides the domestic dimension, external factors that need to be incorporated into a matrix that could generate options that are workable and practicable.

There are Afghanistan's neighbours who have concerns and interests in Afghanistan. Iran has made some gains in the aftermath of the arrival of coalition forces. Hazaras who would constitute 6 to 7 per cent of the population now have a representation of nearly 17 per cent in the cabinet and parliament. And then the fundamentalist Islamist group has been marginalized in the wake of the occupation.

But Iran certainly would be concerned if the US were to continue its presence beyond 2014.

Iran also is concerned with the heroin trade that is creating an alarming situation for its population. It also wants a share in revenue if the pipeline project were to materialize.

China considers that it is a short-term gainer because the presence of the coalition forces has ensured, in China's view, that its unique Muslim minority in Xinjiang province would not receive any support from Afghanistan. But a long term deployment of US forces would be viewed with great concern and anxiety.

Russia would, by and large, go with the US agenda as long as the Americans do not try to create their own space in terms of accessing the energy deposits of the region by pushing out the Russians. They would wait and see.

Pakistan has vital stakes. No country would benefit more from a stable and peaceful Afghanistan and no country would suffer more as a consequence of a destabilized Afghanistan.

But US long-term military engagement would be a factor of instability in the region. It will, inevitably induce distortions in the political landscape of this area. Beside many undesirable outcomes including the continuance of resistance in Afghanistan, it will also bring Pakistan's

relations with China and Iran under tremendous strain. For Pakistan itself the implications of long term presence of the US forces would be destructive.

One fundamental or strategic miscalculation in starting wars, like the one being fought in Afghanistan, is that one has to face an unending stream of crises that don't seem to be lending themselves to easy solutions.

President Kennedy once called Vietnam “the cornerstone of free world in south-east Asia” — he ultimately refused to authorize combat troops. He instead limited America’s military role to advisory missions. That policy would only be reversed, to tragic ends, after his death.

The energy heartlands of the planet from Egypt to Pakistan are of strategic value on the one hand and offer a battleground for great power rivalry on the other. Central Asia has US\$6 trillion worth of oil and natural gas resources. Between the Caspian Sea and the Indian Ocean are a series of countries that the US had to control so that pipe lines could be laid to carry the rich treasures from the Caspian Sea. One of the key countries in the pathway for delivery of Caspian Sea oil and gas to ships in the Indian Ocean is Afghanistan.

The government of Mullah Mohammad Umar was friendly with the US administration until they turned down a Neocons offer to an oil pipeline through Afghanistan. A threat was accordingly conveyed to them to prepare for dire consequences. Mullah Umar was perfectly willing to turn in Bin Laden over if the US would provide them with some proof of Bin Laden’s guilt. Not only did the US not provide, writes Anthony Lawson, the Taliban government any proof of Bin Laden’s guilt, they brazenly admitted that even if Mullah Umar turned Bin Laden over to them, Afghanistan would still be attacked.

Anthony Lawson writes: What we are also not being told is that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, which will carry gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, are Israeli owned and managed.

An article that appeared under the title of “war for Caspian oil and gas” sheds light on the nature of Israeli relationship with Caspian Sea resources: It says: “Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are also both closely allied with Israeli commercial interests and Israeli military intelligence.”

“This is the Great game all over,” Maiman told the *Wall Street Journal* about his role in furthering the, “geopolitical goals of both the US and Israel in Central Asia.” “We are doing what US and Israeli policy could not achieve” he said, “controlling the transport route is controlling the product.”

Anthony Lawson writes: “Zionist advisers, the unelected neo-cons, pushed for US military invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Promoted by the

controlled media, the Zionist hawks used every trick in the book, including outright lies, to convince the public and policy makers that sending hundreds of thousands of US soldiers into the Middle East on an open-ended mission was the only way to prevent another 9/11 atrocity. Most of these advisers are die-hard Zionist zealots with strong attachments to Israeli military intelligence.”

The theme of unending wars is an integral part of the neo-cons plan of world domination and Israeli supremacy in the Middle East.

Coming back to Afghanistan, a distinction must be made between al Qaeda and the indigenous resistance movement. As CIA chief Panetta said there would be less than 50 al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan. Such a small numbers of supporters, assuming some of them are still fighting, would not be deemed to be spearheading the resistance in a country as big as Afghanistan.

Just as rank and file Afghans rose to challenge the occupation of their country by the former Soviet Union, rank and file Afghans have risen to confront the US occupation of their country.

If the war in Afghanistan is about energy and the wider strategic goals of the US, then we are in for a long haul. But if the war is only about defeating al Qaeda, then a convergence of perceptions between the US and the resistance could emerge.

This convergence would be predicated upon the following ingredients or conditions:

1. There would be no al Qaeda in the future Afghanistan
2. No foreign militants would be allowed on the soil of Afghanistan.
3. Afghanistan's soil would not be allowed to be used against any other country.

Although institutions like parliament, constitution and president are sacrosanct but the integrity and unity of Afghanistan is more important and more worthy of being defended. In other words, if institutions come in the way of settlement we have to be concerned with saving Afghanistan rather than its archaic institutions which do not reflect the popular will of 250 million Afghan people.

This war must end. And it would only when the root cause is addressed, when a broad-based, multi ethnic dispensation takes hold that enjoys popular support and can live and deliver on its own without needing external props. If the US and some of its NATO allies fear that complete withdrawal of the coalition forces could create a power vacuum that could ignite a factional war then a UN peace keeping force would be inducted to ensure there is no breakdown of order in the event of the withdrawal of the

coalition forces. Such a force would be drawn from countries that have no stake in Afghanistan — Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh etc. No resistance group would challenge such induction of UN forces for peace-keeping. Under the auspices of the UN peace keepers and with the involvement of Afghanistan's neighbours the various groups, both pro-govt and the resistance could then meet and work out a peace formula that would reflect the aspirations of the people, ensure that Afghanistan emerges as a non-aligned, multi-ethnic and by and large, a pluralistic entity. The formula would bind the neighbouring and regional countries not to interfere, in any manner, directly or through agents, in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. This, of course, would be preceded, by the withdrawal of all coalition forces.

But if the US and Afghanistan go ahead with the signing of the strategic partnership agreement, then any chance of a negotiated resolution to the conflict would be very slim indeed.

An onerous responsibility rests on the shoulders of Pakistan, as a country that would most suffer from a continuing conflict in Afghanistan, to vigorously intervene as peace-broker and establish a convergence of goals between the US and the resistance in Afghanistan. It will ignore this duty at its peril.■

Contributors

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