

Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects

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This book is based on the papers presented at the Two-Day International Conference on ‘Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects’ organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Islamabad, on from 10-11 May 2017 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The organisation of a conference is always a stressful adventure because of the very tiny details and the very important issues, logistics and even temperaments that have to be planned, managed and predicted.

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ACRONYMS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AISA	Afghanistan Investment Support Agency
ANP	Awami National Party
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APTTA	Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade
APTTCA	Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CASA-1000	Central Asia-South Asia Power Project
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
CFS	Container Freight Stations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DGMO	Director General of Military Operations
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
ETA	Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna
EU	European Union
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FC	Frontier Corps
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICD	Inland Container Depots
ICG	International Crisis Group
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IPI	Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence

ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JuA	Jamaat-ul-Ahrar
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LEAs	Law Enforcement Agencies
NAGs	Non-State Armed Groups
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBP	National Bank of Pakistan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NRP	National Reconciliation Programme
NUG	National Unity Government
OBL	Osama bin Laden
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PKK	Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf
QCG	Quadrilateral Coordination Group
RECCA	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SRAP	Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
TPC	Taliban Political Commission
TTA	Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan
TTP	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United National High Commission for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nation Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WW 2	World War 2

Introduction

Brig. (R) Sohail Tirmizi, SI(M)
Sobia Saeed Paracha and Umar Farooq Khan

This book is based on the papers presented at the two-day international conference on ‘Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects’ organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Islamabad, on 10-11 May 2017 in Islamabad. The Conference comprised of four working sessions in addition to inaugural and concluding sessions. The presentations made by the eminent scholars covered various themes ranging from ‘Regional Dynamics and Implications for Afghanistan’ to ‘Reconciliation and Confidence Building Measures in Afghanistan’; and from ‘A Capacity Evaluation of the Afghan Unity Government in Terms of Security, Governance and Economic Management’ to ‘Poverty, Unemployment and Illiteracy: State of Human Security in Afghanistan’. The Conference helped in initiating a timely and informed debate on the subject and suggested plausible recommendations for the policymakers.

Throughout its turbulent history, Afghanistan, despite an astounding social cohesion, has been characterised by a confederal balance of tribal interests, rather than a strong central government. Recently, the perpetual war of more than three decades has disheveled the Afghan society. In addition to the increased Taliban insurgency in the wake of the Coalition Forces’ withdrawal and frail sociopolitical and economic structures, the expansion of ISIS in Afghanistan, documented presence of Al-Qaeda operatives amongst other terrorist outfits, opium trade and rampant corruption, have contributed to the severity of the convoluted conflict. 1.2 million internally displaced Afghans provide an excellent recruitment base for the Taliban and terrorist organisations.

The constantly changing dynamics of war have limited the range of tenable outcomes of the conflict and have worsened the security situation despite efforts made by the Afghan and Coalition forces. The Taliban today contest and control more territory than they have ever controlled after their government was brought down in 2001. Both the Taliban and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are in a flux in terms of capacity and both cannot sustain their battlefield successes. However, there is still room for optimism as the recognised structural flaws in the management of the

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ANSF and their capacity building, can be fixed with political will and consistent support by Afghanistan's allies.

The international community has grown to be more practical and less ambitious with what can be achieved in Afghanistan. There is a general consensus amongst all the major stakeholders, which have been directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, that sustainable peace in Afghanistan is not possible without a political settlement, which is Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. Thus, a dialogue between the Taliban and the Afghan Government is increasingly being promoted and pursued. The talks between Taliban and the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) in September 2016 were the first after a string of efforts which remained inconclusive for one reason or another. Pakistan assisted peace talks, first with Mullah Omar, the then Supreme Leader of the Taliban, and later with Mullah Akhtar Mansour, his successor. Those talks did not achieve their intended end due to the leaders' death during the ongoing negotiations. The consequential lack of leadership has divided the Taliban into different factions which derailed the peace process further.

With the incoming new government in the United States of America, there is a huge question mark regarding the continued engagement of one of the most important actors in this simmering crisis in finding a sustainable solution to Afghanistan's problems. With the widening trust deficit between regional states and the US, China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia have initiated a regional dialogue on the future of Afghanistan and respective security implications for these states.

Stunted economy is another major hurdle to the peace process in Afghanistan. Currently, more than 70 per cent of Afghanistan's governmental budget is financed by and through foreign aid. In November 2016, the White House recommended to the Congress to allocate at least USD 11.6 billion for the US' current campaign against Islamic State militants and the war in Afghanistan. With rampant corruption and unaccountability, there is an obvious hazard of the funds being misappropriated. Through resulting donor fatigue, Afghanistan might be pushed into a fiscal crisis.

Afghanistan provides immense opportunities which could benefit the region in particular and the world at large. In the coming years, Afghanistan's strategic location can act as a bridge between different regions of the world. It provides communication links between South Asia and Central Asia, and also connects this region with East and West Asia. Moreover, Afghanistan is blessed with an abundance of natural resources:

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33 per cent of which are estimated at USD 1-3 trillion. The country is projected to become the largest producer of copper and iron in the world within the next 15 years. 14 of the 17 rare earth metals are found on its territory, and its ample marble resources could be enough to last the entire region for 400 years, according to estimates.

Brig (R) Sohail Tirmizi, Acting President, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in his Welcome Address said that Pakistan has higher stakes in the stability of Afghanistan as the conflict has direct bearing on the country. He said that the war against the Soviets in 1980s, and later, the War on Terror have had unbearable consequences for Afghanistan and Pakistan and negatively impacted the socioeconomic development of the two countries. He said that bringing warring parties of Afghanistan to the negotiating table is not the responsibility of Pakistan alone. However, there is strategic ambiguity as far as international efforts for peace in Afghanistan are concerned. He highlighted the rise of the Islamic State in Afghanistan as a new complex dynamic in the Afghan conflict. He said that political instability and the polarisation in Afghan society are not the only challenges as there are various socioeconomic challenges – dependence on foreign aid, illegal parallel economies, drug trafficking, gender inequalities, poverty, illiteracy and radicalisation of society that also need to be addressed on a priority basis. He highlighted that Pakistan supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. He added that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan will facilitate regional economic integration and help to curtail extremism in its own society and the region as well.

Mr Kristof Duwaerts, Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), in his Opening Remarks talked about frequently heard notions such as Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, and how peace in Pakistan depends on peace in Afghanistan. He said that the Obama Administration devised the term ‘Af-Pak’ that seems relevant due to the deep intertwinement of history and the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He highlighted the third notion, heard in Pakistan-Afghanistan context that we cannot choose our neighbours, but we can choose what kind of neighbours we can be. He further said that making such choices pre-necessitates firm knowledge that goes beyond stereo-typisation. He said that abridging notions such as Taliban, the Taliban and Terrorism are hurtful and do not contribute to sustainable relationships. He said that the public image of Pakistan in Afghanistan does not reflect the sacrifices that Pakistan has rendered for Afghanistan and outlined that commonalities

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between the two countries outweigh the divergences and the need to start a sustainable dialogue process to address the issues of divergence.

Chief Guest, His Excellency Mr Sartaj Aziz, then Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs, in his Inaugural Address pointed out that terrorist outfits have been crossing through the Pakistan-Afghanistan porous border for launching terrorist activities in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan has always made sincere efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Referring to Pakistan's assistance to Afghanistan, he said that Pakistan has initiated several development projects in Afghanistan worth USD 500 million. Moreover, Pakistan has extended transit trade facilities in Afghanistan through its ports under Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). Mr Aziz said that the strengthening of border management with Afghanistan and Iran has been a top priority for the Government of Pakistan to avoid terrorist incidents and cross-border infiltration of terrorists. He highlighted that during the Iranian Foreign Minister's visit to Pakistan, strengthening of border management was discussed in detail. Regarding the Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia for the Islamic Summit, he said that the Summit would discuss issues pertaining to the Islamic world, including Palestine and Kashmir. He said that the lack of progress in the peace process, emerging threat of the Islamic State, drug trafficking, the resettlement of returning refugees are some of the issues that have been making it difficult for Afghanistan to create a stable country. He said that these issues are affecting not only Afghanistan's neighbours, but the entire region. He further stated that meaningful engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan is essential for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

In the session on 'Existing Situation in Afghanistan', **Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi**, Associate Professor, School of Politics & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan identified geopolitical and geoeconomics as the two important regional dynamics in the current scenario. According to him, the geopolitical dynamics, unfortunately, have been very hostile and have all centred on Pakistan for one reason or the other. He said that all the neighbours have been pointing fingers by alleging the presence of hostile elements within Pakistan. Moreover, he opined that the other dynamic is geoeconomics, which is equally interesting because of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). While speaking on the future of regional stability, he argued that both geoeconomics and geostrategic dynamics are at odds with each other. To have progress, stability, investment and growth through CPEC, it is

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imperative that the geopolitical dynamics in the region decline, otherwise the region cannot have growth and prosperity. To conclude, he suggested that unit level gains need to be translated into regional prosperity without which peace is not possible.

Dr Attaullah Wahidyar from the Ministry of Education, Kabul, Afghanistan, spoke on 'Ingress of Non-State Actors in Afghanistan - Islamic State (ISIS) and Al Qaeda' and delivered six key messages for peace in Afghanistan. According to him, non-state actors (NSAs) are the officially disowned subsidiaries of state institutions who are designed to perform legitimate or illegitimate tasks that states believe are needed but they don't want to take the responsibility for them. He further stated that there are internal as well as external factors that create an environment within a state for NSAs' activities. The external factors that help to create these actors are the gaps created by rivalries and mistrust among states, institutions, societies and individuals. He was of the opinion that NSAs are part of the power struggle of big powers with tactical collaboration from regional powers and the countries where these actors exist. In addition, according to him, each time there is a serious effort to normalise relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, or Pakistan and India, such incidents increase. He argued that this infers two conclusions that maybe, there are actors within states who do not want normalisation of relations or maybe, there are outside powers who do not want Pakistan and Afghanistan to have good relations. He concluded by saying that such efforts to create mistrust between two states would not succeed.

Maj. Gen. (R) Ijaz Hussain Awan, HI (M), Former High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam, spoke on effective border management. He argued that Afghanistan is now turning into a wound for Washington, where Coalition forces have lost thousands of men and spent over USD 800 billion dollars, while Pakistan by becoming an ally in the War on Terror has paid a very heavy price in the shape of human and material losses. However, he lamented that US representatives have repeatedly accused Pakistan of duplicity without any credible evidence which undermines the trust that is needed to take the war to its logical end. While explaining the need for border management, he said that all over the world, border management is done in three or four ways. He said that border management of uncontested borders between peaceful states is done politically and diplomatically, but where the borders are contested or one of the sides is unstable, states resort to military management. To this end, the Government of Pakistan has approved some changes and some

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measures, such as raising of some additional Frontier Corp wings, border force, and fencing and electrification of Pak-Afghan border is also planned in selected and high priority areas.

In the session on ‘Structural Problems in the Security of Afghanistan: Review of Nontraditional Challenges’, **Mr Sayed Mahdi Munadi**, Head of Research, Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), Kabul, Afghanistan, talked about economic initiatives such as Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, CASA-1000, China’s One Belt One Road and CPEC projects and said that transportation links are being developed between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. He highlighted the benefits of Chabahar Port for economic development, regional integration and foreign investment in Afghanistan and said that Afghanistan needs both Chabahar and Gwadar Port. He highlighted transit, energy and communication projects, of which Afghanistan is a part, various countries’ contributions in providing economic aid and assistance, and said that the initiation and completion of economic projects can ensure security as the completion of Salma Dam and Afghanistan-Turkmenistan Railway are an example. He talked about Afghan Unity Government’s capacity in terms of governance and said that the Government faces many challenges, but it has strengthened the Security and Defence forces of Afghanistan and has been continuously in the process of reconciling those ethnic groups that were excluded from the political process. He said that fiscal reforms, stringent tax collection mechanism and increased GDP of Afghanistan are the successes of the Unity Government. He further added that improved health and education indicators show the people-oriented policies of Afghan Government. He said that security transition in Afghanistan has been costly but successful as Afghanistan has signed strategic partnership agreement with the United States that has helped in enhancing military capabilities of Afghan Security Forces. He said that Afghanistan would welcome any Asian initiative that would integrate Afghan economy into Asia’s regional economy.

Mr Rahim Ullah Yousafzai, Senior Journalist and Political Analyst, Peshawar, spoke on ‘Poverty, Unemployment, and Illiteracy: State of Human Security in Afghanistan’ and said that President Ashraf Ghani has not been able to fulfill the promises made during his election campaign. He identified that the Afghan Unity Government has been suffering from internal differences and slow decision-making process. He said that discontentment in Afghan masses has been increasing and quoted the result of a survey that showed that 81 per cent of Afghans are dissatisfied with the

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Afghan Government. He recognised a social division in Afghanistan that is constantly on the rise due to increasing unemployment. He said that 68 per cent of the Afghan population is under 25 years of age and due to lack of opportunities around 200,000 Afghan people have left for Europe. According to him, Afghan people are the second largest refugee community after Syrians. He identified unemployment as one of the causes of recruitment for the insurgency. He quoted World Bank figures that show economic growth at less than 2 per cent. He said that the literacy rate in Afghanistan is 47 per cent, and out of the 34 provinces, the literacy rate of 7 provinces is less than 1 per cent. He highlighted that 100,000 Pakistani people are employed in different fields in Afghanistan. He suggested that all countries should seek peace in Afghanistan and United States must take the lead. He further said that Iran and Qatar can influence the Taliban more than Pakistan can do.

Major General (R) Khawar Hanif, HI (M), former DG, Anti-Narcotics Forces, Pakistan spoke on ‘Poppy Cultivation, and Drug Trafficking: A Financial Resource of Terrorism’ and said that unrest always facilitates organised crimes and terrorism. He said that prior to 9/11, the Taliban had brought down the level of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan to 7,400 hectares, while the statistics of 2016 show that 201,000 hectares land is being used for poppy cultivation. He said that the farm gate value of Afghan opium is USD 1 billion and total value of poppy is USD 150 billion, while the money coming back to Afghanistan is USD 10 billion. He also identified financial resources of transnational terrorism and highlighted legitimate sources as charities, religious funding, diaspora donations and endowments. He also talked about illegitimate sources of terrorism like drugs and human trafficking, arms smuggling and Hawala system of money transfer. He stated that the world’s illicit economy is about USD 1.599 trillion, while world drug economy is about USD 428 billion in which the share of Afghan drug income is USD 10 billion. He said that viewing drug trafficking from the global perspective shows that Afghan drug money has little contribution towards financing global terrorism rather it is a source of funding and recruitment for the Taliban.

In the session on ‘Peace Initiatives by Regional Partners and Coalition Countries’, **Dr Omar Zakhilwal**, President’s Special Envoy and Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan, in his Keynote Address called for the need to understand the definition of peace and said that it is difficult to understand the definition of peace in the context of Afghanistan. He stated that after going through a prolonged conflict, Afghan people are desirous of

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peace. Anyone else's commitment to peace can be doubted but not that of the people of Afghanistan. He said that unfortunately the international engagement in Afghanistan at the moment is for all the wrong reasons. According to him, in 2001, the Coalition came to Afghanistan with a lot more clarity, but over time their focus has diluted, but at the same time, there was little room for reconciliation as the mind-set was more focused on revenge as the Taliban were the common enemies. He remarked that there is no shortage of misconceptions and conspiracy theories about his country. Dr Omar opined that in 2001, there was unity among regional countries, but in 2017, that unity is no longer there and the war is full of mistakes now. He highlighted that the way the war is being fought perhaps creates more difficulties than it resolves and is making terrorism more complex than ever before as Daesh has also entered into the war. He stated that the positive engagement of regional countries is necessary for regional economic integration.

Dr Marvin G. Weinbaum, Professor at University of Illinois and Scholar-in-Residence, Middle East Institute, Washington, DC, presented his views on the 'US Vision of the End-State in Afghanistan: A Critical Evaluation of the Obama Policies and Key Recommendations for President Trump'. He said that without recognising a vision, it is impossible to talk about peace. He shared his views that while Barack Obama sought to implement a new strategic approach in Afghanistan, which featured a military surge that was expected to clear the way for the disengagement of US forces from the country, his administration was left with pinning its hopes on a strategy designed to buy enough time for the Afghan state to put its act together.

He suggested that like Obama's administration, all major stakeholders need to do the same and lower their sights for an end-state, and be willing to settle for an Afghanistan whose security, stability and governance is just 'good enough.' He said that Pakistan can play an important role in controlling the problems in Afghanistan effectively. He also pointed out that Pakistan's influence over the Taliban is overestimated and misunderstood; and that the Taliban's vision of an end-state of Afghanistan is different from that of the US and its allies. He opined that the Taliban seek the recreation of an Emirate in a Sharia state, not a Western-styled democratic constitutional state. Trying to get the Taliban to agree to power-sharing has ignored what the Taliban's core leadership regularly states: that it has no interest in power-sharing within the prevailing political system. Regarding President Trump, he was of the view that during

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his campaign for the presidency Donald Trump seldom mentioned Afghanistan. He said that it is doubtful that the new administration's vision for Afghanistan or its strategies in the region will deviate very far from those during the Obama years. Summing up, he lamented that development assistance stands to be cut sharply in America's foreign policy towards this region.

Dr Grigory Tishchenko, Deputy Director, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS), Moscow said that Moscow supports the legal Government in Afghanistan. He also noted that since Pakistan is the key country for ensuring its stability, it is important to continue the present Russian-Pakistani interaction. He warned that destabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan could seriously complicate functioning of the Chinese One Belt One Road (OBOR) passing through the region. He pointed out that any aggravation in the region threatens Russia as well. He was of the view that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can make an essential contribution to normalising the situation in Kabul through coordination of Russian, Chinese, Pakistani and Indian interests. He said that Russia and especially China are already huge sponsors of the Afghan government, both in the military and economic sphere. Therefore, it is essential to add the situation in Afghanistan to the agenda of the SCO. He warned that the fight against terrorism and religious extremism is complex. He also recommended advance preparations for international cooperation in case Daesh activities go beyond Afghanistan. He concluded his speech by saying that the search of forces interested in peace-making and ready to sit down at the negotiating table, including direct dialogue of the Afghan Government with the Taliban is also necessary as is strengthening of borders, modernisation of the armed forces of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, involvement of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR) and the SCO Anti-terrorist Centre in the region.

Dr Seyed Rasoul Mousavi, Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice President, Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, was of the view that the US as the main security guarantor has no specific strategy for Afghanistan, while the Taliban believe that the US has been defeated militarily and so the number of terrorist attacks and the subsequent civilian casualties are increasing, along with massive opium production. He said that Afghanistan's 'trilemma' lies in three main and key problems: Stability, Security and Development. Unfortunately, none of the governments and political parties in Afghanistan has been able to find a balanced solution to these three crises. According to him, the Bonn

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Conference was a failure because it focused on removing the Taliban from the Afghan equation and fixated only on the security dimension, ignoring the social and political dimensions which led to the renewed strength of the Taliban. He said that another mistake made by the Bonn process was relying on the military forces of US and NATO, while disregarding the importance and role of regional countries in attaining this goal. He recommended that Afghanistan needs a 'Power Re-sharing Solution' in which there is participation of all Afghan major political and social players in the central government and local administration, without excluding anyone. He also suggested looking at the present-day Taliban with a new lens as 'Neo-Taliban' rather than the one worn during the previous years.

In the last session of the Two-Day Conference, titled 'Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: A Way Forward', **Mr Owais Ahmed Ghani**, Senior Research Fellow and Member, Board of Directors, Global Think Tank Network (GTTN), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan and Former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan said that every state has been pursuing its own interest in Afghanistan that is conflicting with each other. He stressed that to bring peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan's cooperation with the international community is necessary, and discussed some crucial points. First, the results of military operation in Afghanistan are not according to official wishes of Pakistan and the spillover effect is the continued presence of millions of Afghan refugees in the country. Second, the power-sharing arrangement in Kabul has been in flux since the first day. Third, Pakistan has legitimate concerns about peace and stability in Afghanistan as half of the Afghan population is in Pakistan. Fourth, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been hostile due to superpower rivalries in the past. Fifth, the US cannot resolve the Afghanistan problem because it intends to stay in Afghanistan due to its geopolitical interests. Sixth, the Indian political leadership has openly talked about US-India nexus in Afghanistan that is a cause of concern for Pakistan. Nevertheless, he said that numerous commonalities exist between Afghanistan and Pakistan that can help in building peace, e.g. the common trading system and the main drivers behind this common trade system are the Afghan refugees. A common currency between Afghanistan and Pakistan could also be used. Furthermore, he argued that as 1.5 billion people understand Urdu language, the introduction of a common language is also needed. He concluded that Pakistan has been the worst affected from the Afghan

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conundrum and it could be the beneficiary of the peace process; therefore, peace-building is the need of the hour.

Mr Muhammad Sadiq, National Security Secretary and Former Ambassador to Afghanistan shed light on the fact that Afghanistan throughout its history has been a mysterious country in the region as well as the world. Afghanistan, he argued, is changing because a new Afghanistan is in the making having new realities, cultures and sub-nationalities today, that were not there 50 years ago. He also identified border management as a core problem between Pakistan and Afghanistan that makes peace-building a difficult task. Furthermore, with increasing unemployment, lawlessness increases, making peace-building problematic. According to him, most Afghan warlords are still alive and they think that they can get away with any crime and nobody can make them accountable for their actions. He said that Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey want peace in Afghanistan but practically are not doing enough. In this regard, Afghanistan's neighbours and other regional countries need to agree on common grounds for reconciliation and subsequent peace in the country.

Dr Liu Zongyi from the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), China, while presenting his views on 'Building Consensus among Major Stakeholder Countries', said that Pakistan's position on Afghanistan and the insight it can offer about peace in the country should be respected. He emphasised that China considers Afghan people as the major stakeholders of the Afghan issue. He was of the view that regional connectivity can help Afghanistan and lay the foundation for future regional engagement. He recommended that diverse regional connectivity efforts of individual stakeholders in Afghanistan must be synergised, and the US should support Russian efforts for establishing peace in Afghanistan. He pointed out that many great empires declined after they reached this land and hence, every stakeholder needs to keep this history in mind when developing any policy for the people of this region. He noted that there are many contradictions between the policies of various stakeholders with respect to the future of the country. He concluded his speech by saying that there should be an international consensus on an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process that accepts the Taliban as a legitimate stakeholder as Western democracy cannot be transplanted in Afghanistan.

Mr Michael Semple, Visiting Research Professor, Queen's University Belfast, talked about 'Reconciliation and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Afghanistan.' He said that the Taliban see themselves differently from the Kabul elites and wish to run an Islamic Emirate. He was of the

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view that the most important step should be to ask the Taliban to forego violence since there is a moral authority behind negotiating an agreement on that premise. He warned that while the Taliban are now more fractured, their various wings have become more autonomous than ever before. While the Taliban have found their transition from their last *Amir* to be quite a challenge, the idea of the Taliban Islamic Emirate is still potent. According to him, there is a paucity of decision-making in Afghanistan due to trust deficit on all fronts which leads to failure of the reconciliation process. He suggested more focus on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) among all stakeholders to bridge the trust deficit among all warring parties of Afghanistan.

Ms Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in her Concluding Address said that Pakistan has a policy of maintaining friendly ties with its neighbours. She highlighted that Pakistan desires a meaningful and constructive engagement with Afghanistan as both states share similar history, culture, ethnicity and religion. She said that Pakistan gives priority to enhance people-to-people contacts between the two countries. She highlighted that 48,000 Afghan nationals have got educated in Pakistan, and Government of Pakistan has given training Afghan medical doctors and paramedic staff. She said that Pakistan has granted 3,000 scholarships for Afghan students and has been planning to provide more scholarships for Afghan youth. She also talked about Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) and said that Pakistan has been providing transit facilities to Afghanistan. She highlighted that the emerging realities of Afghanistan in the form of Daesh and other violent actors presents alarming challenges for Pakistan. She said that TTP and Jamat-ul-Ahrar's attacks in Pakistan and their sanctuaries in Afghanistan require strong counterterrorism cooperation between the two states. She stated that an efficient border management mechanism should also be in place. She said that Pakistan desires that Afghan refugees should return to their homes with dignity and honour, and that the international community should assist in their reintegration. Pakistan believes that there is no military solution of the Afghan conflict, but a political resolution is needed. She highlighted that Pakistan participated in QCG and Murree Talks but these processes were undermined. She proposed a regional approach to resolving this conflict and emphasized that peace and stability in Afghanistan is an important foreign policy objective of Pakistan.

At the end, Acting President IPRI, **Brig. (R) Sohail Tirmizi** thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and said that the

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Conference highlighted the internal as well as external dynamics that impact the political spectrum of Afghanistan. He concluded that an intra-Afghan reconciliation process will spur a political and democratic environment between all stakeholders to the conflict eventually leading to enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan.■

PART I

- Welcome Address
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- Inaugural Address
- Understanding 'Peace' for Afghanistan
- Beyond Routine: A Proposal for a 'Special' Relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Concluding Address
- Policy Recommendations of the Conference

Welcome Address

Brig. (R) Sohail Tirmizi, SI(M)
Acting President, IPRI

Honourable Mr Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers and Scholars,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to welcome you all to the Islamabad Policy Research Institute's International Conference on *Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects*. The subject of security and stability of Afghanistan is very close to our hearts because the phenomena of transnational terrorism is a major national security concern for Pakistan and a also burning issue for the international community.

Being an immediate neighbour of Afghanistan with porous borders and cultural linkages, Pakistan, for more than three decades has been directly affected by the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. As you know, Pakistan has fought the War on Terrorism along with other members of the international coalition for more than a decade and a half. In the process of fighting this United States led war, Pakistan has rendered huge sacrifices in terms of human and economic losses. This, however, has not waived Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism at home and facilitate the counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan, through political and moral support.

In addition to making the environment conducive for terrorism, perpetual instability of Afghanistan also has immense socioeconomic implications for Pakistan. The success of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) depends upon inter alia a stable security situation in Afghanistan. A peaceful Afghanistan can ensure regional economic integration, help to curtail radicalisation in its own society and the region as a whole.

Pakistan undeniably remains one of the biggest stakeholders in the stability and security of Afghanistan. Due to historical linkages, Pakistan offered to mediate the dialogue between the Taliban and the National Unity Government. However, Pakistan's approach to conflict resolution is

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nonpartisan and supportive of an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process.

Moreover, the international community has also become more pragmatic and less ambitious with what can be achieved in Afghanistan. Instead of aiming for converting Afghanistan into a Western styled democracy, there is a general sense amongst all the major stakeholders, involved directly or indirectly in the conflict, that sustainable peace in Afghanistan is not possible without a political settlement. This requires recognition of the political role of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Thus, dialogue between the Taliban and the Afghan Government is increasingly being promoted and pursued.

I would not hesitate to say at this point that the ingredients missing in the international struggle for peace in Afghanistan are strategic clarity and unity of effort. All parties have to explore options for conflict resolution in Afghanistan by recognising each other's interests. Working on counter purposes due to confusion and miscalculations needs to be avoided. This requires greater coordination and confidence not just between parties within Afghanistan, but also other major stakeholder countries like China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and the US.

Although Afghanistan's security has remained in flux for more than three decades now, there is a major trend that is emerging in terms of transnational terrorism which has the potential to make peace even more elusive. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has emerged in the region as a completely new dynamic, which demands a comprehensive discussion in its own right. We are closely watching these developments as it will be of significant consequence to the security of not just Afghanistan, but the region at large and other major powers.

Afghanistan historically has not been governed by a strong central government and efforts to create a cohesive state are obstructed by both perpetual war and terrorism, and also various social and structural challenges. Central to Afghanistan's problems is chronic dependence on foreign aid, flourishing illegal economies and drug trafficking, gender inequalities, poverty, illiteracy and radicalisation of society. Any effort for peace in Afghanistan cannot succeed without simultaneous improvement in these social indicators. This is why we also have tried to have an inward looking discussion on Afghanistan's security situation. There are two sessions in the Conference dedicated primarily to these structural problems and their regional interface.

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Since the international strategic environment is in a flux and Afghanistan may not be central to the international security agenda of big powers, however, with the new dynamics that I have briefly broached and longstanding problems related to perpetual violence, a discussion on Afghanistan's peace prospects is always relevant.

A holistic discussion calls for inclusion of views and representation of many countries for which we strove to be as inclusive as was practically possible. For this, we have invited eminent speakers from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, United Kingdom and United States. I cannot thank enough the distinguished speakers from Islamabad and the speakers that have travelled from other countries who would be sharing their invaluable expert opinions and knowledge with us.

With this, I would like to welcome all the participants of the Conference who have taken time out from their busy schedules today and have come to add value to our Conference. I look forward to a very lively and engaging discussion today and tomorrow.■

Opening Remarks

Kristof Duwaerts*

The present publication represents the results of a Two-Day International Conference, jointly organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute and the Hanns Seidel Foundation in May 2017. Its topic ‘Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects’ came at yet another crucial point in the relationship of the two countries, with recent border clashes having transpired into the media. With every *Shaheed* (martyr) being one too many, I am still thankful, that initial reports by some Pakistani media of over 100 Afghan troops killed near Chaman did not turn out to be true. This could have been a major setback in the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, after some positive steps were taken just two weeks prior to the conference with a Parliamentary delegation from Pakistan, comprising more than 30 members visiting Afghanistan for political talks addressing the way forward. Unlike some months ago, very fortunately, the border in Torkham remained open, and one of the guests of the conference came by road from Afghanistan.

When it comes to discussing the topic of ‘Achieving Peace in Afghanistan’ in a Pakistani context, there are some frequently heard notions which lie at the very outset. The first premise is that every peace and reconciliation process should be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. Another frequently heard notion is that without peace in Afghanistan, there cannot be peace in Pakistan, and without peace in Pakistan, there cannot be peace in Afghanistan.

While one might rightfully object to the use of the term Af-Pak, which was termed by the Obama administration, and largely discontinued upon sharp protest in 2010, there is a gist of truth in these notions. While the political ground conditions in the two countries can’t be compared by any means, there is a deep intertwinement of the history – and future – of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This brings me to a third, more generalised notion frequently heard in that context: You don’t choose your neighbours. One might add: But you can choose what kind of neighbour you will be.

* Mr Kristof Duwaerts is Resident Representative of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Germany in Pakistan.

Opening Remarks

Making such choices pre-necessitates a firm knowledge which goes beyond 'stereo-typisations'. Despite the fact that Afghanistan and Pakistan have been geographically, culturally, socially and economically joined since times immemorial, there continues to be a certain lack of understanding on both sides of the Durand-Line about the other side. Quite obviously, a lot of things have happened ever since the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan all of a sudden were sharply increased due to foreign intervention in 1979 with up to 6 million Afghan refugees pouring into Pakistan. Despite a large-scale Afghan presence for the past four decades, there continues to be a disturbing lack of knowledge about Afghanistan or Afghans in wide parts of Pakistan, and vice versa. Obviously, abridging notions, which could be summarised as 'Turban, Taliban, Terrorism', are hurtful, and don't contribute to sustainable relationships. On the other hand, the bad public image, which Pakistan currently commands in wide parts of Afghanistan doesn't reflect the contributions - and sacrifices in part - which Pakistanis have made for their Afghan brethren. I would argue that the number of common and shared challenges has increased ever since 2001, and especially so since the decision of international withdrawal from Afghanistan was taken, and thereby opportunities have also increased. Separators have actually become less in number. This might not always be accurately depicted in media representations or transpire into the societal biases and national dialogues.

There is a huge constituency for understanding and dialogue in and in between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Commonalities by far outweigh the few political topics, in which - at times even rightfully - there are divergences. Those divergences should not be keeping down the relationship between two brotherly nations, and a widescale dialogue must be started to address the outliers. Conferences such as this one may contribute towards a better understanding, and towards an eradication of misperceptions and misconceptions. After all, there is so much at stake to what we are no longer referring to as Af-Pak.

A number of opportunities arise from economic integration, a number of opportunities arise from cultural and social or academic exchanges - probably one should even assess the opening of joint media houses. Perceptions are a very important factor in the current setup. Joint approaches in the field of eradicating the looming threat of radicalisation and terrorism might prove much more meaningful and effective. For that, apprehensions would need to be decreased. Information and experience sharing mechanisms could easily be implemented based on the fact that a

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significant share of Afghan civil servants have been educated in Pakistan, and Pashto being the maternal and common language of and in the border regions. In short: all the ingredients are already there.

I sincerely hope that the recommendations which have been developed during the conference would provide ground for a more sustainable understanding of the actual issues hindering or promoting the quest for peace, stability and development. I expect the number of bilateral exchanges to increase manifold, and thereby, further decrease preconceived notions. With Pakistan extending a helping hand, an equitable basis could be laid for a truly Afghan-owned, and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process.

I am thankful to the international speakers for having joined us from a number of locations, because the quest for peace is quite obviously an international one. Such international presence and contributions should yet be supportive and not interventionist in nature. I shall be looking forward to further suggestions about which regional contributions could be made in order to support the Afghanistan-Pakistan axis in addressing some of the most prominent lynchpins for sustainable development, not only in this region but for the world.

The German Hanns Seidel Foundation, with its parliamentary mandate of supporting political education and political dialogue worldwide, has been supporting think-tanks, such as the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, and Government as well as academic institutions in Pakistan for the past 35 years in addressing hindrances and jointly developing indigenous solutions. We are committed to do so in the future.

I would like to thank IPRI and its acting president Brig. Sohail Tirmizi in lieu of all the IPRI staff for once again having managed in putting together a wonderful setup, and identifying a topic, which is highly timely, and which might provide the ground for meaningful change. I would like to appreciate the international and local scholars for having taken time off in order to join us in Islamabad for this important dialogue, which would hopefully transpire into the policymaking circles. Last but not the least, I would like to thank the representatives of government institutions and universities for having joined us for thriving Q&A sessions, and I would like to particularly appreciate the presence of so many students who are going to be in the driver's seat tomorrow, and who would hopefully not be repeating any mistakes of the past. I shall be looking forward to many future interactions, and I wish us all the success this conference certainly deserves - be it through the presentations - the Q&A sessions - the joint

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recommendations - or this publication. I would like to end on some kind of a Kantian notion:

Let us all be the neighbour we would wish our neighbour to be.
Thank you for your attention.■

Inaugural Address

Sartaj Aziz*

It is a pleasure for me to address this august gathering of distinguished academicians and thinkers today. I commend IPRI's efforts for gathering notable researchers on this conference to discuss a topic which is of immense significance in the context of our foreign policy. I believe that the presence of international scholars shall make it very informative bringing in diverse perspectives on Afghanistan.

The title of today's conference 'Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects' is a topic of great importance. The challenges in Afghanistan have multiplied since January 2015, when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ended its combat mission and Afghan forces assumed direct security responsibilities. The persistent conflict and the failure of military strategy to bring peace have taken a heavy toll on both Afghan security forces and the civilians. The lack of progress on peace process, emerging threat of Daesh, drugs trafficking, resettlement of returning refugees are some of the issues that have been making it difficult for Afghanistan to create a stable country. This situation is affecting not only Afghanistan's neighbours but the entire region.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are also being affected due to these factors, despite our old bonds of common culture, heritage, traditions and religion. A peaceful prosperous Afghanistan is in our interest. We believe that a politically negotiated settlement will be the most viable option for bringing lasting peace to Afghanistan. Towards this end, Pakistan has been making sincere efforts for facilitating talks between the Afghan Government and Taliban. Our consistent and clear message to the Taliban has been that they must give up violence and join the peace process. Our efforts led to Murree talks in July 2015 and setting up of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) in December 2015. However, both times the process was undermined by forces who were against reconciliation. Terrorism is a major threat to regional and international peace. In recent years, Pakistan has been a victim of brutal terrorism. Since 2014, a national consensus has developed for a determined fight against this scourge.

* His Excellency Mr Sartaj Aziz is Deputy Director, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, and the former Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan.

Inaugural Address

Operation Zarb-e-Azb launched in January 2014 has successfully dismantled terrorist networks all over the country. Tribal areas, particularly North Waziristan, have been cleared. Any remnants of the dismantled groups are now being targeted through Operation Rad-ul-Fasad. Our success in counterterrorism has been recognised by United States Congressional leaders and military commanders who visited the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, including North Waziristan. Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) reforms are being introduced to mainstream the area politically and administratively, and to accelerate its development and safeguard its security.

In order to strengthen these gains we have been emphasizing the need for effective border management with Afghanistan. This would prevent the movement of terrorists and miscreants and would help address the Afghan allegations regarding Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA) and Haqqani networks presence in Pakistan. We have also been stressing upon the Afghan government to take action against the TTP and JuA¹ sanctuaries in Afghanistan who have been crossing through the porous border and launching terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Meaningful engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan is of key importance for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. In recent weeks, exchange of visits has gained momentum. Speaker National Assembly led a multiparty high level parliamentary delegation to Kabul as part of our efforts of strengthening engagement with Afghanistan. The Chief of General Staff and Director General Inter-Services Intelligence also undertook visits to Afghanistan. It is important that these visits and interactions are streamlined under the rubric of bilateral cooperation mechanism agreed upon between the two sides in March for cooperation in diplomatic, military and intelligence fields with political oversight.

Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have immense scope and offer multiple opportunities. Pakistan extends transit trade facilities to Afghanistan through its ports under an Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) without any quantitative limits or barriers. The revision of this agreement is due and we are hoping that the next meeting of Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTTCA) would be convened soon.

For the past four decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees with dignity and honour. We are engaged with Afghanistan and the

¹ Editor's Note: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar.

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United National High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for voluntary and dignified repatriation of these Afghans. In order to facilitate their return, the Prime Minister has already extended the stay of refugees in Pakistan upto 31 December 2017. We are also working on a facilitative visa regime for the refugees to cater for their education, medical and economic needs. The international community has to play an important role in ensuring that the returns are sustainable and the returnees are able to settle in Afghanistan.

Under the bilateral assistance package, Pakistan has undertaken development projects in Afghanistan worth USD 500 million. 3000 scholarships have also been availed by Afghan students for education in Pakistan's colleges and universities. At the Brussels Conference in 2016, Pakistan announced an additional USD 500 million and 3000 more scholarships for higher education in medicine, engineering, technology, finance and other fields to fulfill Afghanistan's development needs.

I would also like to highlight that connectivity with Afghanistan is an important element on our agenda. Exploitation of Afghanistan's vast mineral resources need rail-road connectivity between Afghanistan and Pakistan so that the transportation of the extracted minerals to the outer world can be realized. Projects including Peshawar-Kabul motorway and Quetta-Kandahar Rail link are in the pipeline which would only come to fruition if an environment of peace and stability is achieved. Moreover, energy cooperation through projects like CASA-1000² and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) will bring huge dividends for Pakistan, Afghanistan and the region.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that the future of the region lies in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Pakistan remains committed to the goal of lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region. ■

² Editor's Note: Central Asia-South Asia Power Project.

Understanding ‘Peace’ for Afghanistan

Keynote Address

Dr Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal*

From the very outset, let me thank the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) for their interest in peace in Afghanistan. It is a topic very dear to every Afghani and Pakistani. This Conference is not only of immense importance but deserves immense appreciation on behalf of Afghanistan.

When we say ‘Peace with the Taliban’, what do we mean? Do we have clarity with respect to the definition of Peace? The truth is that there is lack of clarity even in Afghanistan on the definition and a whole lot of other questions that are important for defining Peace. There is also lack of clarity within the region - Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Central Asian countries and within the Coalition partners.

The more pertinent questions are: Why do we opt for peace talks? Is it out of need or out of choice? Is it because peace is the right thing to do or is it because there are no other options? What do we offer in peace: power-sharing, living space, political space or just immunity? Who do we make peace with? Who is the enemy? What is the cause of our enemy: religion, power, grievances, revenge, fear, opportunity or just to create chaos? Or is it other ambitions? Is our enemy independent in making choices for itself?

These are questions on which clarity is needed. However, in 2017, things have become further complicated which has made answers to the above even more difficult.

In 2001-02, the United States-led Coalition partners came to Afghanistan with a much clearer mission: enemy known, aims, means and path forward was very clear, however, over time things became diluted and confused. What happened? When the US-led Coalition came to Afghanistan, it had an entry strategy, but not an exit one. In addition, the War on Terror was full of mistakes: limited knowledge of culture; war against the Taliban fought to extract revenge; little or no window for reconciliation with the Taliban and so on. Invasion of Iraq and the

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subsequent broader chaos in the Middle East did not make things easier in Afghanistan and added more dimensions to the war in our country.

In 2001-02, there was regional consensus with respect to the US-led intervention: toppling of the Taliban and replacing it with a pro-Western modern elected government. However, slowly this regional consensus weakened. There were also flip-flops in the strategy with respect to Afghanistan and how to deal with the Taliban. As a result, the way the war was fought perhaps created more difficulties than it solved. It also made terrorism more complex and complicated.

In 2001-02, regional countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Russia and others in Central Asia, were on the same page with the US-led Coalition with respect to Afghanistan. Perhaps some had no choice - and most - saw in the Taliban a common enemy. For example, the US and Iran had the worst bilateral relations, yet in the Taliban, they found a common enemy, and therefore, despite difficulties, the two countries agreed on toppling the Taliban in support of the alternative. Similarly, Iran and Saudi Arabia were rivals, but still cooperated when it came to Afghanistan.

In 2016-17, this unity is no longer there.

In 2001-02, there was little distinction made between the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and all the other regional threats.

In 2017, these threats are considered separate entities.

Now, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has joined the mix and Taliban versus ISIS has become a matter of choice for some regional countries. Russia is involved in this, Iran is doing the same, Pakistan has been part of this game, Saudi Arabia and other countries as well.

Now, because of this change in environment, change in perceptions, change in the behaviour of these countries, the war has evolved with rumours of support for the Taliban by some countries who were against them in the past. The region has become engulfed in a complex Prisoner's Dilemma with respect to Afghanistan - a paradox in decision analysis in which two individuals acting in their own self-interest pursue a course of action that does not result in the ideal outcome. The typical Prisoner's Dilemma is set up in such a way that both parties choose to protect themselves at the expense of the other participant. As a result of following a purely logical thought process, both participants find themselves in a worse state than if they had cooperated with each other in the decision-making

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process. This is what we have in the region with respect to peace in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan provides to the regional countries opportunities for both good and bad engagements. Good reasons for engagement include peace which benefits everybody. At the minimum, there will be no conflict spillover. Afghanistan also provides a test case for cooperation between rival regional countries. It could be a test case for Saudi Arabia and Iran, Iran and the US and the US and Russia. The most positive engagement would be for regional economic development and integration. Within the region, we are diverse in terms of what we can offer each other: resource-rich versus technologically-focused. Thus, economic development and integration can compliment our economies. Yet, our region remains the least connected in the world - less than 5 per cent of our trade is within the region, compared to 70 per cent in Europe, and 50 per cent in Asia as a whole.

Then, there are bad reasons for engagement in Afghanistan. Despite the rhetoric, we believe Pakistan has not changed its policy that contributes to continuous violence in our country. Other countries are not helpful either. A number of regional countries are getting engaged in proxy rivalries in Afghanistan. Then, there is a reason of using Afghanistan against the West and against the US-led Coalition in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, engagement of regional countries right now is mostly for bad reasons.

For sustainable peace in Afghanistan, the best approach is a genuine approach for peace in the country. But who can make it possible? The US being the biggest partner could be a significant player but has not proven to be the best facilitator. When it convenes regional forums, at best what it can get is an act and words of cooperation but not deeds of cooperation. The recent Russian initiative for convening regional meetings to push for peace in Afghanistan failed because there were suspicions with respect to its motives. Alone, none of the international or regional powers can bring peace to Afghanistan. However, all the countries together can achieve this feat but with different roles and responsibilities by bringing different assets, concerns and angles to the table.

As Afghanistan is at the centre of the conflict, it is we who need peace first and foremost, and therefore, it is we who would genuinely be interested in peace in Afghanistan. The best convener would, therefore, be Afghanistan for regional cooperation. China could play the role of a mediator especially with regards to Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. China has very cordial relations with both. Pakistan could be the best facilitator

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and enabler but its actions have to speak louder than its words. Russia, India, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, despite their differences elsewhere, could make Afghanistan a test case of positive cooperation for peace as they did in 2002-05. The US and its Western allies should serve as sponsors of such talks.

Easier said than done, but let us hope that common sense and sanity prevails in the region. ■

Beyond Routine: A Proposal for a ‘Special’ Relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Keynote Address

Owais Ahmed Ghani*

All Asia is one living body of water, stone and clay
The Afghan Nation is its heart, so all sages say;
A tranquil heart means tranquility on all Asian soil
A troubled heart means an Asia in trouble and turmoil.

- *Allama Iqbal*

India is a close friend of Afghanistan but Pakistan is a twin brother of Afghanistan. We are more than twins, we are conjoined twins. There is no separation, there cannot be a separation.

- *Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Islamabad, March 2010*

Introduction

The proposals in this paper are based on the premise that (1) Pakistan’s routine run-of-the-mill foreign policy approach towards Afghanistan over the past seven decades has signally failed to achieve the desired goal of a friendly and supportive neighbour and therefore the need to go *‘beyond routine’*; (2) Pakistan will always be deeply impacted by events and conditions inside Afghanistan which calls for a proactive policy approach on part of the former; (3) India, not Pakistan, has succeeded in achieving *‘strategic depth’* in Afghanistan against Pakistan; and (4) in view of the disastrous impacts on Pakistan resulting from invasions of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia and United States of America (USA), it has now become a *strategic imperative* for Pakistan to deter any future adventurism by foreign military powers in Afghanistan. In terms of

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Pakistan's foreign policy, Afghanistan must be placed at topmost priority; perhaps at par with China; but, of course, for different reasons.

This paper analyses the peculiar relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It outlines the commonalities and convergences between the two countries on the one hand, and significant divergences on the other. It deals with the challenges of religious extremism, Islamist insurgency, terrorism, ethnic and sectarian strife, narcotics and political instability that are common to both countries. It stresses the necessity for both countries to accommodate each other's economic, geopolitical and security interests. At the same time, the paper enumerates the significant obstacles against such an accommodation arising out of newly emerging geopolitical realities in the region and the world. Similarities in the security challenges faced by both countries are discussed along with the potential for contradictions to arise from these very similarities. Attempt has been made to indicate Pakistan's position on the anti-Soviet Afghan *Jihad*, the post-9/11 US/NATO invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing Afghan Taliban insurgency. Factors that impose substantive limitations and obstacles to Pak-Afghan normalisation are also presented. In general, though, the paper argues for the need of going '*beyond routine*' to pursue a '*special*' relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan and, in conclusion, proposes key policy options for Pakistan in this regard.

Why Go Beyond the Routine?

Bilateral relations between the regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan over the past two decades have, without interruption, remained hostage to geopolitical rivalries of great hegemonic powers. The classic divide-and-rule policies of these powers are invariably aimed at accentuating ethnic, religious and political divisions as well as nurturing rivalry and infighting to prevent the emergence of a common cause amongst the native populations against the domination of these hegemonic powers on the one hand and, on the other, to keep the indigenous ruling classes and factions weak and, therefore, dependent on and subservient to them.

It is the ill-fated continuity of this historical inheritance which continues to breed hostility and suspicion between the two countries and their respective governments. It is a sad fact that both Pakistan and Afghanistan have not been able to transcend this negative inheritance in spite of the very obvious benefits that would accrue from friendly ties and

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close cooperation between these two neighbouring countries which are inextricably tied together by geographical, historical, political, socioeconomic and cultural dynamics.

At the same time, placing the entire blame on the hegemonic power-play of great powers for this state of affairs conveys a partial truth only. It has to be admitted that successive leaderships in Pakistan and Afghanistan, based on their own notions of national interest, consistently chose to become willing players in this power-play. Therefore, they have not only been hapless victims but also willing partners in the same power-play that is blamed for the exacerbation of differences between them. This pattern of initial helplessness and later willingness in conforming to hegemonic strategies of great powers has been a consistent feature in the histories of most weak nations. The challenge before Pakistan and Afghanistan is how to overcome and defeat the seemingly inexorable logic of past policies and adversarial tendencies that have been historically immanent in their foreign policies.

In this context, the *Afghan Jihad (1979-89)* has proved to be a major *game changer* - although, at a superficial level it displayed the same old pattern of complicity with policies of hegemonic powers. The turmoil and anarchy of the past three and a half decades, triggered by the 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and eventually leading on to the 9/11 Terror Attack in New York in 2001 and the subsequent US-NATO Invasion of Afghanistan, has brought varying degrees of devastation to both Afghanistan and Pakistan due to an unending cycle of conflict and destruction. Simultaneously, these very events have resulted in the *emergence of new fundamentals in the region* that have brought about extensive convergence between the two countries and its populations and which, if properly understood and exploited, offer the exciting prospects of building a new and highly productive *'special'* relationship between them.

On the downside, this state of affairs has also provided ample opportunities to hostile powers in the region and the world to further their agenda of weakening and destabilising Pakistan, currently the world's sole Muslim nuclear power, with the ultimate objective of subordinating it and preparing it for eventual *de-nuclearisation*. Today, Pakistan is squarely in the cross-hairs of a dangerous US-India axis. This concern may be dismissed by some as paranoia, however, the fact remains that the amount of attention that Pakistan's nuclear programme continues to receive in the international press and the policy rooms of the White House shows that the

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subject is uppermost in the calculations of American policymakers and, by extension, in the war-rooms of Pakistan's traditional rivals in the neighbourhood. There is a reasonable justification to believe that this inordinate attention is an indication that Pakistan's nuclear programme does not sit well with Western and American governments, in spite of occasional public expressions of confidence in its safety by US civil and military officials.

In all this, Afghanistan is unwilling to acknowledge that its destabilisation and near-permanent state of crisis is seen by some big powers as a golden opportunity to destabilise and weaken Nuclear Pakistan. The mortal dangers posed and the extensive socioeconomic damage caused to Pakistan by the two invasions of Afghanistan by foreign military powers in recent times, *make it paramount for Pakistan to pursue a new strategic balance in the region which will deter future invasions of Afghanistan*. This '*strategic imperative*' dictates the pressing need of cultivating a '*special*' relationship with Afghanistan.

The experience of the last few decades has forcefully brought home the point that Pakistan and Afghanistan are, in reality, 'conjoined twins', and simply cannot insulate themselves from events affecting one or the other. They swim or sink together. It is clear as daylight that stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan is one of the vital pre-requisites for bringing stability, peace and prosperity to Pakistan.

Admittedly, the metaphor of conjoined-ness could be debated. And it is also quite possible that Afghanistan's understanding of this metaphor may be completely different from Pakistan's understanding. For Afghanistan, it has, on occasions, offered a temptation to work with anti-Pakistan elements in contradiction to the spirit of cooperation and mutuality preferred by Islamabad with regard to Afghanistan. This is an unfortunate tendency, but it is far outweighed by the imperative of exploiting commonalities and convergences to build a '*special*' relationship with a view to bringing stability and order to the region and *guard against the emergence of conditions which may once again tempt foreign powers to pursue destabilisation policies, proxy wars or straightforward military adventurism in this region*.

The past decades have made it abundantly clear that run-of-the-mill and occasionally cavalier approach, which has characterised Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, has totally failed to normalise relations between the two countries, thus, preventing building of a foundation for long-lasting understanding and cooperation between them. The enormous price paid by Pakistan over the past three plus decades has remained largely

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unproductive in this regard. A bold and imaginative policy approach is needed.

The fact cannot be denied that Pakistan has always been more interested in normalisation of relations with Afghanistan than the other way around. Even though Pakistan is not fundamentally threatened by a hostile Afghanistan, one cannot underestimate the benefits and importance of a friendly Afghanistan. Since 1947, Pakistan has been eager to intensify and upgrade contacts and dialogues, but the nature, depth and content of such contacts have invariably been determined by the Afghan establishment which remains traditionally suspicious, reluctant and somewhat envious of its bigger and stronger neighbour and perpetually fearful of being dominated by it. While Pakistan might take the initiative, the outcomes always rest on the reactions of the Afghan establishment.

As things stand today, *the initiative has to come from Pakistan because it stands to gain or lose much more than any country from the direction Afghanistan will take over the coming years.* At the same time, this desire to take the initiative should be squarely grounded in awareness of the limitations of any such initiative vis-à-vis Afghanistan's domestic environment and regional geopolitical realities. One of the foremost efforts that Pakistan has to make, for any such initiative to succeed, is to assess its own prevailing internal situation and national mind-set and bring to fore the conditions that will ensure that this initiative is provided the requisite level of political, economic and societal support required for its success.

Commonalities and Convergences

The fact that Afghanistan and Pakistan have much more in common than is popularly recognised is often overlooked and, therefore, the perceived differences in their social and political structures are seen as significant enough to render a '*special*' relationship unviable. While Afghanistan remains a loose tribal confederacy governed till recently by a monarchy and currently by a shaky democracy, Pakistan is a complex mix of feudalism, democracy and military autocracy. The population sizes and socioeconomic disparities between the two are also visibly significant.

Notwithstanding these differences, however, both states share a substantial common religious, cultural and historical legacy. Admittedly, this common legacy may have been experienced differently by the two nations

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so that while they may have shared the same historical space-time, they may have done so in asymmetric ways.

Currently, however, *both suffer from ideological divides, violent conflicts and instabilities of similar natures emanating from common causes*. Both countries are long-suffering victims of the same regional geopolitical power-play between the world's hegemonic superpowers. On the positive side, there has always been a significant degree of economic interdependence throughout history which continues even today, although now there is a much higher degree of Afghan dependence on Pakistan's economy. Events of the past have brought forth many more enhanced commonalities with exciting potentials which are elaborated in the following.

Common Security Challenges

There are striking similarities between Afghanistan and Pakistan in their respective geopolitical threat perceptions. Both countries have faced existential threats since their inception and have struggled to keep their larger regional neighbours at bay. It is, therefore, no surprise that the security establishment has consistently played a pivotal role in both countries. While the degree of external threat differs in nature and scope, both countries harbour genuine concerns about their bigger and stronger neighbours.

Here, it must be kept in mind that this similarity in threat perception has a subtle under-side. Afghanistan's threat perceptions from bigger neighbours may also include Pakistan as one of those big neighbours because of the obvious reasons of power differential and capabilities that exist between the two. This perception has caused resistance to the normalisation of relations and even exacerbated tensions and will, therefore, need prudent management.

Analogous security challenges have influenced the foreign policy of both countries in similar manners. Unlike others, both have pursued realistic foreign policies devoid of idealism; though, at times, this realism was tinged with a paranoid streak. After World War 2, both tried to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy that sought friendly relations with the rival blocs of the Cold War. But subsequent regional developments severely curtailed their options and their non-aligned policies had to yield to the rivalries of superpower bloc politics.

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In this respect, both Afghanistan and Pakistan followed identical foreign policy solutions, namely, extra-regional alliances and linkages but often at cross-purposes. The geopolitics of the Cold War period and the American drive for setting up a containment cordon of anti-communist military alliances around the former Soviet Union suited Pakistan. It, therefore, cooperated with the Western alliance system to address its domestic and regional security concerns. Relative geographical proximity, however, prevented Pakistan from overly alienating Moscow. Eventually, Pakistan became a member of Western military alliances, while Afghanistan chose to side with the Soviet bloc and gradually emerged as Moscow's 'strategic partner' in the region along with India. Soon, both Pakistan and Afghanistan were entrenched in the Western and Soviet camps respectively as their regional allies. Later though, in a let-down by its US ally, this alliance brought tragic consequences to Pakistan in the shape of secession of Bangladesh in 1971 at the hands of a hostile Soviet-India axis.

Their close alliances with rival blocs of the Cold War notwithstanding, Pakistan and Afghanistan remain important Islamic countries. Their respective emphasis on their Islamic identity has been vital both for domestic reasons and for countering dominance and absorption by their bigger and stronger *non-Muslim* neighbours. This, coupled with the need to forge close ties with the Islamic world, compelled both countries - Pakistan more so than Afghanistan - to pursue a foreign policy oriented towards Islam. Ironically though, the factor of common faith had, at best, a limited positive impact on their relations.

Pakistan's crucial support to the Afghan Jihad against the 1979 Soviet Invasion proved to be a game changer. It resulted in major changes in the traditionally-held perceptions about foreign relations, security challenges and Islamic identity. The participation of thousands of Pakistani youth in the Afghan *Jihad* and the massive influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan led to extensive interaction between the respective populations of both countries for an extended period which dispelled many misconceptions and brought about a certain level of closeness between them. The Islamic nature of the *Jihad* resulted in an enhanced consciousness amongst both populations about their Islamic identity. Other new commonalities also emerged which are discussed in the following sections.

Importantly, the death, devastation and destabilisation in the region caused by the Soviet Invasion and the subsequent US-NATO Invasion, has also given rise to a *new strategic imperative* and an as yet unarticulated

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common security concern that occupies the minds of intellectuals and political leaders of both nations - that of *how to protect the Pakistan-Afghanistan region from future invasions/military adventurism by hegemonic powers.*

Common Language of Communication

Millions of Afghan refugees have stayed in Pakistan for the past three decades. Resultantly, more than 80 per cent of Afghans can understand and speak Urdu language with a fair degree of fluency. The continued presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has resulted in a ceaseless high-volume cross-border movement, largely informal in nature. Common religious and ethnic bonds have led to inter-marriages between Pakistani and Afghan refugee populations. Consequently, Urdu-knowing and Urdu-speaking populations continue to grow in Afghanistan and the cultural-linguistic footprint of Urdu continues to expand in that country. Urdu is steadily evolving into a *Common Language of Communication* between the two countries.

Common Trade System: Pak-Afghan Bilateral Trade

Huge volume of both formal and informal trade exists between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Interestingly, the undocumented informal trade is thought to be already in excess of this targeted increase.

Pakistan is also a transit state for Afghan trade providing it with the most convenient access to international waters. In this regard, both signed the Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) in October 2010. Under this agreement, however, Pakistan allows routing of Afghan exports to India through the Wagah Border but not the other way around - obviously due to long-standing issues between Pakistan and India.

In 2012, both countries agreed to extend APTTA to Tajikistan which opened new trade opportunities for the three countries and could lead to the materialisation of a north-south Central Asia-South Asia Corridor (CASA Corridor), thus, enhancing the regional significance of Karachi and Gwadar ports. Recent progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) holds out the promise of mutually beneficial integration of economies of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The two countries have also agreed in principle to integrate their rail systems via the construction of rail lines in Afghanistan and connecting them with the railway network in Pakistan. In

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this regard, Pakistan has agreed to fund and construct the Chaman-Spin Boldak railway line as a beginning (though commencement of work is long awaiting Afghanistan's nod).

Thousands of Afghan refugees play a crucial role as middle men in the voluminous formal and informal cross-border transactions as they enjoy an in-depth knowledge of the commodities and structure of each other's markets. Agreements also exist in principle to form a joint Pak-Afghan Chamber of Commerce with expo and display centres to be established in Kabul and Karachi for enhancing bilateral trade. In practical terms, a *Common Trade System*, in both dollar and rupee denominations, is rapidly developing between the two countries.

Common Currency System: The Pakistani Rupee

Bilateral trade, both formal and informal, combined with cross-border movement of people has resulted in an informal currency union in that the Pakistani Rupee (called Kaldar by Afghans) has become a currency of choice in the markets of Afghanistan with an exchange frequency equal to that of the US Dollar. This is in part due to the ease of exchange that Pakistani Rupee enjoys amongst Afghans, free of exchange-rate hassles, thereby allowing smooth transaction of business which is further facilitated by access to Pakistani banks on both sides of the border offering accounts in Rupee denomination. For all practical purposes, a *Common Currency System* exists between the two countries although hostile elements within the Afghan establishment have been discouraging this trend.

Common Economic Community: Afghan Refugees in Pakistan's Economy

Currently, about 0.8-1.0 million Afghan refugees reside in Balochistan province, out of which an estimated 60 per cent are employed in the farming and fruit orchards sector. In fact, these refugees, who had generations of experience in fruit farming in their home country, are the main factor behind the huge expansion of fruit orchards in Balochistan over the past three decades. As a result, Balochistan has become a major fruit and vegetable exporter to Punjab and Sind provinces and the Middle East. If these refugees were to return home, the fruit farming sector in Balochistan is sure to be affected adversely. Similarly, Afghan refugees support the carpet weaving and gemstone businesses in Khyber

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Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) from where the annual export of carpets and gemstones tops USD 140 million and 30 million, respectively.

Another estimated 1.0 million Afghan refugees are directly responsible for burgeoning trade, both formal and informal, in Pak Rupee denomination between the two countries in which the industrial and manufacturing sectors of all provinces of Pakistan benefit. Some Pakistani banks, including the state-owned National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), with their branches located in key Afghan cities, are promoting trade in Pak Rupee denomination between the two countries eliminating the complications of foreign currency regulations and exchange rate fluctuations. These useful and skilled sections of Afghan refugees are now integrated into Pakistani society for all practical purposes. This 'blending' of populations on a large scale is giving rise to the emergence of a *Common Economic Community* composed of business communities of both countries.

Cultural Affinity

There is a high degree of cultural affinity between Afghans and Pakistanis, especially in KPK, Sindh and Balochistan. Social mobility in Pakistan has facilitated the movement and relocation of large numbers of both local and Afghan Pashtuns across the length and breadth of Pakistan. This is further reinforced by the age-old cultural links between the two countries. At one point in time, in the 1980s, almost 60 per cent of the population of Afghanistan was residing in Pakistan in refugee camps or in rented accommodation.

A whole generation of Afghan refugees, born, bred and educated in Pakistan, have imbibed many aspects of Pakistani culture. *Cricket, Lahori kulfā, Peshawari chappal-kebab, tak-a-tak* delicacies and, of course, Urdu language is prominently visible in the *bazaars* (markets) of Kabul and other major Afghan towns. Many Afghans prefer Pakistani schools, colleges and universities for educating their children. More than 90 per cent of Afghans prefer Pakistan for healthcare and specialised medical treatment. The families of a very large number of Afghan ministers, bureaucrats, businessmen, professionals and blue-collared workers continue to reside in Pakistan to benefit from comparatively better security, urban facilities and social life. As mentioned earlier, inter-marriages between Afghans and Pakistani families are fairly common. Notwithstanding the somewhat hostile mind-set of the Afghan establishment, there is a distinct movement towards

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the evolution of a *Common Culture* which is progressively binding together the populations of the two countries.

This pro-Pakistan generation of Afghans, the majority being between the ages of 20 and 50 years, is now figuring prominently in the affairs of Afghanistan and can prove to be a powerful positive force for rapprochement between the two countries. This '*strategic depth*' in the hearts and minds of the younger Afghan population can and should act as a precursor for a true and mutually beneficial strategic depth, rather than the flawed grandiloquent notions of 'territorial strategic depth'.

Pakistan's Special Policy on Wheat

Afghanistan is a cereal-short country and one of the major importers of Pakistani wheat. Pakistani authorities also turn a blind eye towards small-scale wheat smuggling across its north-west borders into Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan have witnessed a concentrated growth of flour mills in recent years. Pakistan has always followed a good neighbourly practice of catering to food needs of the Afghan people. The people of Afghanistan are aware of this and appreciate Pakistan's value in this regard. As an additional measure of support to Afghanistan's economy, Pakistan is spending USD 300 million on development projects in Afghanistan in the higher education, transport and health sectors.

Geostrategists around the world recognise the strategic value of surplus wheat production. Interestingly, Pentagon includes wheat in its list of strategic materials. This *Wheat Factor*, if properly handled, can prove to be a major instrument for cementing close ties between the two countries and nations. In this regard, it should be noted that cheap wheat has lately become available from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia, as the last-mentioned country has been able to reverse the decline in its food production suffered in the wake of the collapse of Soviet Union. Recent price increases of wheat in Pakistan will invite competition from cheaper sources. The world markets are closely monitoring this wheat relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan which gives the latter considerable leverage with the former. Pakistan's policymakers need to be aware of this useful leverage and should adopt appropriate policy measures to protect it.

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Afghan Mineral Wealth: Potential Bonanza

Afghanistan is known to possess rich sources of iron, copper, tin, barite, sulphur, talc zinc, gold, marble, rubies, emerald, lapis lazuli, salt, mica, magnesium, lithium, bauxite, uranium and rare earth minerals. Some of these are already becoming lucrative business in Pakistan which acts both as a transit market and an end-user.

However, other countries are moving in on the mineral resources of Afghanistan. China has invested USD 2.9 billion in the Aynak Copper mines near Kabul; known and indicated copper deposits may total up to 30 million metric tonnes. In 2011, an Indian company was awarded mining rights in Haji-Gak Iron Ore mines estimated to contain ore worth USD 420 billion. This project will also include the construction of a power plant and an estimated USD 1 billion for laying a rail line from Haji-Gak to the Iranian port of Chahbahar; the Iranian rival to Gwadar Port. But till now, it seems that the Afghan nation is not properly benefiting from these operations. For example, in the Wardak province of Afghanistan, clandestine open strip-mining of either Uranium or Rare Earth Metals (probably by the British during 2010-11) has left miles of open trenches.

It is estimated that USD 1 trillion worth of untapped mineral wealth lies buried in Afghanistan. The exciting potential of considerable expansion and growth offered by the mineral sector trade, if properly exploited, can be another major factor contributing to the emergence of a *Common Economic Community*. Speedy action needs to be taken so that Pakistan is not left behind in developing a mutually beneficial cooperation plan for mineral exploration with Afghanistan. As things stand today though, Pakistan is in danger of missing the boat.

Analogous Challenges

While the several commonalities and convergences discussed in the foregoing can provide the building blocks for a *'special'* relationship of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, yet there are serious obstacles in this regard which also need to be squarely faced. These relate to the analogous challenges emanating largely from common origins - that of extremist religious ideology, *jihadist* militancy, sectarian and ethnic strife and narcotics cultivation in addition to the traditional hostility between establishments of both countries and regional geopolitics of hegemonic powers. All these are briefly discussed in the following.

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Ideological Sectarian Divides, Jihadist Militancy

Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are racked by a violent ideological divide between Secular-Liberalists who desire to see their country as a replica of Western liberal societies, and Conservative-Islamists who desire to see society conform to traditional Islamist values as embodied in the early periods of Islam. The populace of both countries is torn into various shades of political right and left between these two ideological extremes.

This ideological divide is further complicated by overlapping layers of sectarian and ethnic divisions. These divisions have brought unending civil war and opportunities for two foreign military invasions of Afghanistan over the past three and a half decades and their spill-over has embroiled Pakistan in Islamist insurgencies, terrorism and sectarian strife. Prolonged conflict and widespread slaughter has destabilised the societies of both countries and given birth to violent religious extremism and *Jihadist* militancy.

The role of Pakistan in the aftermath of both foreign invasions enmeshed it in the complex matrix of Afghan ethnic and sectarian factionalism giving rise to hostile sentiments against it amongst some Afghan factions. These Afghan factions fail to appreciate that Pakistan had to do what it did because of its own geopolitical compulsions and the desperate need to deflect the mortal threat posed to it by the presence of foreign super-power military forces in neighbouring Afghanistan. These events have led to deep suspicions, misunderstandings and bad blood between the two countries, especially between their respective government establishments and some segments of the intelligentsia. Overcoming this hostility represents the biggest challenge to building a *'special'* relationship with Afghanistan.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the common challenges of religious extremism, *jihadist* militancy and sectarian violence faced by both countries have arisen from common origins and events and are being played out by closely allied militant outfits. This commonality, in itself, provides a motivation for developing a close understanding and a *'special'* working relationship between governments and political and social leaders of both countries in order to implement a common and closely coordinated strategy to overcome these common challenges.

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Narcotics in Afghanistan: A Common Challenge

On US-NATO's watch over the past decades, Afghanistan has become the world's major supplier of narcotics (both marijuana and opium) catering to about 93 per cent of the world's demand for heroin and other opiates. About 60 per cent of Afghanistan's economy is now narco-based. It has criminalised both society and government in Afghanistan. An estimated 40 per cent of Afghanistan's narcotics are smuggled via Pakistani territory to foreign markets. Reportedly, between USD 6-8 billion annually filter back into the Pak-Afghan region from this narcotics trade. As a result, Pakistan is also deeply affected by the evils of illegal narcotics trade.

The ongoing conflict in Pakistan-Afghanistan, in many aspects, resembles the Opium Wars waged by Britain in the mid-Nineteenth Century in the Far East. Both powerful local and international narco-mafias have developed a huge interest in continuation of conflict in Afghanistan so that they can carry on with their lucrative business and are active in this regard.

The smuggling of Afghan narcotics via Pakistan is contributing to increasing criminality in society and corruption both within government and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Pakistan. It also suits the international and local narco-mafias to keep Pakistani LEAs tied down in insurgencies and terrorism in FATA, KPK, Balochistan and Karachi to divert both focus and resources from anti-narcotics operations. Therefore, it is probable that they are providing funding to terrorist groups and even involving some of them in narcotic smuggling activities.

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan need to break this global narco-chain by helping Afghanistan transition to more legitimate economic activities. However, considering the huge scale of this problem, they cannot manage this transition on their own resources. Help will be needed from larger countries such as Russia, Europe and China who themselves are adversely affected by addiction and narco-related crime and should be willing to play a positive role in this regard. The USA, though, is a doubtful player in this matter and has till now played a negative role in this regard as its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is notorious for employing slush funds obtained from narcotics trade to finance its clandestine subversive operations against other countries.

It is obvious that illegal narcotic cultivation and trade is no longer just an Afghan problem. It has grown into a joint Pak-Afghan problem. Only joint efforts over an extended period will yield beneficial results. This issue

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too provides an incentive for pursuing a 'special' relationship between the two countries.

The Prickly Bush of Afghan Politics

The population of Afghanistan consists of Pashtun (40-45 per cent), Tajik (27-28 per cent), Hazara (9-10 per cent), Uzbek (9-10 per cent), Turkmen (4 per cent), Aimak (3-4 per cent), Baloch (2 per cent) and other smaller ethnic groups (Pashai, Gujjar, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Brahui etc.) which together constitute around 4 per cent of the population. The main power struggles that have racked Afghanistan since the 1990s have been waged between Pashtuns and Tajiks, the latter generally supported by the Uzbek and Hazara who are generally anti-Pashtun and more aligned with Tajiks. However, this does not mean that they do not have their own differences. Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras have proven to be fractious allies and bitter enemies to each other too. The Afghan Insurgency is largely composed of the Afghan Taliban, Haqqani and Hikmatyar groups who are predominantly Pashtun which is why the USA was able to obtain the support of the rag-tag Northern Alliance militia of Tajiks and Uzbeks to oust the Afghan Taliban from power. This has further embittered Pashtun and Non-Pashtun ethnic relations.

Inter-ethnic relations are not prone to peace in Afghanistan although short-term understanding based on accommodation of perceived interest is not impossible. But the stark reality is that relations between Afghan tribes and ethnicities even in the best of times have remained in a state of uneasy equilibrium with the possibility of conflict ever looming in the background. In fact, another round of bitter ethnic infighting is widely expected in the post-US withdrawal period.

Traditionally, the Afghan power equation, known as *Meesaq-e-Milli* or its national-political compact, revolved around a loose confederation of ethnic/regional power groups enjoying substantive autonomy while looking up to Kabul as the *Meesaq's* centre-pivot which performed the role of a neutral balancer-mediator-arbitrator-conciliator of ethnic-regional issues. The Persian-ised Pashtun-Durrani Monarchy proved extremely dexterous in performing this role and was able to maintain relative harmony in Afghanistan for over two centuries. This also aided in the emergence of a consciousness of an Afghan Nationhood amongst the disparate multi-ethnic tribal society of that country. The slaughter of the Durrani Monarchy and

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its allies during the Afghan Saur Revolution and the 1979-Soviet Invasion, therefore, proved to be a major setback to the Afghan *Meesaq* by depriving it of its centre-pivot and disturbing the delicate balance of tribal/regional power which was sustaining harmony in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has practically remained in a state of civil war ever since. This has also provided opportunities for external interference.

The formal trend of the post-9/11 Afghan Central Government, propped up by the US, has been to give more prominence to other ethnic groups and marginalise Pashtuns who are the major component of the Afghan Insurgency against US-NATO invasion. The US-imposed Afghan Constitution of 2004 has distorted the traditional mode of governance in Afghanistan by concentrating power in the office of the President at the expense of the regions and tribes. This goes against the very grain of the traditional Afghan political power equation and all but guarantees that this Constitution will not survive if the US-NATO alliance leaves the region. In a sense, it has already failed considering the current extra-constitutional power-sharing arrangement in Kabul which totally negates the Constitution. It is also certain to lead to another round of civil war in Afghanistan; hopefully, though, of limited scope and duration if the entrenched tribal warlords can work out an understanding on power sharing. A future stable Afghanistan will be built only when all ethnic groups are proportionally represented in the government - with the Pashtuns enjoying the traditional position of being the leading group.

The complex and convoluted politics of Afghanistan have been likened to a *prickly bush* which is best given a wide skirt. Pakistan is also well-advised to keep clear of Afghan politics and leave it entirely to the Afghans themselves to work out their internal political power equations. Pakistan needs to remain focused on the higher strategic issues of regional security and stability and trade and development opportunities and combating the common challenge of violent religious extremism in the Pak-Afghan region. Pakistan's strategy in this regard has to be based on a well-thought out combination of political, strategic, economic, cultural, social, and religious factors.

Geopolitical Complexities

Afghanistan's critical geopolitical location makes it a 'gateway' for Central Asia. Pakistan provides the transit lifeline for Afghanistan's economy and regional trade and its access to international waters. In turn, Pakistan's

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trade, transport and energy integration with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) needs the transit of Afghanistan. Therefore, both Afghanistan and Pakistan possess critical transit connectivity potentially benefiting each other as well as other regional economies interested in doing business in Afghanistan and in the region. Pakistan provides the most convenient access to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to both Afghanistan and China. This connectivity could be extended to Russia in time.

Simultaneously, though, this connectivity is also the source of intense geopolitical rivalries between regional and world powers. All are pursuing their own interests in this region. It is logical, therefore, to assume that there will be substantial resistance to any move towards the development of a '*special*' relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

USA is intensely allergic to the rise of modern China and the resurgence of Russia under Putin. The *cordon sanitaire* of American containment of China and Russia will not be complete as long as Afghanistan, Pakistan and CARs are not fully integrated into USA's containment strategy designed to deny China access to the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. Pakistan's historical closeness to China ensures that any movement towards a close '*special*' Pak-Afghan relationship will be frowned upon by the US and actively opposed by it. USA will accept such a stabilising relationship only if it is a part of USA's 'containment strategy' or perceived to bolster it - otherwise USA may be content to keep the Pak-Afghan region in chaos.

India has always cultivated a close relationship with Afghanistan with a view to keep it hostile to Pakistan. India and Afghanistan have remained close ever since both were part of the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War period. Post US-NATO invasion, India jumped onto the US bandwagon and exploited the opportunity to use Afghanistan as a base for channelling support to anti-Pakistan terrorist groups such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and others, to launch terror campaigns and insurgencies inside Pakistan. The new Indian Prime Minister, Modi, is pursuing this policy even more aggressively regardless of the pious intentions for peace shared with his former Pakistani counterpart in meetings over the past few months. *Today it is India, not Pakistan, that has achieved strategic depth in Afghanistan* and it will continue to use its allies within the Afghan establishment to subvert and undermine Pak-Afghan relations. In fact, senior Indian government officials and political leaders have openly declared their opposition to CPEC and their

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determination to prevent Chinese access to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf as well as their intention to deploy terrorist proxies to keep Pakistan unstable.

Russia was content to let the Americans blunder into Afghanistan and suffer another 'Vietnam'. Putin's resurgent Russia continues to consider CARs as its sphere of influence, and therefore, maintains an active interest in Afghanistan. Russian and Afghan establishments continue to enjoy traditionally close relationships since the Soviet era, albeit in a low key manner in present times given the US-NATO presence in Afghanistan. Russia may remain ambivalent towards a '*special*' relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan unless it is convinced that such a relationship will serve to stabilise Afghanistan and contain *Jihadist* Militancy so as to prevent it from infecting the Muslim populations inside Russia and CARs. The emerging China-Russia-Pakistan alignment is a positive development in this regard and may provide additional leverage to Pakistan.

Iran continues to pursue its own interests in Afghanistan and has substantial influence with the Persian-speaking and Shia segments. It has funded huge housing projects in Herat and encouraged Afghan Shias to relocate and settle there. It has indicated to them that it will write off all housing loans in this regards. Iran's relations with the Sunni segments, especially, the largely Sunni-Pashtun Afghan Taliban, range from neutral to actively hostile. There is convergence in the interests of Iran and India in the sectors of maritime security and international trade revolving around the Chahbahar Port and related road and rail links to Afghanistan and CARs. This sea-land route through Iran is not very popular with the majority Sunni Afghans due to their historical rivalries. This route also bypasses and negatively impacts Pakistan, weakening its geopolitical clout. Considering these factors, it can be assumed that moves towards a '*special*' Pak-Afghan relationship will be disliked and undermined by Iran.

China has three main interests in the Pak-Afghan region. Firstly, it wishes to maintain this region as a 'break' in the USA's *cordon sanitaire* containment strategy, and therefore, desires an early exit of US military from Afghanistan. Secondly, it desires the elimination of *Jihadist* Militancy from this region to prevent it from destabilising its own adjoining Muslim majority provinces; and on this score China may tolerate US presence up to the point where in its estimation the *Jihadi* outfits are sufficiently degraded. Thirdly, it desires an end to chaos and conflict so as to exploit the economic opportunities offered by mineral wealth in Afghanistan and also to access to the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf via the Trade and Energy

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Corridor through Pakistan under the CPEC Project. All three interests require stable and effective states and governments in place in both transit countries.

Therefore, China is perhaps the only country which could be convinced to be supportive of a '*special*' Pak-Afghan relationship if it perceives it to be instrumental in stabilising the Pak-Afghan region, reconciling ethnic and sectarian divisions and containing *Jihadist* Militancy. The recent spate of terrorist bombings and attacks by local Muslim militants in the Chinese province of Xinjiang has given added urgency in China to seek viable solutions to these problems.

China is already investing in the mineral sector in Afghanistan. It is committed to proceed with the CPEC project which is also extremely important for Pakistan's economic development. However, continued conflict in the region as well as terror attacks inside China by Chinese *jihadist* elements are adversely affecting these plans. In this regard, it has to be kept in mind that China has fall-back plans for a New Silk Road and Maritime Route which bypasses Pakistan. Reportedly, China is less eager to construct CPEC along the western route (Islamabad-DG.Khan-DI.Khan-Gwadar) that would have gone through Pashtun and Baloch tribal belts in KPK and Balochistan and has indicated its preference for an 'early harvest' eastern route (Islamabad-Lahore-Upper Sind-Gwadar). All these are not encouraging signs and require urgent corrective measures on Pakistan's part.

Policy Proposals for Pak-Afghan '*Special*' Relationship

This paper has argued for the strategic imperative for Pakistan to pursue the objective of building a '*special*' relationship with Afghanistan. Extensive commonalities and common challenges which make it logical for both countries to work closely together have been highlighted. The geopolitical complexities and other obstacles to building such a relationship have also been indicated. Policy proposals are now outlined below. These proposals have been worked out on the following premise:

First, it has become a *strategic imperative* for Pakistan's own security and stability to ensure that Afghanistan is protected from future invasions by military powers. Therefore, Pakistan needs to take the initiatives in wooing Afghanistan into the proposed relationship.

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Second, the newly emerging factors of commonality - common language of communication, common currency, common trade and economic community, closer cultural affinities and increased dependence of Afghanistan's economy on Pakistan, common security and geopolitical challenges, have gotten the job of building a '*special*' relationship half done, and it would be terribly short-sighted to waste this historical opportunity for improving Pakistan's strategic position in the region and the world; an opportunity that may not be repeated in the foreseeable future.

Third, the traditionally hostile Afghan Establishment has to be managed dexterously so as not to create the impression that Pakistan intends to dominate and absorb Afghanistan. Pakistan would need to be extra generous and mindful of Afghan sensitivities - both cultural and political terms such as *confederation* or *union* will need to be scrupulously avoided.

Fourth, Pakistan must steer clear of the prickly bush of Afghan politics. The '*special*' relationship should be built upon mutually beneficial bilateral and regional trade, security partnerships and free movement of people between the two countries. Pakistan being the bigger neighbour should have no fear of being swamped by a neighbour one-tenth its size.

Fifth, in view of the complex geopolitical rivalries in the region, Pakistan must proceed with care, in an incremental manner, so as to avoid hostility to its moves under this approach. Focused diplomatic activity will be required in this regard to pre-empt or manage negative reactions both regionally and globally.

Sixth, the proposals should be primarily designed to deepen and cement existing relations between the publics of both countries and increase their joint economic stakes so as to generate a critical mass of public pressure on their respective political leadership, government establishments and media/opinion-makers, thus, neutralising the ongoing hostility between them on both sides and pushing them towards building cordial relations and close cooperation.

Phase-1 (Implementation Period: Year 1)

No-visa policy should be adopted, requiring only an entry stamp on passports at designated border points equipped with advanced biometrics/cameras for automatically recording all arriving and departing persons. Validity of stay should be 3 months and entry/exit charges should be nominal. In addition to Torkham and Chaman, other border-crossing

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points in Bajaur, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Zhob, Noshki and Dalbandin areas should also be developed.

An estimated 100,000 persons informally cross the Pak-Afghan border on a daily basis and illegal immigrants disappear amongst the million-plus Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan. Pak-Afghan border has become dangerously fuzzy. The conveniences of a No-Visa Policy and freedom from hassles with the border officials and police will make it attractive for Afghans to use legal channels to cross the border. The No-Visa Policy will, at one stroke, firm up the Durand Line and provide a treasure of computerized data with photographs of all border crossings on a daily basis.

The surge of goodwill for Pakistan amongst the ordinary Afghan people will be tremendous bringing them closer to Pakistan. Segments amongst the Afghan establishment could view this move with some suspicion but will not be able to resist it overtly due to pressure from its own people.

Phase-2 (Implementation Period: Year 2 Onwards)

Liberal Resident-Visa and Dual-Nationality Policy should be adopted for Afghan families who invest over PKR 200 million or PKR 50 million per household member (whichever is higher) and over PKR 400 million respectively in residential and commercial properties in designated urban areas of Pakistan.

The idea is to attract well-to-do businessmen, bureaucrats and intelligentsia who can then become a powerful positive force for rapprochement between the two countries. Influential Afghans with dual nationality will substantially increase Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. The provision of designated urban areas is to prevent concentration of Afghan population in a few areas only which may disturb the ethnic balance. Additionally, the demand for urban housing will also provide a boost to the construction industry and real estate businesses in Pakistan.

Phase-3 (Implementation Period: Year 4 Onwards)

Customs Union and Free Trade Agreement should be negotiated for establishing combined customs facilities at Karachi, Gwadar, Herat-Iran,

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Hairatan-Uzbekistan, Torghundi-Turkmenistan and other suitable points and allowing free movement of goods across Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Major trade volume with Afghanistan is already in Rupee denomination and largely in Pakistan's favour. Much of the trade is informal as well. Free trade will eliminate smuggling and associated corruption. A secure access to CARs will be ensured. It will free up personnel of Customs and LEAs for increased focus on smuggling of illegal narcotics and weapons. Subject to the emergence of suitable conditions, other neighbouring countries to the West (Iran, CARs) can also be invited to join in on appropriate terms wherein individual interests are also protected. The decision by Afghanistan and Pakistan to extend transit trade agreement to Tajikistan is a step in the right direction.

Phase-4 (Implementation Period: Year 6 Onwards)

Defence partnership or pact can be negotiated at an appropriate juncture to the mutual benefit of both countries.

Afghanistan will benefit from Pakistan's military capabilities and pave the way for evolution of a close alliance between the two militaries. For reasons already explained above, this move should not be done hastily and only after the benefits of free travel and trade take effect and render the Afghans more amenable. A start can be made by enrolling sizeable contingents of Afghan youth in Pakistani Cadet Colleges at subsidised fee and training of Afghan Army and Air Force Officers in military academies of Pakistan. Next, joint military exercises can be planned. Over a period of time, the military establishments of both countries will come close enough for a defence pact to be negotiated to mutual benefit.

Phase-5 (Implementation Period: Year 10 Onwards)

A broad-based strategic partnership agreement based on all types of complementarities should be formalised between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Appropriate flexibility would be needed to accommodate sensitivities and interests of both countries in the domain of foreign policy which should not be a problem provided long-term strategic and socioeconomic benefits and the need for sustainable peace are kept firmly in sight. Economic integration should be the major focus in this partnership agreement.

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Concluding Address

Tehmina Janjua*

I would like to begin by congratulating IPRI for successfully conducting this international conference on ‘Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects.’ I am also grateful for providing me this opportunity to address this gathering of eminent intellectuals and researchers.

This being my first address to a think-tank since assuming charge as Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, is reflective of the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan and bilateral relations in Pakistan’s foreign policy calculations.

I have always been appreciative of the commendable role think-tanks play in providing useful recommendations to policymakers on important issues of foreign and security policy. While going through the published programme of the event, I found that the sub-themes discussed during different sessions are quite pertinent. I hope that the audience would have benefited from the two-day deliberations.

At the very beginning, I would like to stress the importance of a peaceful neighbourhood in our foreign relations. Friendly, cordial and good neighbourly relations are the cornerstone of our foreign policy. We strive to maintain friendly ties with our neighbours and continue to strengthen our connectivity with the region in line with the vision of our leadership. Our efforts are, therefore, geared towards ensuring positive engagement with all our neighbours with the aim of developing a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan and the region.

In this context, for us the engagement with Afghanistan is important. We share common bonds of history, culture, ethnicity and religion. Given close proximity, the situation in Afghanistan directly affects us. Pakistan desires meaningful, constructive and prosperous relations with Afghanistan marked by engagement at all levels including political, military, intelligence and people-to-people. Recent visits of various delegations including multiparty Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq; Chief of General Staff, Gen. Bilal Akbar and Director

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General Inter-Services Intelligence, Gen. Naveed Mukhtar to Kabul are evidence of our desire to strengthen engagement with Afghanistan.

It is my firm view that people-to-people contacts provide a strong foundation to our relations. People of our two countries are connected through bonds of history and geography. It is a matter of pride for us that Pakistan has significantly contributed in strengthening the human resource base in Afghanistan. More than 48000 Afghan nationals educated in Pakistan are serving in various capacities in Afghanistan ranging from medicine to civil aviation. Of all the Afghan students studying abroad, nearly 60 per cent have been studying in Pakistan's colleges and universities. 3000 scholarships have been availed by Afghan students and another scheme of 3000 scholarships has been launched this year. We have recently imparted training to around 70 doctors and paramedic staff who would be serving in Pakistan funded hospitals in Afghanistan.

We have been hosting millions of Afghan refugees for the past many decades treating them like our own brethren. In addition, we are working on a visa regime for facilitating the movement of Afghan nationals to Pakistan for their health, education and economic needs.

It is our continuous endeavour to further strengthen connectivity between our two countries for promoting people-to-people interaction. In this regard, our Government is determined to enhance the modes of connectivity including through increased flights, and visa and transit facilitation. Under the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), Pakistan has been providing transit route for Afghan trade. We are engaged with the Afghan side for holding the next meeting of Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTTCA) for improving transit in line with the need of modern times.

The purpose of highlighting all these initiatives is to bring forth the fact that Pakistan and its people desire to see Afghanistan thrive as a peaceful and prosperous nation. However, the increasing violence, expanding influence of Daesh, growing ungoverned spaces -- all result in an unstable environment which is alarming for us and other neighbours. It also raises concerns at regional and international levels. The ungoverned spaces in Afghanistan are at the risk of becoming safe havens and sanctuaries for terrorists and militants. Some of the terrorist groups like TTP¹ and JuA¹ use

¹ Editor's Note: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar.

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these sanctuaries to undertake terrorist attacks in Pakistan through our 2,611 km long border.

To address this concern, our engagement with Afghanistan has to focus on two areas: i) counterterrorism, and ii) border management. Pakistan's military operations launched in tribal areas including Northern Waziristan as part of Operation Zarb-e-Azb helped clear the area of terrorists and miscreants. The remnants of these terrorist setups are being eliminated through Operation Rad-ul-Fasad.

To sustain the gains made through these Operations, the Government is working to implement an effective border management policy. Accordingly, Pakistan is determined to strengthen border controls. The purpose of these border controls is to prevent the movement of miscreants on the one hand, and on the other, to facilitate the legally documented movement of people and vehicles.

We have continued to emphasise that cooperation from the Afghan side is important to implement border management measures effectively. This is in the interest of both countries. To achieve this end, the two countries have agreed on a bilateral mechanism of cooperation at diplomatic, military and intelligence levels with political oversight at the Foreign Minister's level. The mechanism can provide a useful setup for enhancing cooperation and coordination to counter the common threat of terrorism.

As I mentioned earlier that peace and stability in Afghanistan is important for us as well as the region. There is a universal consensus that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict and lasting peace can only be achieved through a political process. This point is corroborated by the fact that use of military strategy in Afghanistan for over 15 years has not delivered.

Pakistan, on its part, has made serious efforts towards Afghan peace and reconciliation. We facilitated the Murree talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban in 2015. Later, we worked with Afghanistan, United States and China in the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) for facilitating peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. Unfortunately, both times the peace process was undermined.

It has been Pakistan's firm view that QCG is an effective forum for an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. In 2016, it did useful work towards facilitation of peace talks. However, Pakistan's policy remains to constructively engage in all initiatives and processes for peace in Afghanistan such as Heart of Asia, ICG, 6+1 or the recent Russian

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initiative. In the Moscow format meeting held on 14 April 2017 in Russia, there was a consensus among regional countries, including the Central Asian Republics (CARs) that the solution to Afghan conflict lies in an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. The participating countries also emphasised on the need of a regional approach for bringing lasting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

In the end, I would like to reiterate that peace and stability in Afghanistan is an important objective for us. Pakistan has, therefore, continued to make serious efforts for this goal. We also remain committed to strengthening our relations with Afghanistan.

Let me once again congratulate IPRI for organising a successful conference and hope that the Institute would continue to hold such activities in the future as well.

Thank you.■

Policy Recommendations of the Conference

In the light of the views expressed by the eminent Conference participants, the following policy recommendations were put forth:

Peace in Afghanistan: A Shared International and Regional Responsibility

Although the peace process should be Afghan-led and Afghan- owned, but at the same time, building peace in Afghanistan is a shared responsibility of all regional and global players. They must facilitate a reconciliation process to find a politically negotiated settlement. For this purpose, the concerned stakeholders, including the Afghan Government, the Taliban and regional/global players need to sit together on the negotiating table. Such negotiations could be sustained by focusing on mutual cooperation between the Afghan Government, the Taliban and regional countries to fight the Daesh. Major powers should also contribute in the fight against Daesh in Afghanistan, as it is also a threat to regional and world peace.

Letting Go of Vested Interests and Military Solutions

The instability in Afghanistan is being exploited by various powers for their vested interests. The approaches and strategies adopted to settle the Afghan issue are mainly based on military solutions. To bring an end to the Afghan quagmire, there is a need to have strategic clarity on the issue.

Letting Geoeconomics Work

The geopolitical and the geoeconomic dynamics offer both opportunities and challenges to the region. Geoeconomic factors can become major motivations for peace in the region. Regional players need to transform their geopolitical competition to geoeconomic cooperation. This will help to optimise connectivity through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the region and beyond. South Asian countries, in particular, should play down their political differences to benefit from the emerging economic opportunities. The Chinese-led One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative has set the pace of regional connectivity.

Policy Recommendations of the Conference

Need for Greater Trust

There is a need to have greater trust among the regional players, in particular between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Collectively Combating Threat of Non-state Actors

The rising transnational activities of non-state actors (NSAs) are posing serious threat to the economic development and security of regional countries. In order to weaken these actors, regional countries will have to give up their obstinate positions. The lack of cooperation, mistrust and regional rivalries can provide a conducive environment to extremist groups for exploitation. The way forward is to resolve all outstanding issues between different stakeholders through sustained and meaningful dialogue.

Improving Pak-Afghan Border Security

Security along the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border needs to be beefed through political and military cooperation of both countries so as to curtail illegal cross-border movement. Apart from using military personnel to monitor illegal cross-border movement, technical surveillance by drones and aircrafts should also be used. Raising Frontier Corps wings, fencing and electrification and drone surveillance are measures which have been unilaterally undertaken by Pakistan. Nevertheless, Afghanistan also needs to cooperate to control border infiltration. In this regard, the United States' role as a facilitator in border management can be useful.

High-level Official Interactions

To allay misperceptions and negativity surrounding Pak-Afghan bilateral ties, the political leadership on both sides needs to take initiatives for meaningful engagement. In this context, visits of high-level political, diplomatic, intelligence and military personnel between both countries should be institutionalised.

Resolving Property Dispensation Issues of Returning Afghan Refugees

Afghan refugees in Pakistan hold property, which is illegal and while going back to Afghanistan it is not possible for them to dispose it off. The

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Government of Pakistan should look into the matter and provide alternate options to Afghan refugees. This will create good will for Pakistan among the Afghan people.

Home-grown Afghan Governance

Western style of democracy is not the solution to bring peace in Afghanistan. The country needs a consensus-based system of governance as per their culture. The traditional Afghan *Jirga* system should also be given due consideration.

People-to-People Contact

People-to-people contacts between Afghanistan and Pakistan can reduce the trust deficit. In this regard, more student exchange programmes, joint academic programmes between universities can improve the existing situation and build trust.

Controlling Narco-Trade

Curtailement of opium production in Afghanistan is required as drug trafficking provides funding for terrorist organisations. A strict control on the movement of opium is also needed. In this regard, timely and transparent intelligence sharing at regional level is necessary. For this, an effective international and regional coordination mechanism and operations, including enhanced Container Freight Stations (CFS), Inland Container Depots (ICD), and capacity enhancement of transit countries is required. There is also a need to delink counter narcotic efforts from the geopolitical and geoeconomic competition between countries.

Reconciliation with the Taliban

The prolonged War on Terror and the ingress of Daesh in Afghanistan have changed the region's perception of the Taliban. Most regional countries such as Russia, China, Iran and Central Asian States, which were earlier against the Taliban, today support talks with them to counter the bigger threat of Daesh. The Afghan people have seen the war for decades. To attain peace and defeat militancy once and for all, the Afghan Government and other stakeholders need to convince the US and India to

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support a political settlement of the Afghan conflict through a process of reconciliation with the Taliban.

Role of the United States

The US has been an influential political actor in Afghan affairs. Its absence in the recently concluded Moscow talks on Afghanistan has sent a negative signal to the concerned parties. Russia's regional initiative is a positive step towards political settlement of the Afghanistan conflict. US participation is extremely important for the success of the initiative.

Pak-Afghan Bilateral Trade

Since Pakistan and Afghanistan need to adopt close cooperation for national political reconciliation, both should work on commonality of interests. In this context, Preferential Trade Agreement is required to increase trade volume. Moreover, liberal visa policy should be introduced with a clause regarding dual citizenship based on sizable volume of investment. Common customs facilitation is also required between the two countries to reduce smuggling.

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

Afghanistan is facing an internal trust deficit which is a leading cause of the failure of the reconciliation process. Therefore, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) should be initiated and implemented. In this regard, the release of prisoners and ceasefire in conflict areas would be helpful in bringing warring factions to the table.■

PART II

Existing Situation in Afghanistan

- Regional Dynamics and Implications for Afghanistan
- Ingress of Non-State Actors in Afghanistan - Islamic State (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda
- Effective Pak-Afghan Border Management: A Key to Security in the Region

Regional Dynamics and Implications for Afghanistan

Working Paper

Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi*

Introduction

Regional security dynamics in South Asia are intensifying at a time when presumably peaceful economic ventures are ascending. In the age of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas project, Gwadar and Chahbahar, regional states in South Asia are mired in geopolitics of increasing militarised security. This securitisation bodes ill for Afghanistan as its dependent status is bound to be stretched further if contemporary regional dynamics continue to unfold as they are. The fundamental contention of this paper is that the regional security complex in South Asia based on conflict formation is in dire need of transformation. This transformation is imperative because the regional security complex is being defined through an overarching ‘economic’ framework where if security issues of a political and military nature predominate, the outcome for development and long-term gains are minimised. The logic of economic games is that they are played over the longer-term, are iterative and in this sense, contribute to a less hostile geopolitical dynamic.

The paper seeks to engage in identifying for analysis two dynamics that are at the core of regional politics in South Asia, geopolitics and geoeconomics - both centered on Pakistan in recent times. Geopolitically, all four neighbouring states have pointed fingers at Pakistan for the presence of non-state armed terrorist groups fanning violence in their own countries. India, since the 2008 Mumbai attacks has harped on the theme most vociferously, which increased after the Pathankot and Uri attacks (Dawn 2015). Iran, has complained of the presence of Jundallah and now Jaish-al-Adl (Army of Justice) which have carried out attacks on Iranian territory (Dawn 2017). Afghanistan has also pointed fingers at Pakistan for harbouring the Afghan Taliban who it alleges carry out suicide attacks

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inside the country (Al-Jazeera 2017). Ironically, China, Pakistan's most trusted all-weather friend alerted the state about the presence of East Turkestan Islamic (ETI) Movement in the area straddling the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan which then resulted in the killing of their leader Hassan Mahsum in 2003 (China Daily 2003).

In response, the Pakistani state has reprimanded the Afghan government for the presence of non-state actors threatening her internal stability including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jaamat-ul-Ahrar (Reuters 2012). With respect to Iran, Pakistan cooperated with their authorities in 2009 when Abdolmalek Rigi was apprehended by the former's authorities on an alleged tip off by Islamabad (Shuster 2010; The Express Tribune 2015). With India, Pakistan has responded by pointing to its domestic troubles in Kashmir whose ill-governance and state brutality continues to foster an indigenous crop of hardened Kashmiri nationalists ready to give up their lives for their nationalist cause. In all, Pakistan has made clear to its neighbours that it has itself been a victim of terrorism plaguing the South Asian region resulting in the deaths of 80,000 of its own people (The Express Tribune 2015a), including the terrible Army Public School tragedy where innocent children were brutally killed by armed terrorists.

On the other hand, the geoeconomic trends are also centred on Pakistan with the initiation of CPEC. The now USD 62 billion project envisaging the building of roads, ports, free economic zones attending not only to Pakistan and China's economic vitality but also fostering regional connectivity with Afghanistan and the Central Asian States stands at the opposite end of the geopolitical trends bordering on conflict and hostility (Siddiqui 2017).

This, then, is the central premise of the paper. That is, the geopolitical and geoeconomic trends have an inverse relationship with each other with a rise in geopolitical hostility negating seeming economic benefits, while a rise in economic ventures through regional connectivity leading to a probable lessening of hostile geopolitical trends. The paper seeks to unearth the two trends by focusing on two dyads: Pakistan-Afghanistan and Pakistan-India relations and their impact on Afghanistan. A few caveats, however, are in order. The rise in regional connectivity through geoeconomic ventures does not imply that geopolitical competition will fade away completely. Secondly, geoeconomic integration does not imply that all states will benefit equally. Some states will benefit more than others, however, the logic of benefits in themselves can also motivate states

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to engage in economic and business pursuits despite the relative advantage of other states (Powell 1991).

Modern international politics serves two examples of the management of geopolitical and geoeconomic linkages in interesting ways. The first example is from Europe where after the end of the Second World War, Western European states reoriented their destinies towards more peaceful pursuits resulting in the eventual realisation of a European Union (EU). While current economic frailties dot the EU, the probability of Europe returning to its pre-1945 phase seems distinct and remote. Europe has progressed forth with its economic leverage positing an identity of material development.

The second example of a successful interplay of geopolitical and geoeconomic linkages comes from China itself. In the Chinese case, the successful pursuit of economic development through the Open Door policy came after a radical suspension of geopolitical pursuits, most importantly, on the issue of Taiwan. It is an open question if China's economic rise would have been possible without an overhauling of its geopolitical pursuits but the question is irrelevant because the Chinese leadership made a conscious policy choice to do so. The fact that they did is more important - for it is the framing of leaders that decides policy as much as structural and circumstantial factors involved.

Hence, the key question is the following: how will South Asia face up to the twin dynamics of aggressive geopolitics and the probability of an animated geoeconomics? There are two possible answers:

1. Pakistan-centred geoeconomic pursuits need to be translated into a regional game of payoffs where unit-level gains lead to regional prosperity.
2. Geopolitical competition needs tempering either through elimination (the European example) or suspension (the Chinese case study) before geoeconomic gains are materialised.

As far as the implications on Afghanistan are concerned, the paper hypothesizes that if geopolitical trends continue to manifest themselves, the country will continue to resemble a 'game without an end.' This rendering implies that it remains locked in a perpetual struggle in which both internal and external forces neither win nor lose. In this regard, the paper will explore the dynamics of Pakistan-Afghanistan and Pakistan-India dynamics and unearth the mixed motive nature of their ties and what can be done in

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order to lessen the heavily militarised nature of their security dynamics. The manifestation of regional economic linkages provides Afghanistan the opportunity to drag itself out of the present conundrum and become part of a regional nexus of trade and development. The second key question is the following - how to transform the geopolitics of security competition to the geoeconomics of peaceful interaction?

Regional Dynamics: Pakistan-Afghanistan

Between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a historical security dilemma exists marred by border issues, ethnic considerations and in recent times accusations that both states are harbouring non-state actors in order to hurt each other (Khan 2010). The security dilemma, it must be stated, is a product of colonial machinations but is not entirely an essentialist objective reality that stands to tear bilateral relations between them apart. In fact, their bilateral security dynamics are relational, which implies primarily that: their major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another (Buzan and Waever 2003: 44).

In the present context, one should ask whether their relations can be resolved only if Afghanistan accepts the Durand Line as the primary territorial boundary (Siddiqui 2017a). If it does so, will it lead to a reorientation of Pak-Afghan relations? Secondly, another interesting question that requires asking is, whether Afghanistan's irredentist claims are still relevant?

Between these two nations, a major rapprochement was witnessed between 1976 and 1978 when President Daoud visited Pakistan twice and Afghanistan dropped its claim on Pakhtun self-determination. Hostile propaganda in both countries ceased and an active search for an amiable solution of the Pakhtunistan dispute was well underway when the Marxist coup took place in Afghanistan in April 1978 (Cheema 1983). Furthermore, the irredentist element from the Pakistan side is well minimised and can be argued was never a strong force even during the heyday of Bacha Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) Party. In fact, the Party leanings were not ethnic rather nonviolent and social reformist in orientation (Ahmad 2016). Over the post-colonial period, the Awami National Party (ANP) has emerged as a mainstream national actor, not irredentist, where Pakhtun nationalism serves merely to supply votes to the party rather than as a call to a Greater Pakhtunistan.

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If Greater Pakhtunistan were the case, the ANP would have seen a decisive military confrontation with the Pakistani state, which was never the case in the country's post-colonial history. At present, Pakhtun nationalism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) has been further sidelined with the rise of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) where the Pakhtuns voted in numbers not on the basis of nationalism or religion rather service delivery. The defeat of the ANP and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI -F) and the rise of the PTI in the 2013 elections is a further manifestation of where the ideological prowess of the Pakhtuns in KPK lies. Hence, from the Pakistan side, Afghan irredentist claims less relevance because no socio-political actors exist to support it.

Hence, in order to proceed, an explicit comment on the part of Afghanistan over the Durand Line needs to be made. And this should be made with the realisation that the Pakhtunistan issue is a dead horse which holds lesser relevance in bilateral relations. On the Pakistan side, since policies in Afghanistan have been instrumentalised from the perspective of insecurities caused by the non-acceptance of the Durand Line, an explicit commitment needs to be made with respect to insecurity, that is, Pakistan does not seek strategic depth in Afghanistan. Pakistan's quest for strategic depth against India is one of the most obvious drivers of its Afghan policy (Weinbaum and Harder 2008).

It flummoxes an observer of Pak-Afghan relations that both states are allies in the War on Terror not enemies. That is, both, as well as the United States (US), have an explicit commitment to oversee that hostile non-state actors are dealt with adequately. However, while they do it, they cannot seemingly agree to a common position which integrates their strategies with each other. The recent border clashes are rather unfortunate while both states should be deploying their power against non-state actors such as the Islamic State (IS) which is bent on destabilising the region (BBC 2017). Kabul accuses Islamabad of supporting the Afghan Taliban, while Islamabad accuses Kabul of harbouring the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Interestingly, when it comes to the Afghan Taliban, both Pakistan and Afghanistan (including the US) tacitly agree that reconciliation process needs to be undertaken with the Afghan Taliban. In this regard, failed peace talks have taken place between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Qatar (The Guardian 2016).

To put all of this into perspective, for peace to prevail inside Afghanistan, it is essential that the Afghan Taliban accept the Afghan Constitution and renounce violence (Khaama Press 2012). Without

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accepting the framework of the constitution and its essential basis, the Afghan Taliban will not be deemed as legitimate partners interested in the socio-political stability of Afghanistan. Hence, the mainstreaming of the Taliban in Afghanistan's political processes is an essential ingredient for other actors, including US and Pakistan, to initiate dialogue and reconciliation. Without such an acceptance, the Afghan Taliban will be seen as hostile actors bent on conquering the rest of the country through zero-sum tactics inviting further conflict and hostility as well as minimal acceptance from the international community. If the Taliban continue their rampage, the possibility of dialogue, reconciliation and a political end to the crisis becomes less and less tenable (BBC 2017a).

On the Pakistan side, perhaps more work needs to be expended on increasing its soft power in Afghanistan. However, increasing its soft power, which means building infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads and highways, for example, means expending money which is a challenge considering Pakistan's meagre financial resources (Daily Times 2016).

It should be realised by both that they cannot continue to assert at the official level that terrorism is a mutual problem but then engage in a blame game which heightens insecurities. This cannot continue any longer because the longer it continues, the geoeconomic benefits through CPEC become compromised. A way out through mutual acceptance of security concerns and their effective dilution is a way forward from the present *impasse*. This is imperative so that non-state actors detrimental to both countries are minimised for the smooth flow of economic benefits.

Regional Dynamics: Pakistan-India

Contemporary geopolitical dynamics between Pakistan and India border on hostility and conflict. This is problematic again because geopolitical rivalry resulting in crises, limited wars or terrorist attacks undercuts economic gains. Bilateral relations between these two neighbours have been of a mixed motive nature resulting in conflict in the early 2000s when the Indian Parliament was attacked in December 2001 but then leading to cooperation in the Musharraf-Manmohan Singh phase where the former made explicit proposals relative to Kashmir and border issues (Naqvi 2006). The same good-will as between Musharraf and Manmohan Singh was also witnessed between Nawaz Sharif and Narendra Modi when the latter visited Lahore on a private visit, however, terrorist attacks in Pathankot and Uri, recent

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border skirmishes, the killing of Burhan Wani and the uprising in Kashmir has tended to upset these relations.

The Indian strategy in Afghanistan is rather simple: use its influence with the Afghan government in order to undercut Pakistan's interests and lay the basis for India as a rising power in the region (Pant 2010). On the other hand, Pakistan has alleged that India instrumentalises Afghanistan as a sanctuary in order to provide relief and shelter to separatist ethnic actors fighting against the Pakistan state, a charge which gained traction with the arrest of an Indian spy in Balochistan (Yousaf 2017).

Is the Indian strategy sustainable? No, because Pakistan's internal conditions are a function of its own policies and deliberations not merely external involvement. Despite alleged machinations in Balochistan and Karachi, an improvement in Pakistan's internal security conditions have been witnessed in recent times. Furthermore, the security situation has also improved in Peshawar, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and other parts of Pakistan owing to Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasad (Geo Tv 2017). The key here is that India can push through its agenda of destabilising Pakistan, but cannot prevent the latter from improving its own sociopolitical and socioeconomic agenda.

While Indian alleged embarks on destabilising Pakistan, the reality is that India is interested in economic linkages in Central Asia through Afghanistan and cannot sustain this project, unless a working relationship with Pakistan is attained. The rhetoric from Indian politicians which receives traction in the local media aside, Pakistan's geography makes it inevitable for India to seek peace with it if geoeconomic benefits are to be accrued (Bagga 2015).

India, then, has a similar imperative as Pakistan. That is, for geoeconomic pursuits to be sustained and materialised, peace with Pakistan is a must. The Indian strategy of isolating Pakistan is untenable because of the latter's active links with China, its overtures towards Russia and its engagement with the US, despite difficulties in the relationship during the War on Terror. With the general improvement in internal security conditions in Pakistan (which they must because without it CPEC cannot materialise), the Indian policy of seeking Pakistan's isolation is bound to falter and is untenable in the long run (Deccan Chronicle 2017). Finally, the dynamic of Pak-India relations has to take into account India's failure in Kashmir and the fact that governance mechanisms within Indian Kashmir have to improve radically without which the general spate of relations cannot move forward (The Indian Express 2016).

Conclusion

A reader of the analysis presented above might ask the proverbial question: how is all of this possible? How can peace and security be maintained between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan and how can the zero-sum logic of relations between the three states transformed into a positive-sum logic of mutual gains and cooperation?

The optimism relative to peace in Afghanistan is ingrained in the fact that hostility and conflict in the South Asian region is not due to objective, systemic properties such as anarchy but rather actor-oriented subjectivities. It is actors at the unit-level who decide whether conflict or cooperation will be pursued towards other states. If conflict is the predominant strategy, this is only because the lead actors play out their politics in such obnoxious ways. Peace in Europe or economic development in China did not come about because of objective facts of international life but because fundamental decisions were made by human actors. If human actors have a will to war, they also have capabilities to develop a will to peace. They do so when they realise that sustained conflict does not benefit anyone.

South Asia, as of today, stands at a precipice. The first choice is to join in the worldwide 'cult of the offensive' (van Evera 1984) typified by strongmen such as Trump, Putin and the like destined to take the world towards conflict and hostility. The second choice for South Asia is to create its own destiny. There is a dire need within Pakistan, India and Afghanistan for socially cohesive socioeconomic development. The South Asian region can choose to write its own destiny because strong undercurrents of economic benefits exist in regional geopolitics which offer possibility of growth and development.

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Ingress of Non-State Actors in Afghanistan – Islamic State (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda

Thought Piece

Dr Attaullah Wahidyar*

Many definitions have been put forward for the non-state actors and almost all of them agree on the non-statehood nature of these entities. (Davis 2009; Krause and Milliken 2009; Akca 2009; Maoz and Akca 2012). A widely accepted assertion is that non-state actors often operate outside the state institutions sphere of influence. Although accepted, this definition has proven problematic in practice and, in effect, has boosted instability and made conflict resolution significantly more challenging. It has turned the Non state Armed Groups (NAGs) into a completely unaccountable enterprise that each state benefits from, in one way or the other, but no one is held accountable to the benefits they enjoy through sponsoring NAGs. It is similar to the situation of prostitutes in conservative societies. Prostitution may be illegal, but most elites enjoy their services at night while cursing them in the morning. The nightly recreational activities are for private entertainment and pleasure of the flesh, while the condemnation during the day is seemingly redeeming and for public consumption. The worst hypocrisy of states denial vis-à-vis their relations or influence over the NAGs has paved the way for losing unaccounted innocent civilian lives across the globe contributing to conflicts continued for decades.

It is for the pure purpose of humanity and ensuring some kind of dignity to human life that I take the courage to redefine NAGs so that a minimum accountability framework can be established around it and help decrease the loss of human lives on daily basis. With the above explained context in mind, I would like to offer an alternative definition:

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Non state actors are the officially disowned subsidiaries of state institutions designed to deliver on legitimate and illegitimate functions that the states or its concerned institutions feel necessary to perform; but, who do not want to take direct responsibility of their actions for a variety of reasons which at times we can guess, but they themselves know best.

After a quick review of about 500 NAGs operating globally, we conclude that it is extremely difficult to find a single NAG that has no perceived external supporter (Akca 2009). The reasons behind states support or sponsorship could be many, but I would assert that the gaps created by rivalries, lack of confidence or mistrust between states, organisations, societies and individuals have turned into sources of support and funding for non-state actors.

One may think that I intend to label NAGs as totally external phenomenon. I'm absolutely do not. I also do not intend to put entire responsibility of NAGs existence on external factors (although they are the true spoilers), one has to consider yet another factor. The existence of NAGs without a favourable internal environment is extremely unlikely to materialise, and internal factors often include violent state policies. National leaders may be over ambitious in their yielding of state power. Or, they want to hoard power. Either way, such an unhealthy obsession with power - whether successful in achieving control or not - paves the way for NAGs. It is equally important to note that trust deficit between organisations, societies and individuals within a state also provide a strong basis for any external power to be able to create, inspire or harbour NAGS within that state.

The external creation and support of NAGs can affect domestic insecurities and political milieu. Such activities can take different forms that include, but not limited to troop contribution, safe havens for the members of a NAG, safe havens for the leaders of a NAG, production of nonviolent propaganda, facilitation of fundraising and/or direct funding, training camps, training, weapons and logistics (Ibid.).

Non-state Armed Groups in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been called the 'graveyard of empires' (Jones 2010) indicating that empires have always failed in fighting, conquering or ruling this land and in that struggle they lost themselves as well. From Alexander the Great to the Soviet Republic invasion and defeat, Afghans have proven

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resilient, optimistic, freedom loving, and formidable. It was these characteristics of its people compounded with worst leadership of its rulers that is used as the best agar plate for harbouring NAGs as part of Cold War strategy. The *jihad* ideology of Afghan people was used effectively to defeat Soviet Russia in the 1980s, paving the way for the rise of so-called international Islam with a violent face which is certainly not the true one. I hardly know of a NAG of Muslim origin that has no connection to or not been inspired from the role NAGs played on Afghan soil. The heroic victory over Russians will remain a continuous source of inspiration for centuries to come motivating small groups and individuals.

Let us have a quick look at who did what in making Afghanistan a ground for NAGs and source instability in the region and globe.

The Global Plan

NAGs, by definition, have external supporters or sponsors. The Afghan *jihad* was also supported and advocated for by the entire Western bloc, Muslim world in general and China to some extent with the aim of defeating Soviet Russia. It was this global alliance in which a favourable environment for the growth of extremism was created resulting in global support for nurturing the existing Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda ideology in order to create a ready to die army for their cause required for defeating the threat of Communism. For successful implementation of this global plan, a fertile agar plate in the region, especially Afghanistan, was prepared so that this ideology could grow faster and more effectively. The notion that only Muslims can rule Kabul and that all invaders are non-believers (Tharoor 2014) is not something that an Afghan semi-illiterate cleric has developed. It was part of the textbooks printed with American money under the auspices of the University of Nebraska Omaha. The texts included in these books are interesting to read. Take an example of Mathematics - the most innocent book that one can have reads an addition question as 5 Guns + 5 Guns makes 10 Guns; and the more interesting subtraction question: If out of 10 atheists 5 are killed by 1 Muslim, 5 would be left.

This was the agar plate prepared with United States funding in the 70s for the growth of an ideology on Afghan soil that is now owned and fully followed by Al-Qaeda and ISIS. I have personally gone through this schooling system and remained part of this journey in my childhood and I can completely understand when extremists blow themselves up and where

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that ideation comes from and why it comes. I can still recall some of the very enthusiastic and heated discussions among fellow *Mujahedeen* whom we always considered more holier/pious than ourselves because they left luxurious lives and came for *jihad* about how only Muslims have the right to rule the world and an Islamic state can be established.

When I first heard the word 'Islamic State' and then subsequently saw some of their brutal actions, it was not new for me at all. It reminded me of the house rented by some young *Mujahedeen* from the West in the then very newly established township Hayatabad area of Peshawar, Pakistan where they used the telephones of the homes they rented to call the outside world. They never used the dialers, instead used the hook to dial overseas numbers and after a few months, exorbitant phone bills would come even though the tenant by then would have either died or was in the fighting lines inside Afghanistan. I remember asking some of them that this act was illegal and they responded they were doing this in Allah's way and it is ok to do so.

To cut the story short, it is not the poor actors in the field who should be blamed for every single atrocity that is committed on the globe, instead it is part of the power struggle enterprise of so-called superpowers to exploit such ideologies for their own interests keeping the concept of controlled damage in mind. It is in this prospect that I see 9/11 as part of the unpredictable controlled damage philosophy. I believe the actors of the power struggle system did not realise that controlled damage can grow to the level that it can become uncontrolled and hit targets within US borders. The biggest challenge of the NAGs is that even those who harbour and support them in one way or the other are afraid of not continuously funding them with the fear that their opponents might extend support to these NAGs and use them. TTP, which has received funding from Indian intelligence, is an excellent example. This fear becomes a continuous reason for supporting NAGs through security and intelligence institutions under the good name of national interest even if some of them act against the state supporting them.

Regional Collaboration

The issue of tactical regional collaboration is of extreme importance when it comes to NAG activities. It is obvious that the global powers are unable to act alone unless they have a good regional collaborator for effective utilisation of NAGs for the purpose they are designed. The first and

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foremost priority of regional collaborators is securing their national interests in the game of using NAGs. These national interests vary from region-to-region and collaborator-to-collaborator and include (but not limited to) seeking advancement of political influence at regional and global level, achieving regional dominance, competing with regional rivalries, receiving development and military aid, balancing the power struggle at regional level, expanding their sphere of national security, taking the fight away from their own homeland etc. The key to the tactic is ensuring maximum benefit out of utilising NAGs with some degree of assurance that the main purpose of its design is not lost, otherwise, it can trigger the anger of the global power which the regional powers always see as biggest threat unless they have already reached a hidden deal with the rival global power who could protect them in case the anger of the global power turns to action.

There is no guarantee that NAGs would always be under complete control and it is also evident from the very recent examples in the Middle East, Africa and Asia that these NAGs turn against the interests of those who have been their patrons from birth to puberty. It is this character that makes them so complicated at the regional level and the local host country level where they are supposed to be operating.

Local Implementation

The local host country region or territory where the NAGs are operating is the most complicated area to work in for finding a way forward considering the continuously changing priorities both at global and regional level. In most cases, the NAGs are much more abreast of the changing priorities and they have the skills to adjust accordingly as they are not bound by any law, rules, disciplines or morals. The NAGs have the ability to quickly understand dynamics and change sides within days to hours in favour of one or another regional power. The best and live example I personally experienced was that of Charar-e-Sharif hero Major Mast Gul who fought Indian forces in Kashmir but was killed in Pakistan by a US drone. At the time of his death, he was fighting against the Pakistani state and claimed responsibility for suicide attacks in Peshawar (Mir 2014) under the umbrella of TTP which is believed to be funded by Indian intelligence agencies. This is a typical example of how NAGs change sides quickly and how dangerous they can be for any state.

The local host countries from Asia to Africa and Middle East to the West are all innocent victims of NAGs operating on their soil, but none of

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them are completely innocent as each one of them has some kind of involvement in one way or the other in this power struggle enterprise. With exceptions in mind, I cannot think of a victim state that is not complicit in one way or the other in this journey of killing innocent humanity regardless of state, religion, color and ethnicity.

As mentioned earlier, local actors are also equally responsible for inducing fertility into the land that helps in creating the environment or agar plate for emergence of NAGs. The clearest case is Afghanistan - if violent action of the state was not eminent, it would have been very difficult for NAGs - more specifically, the Islamic Resistance Movements examined in the examples above - to mobilise masses against the state and the journey still continues with similar pace.

My intention of providing a new definition of NAGs is to enable us to create some kind of accountability system at the global level and try our best to decrease the catastrophic atrocities that these NAGs commit on the globe resulting in loss of millions of innocent lives. Such accountability can be created at three levels: global powers, regional powers and local actors. I am hoping that by realising these responsibilities or emergence of public pressure some kind semi solution can be found through realisation at all ends.

With explaining the above story from a victim perspective and highlighting the need for revisiting the offline power struggle structure created in this region, I would like to draw attention to an alternative scenario that could be considered that could benefit all.

The Story of Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, an exemplary NAG enterprise has been used to fight Communism as I mentioned in my discussion above. The agar plate required for the growth of such an extremist ideology has been fully enforced through all possible means including school curriculum with participation from individuals across the globe regardless of nationalities, ethnicities or geographical locations. Neither this NAG enterprise has been properly disposed off nor anything done to dismantle it. There is no investment made or at least I have no clue of any active plan to counter this ideology that was harboured with absolute funding from Western nations.

Al-Qaeda and ISIS are the manifestations of the germs grown in the agar plate prepared by the West with support from regional and local actors

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that was not disposed off after its effective use, hence, this perception on Afghan soil that every bullet that is fired in this country has external roots is not baseless as this society has firsthand experience of seeing it happen. They have personally seen where the money came, who received it and who was killed with it, who the ultimate beneficiary was and who was the victim. Afghans, innocent implementers of external agendas, are merely fulfilling their basic needs.

Need to View Afghanistan as a ‘Connector’ Not as an ‘Insulator’ or ‘Buffer’

Maybe the idea of connectivity is relatively new or the need for connectivity has recently gained greater attention due to the scarcity of available resources and strong competition in business markets, however, Afghanistan has always been seen as an insulator by global and regional powers.

The British, then the Russians, and now the Americans saw and continue to see Afghanistan as an excellent insulator to keep themselves away from potential harm. As a result, they view Afghanistan as a buffer, at best. Even the very close neighbours of Afghanistan have been using it as a testing ground for their rivalries. Afghanistan, with its weak state institutions, has never been able to resist or manage these rivalries resulting in disastrous scenes on Afghan soil.

The insulator status of Afghanistan has given birth to too many challenges for the region and globe. The every day incidents in any part of the world in one way or the other have some kind of connection to the ideology brought up on Afghan soil over the decades. Hence, there is a need to collectively work towards giving a new status of ‘connector’ to Afghanistan. This status should not become another curse for its poor people whose expectations are not high -they just want to live, a nation looking for the simple opportunity to live, nothing else. The dominance over the connectivity of Afghanistan could turn into another challenge for the region and globe again paving way for potential support for NAGs. The mindset of either ‘I get’ or ‘No-one gets it’ is an absolute flaw in the political and security mindset of this region and needs to change, otherwise, no-one benefits and everyone will suffer more than they expect.

Afghanistan offers connectivity and resources that can help the development agenda of the globe and region equally. Based on the comparative advantage of each country (meaning who is best at what they

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can offer) is an excellent formula that would result in prosperity of Afghanistan and meeting the development needs of countries around the world. USA, China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran and India have different needs and comparative advantages for creating a cooperative environment in Afghanistan.

My country has a lot to offer, hence, I strongly suggest policymakers to try and come up with usable formulas of cooperation instead of drawing maps of wining Afghanistan. I believe no one can win Afghanistan for itself, but together this region can effectively be transformed into an economic hub benefiting the entire world, of which South Asia will be the first beneficiary.

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Effective Pak-Afghan Border Management: A Key to Security in the Region

Essay

Maj. Gen. (R) M Ijaz Hussain Awan, HI (M)*

Introduction

Pakistan shares a 2,611 kilometre long international border with Afghanistan - almost equally divided between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)/Northern Areas and Balochistan (1,343 kilometres along KPK/Northern Areas and 1,268 kilometres along Balochistan). The border comprises some of the most rugged terrain in the world with elevation ranging upto 24,700 feet. Since its demarcation in 1893, the border has remained both unmanned and porous due to a host of factors including, but not restricted to, treacherous geography, remoteness of the area, scarcity of resources, divided ethnicities, peculiar tribal cultures, socioeconomic compulsions, informal governance on both sides and availability of a number of formal and informal crossing points all along the border. On the pretext of Easement Rights (*as there is neither any formal document on Easement Rights nor has there ever been a formalised system for their implementation*), unregulated cross-border movement continued unabated and consequently, allowed miscreants to establish and embed themselves amongst local populace along the border.

Historical Perspective

Since the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) misadventure of moving into Afghanistan in the 80s and Pakistan's willingness to fight the United States backed proxy war in Afghanistan, Pak-Afghan border attained strategic significance. Porous borders served and facilitated the cause of

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coalition partners and no questions were asked. Thousands of *Mujahedeen* were recruited from across the Muslim World, funded by Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Arabs including Osama bin Laden were welcomed who fought the liberation war of Afghanistan. After the USSR withdrawal, US turned its back on Pakistan-Afghanistan and the battle hardened *Mujahedeen*. This neglect if not betrayal sowed the seeds of another war.

Post 9/11, US-led coalition attacked Afghanistan and added a new dimension to the politico-military situation in the region. It dislodged the Taliban regime which resulted in massive influx of militants from Afghanistan to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Pak-Afghan border areas became preferred zones for resistance forces to further their agendas: anti-Pakistan being one of them.

Current Situation

The Pakistan Army is engaged in a comprehensive counterterrorism campaign for the last 15 years with the objective of *indiscriminate* eradication of terrorism from the country. A significant number of terrorists have been killed, however, elements of terrorist organisations especially Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates, and major leaders were able to escape to Afghanistan due to absence of requisite anvil by the Afghan and coalition security forces. Their sleeper cells and scattered support inside Pakistan remains to date. TTP and other terrorist organisations operating from Afghanistan and threats from across the border have necessitated a review of Pakistan's response.

Today, we are at war with militant groups like TTP, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Lashkar-e-Islam, Al-Qaeda and Daesh and their affiliates which use these areas, beside other places in Afghanistan for waging a terror campaign inside Pakistan. Presence of terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan is also due to capacity issues and lack of control of the Afghan Government over a large part of Afghan territory with estimates of state-controlled territory ranging as low as 57 per cent. Absence of Afghan security forces along the international border makes it easier for terrorists to infiltrate, though it is somewhat checked on the Pakistani side through deployment of over 975 border posts. Necessary mechanism on the Afghan side is conspicuously absent with only 218 posts, leaving large gaps in deployment of Afghan forces. The threat present across the Pak-Afghan border is further compounded by presence of around 1.5 million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil in 54 camps besides an almost equal number of unregistered

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refugees hemmed in nearly every city - a space available to militants to rest, morph and mutate.

The space provided by default is being effectively used by the militant groups for orchestrating their activities in and across Pakistan with virtual impunity. Besides a number of major terrorist attacks in urban centres attributable to Afghan-based groups, there has been a steady increase of cross-border terrorist attacks on Pakistan's border posts. In 2017 alone, there have been 116 cross-border attacks. During the last three years, 47 soldiers embraced *shahadat* (martyrdom) with more than 100 wounded. Besides physical actions, terrorists use the available spaces in Afghanistan to launch propaganda broadcasts through illegal FM stations and run an extensive extortion network targeting Pakistani traders. Stability achieved by Pakistan through successful conduct of military operations is presently in its consolidation stage, but vulnerabilities persist due to snags and deficiencies in border management.

Hostile intelligence agencies have latched onto the opportunities of running proxies to further their interests premised on creating instability in Pakistan. Admission of Kulbushan Jadhav and now Ehsanullah Ehsan are poignant reminders of the spy and terror games played out by hostile agencies.

Border Management

Border management all over the world is done through political and diplomatic measures. But where borders are contested, control is exercised through use of military means. Irrespective of means employed, it is an established fact that border management between unstable / dysfunctional states plays a key role in stopping militancy and terrorism. On the contrary, weak border management with volatile or unstable states presents an exploitable vacuum.

Border management with Afghanistan, thus, appears to be an urgent necessity for Pakistan so as to capitalise upon the operational gains against terrorism along with windfall gains against narcotics illegal trade, smuggling, illegal immigrants/refugees and prohibited weaponry to create a conducive environment for actualisation of envisaged economic progress and internal stability.

Border Management Models from Around the World

Historically, the Pak-Afghan border had a unique management model, which can be termed as Social Management, where tribes were assigned responsibilities of various stretches of the border. Hence, the concept of levies via tribal police was applied. Social Management, however, did not remain wholly applicable to the zone after independence which was then managed by Frontier Corps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, with limited use of Army units for internal security duties. The arrangement, thus, remained blurred between Social and Military Management Models.

Four models (under various names) of border management are followed around the world: Political Management is applied in case of settled borders as in the European Union. Administrative Management is resorted to where a few crossings are legally managed as in case of US-Canada and Pakistan-China. Where the borders are not stable or contested and the above two models cannot be applied, Military Management is resorted to as is the case at 38th Parallel and India-Pakistan. There is also a hybrid arrangement combining any of the two arrangements.

Post 9/11 Pak-Afghan border management tilted heavily towards Military Management after deployment of Army into FATA for kinetic operations against militancy. Nevertheless, Military Management alone is not sustainable for Pakistan in the longer run. Similarly, Political and Administrative Models cannot be applied in the foreseeable future due to the prevailing situation in Afghanistan; whereas the Social Model is no more an option after announcement of FATA's mainstreaming. A Hybrid Model (Military and Administrative), therefore, appears to be a workable model for management of Pakistan-Afghanistan border. To this end, the Pakistan Army is engaged in taking following measures:

1. Raising of additional Frontier Corps Wings: 29 Wings have been raised as authorised by the Federal Government in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, while the raising of remaining wings is considered a top operational priority for effective border control.
2. Construction of border forts as required to plug gaps and check infiltration along frequented and unfrequented routes is in progress. The construction and manning of these forts is again linked to the availability of additional Frontier Corps Wings which needs to be expedited.

Effective Pak-Afghan Border Management: A Key to Security in the Region

3. Fencing and electrification of Pak-Afghan border has been approved in principle and the Pilot Project is planned in selected high priority areas of Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber Agencies.
4. Deployment of technical surveillance means including unmanned sensors and radars, while aerial monitoring/surveillance with drones and aircrafts is being ensured.
5. Crossing control mechanism on notified border crossings is being implemented by construction of border terminals. In the initial phase, Chaman and Torkham border terminals have been activated, ensuring use of crossing documents. A similar mechanism and models will be replicated at other minor crossing points to regulate and facilitate legal cross-border movement.

These measures are being undertaken unilaterally, but there is a need for greater cooperation between Pak-Afghan administrations duly assisted by the US. Pakistan is also trying to engage positively with Afghan authorities during military-to-military contacts to remove irritants and develop harmony. Since January 2016, there have been 19 such meetings at various levels for the same purpose, besides activation of hotline contacts at Director General of Military Operations (DGMO).

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is evident that:

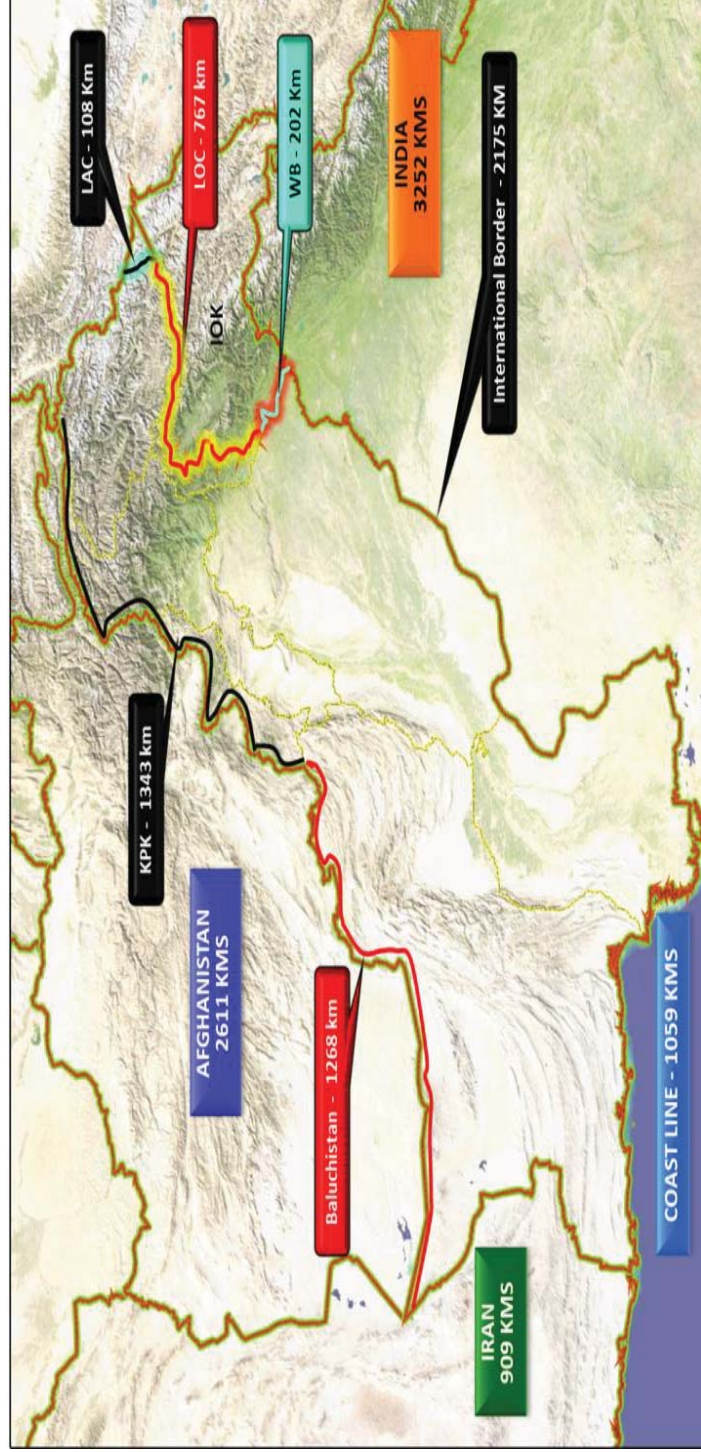
1. Afghanistan is turning out to be a bleeding wound for Washington where coalition forces have lost thousands of men and spent over USD 800 billion.
2. Pakistan's unfortunate experience of becoming an ally in the War on Terror has had a very heavy price in the shape of human and material losses. It suffered over 60,000 casualties of innocent civilians and members of law enforcement agencies. Schools, mosques and churches have been attacked by terrorists from across the Pak-Afghan border.
3. Pakistan, despite being a Non-NATO ally and frontline state, is being accused of working at cross-purposes. Critics are going as far as accusing Pakistan of posing material threat to the cause.

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4. The US, unfortunately, finds Pakistan as a whipping boy for its failure in Afghanistan. Not willing to accept that it is fighting an ill-planned war against the three constants of History, Geography and Culture. It has committed itself in a polarised Afghan polity in wrath and haste.
5. US representatives and high ranking officials are repeatedly accusing Pakistan of duplicity without any credible evidence which undermines the trust and confidence needed to take the war to a logical end.
6. The Islamic State is expanding its presence in Afghanistan and all regional countries are expressing security concerns. Russia already expressed its concern and finds the Taliban as counterweight to this growing presence. These developments may devastate what is left in Afghanistan, with negative implications for Pakistan.
7. In case US does not realise the futility of its Afghan war, transnational terrorism in South Asia will grow and continue to afflict the region.
8. The string of events in the last decade bear testimony to the fact that Pakistan can ill afford the luxury of unmanned or open borders with Afghanistan.
9. Ever widening trust deficit between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US is a sad reality that we cannot embrace. Pakistan is not in cahoots with the Taliban in their war of resistance and is discriminately battling with all terrorist groups engaged in this war.
10. People of Pakistan have lived through moments of horror since the US invasion of Afghanistan and aggregate of their sufferings is alarming. Every saint and sinner realises that people of Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered enough in terms of human losses and they deserve to live a peaceful life.

Border management cannot be a panacea for all border related issues, including terrorism. Nevertheless, it serves as an enabler in the eradication of cross-border terrorism. It is a realisation that has dawned a little late on the policy planners in Pakistan. This realisation and its actualisation is key to dealing with the prevalent situation of mistrust and blame game in the region, which has the potential to escalate into a bigger conflict amongst the competing powers. There is no hope and hint that help will arrive from elsewhere, it is we who have to help ourselves. ■

Pakistan's Borders with Its Neighbours



Structural Problems to the Security of Afghanistan: Review of Non-Traditional Challenges

- Capacity Evaluation of the Afghan National Unity Government: Governance, Economic Management and Security
- Financial Resources of Transnational Terrorism

Capacity Evaluation of the Afghan National Unity Government: Governance, Economic Management and Security

Working Paper

Sayed Mahdi Munadi*

Abstract

Evaluation of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) only two and half years old under conditions in which the variants are changing fast is not easy. Apparently, even though evaluating capacity of the NUG in terms of economic management might be more positive than governance and security, but practically NUG is an institution which has changed the lose-lose game of elections to a win-win game by involving important internal stakeholders. This slow process institution, with high human cost of life and casualties defeated terrorism, while foreign troops had reached their lowest level. In economic affairs, the NUG through different national and international conferences convinced regional countries to involve Afghanistan in their economic initiatives. Internationally, the Warsaw and London Conferences have been economically beneficial to Afghanistan and are likely to remain so till 2020.

Key words: Regional Economic Projects, Economic Security, Rising Non-State Actors.

Introduction

Through evaluation of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) in Governance, Economic Management and Security, this paper will provide an overview of the NUG's achievements and challenges. The first part presents a comprehensive view of NUG's key achievements

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in governance after the elections. The NUG originated through a conflict in the 2014 Elections which started a new phase of governance in Afghanistan. The second part of this paper aims to explore the economic initiatives that Afghanistan is implementing or involved with. The path of obstacles towards achievements would also be clarified. Finally, in the third part, the capacity of NUG in security affairs will be evaluated. The NUG establishment was born with the parallel rise of Islamic State (Daesh) and transformation of insecurity in the north of Afghanistan, so the ability of NUG has been (in practice) about survival and showing capacity during this period.

Governance

NUG was the result of a United States-brokered agreement between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah after disagreement about results in the 2014 Presidential Elections. Rejecting the Independent Election Commission (IEC)'s 7 July preliminary results, which gave Ghani 56.4 per cent of the vote and Abdullah 43.6 per cent, the latter's powerful supporters threatened to form a 'parallel government' (Gall and Rosenberg 2014; Reliefweb 2014). To defuse a political crisis that risked dividing Afghanistan along political and ethnic-regional lines, United States Secretary of State John Kerry mediated the agreement, signed by the two leaders on 21 September, that resulted in formation of a 'NUG' with Ghani as President, Abdullah as CEO and both committing to a 'genuine and meaningful partnership' to govern together (ICG 2017).

NUG establishment was a dissertation to end the crises and started a new game with both candidates. This new game brought important Political Wings to the government. This new win-win game in the political atmosphere was mostly a slow motion process to deal with Afghan issues. Along with this, the NUG consulted with excluded ethnic communities to include them in the system.

One of the important tasks of NUG government was dealing with corruption and both candidates promised to deal with it. The issue of imaginary teachers and police officers was addressed by applying modern technology. 25 per cent of customs' employees were dismissed due to misuse of their duties. 30,000 acres of usurped lands have been restored. 140 senior officials were prosecuted on corruption charges. With regard to the Kabul Bank Case, the main perpetrators were arrested and USD 440 million have been retrieved.

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In January 2017, Transparency International reported that Afghanistan had slightly improved over the previous year in its annual Corruption Perception Index ranking to 169th from 175th. However, there are some critics of the NUG that claim that it was merely attempting to assuage donor demands, but it is undeniable that things have been progressing in this regard (ICG 2017: 5). In addition, NUG is in the process of announcing the schedule for parliamentary and district council elections.¹ There are many other improvements in Health and Education sector due to internal system changes and international cooperation.

Since there is a new system in place now and very little time has passed, it is not possible to clarify all aspects of NUG functionality and improvement in term of governance in this period. However, overall, the system has seen both highs and lows and continues to improve.

Economic Management

Afghan economy since 2001 was an independent variant to international aid. However, this aid following withdrawal of foreign troops in 2014 until the birth of NUG reached its lowest level. This directly affects other aspects of economic affairs such as investment. According to reports of Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), the level of investment slumped by 30 per cent in 2015 in comparison with earlier years. Most investment reduction has been seen in the construction sector, which is about 60 per cent. At the same time, Afghan official exports declined in 2015 to USD 504 million from a peak of USD 620 million in 2014 (RECCA 2016:7). This prospect of shortfalls in the economy was expected, so a series of economic cooperation initiatives has been started with regional countries to fill this important gap.

Integrating into the regional economic trade and transit hub, along with Regional Economic Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA)'s vision and the World Bank perspective, trading goods via Afghanistan can potentially benefit its economy worth USD 5.2 billion annually. This is an important strategy for Afghanistan. The other development strategy which includes extracting mineral resources can further generate more than USD 2 billion

¹ Editor's Note: The Afghanistan Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has announced that 7 July 2018, will be National Election Day and that on that day Afghans will elect their representatives to the House of Representatives (Wolesi Jirga, House of the People) of the National Assembly and to the country's district councils.

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in public royalty and tax revenues. With this high potential source of revenue, there are reports that 40 per cent of Afghans face severe food shortages and depend on international aid for their survival (Ibid.: 8).

It seems, there are two important choices for Afghans which Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan mentioned:

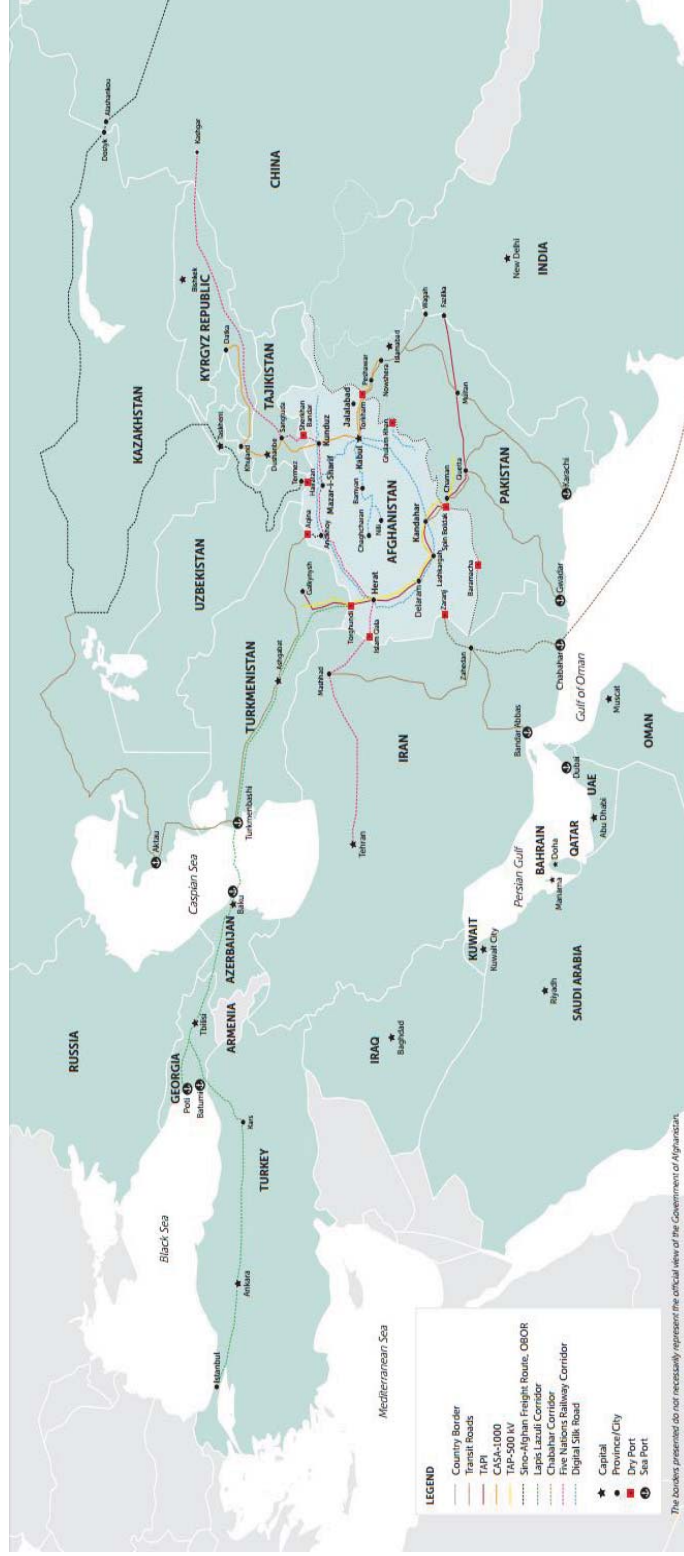
Today we are seeing the clash of two models of Afghanistan's future. We can return to the corruption, the misery and the exploitation of the past thirty years or we can reform and build an Afghanistan for the people.

Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of Afghanistan in this regard says:

Important initiatives in the transport, energy, and trade sectors are underway in our region that will positively impact the livelihoods of millions by opening new corridors and creating new opportunities.

Along with integration with regional economic initiatives, there are more than 12 economic projects and initiatives such as TAPI, CASA 1000 and Chinese Belt and Road Initiatives, Lapis lazuli, Chabahar Port, Five Nations Railway Corridor, and National Rail Road considered top priority of NUG's strategy. Figure 1 shows the map of important economic initiatives which are going to be implemented in Afghanistan up to 2020:

Figure-1
Map of Important Economic Projects in Afghanistan



Source: RECCA 2016.

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TAPI Gas Pipeline Project

Among all the important projects for Afghanistan, TAPI is the most important one. TAPI Natural GAS Pipeline (or Peace Pipeline) is expected to export up to 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year from Turkmenistan Gas Field to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India over three decades. Construction, operation, and maintenance of TAPI will generate thousands of jobs.

Four leaders of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, and India signed a memorandum on energy at a groundbreaking ceremony on 13 December 2015 in Mary, Turkmenistan near the gas field to commemorate the state of construction of the 1800 km pipeline to be completed by 2020.

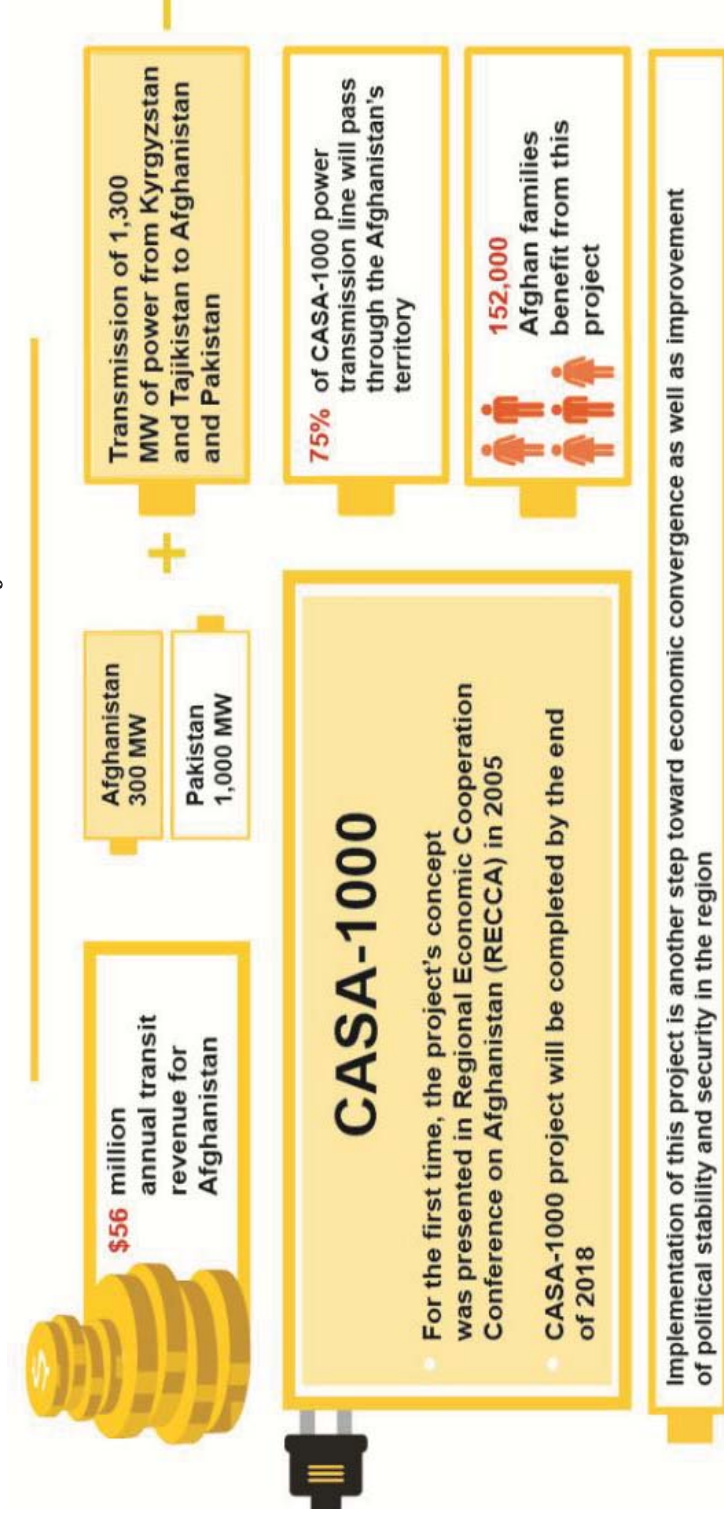
This project offers advantages to all four countries, but exclusively it offers 15000 employment opportunities for Afghanistan. This project has local protection in coordination with the Government. Furthermore, the NUG is considering allocating about 7000 military troops to protect this vital project.

According to RECCA, countries along the pipeline should undertake threat and opportunities assessment in provinces hosting the pipeline and jointly design a pipeline security mechanism. Joint efforts will not just facilitate meeting TAPI's goals, but due to coordination and cooperation, increase the functionality of peace among these countries.

CASA 1000

The project of 1300 MV power transmission from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan is another important project which increases Afghanistan's geoeconomic significance in the region (Figure 2):

Figure-2
Details about CASA -1000 Projects



Source: Factsheet - Achievements of the National Unity Government, Brussels (October 2016).

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Progress in this project through agreement and operational phase, indicates successful economic diplomacy by the NUG over the past two and half years.

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan- Pakistan 500-KV or (TAP-500)

This is project involves Pakistan and Central Asian Republics. Its MoU was signed on 13 December 2015 between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The proposed TAP 500 line seeks to export year round power to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkmenistan has already commissioned for completion by 2018.

Belt and Road Initiatives

Belt and Road Initiatives are a series of projects under which China is reviving the historic Silk Road, regional markets and connectivity, investing a considerable amount of money in the region. In this regard, Afghanistan through strong diplomacy has also become part of the following economic initiatives:

1. Sino-Afghan Special Transportation Railway between Haimen (near Shanghai) through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and Afghanistan's Hairatan rail port on the Uzbek border. On 7 September 2016, Afghanistan received the first train from China at Hairatan. Now, there are two trains each month.
2. Afghanistan and China signed an MoU on 16 May 2016 in Beijing which shows the commitment which both sides share to jointly promote cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiatives.
3. Afghanistan and China signed an agreement for a fibre optic line across the Wakhan district of Badakhshan province on 20 April 2017.
4. Afghanistan joined the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB). Afghanistan believes that trilateral economic cooperation with China and Pakistan can be an important asset in trust building. Meanwhile, in this regard, Kabul is looking for concrete linkages between China's economic routes, especially China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

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Lapis lazuli Transit, Trade and Transport Route or Lapis lazuli corridor

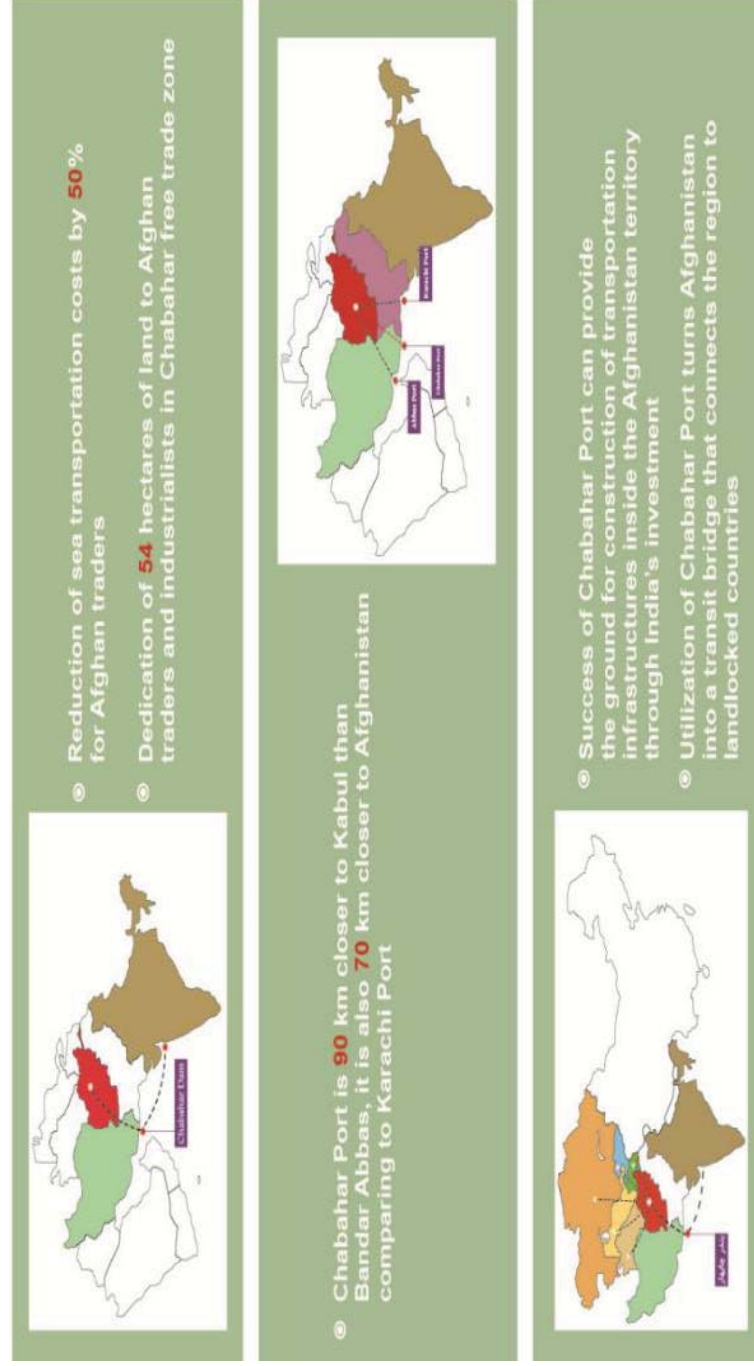
This Corridor facilitates the connection between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and expands cultural and economic cooperation. Three technical discussions on the Lapis Lazuli Corridor agreement have been held - the most recent one on 31 March 2016. However, there are more immediate actions needed to finalise the project associated with feasibility studies.

International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement)

On 23 May 2016, the International Transport and Transit Corridor agreement called Chabahar Agreement was signed between Iran, India, and Afghanistan (Figure 3):

Figure-3

Significance of Chabahar Agreement



Source: Factsheet - Achievements of the National Unity Government, Brussels (October 2016).

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Five Nations Railway Corridor (China, Kyrgyz REP, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran)

Through this 2100 km Corridor, these five nations connect with each other through railways. This project was discussed at the 25th meeting of Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) in March 2015 and some preliminary design work has been done.

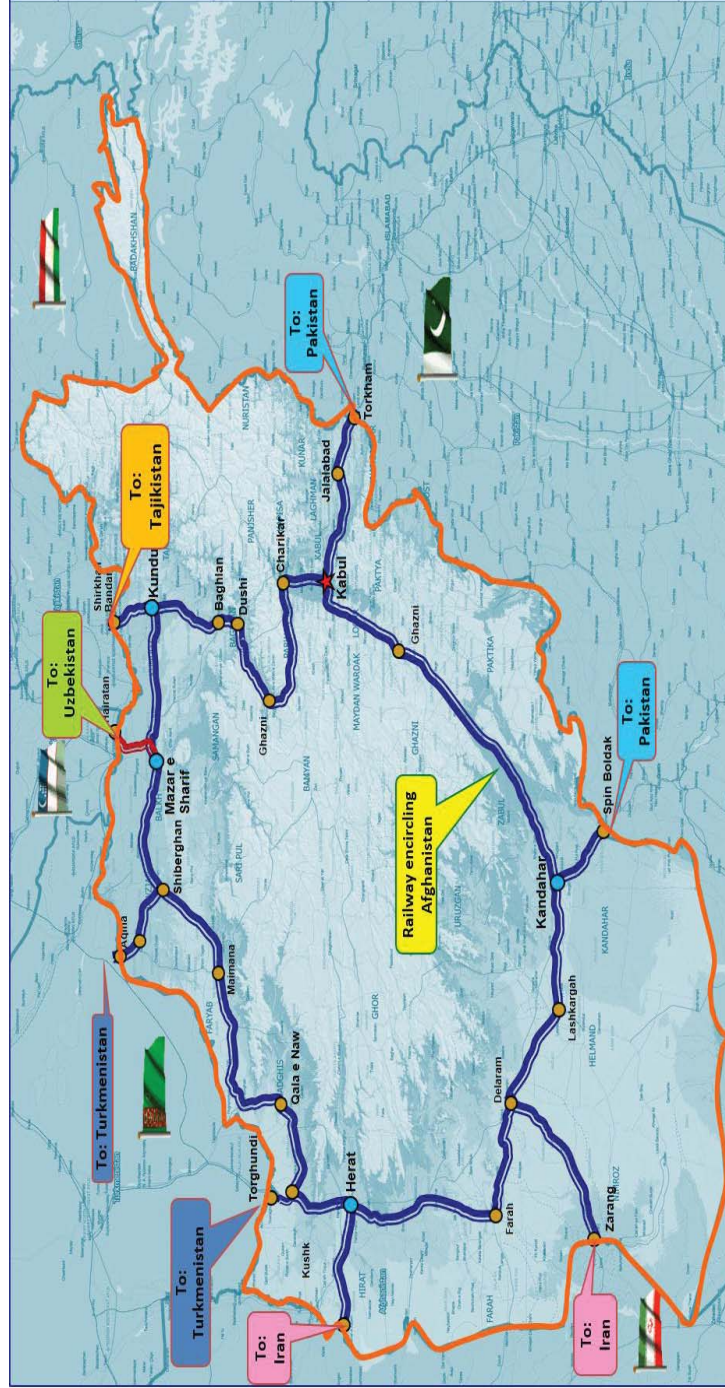
National Rail Network

To become a trade and transit hub, Afghanistan considers railway construction critical which will connect the country with its regional neighbours:

1. Tajikistan via Sher Khan Bandar to Bandar Islam Qala connecting with Iran.
2. Via Lapis lazuli Corridor connecting Turkmen railroad from Aqina paving alternative way for goods from China as well as Afghanistan to get to Europe via Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea.
3. Afghanistan's planned railroad beltway connecting to other neighboring countries.
4. Railway spurs to Pakistan via Torkham and Spin Boldak Ports; and
5. Development of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports.

According to the plan, the railway main line encircling Afghanistan is approximately 5000 km, and there are other eight boundary railways connecting Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan (two railways), Iran and Pakistan (four railways).

Figure-4
Afghanistan's National Rail Network



Source: RECCA Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Afghanistan (2017).

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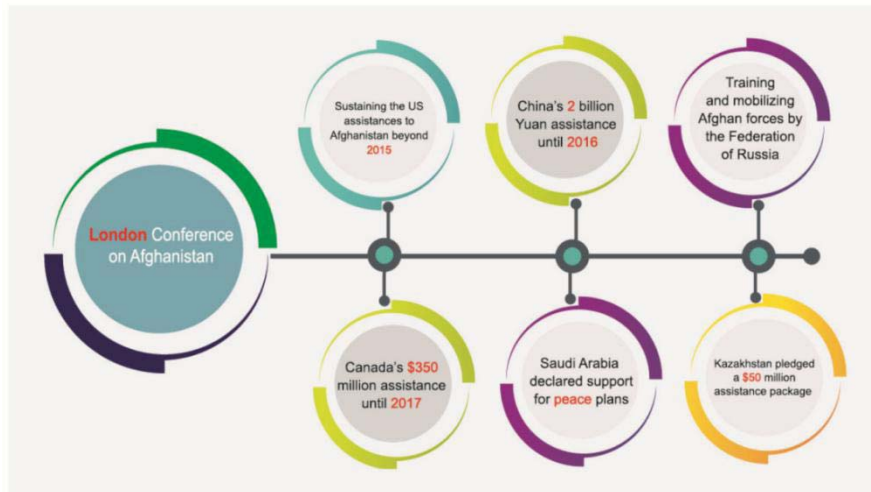
There are many other economic projects and initiatives which economically support Afghanistan and are considered top priority under NUG's strategy plan.

London and Warsaw Conferences

These two conferences have helped Afghanistan to deal with economic shortages. Figures 5 and 6 indicate the type and amount of international support being provided under them which include:

1. Afghanistan- Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
2. Cross-border Transport Agreement and TIR Convention
3. Special Economic Zones, Multimodal Transport, and Logistic Facilities
4. Regional Customs and Border Management cooperation
5. Agro Food Industry Development
6. Labor exchange and Remittances.

Figures 5 and 6
London Conference and Warsaw Summit Result



Source: Factsheet - Achievements of the National Unity Government, Brussels (October 2016).

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Due to improved economic systems, Afghanistan's revenues increased 10.4 per cent of GDP in 2015 from 8.7 per cent in 2014 (World Bank 2016). Additionally, fiscal reforms and tighter control over tax collection have improved domestic revenues, which have helped the NUG to have significant economic success.

Changing the Narrative: From Security Dilemma to Economic Security

The dominant narrative from the regional perspective is priority of security. The NUG, on the other hand, is trying to strengthen the cumulative narrative to substitute the dominant narrative. People in this region mostly think they need security first and only then there can be economic initiatives and projects. Since there is no direct proposal for improving peoples' security, it is difficult to involve them and maintain conventional security.

Salma Dam in the west of Afghanistan and Shirkhan Bandar Rail Road with northern neighbours were met with success given Government efforts to have support of local people to secure the projects. Economic projects, which create job opportunities, can receive people's support and change the narrative of security dilemma to economic security. The NUG, through economic diplomacy internally and regionally, is supporting this new narrative.

South Asia suffers from three evils: Radicalism, Terrorism, and Separatism and these anti-government narratives are a challenge for every government in the region. Afghanistan has become the core sanctuary for these regional evils. The establishment of NUG simultaneously happened with the withdrawal of international troops and rise of Islamic State (Daesh) in Afghanistan. In order to deal with this growing threat, the NUG signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement with USA and NATO immediately after coming into power.

It paid more attention to the structure of the National Army and developed this area, which has significantly improved. However, the National Army has suffered more casualties and death due to insecurity in Helmand and Uruzgan province.

Through peace negotiations, NUG convinced the Islamic Party under Gulbedin Hekmatyar to come to the peace negotiation table, which has encouraged other militants to join peace negotiations. Through this, the

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new NUG has strengthened Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF)'s ability to counter the insurgency.

Conclusion

Afghanistan with a new government has experienced a new system and while it has had to deal with many security crises first, it has also made significant development for its economic growth and security with international support. Much more needs to be done, of course, which includes supporting economic initiatives in Afghanistan and creating security through economic initiatives; remembering that local societies are important actors in security affairs so their support is crucial for the success of any economic initiative; and last but not least, starting to negotiate with the Taliban and other internal militancy groups. With these steps, the dominant narrative will be changed from security dilemma to economic security. At the end of the day, it is vital to learn from one's mistakes in order to have trust and peace in the region.

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Financial Resources of Transnational Terrorism

Working Paper

Major Gen (R) Khawar Hanif, HI(M)*

Abstract

The acquisitive trade of narcotics has a deep historical background and an intricately extensive international linkage. Commencing since 3400 BC, illicit drug trade has continued to grow, at times also exploited for geostrategic purposes. Extensive drug trade by the Dutch and British in 17th and 18th Centuries (the two Opium Wars) and the steep spike of opium production in the Golden Triangle during the Vietnam War, are some of the examples. Even today, drugs are being produced in massive quantities, particularly in the regions namely: Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos and Thailand), Afghanistan and Latin America. The categories include Opiates, Cannabis, Amphetamine Type Stimulants, Cocaine and New Psychoactive Substances.

Key words: Drug Trade, Transnational Terrorism, Organised Crime, Legitimate and Illegitimate Sources.

Introduction

While all the three regions mentioned above are responsible for producing various types of illicit drugs, Afghanistan tops the list in production of opiates, primarily due to nearly dysfunctional state institutions. Current unrest in Afghanistan is not a new phenomenon. Much of Afghanistan's history in the last 150 years is replete with polarisation and absence of a central authority, with only a few exceptions. Even today, at least 60 per cent of Afghanistan's territory comprises ungoverned spaces. This lack or absence of writ of the state, lawlessness and crime (of which drug trade is a part) are a perfect recipe of rogue and

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renegade groups to thrive. Such an environment facilitates organised crime, including extremism and terrorism - the ultimate form of organised crime.

In addition to lawlessness, lack of focus of the Western powers towards providing alternative livelihoods to farmers is the main factor behind unabated poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Taliban were, however, successful in controlling poppy cultivation to a considerable degree. By 2001 (the fateful year of 9/11), they had brought its cultivation to as low as 7400 hectares, which is nearly naught as compared to what happened in subsequent years. In the post-NATO invasion of Afghanistan, poppy cultivation continued to increase at proportions not known before. By 2016, poppy was being cultivated on an estimated 201,000 hectares, producing approximately 5400 metric tonnes of opium. Currently, Afghanistan is producing 90 per cent of the world's illicit opium.¹

Afghan Drugs Trade Routes

The Afghan opium finds its way to the world through three main routes. The so-called 'Balkan route' is the main conduit of Afghan opiates trafficking to Western and Central Europe, through Iran, Turkey and South-Eastern Europe. 'Southern route' (through Pakistan or Iran to the Gulf region, Africa (particularly East Africa), South Asia and, to a lesser extent, South-East Asia, the Oceania region and North America. The 'northern route' from Afghanistan goes to neighbouring states in Central Asia, the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).²

Most of the Afghan opiates are smuggled to Russia, Middle East, Europe and Australia where their prices spike up nearly 170 times. Farm gate value of Afghan opium is approximately USD 1 billion. In the international market, it is approximately valued at USD 150 billion, out of which about USD 10 billion find their way back into the Afghan economy. Viewed in context of the size of the global informal economy, the proceeds of Afghan opiates do not make a deep impression (UNODC 2015: 15).

¹ Gleaned from various papers about the Paris Pact Initiative.

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) elaboration based on the seizure data from Drug Monitoring platform, individual drug seizures, supplemented by official reports.

Financial Resources of Transnational Terrorism

Until 2009, the development of the world economy and globalisation made enormous gains in economic well-being possible, but paradoxically, this development contained risks, too. One of them is (transnational) terrorism and the global number of terrorist attacks, which rose from 208 in 2003 to 864 in 2008 (Freitag et al. 2009; Intriligator 2010; and Schneider, Bruck and Meiericks 2010). Complex financial sources and linkages underpin the fabric of transnational terror, with growing evidence of the relationship between transnational terrorism and transnational organised crime. Interestingly, globalisation of legal market economy has also been a major source of terrorist funding in the past. Since the mid-1970s, legal international financial flows have grown to hundreds of billion dollars a day that have been enabling terrorist groups to freely move their funds across the globe within seconds. In fact, the legitimate economy was the major source of funding during the Cold War and of Al-Qaeda in their lead up to 9/11.

The emergence of transnational terrorism also poses to both social scientists and security practitioners the question of how terrorism and organised crime is financed. In fact, complex financial sources and linkages underpin the very fabric of transnational terror. The same international financial system that allows commerce to flow freely between nations also provides terrorists the ability to move money around the globe within seconds. Transnational terrorism and organised crime have become a global problem, and therefore, the effort to disrupt its financing ought to extend beyond borders in order to block the money wherever it is hidden and track it down wherever it moves.

Legitimate Sources of Terrorist Financing

Financing from legitimate sources has been more pronounced and abundant during the Cold War and in the lead up to 9/11 attacks. Although financing of Al-Qaeda came from all countries across the world, Middle Eastern countries were the prime source of financing. However, greater focus and scrutiny by financial institutions has controlled inflow of money from legitimate sources to a considerable degree. Legitimate financing is related to completely legal activities conducted by charities, diaspora, and firms. The 9/11 Commission pointed out a core number of financial facilitators involved in raising, moving, and storing money from around the

Financial Resources of Transnational Terrorism

world, primarily the Gulf Region but also from other countries. These groups used legitimate charities and businesses as covers to develop a substantial financial network.

State Sponsors

Majority of companies and banks used by bin Laden such as Faisal Islamic Bank and Islamic Bank Al Shama were located in Khartoum (Sudan). Foreign currency accounts were set up at Al Shama for a number of the companies belonging to bin Laden. Shama's correspondent banking relationships were with a variety of reputable banks such as Citibank and others, which is why Al-Qaeda was able to move money rapidly and without impediments around the world.

Private (Individual and Corporate) Donors

Private individuals and organisations have also been a major source of terror funding. Among the private donors, Al Rajhi Kohlmann and his family members were one of the most important private donors involved in terrorist financing. According to CIA reports and federal court filing by the US Justice Department:

They have been major donors to Islamic charities that are suspected by Western intelligence agencies of funding terrorism. Rajhi's website furnishes nearly USD 50 million in direct donations within the kingdom to Islamic causes and at least USD 12 million in donations abroad for Muslims in Kosovo, Chechnya and the Palestinian territories (Kohlmann 2006; Simpson 2007a).

According to Simpson (2007b), the US Justice Department investigated possible criminal tax-law violations by a Boston private-equity firm that managed hundreds of millions of dollars for Muslim investors in Europe and the Middle East and was affiliated with a Swiss investment group that American authorities suspected of financing Islamic extremists.

Ethnic Communities and Religious Financing

Zakat (Islamic Tax) is one of the five fundamentals of Islam, which employs the support offered by the richest to the poorest, and it is obligatory to pay this within the Islamic community. Charity forms a very important part of

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Muslim law and tradition. Al-Qaeda took advantage of this noble practice to solicit funds through collection boxes at mosques and Islamic centres and used it for terrorism.

Charities

The perfectly legal donations to non-government organisations (NGOs) and charities are also misdirected by some NGOs that are linked with organisations involved in illegitimate activities. A number of terrorist organisations have resorted to a variety of charitable as well as front and fraudulent organisations to mobilise financial resources. Maktab al-Khidamat is one such example that was run principally by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden, for the purpose of providing logistical support to the *Mujahedeen* who were fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Several other charities in Southeast Asia were also linked to the brother-in-law of bin Laden, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, who was also directing a Saudi Arabian charity known as International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). Intelligence reports indicate that IIRO was used to support local terrorist operations throughout Southeast Asia. However, the role of charities cannot be completely disentangled from state support.

Legal Business

In many cases, terrorist groups establish legitimate businesses to cover illegal activities or to provide employment for their members. The truly transnational financial engine of Al-Qaeda and its sympathisers raised money through their own business activities.

Illegal Sources of Terrorist Financing

Drug Trafficking

The probability of linkages of South America's narcotic industry with terrorist groups is the highest. Proceeds of illicit drug trafficking do contribute to most common criminal activities, including terrorist groups. Since the 1970s groups such as FARC, Basque Fatherland and Liberty (Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna - ETA), the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan - PKK) and Sendero Luminoso have all been involved in drug trafficking by well-documented evidence. According to Yepes (2008) in May 2002 a report called Global Overview of Narcotics-Funded

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Terrorist and Other extremist groups' was launched, prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress and the US Department of Defence. The report examined connections between extremist groups and narcotics trafficking in Latin America. Peters (2009) documented the strong ties between drug trafficking and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Paoli et al. (2007) also documented a detailed report on opium and heroin trafficking in Tajikistan.

Oil Smuggling

Oil smuggling is where terror, criminal, and legitimate economies interact. Countries, where oil smuggling is a significant problem are Thailand, China, Russia, Cambodia, Iran and Tanzania. In all these countries, oil smuggling earns significant profits, a substantial portion of which enters the laundering cycle. Oil smuggling is also related to arms trade.

Arms/Diamonds Trafficking

Besides drugs, arms trafficking, and illegal diamonds trade are some of the most important illegal sources of funding of terrorist groups. Raphael (2003) reports the activity of some Al-Qaeda operatives based in Liberia in gem business in Africa. Passas and Jones (2006) highlight the role of commodities in the financing of terrorist groups by covering many areas of legal and illicit trade, foremost among these diamonds. In situations where access to normal banking channels is very difficult (for example, as with most non-state actors), the financing of arms deals often takes a different form, most often through commodity exchanges or 'Hawala System'.

Informal Money Transfer (Hawala) System

The non-criminal and criminal individuals and organisations have been equally benefiting from the underground banking system since early 50s. In fact, the Hawala system has been able to build such a trust among its users that they hand over their hard earned fortunes to operators on the basis of word of mouth and accounts to billions of dollars. Table 1 contains the statistics of various regions. The Hawala system accepts cheques, cash, and pay orders without identification of the client or his source of income. It is pervasive in most parts of the world.

To sum up, through the Hawala system that forms an integral part of the informal black market economy, underground bankers ensure the

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transfer of money without having to move it physically or electronically. When a payment needs to be made overseas, the underground banker will get in touch with a courier (or more recently using email, fax or phone) in that country informing him of the details of making the payment. If the recipient of the payment wishes to personally obtain the money, a code referring to the underground banker in the country of payment is given to the recipient. Such a system is almost untraceable since it leaves little if any paper trail. Transaction records are, if they are kept at all, being kept only until the money is delivered, at which time they are destroyed. Even when there is a paper or electronic record of sorts, it is often in dialects and languages that serve as *de facto* encryption system.

Money Laundering

Money laundering is generally difficult to detect, track and record. Occasional involvement of influential persons and state interest is also a hindrance in close scrutiny of financial transactions by law enforcement agencies (LEAs). Since the money trail is lost, any individual or group can use it for any purpose, including terrorism. Financial institutions, intelligence agencies and LEAs have neither had the desired level of success in establishing the link between money laundering and terror financing nor have fully succeeded in preventing terrorist funding through this source. Governmental effectiveness, however, can be enhanced by greater scrutiny of international financial transactions, profiling the individuals and organisations' transactions, disseminating the information to the concerned country and their unstinted support in cracking down on the culprits.

Narco-Terrorism Nexus

There are differing and divergent views on the veracity of Narco-Terrorism linkages. Some practitioners like Rusty Payne, an ex-CIA official unequivocally declare the linkage as a reality. While according to Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow at Brookings Institution:

Many of these links are vastly exaggerated, and based on extraordinarily shabby evidence. The Narco-Terrorism narrative is based on a lot of drama and myth.

Many officials of UNODC believe that there is a very high probability of drug proceeds' linkage with terrorism. The likelihood of ultimate

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relationship between drugs and terrorism is far greater in South America, Afghanistan and Myanmar. However, it is very difficult to find hard evidence to attribute drugs trafficking to terrorist groups. According to Irka Kuleshnyk, a senior UNODC official:

While it is difficult to establish how widely terrorist groups are involved in the illicit drug trade, or the breadth and nature of cooperation between these two criminal groups, the magnitude of the numbers involved makes the relationship worrisome.

Whichever camp one might belong to, the relationship between illicit economy and organised crime cannot be ruled out.

Way Forward

1. Counter-narcotic efforts should be delinked from geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic competition for greater good of humanity.
2. Afghan poppy be managed before it is collected, processed, concealed and transported. Destruction of standing crops, seizing the land over which poppy is sown and criminal proceedings against the defaulter farmers are needed. A greater allocation of resources and focus of the International Security Assistance Force deployed in Afghanistan will certainly yield positive results.
3. International agencies should focus on building the capacity of inner ring transit countries, i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. This will restrict drugs and their containment to the region will lower prices and reduce the incentives for farmers, financiers and dealers.
4. The capacity of transit countries for border control and intelligence-driven operations to interdict drugs should be reinforced for better control.
5. Greater operational coordination including enhanced ICD operations will be a welcome initiative.
6. Industrial countries should exercise stricter control on production, allocation of quota and movement of controlled substances.
7. Multilateral and bilateral cooperation for timely and transparent intelligence sharing between the Counter Narcotics Forces of various countries at international and regional level is needed.

Conclusion

Drugs usage and trade has been pervasive since ages. Various groups and states have used drug money and their psychoactive effects to further their political and criminal agenda. Illicit drugs are causing greater harm to humanity in fields other than terrorism. Nearly 685 persons die around the globe due to drug overdose as opposed to only 39 victims of the terrorism. Besides, millions are languishing and dependent due to addiction.

Terrorism and organised crime is being funded by a variety of sources that includes both legitimate and illicit means. Drug money is also contributing to organised crimes but at a relatively low percentage. Myth of Narco-Terrorism is overstated. However, the relationship between illicit economy and organised crime cannot be ruled out. The greatest likelihood of Narco-Terrorism link is in South America. Viewed from the global perspective Afghan poppy has very little contribution to global terrorism. Nonetheless, it is a source of funding for Taliban themselves.

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Peace Initiatives by Regional Partners and Coalition Countries

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US Vision of the End-State in Afghanistan: The Obama Era and A Trump Presidency

Essay

Dr Marvin G. Weinbaum*

Obama Sets His Course

During his first campaign for the presidency, Barack Obama had suggested he would look at the Afghan war differently from his predecessor. Along with others, he referred to it as the ‘forgotten war’. Over the previous five years, the conflict had been overshadowed by the war in Iraq, and the American public had clearly grown tired of extended international military commitments. It had become obvious that the Afghan conflict would not end anytime soon. Indeed, the insurgency in Afghanistan had grown increasingly serious. The United States (US) found itself caught in a fight that it seemed increasingly unlikely to win outright but felt it could not afford to lose. Any hope of reversing the direction of the conflict seemed to demand new strategies.

After assuming office in 2009, President Barack Obama sought advice on how to refocus attention on Afghanistan. He commissioned a civilian-led study of American war policy and also asked his newly appointed Commander of Forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McCrystal, for his recommendations. The General’s extensive report, drawing on his experiences in Iraq, concluded that without major changes in strategy, the US and its NATO allied countries were headed to defeat in Afghanistan. He outlined a series of actions to the White House that in December 2009 led to the announcement of the deployment of upwards of 100,000 troops, forces that together with international partners would number about 140,000. To complement the military surge, many thousands of civilian advisors were sent to improve the capacity of the Afghans to achieve a functioning government. Yet, at the same time as Obama announced his initiatives, he also declared that the American-enhanced military campaign would be wound down by the end of 2014.

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The President was convinced the American public would back him in ordering the surge only if assured the commitment was not indefinite.

What the US hoped to achieve for Afghanistan had evolved quickly during the earlier administration of President George W. Bush. Although Bush was generally disinclined to have the US engage in state-building, his administration soon discovered that it had acquired in Afghanistan the responsibility not only for assuring the survival of the state but for a framework for governance. Envisioned in the December 2001 Bonn Conference and a 2004 Constitution was an Afghanistan designed to become a liberal modern Islamic democracy. Fearing a rebirth in Afghanistan of a weak and decentralised state, international aid donors encouraged adoption of a strong elected presidency as best suited to bring about the country's development, security and stability. To overcome Afghanistan's traditional ethnic and sectarian divides, there was prescribed an inclusive, accountable representative system through a regularly elected Parliament. Afghanistan would also observe the rule of law and have respect for international human rights norms. Though expected to remain for some time dependent economically on the international community, foreign investment in a welcoming open market economy would presumably put it on the path towards economic growth and independence.

On coming to office in 2010, Obama confronted an Afghanistan that bore little resemblance to this vision. Despite observable gains, particularly in health and education sectors, Afghans were increasingly disappointed with their Government. It had been unable to provide basic security or create jobs for millions of Afghans, especially the youth. Most citizens had lost faith in their courts and police. The Afghan Army was undermanned and under-equipped, and most of the burden of fighting the insurgency was assumed by the US and its NATO allies. The economy could generate little revenue and was distorted by the stimulus of massive foreign military spending. Rampant corruption had contributed to undermining confidence in the political system. The bitterly controversial 2009 Presidential Election and a largely undisciplined, obstructionist Parliament left many questioning the viability of Afghanistan's democratic institutions.

To reset his administration's approach to Afghanistan and its region, Obama made a more serious attempt to add diplomacy to what had been an almost entirely military strategy. He created in the US State Department the office of Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) and chose to the high profile Richard Holbrooke to head it, well known for having orchestrated the Dayton Accords that settled the 1990s Balkans

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conflict. Holbrooke assembled for the office a team of seasoned analysts who would work outside the normal lines of command in the State Department.

SRAP saw pursuing two complementary tracks as its mission, one to promote the idea of Afghanistan's neighbours cooperating to contribute to its economic and political stabilisation, the other to explore ways to bring the Taliban leadership to the negotiating table. Both represented a sharp deviation from previous American policies and reflected how far expectations for an end-state in Afghanistan had changed. They also marked Washington's having concluded that no strictly military way out of the Afghanistan conflict was possible and that a political solution was inevitable.

Two Tracks

The first track altered the earlier belief that the region's countries were likely to get in the way of US and NATO's counterterrorism efforts. They were assumed to have their own agendas and be inclined to intervene on behalf of ethnic Afghan groups, much as they had in the 1980s and 1990s. Some were thought motivated by the prospect of establishing spheres of influence in the country. Washington was now, however, prepared to believe that Afghanistan's neighbours and near neighbours had come to recognise their mutual stake in a politically stable Afghanistan. Motivating the region's actors seemed to be their shared fear of the return of a radical Taliban regime or ungoverned space in a chaotic Afghanistan. Though still armed with various hedging strategies in the event of state failure in Afghanistan, all of the contiguous states were fearful of insurgent national groups being able to use Afghan soil to mount cross-border terrorist attacks. Planning its own military drawdown, the US hoped to enlist countries in the region to share the burden of securing the integrity and stability of Afghanistan.

Prospects for regional cooperation on Afghanistan had never been considered seriously, especially given the difficult relations among countries both within and between South and Central Asia. Aside from political differences, these regions are the least integrated of any on the globe in terms of trade and other transfers. Yet, there has been growing recognition among these countries of the potential economic advantages of a pacified and prospering Afghan state. Serving as a land bridge or crossroads, land-

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locked Afghanistan would be critical to realising the advantages of greater interconnectivity. The SRAP office sought to promote the idea of a new Silk Road that would be as important as its historical antecedent in embedding Afghanistan in an economically flourishing region.

This vision gained traction with the holding of an American-supported November 2011 conference in Istanbul of South, Southwest and Central Asian countries that institutionalised an Istanbul Process for Heart of Asia countries. The conference expressed its support for regional non-interference, territorial integrity, support for the government and people of Afghanistan, and the need to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries. The economic piece, essentially the Silk Road concept, is contained in breathing life into an older organisation, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). Created in 2005 and meeting annually, RECCA has put on paper extensive plans for improvements in multilateral and bilateral infrastructure and identified investment opportunities across the region. To date, both the political and economic dimensions of integration and cooperation remain aspirational. All wait on the emergence of a more secure and stable Afghanistan that they have as yet done little to help bring about.

SRAP's second and more daunting approach was predicated on the idea that the Taliban could be convinced to negotiate were they offered the opportunity to enter the Afghan political system, forming a political party and contesting in elections. The US and the Kabul government indicated their willingness to offer cabinet positions and governorships. Importantly, the Karzai regime and its international backers were prepared to concede that the Taliban's Islamic values were part of the country's social fabric and had to be accommodated politically. At the same time, however, those anxious for negotiations insisted that the social, economic and political gains registered since 2001 could also somehow be preserved.

The Taliban's decision to open an office in Qatar was taken as a sign that its leadership might be prepared to accept a political deal. Back-channel discussions with individuals claiming to be speaking for the leaders or at least to be familiar with their priorities suggested a possible new flexibility. The Qatar discussion broke down, however, when it appeared that the Taliban were more interested in acquiring legitimacy than in engaging in serious negotiations with the Kabul government. A more promising step came in July 2015 when under pressure from Pakistan, the Quetta-based Taliban leadership agreed to participate in a June 2015 formal meeting sponsored by a Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG)

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consisting of Pakistan, Afghanistan, the US and China. That meeting, more exploratory than substantive, was scheduled to be followed by another later in the summer. It failed to materialise when the revelation of the earlier death of Mullah Omar led his successor Akhtar Mansour to back out of talks after his leadership was challenged by critics of negotiations.

Convinced that insurgencies are impossible to defeat if the enemy is able to find safe haven in a neighbouring country, most American analysts and policymakers have concluded that Pakistan holds the key to ending the insurgency in Afghanistan. They point to the Islamic State's close ties to Afghan insurgents and allege its turning a blind eye and even facilitating their cross-border activities. Pakistan is seen as having considerable leverage over the leadership of the Taliban and its associated Haqqani Network. A peace agreement is thought to hinge on the willingness of Pakistan to pressure the Taliban to negotiate.

But Pakistan's influence is probably overestimated and misunderstood. In pressing Pakistan to arrest and evict the Afghan Taliban, there has been little understanding by American policymakers of the underlying reasons that Pakistan has for so long protected the Taliban and Haqqani Network. Aside from concern that these groups could if targeted turn against the Pakistani state, a Pashtun proxy force is seen as an asset to be held in reserve against the real possibility that the Afghan state will fail. In that event, these supposed friendly Afghans would be expected to secure Pakistan a sphere of influence in a dismembered Afghanistan. Pakistan's policy is likely to change only when its military leadership is convinced that a reasonably stable and cooperative Afghanistan has made association with Afghan insurgents a liability.

Conflicting Visions

There is reason to conclude that the Taliban's vision of an end-state for Afghanistan is essentially different from that of the US and its allies. The Taliban has never left any doubt that it seeks the recreation of an Emirate in a *Sharia* state, not a Western-styled democratic constitutional state. Trying to get the Taliban to agree to power-sharing has ignored what the Taliban's core leadership regularly states: that it has no interest in power-sharing within the prevailing political system. Even when the Taliban gave hints of a new pragmatism that it had learned from past mistakes and softened its views on women and education — it was difficult to know

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whether attitudes had modified or whether the Taliban had become more skilled at public relations. Moreover, it remains unresolved whether the Taliban is a nationalist movement, with geographically limited ambitions, or is essentially an Islamic movement that once in power would be drawn to assist the area's insurgent Islamist groups. From most indications, a more radically ideological new generation of leaders has emerged, one less inclined towards making political compromises. Of course, factionalism within the Taliban together with the emergence of the hard-line Islamic State further complicates any quest for negotiations. It raises the question of whether anyone could in fact negotiate on behalf of the insurgency and ensure the implementation of an agreement.

Even among those Taliban figures that may have shown an interest in entering the political process, none have given indication of their willingness to compromise on their goals. There is reason to conclude that most Taliban commanders expect to achieve those goals through military victory. Where many US military strategists have seen possibility of a 'hurting stalemate' leading to negotiations, the Taliban appear prepared for a protracted conflict in which foreign forces are expected eventually to tire of their commitments and the Kabul government to collapse. Short of that outcome, with the tide running strongly in its favour, Taliban might be the one to initiate the call for negotiations. It would no doubt insist that the talks be on its terms — over how the Taliban would be prepared to accommodate all Afghans within an Islamic state rather than fitting the insurgents into a democratic constitutional system.

Aside from the Taliban, a wide body of Afghans and their international supporters are convinced that Pakistan seeks to impose a fundamentally different kind of future for Afghanistan. According to this thinking, Pakistan would prefer a weak Afghan state, both liable to manipulation and too divided to maintain an effective alliance with India. Pakistan, then, is believed to have never given up on the idea of Afghanistan providing Pakistan with strategic depth against India and has therefore never been serious about negotiations.

These views seem outdated and overlook the reality that strategic depth in the traditional geopolitical formulation was made obsolete with the reaching of nuclear parity on the subcontinent after 1998. They also fail to take into consideration that while Pakistan aided efforts by the Taliban to consolidate power in the 1990s, Pakistan has now to see conflict in Afghanistan through the lens of its own insurgency and consider whether

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Pakistan's anti-state militant extremists would be emboldened by the Taliban being fully restored to power.

The US has also found that its Afghan partners have not always shared its visions for the country. As President, Hamid Karzai had grown increasingly critical of the outsized American role in the country. His means of building loyalties through a clientele political system contrasted sharply with the merit-based views of his foreign benefactors. Karzai resented the Americans' constant harping about the lack of reform. Differences with the US came to a head in 2014, with Karzai's refusal to sign a bilateral strategic agreement that had been approved by his Cabinet and the Parliament. That agreement set the conditions by which US and other troops would remain in the country. At the same time, the President's evolving attitudes about reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban could not always be reconciled with those of the Americans and the Europeans.

Transferring Responsibility

By 2014, there was little to show as the American and NATO military surge drew down their forces. If there were any remaining hopes that the surge would create conditions that from a position of strength the Taliban could be forced to negotiate peace, they were clearly dashed. Hard fought progress had been made in setting back the insurgents in large areas of Helmand and Khandahar provinces. But with time having run out on the time-constrained mission, those gains could not be extended to other contested provinces. Nor could they be sustained in the areas liberated. The civilian government had been incapable or unwilling to follow up military successes with the improved civil administration and basic services needed to win over local populations.

As American forces proceeded with their withdrawal of troops, there began the transfer of responsibilities for the country's security to the Afghan security force, including the Army and Police that was expected to rise to roughly 350,000. But this transition would entail another, that of the country's economy. Sharp troop reductions meant the heavy loss of military spending that since 2002 had propped up the economy and accounted for its high annual growth rates. Even with continued international pledges of support for critical functions, the Afghan economy would be tested by its ability to adjust to the new reality. A third transition called for an improvement in governance, above all a reform agenda that curtailed

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corruption. This was thought to require progress toward the reconciliation of the country's various political factions, enabling the government to deal more effectively with the country's problems and win the Afghan citizens' confidence. The country's political dysfunction was highlighted by the controversial 2014 election that was resolved only through the personal intervention of US Secretary of State John Kerry.

While the resulting National Unity Government (NUG) has survived politically, it has accomplished little. This, despite having as its President Ashraf Ghani and as Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, men whose progressive goals for their country closely align with those of their Western partners. The strategic agreement with the US was signed soon after Ghani assumed office. But political wrangling has plagued the government and reform efforts languish. The economic transition has, as expected, been difficult. It has stabilised but failed to create the needed new employment opportunities, a task complicated with the return of tens of thousands of Afghans from Pakistan. And the security piece of the Afghan transition is, at best, mixed. While the Afghan security forces, especially their elite forces, have often performed well, the Army and Police have suffered from heavy combat losses and desertions, and steadily yielded effective control over large parts of the countryside to the Taliban.

The end-state vision that increasingly took form during the Obama era and was inherited by the Trump administration recognises that for the foreseeable future the country will fall far short of the ambitious goals laid out a decade earlier. The best that can be expected is an Afghanistan that is 'good enough.' Realistically, the kind of political reforms and democratic consolidation once imagined are for the time being unachievable. It is widely accepted that for Afghanistan to remain economically afloat will necessitate heavy dependence on the international donor community for at least a decade.

In the security sector, while the government continued to try to build the quality of its security forces, the most that can be expected for the time being is to restrain an insurgency from overrunning the country's population centres. Towards this end, President Obama's last important decision on Afghanistan was to keep 8,500 troops for training, advising and special operations in the country, this despite his earlier promise to withdraw them by the end of 2016. In so doing, he left to his successor the decision on what level, if any, to maintain an American military presence. The Obama legacy can be summed up as having left in place a maintenance

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strategy aimed at ‘buying time’ for Afghanistan to improve its performance in the security, economic and political sectors—so as to be ‘good enough.’

The Trump Administration

During his campaign for the presidency Donald Trump rarely mentioned Afghanistan. His ‘America First’ themes suggested a preference for a smaller American footprint globally and foreign relations that would be more transactional with both friends and foes. Trump’s initial policy priorities have now been pressed, most notably by the challenges to US foreign policy posed by Syria, Iraq, Iran and North Korea, and his preoccupation with defeating the Islamic State (IS). While Trump may have wanted to put countries like Afghanistan on the back burner, the activities of a local branch of IS and on-going American military commitments force his administration’s attention.

The new President was immediately faced with having to make a hard decision on American troop levels in Afghanistan. There has apparently been little consensus among his closest advisors. But Trump is believed to value most the guidance he receives from serving or former generals known to favour staying the course in Afghanistan. It comes as no surprise, then, that Trump appears willing to agree to the deployment of thousands more American troops to provide a deepening of the training and advising of Afghan forces, and the expansion of US counterterrorism missions. Adjustments have also been made in the rules of engagement, giving US commanders greater operational discretion. Increased close air support for Afghan and foreign assisting troops appear probable.

In other areas, a Trump administration seems poised to differentiate its policies from those of its predecessor. Development assistance stands to be cut sharply in an overall defunding of soft power in foreign policy. The Ghani government seems likely to be pushed harder to show progress in curbing corruption, particularly within its security forces. On the advice of much of the military and intelligence communities, pressure can be expected to increase on Pakistan to take stronger action to expel Afghan insurgents. While the Trump administration may insist that the door always remains open for reconciliation with the Taliban, current expectations are low. Instead, Trump’s generals are calling for a more robust military effort that - if it cannot defeat the Taliban - forces it to negotiate.

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Whether the new administration will adopt a different regional approach is a separate but related issue. Until now, some conspiracy theories notwithstanding, American policies in Afghanistan have not been broadly geostrategic, that is, designed to give the US a long-term military presence from which it can assert its power in the region. Washington has, instead, defined its role in Afghanistan as necessitated by the need to prevent the country from becoming an ungoverned space that would be occupied by global terrorist organisations. Washington has also hoped to use political leverage in the region to prevent nuclear proliferation and discourage Pakistan and India from engaging in a major conflict. Although concerned about the expanding influence of Iran, Russia and China in the region, the Obama administration made no serious effort to constrain them. The Trump administration could reassess this approach if, for example, Iran or China were to decide to project military power into South Asia. Those possibilities aside, with the Trump administration's attention elsewhere and an American public's disinclination to support global military adventures, any deeper American involvement in South Asia appears unlikely.

The US will nevertheless remain engaged in Afghanistan. Buying time for a government in Afghanistan to succeed will require continuing commitment. By its presence, American diplomacy can contribute to helping Pakistan and Afghanistan to resolve differences that impede cooperation. Assisting Pakistan and India to make progress in normalising relations can contribute to alleviating Pakistan's fears about India's believed strategic intentions in Afghanistan. Sustained encouragement can also further regional economic integration. Ultimately, every country in South and Central Asia has a stake in ensuring that there be a stable, united and peaceful Afghanistan.

Finally, putting aside all the challenges confronting Afghanistan, there are optimistic end-state scenarios that the US and other countries have either promoted or not entirely discounted. The most prominent of these envisions Afghanistan becoming a wealthy country through exploitation of its untapped rich natural mineral resources. It holds out the prospect of an Afghanistan able in time to free itself of economic dependency, allowing it also to realise greater political independence. In this vein, some see Afghanistan acquiring the status of a neutral country, one able to insulate itself from the rivalries of its difficult neighbourhood by assuring them that Afghan soil will not be used for an attack on a third country. Both scenarios remain, however, far distant. A resource-based prosperity waits on far

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greater domestic security, a supportive infrastructure, and the easing of barriers to regional trade. Neutrality, while seeming attractive, may be unrealistic without the acquiescence of its neighbours and Afghanistan retaining the ability to defend itself.■

About Possible International Cooperation for Normalisation of Situation in and around Afghanistan

Essay

Dr Grigory Tishchenko*

The situation in Afghanistan and in the region has become more complicated. There are more and more supporters of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan who are squeezed out here due to the war in Syria and Iraq. The danger exists that this army can rush open spaces of the former Soviet republics, to Pakistan, Xinjiang-Uighur autonomous region of China and seriously destabilise the situation there.

Destabilisation of the situation in and around Afghanistan can seriously complicate functioning of the Chinese 'Economic Belt of the Silk way' passing through the region. The aggravating situation in the region threatens Russia as well.

In case the situation around Iran becomes unstable due to the United States of America (USA) and its allies, Afghanistan will also be threatened as American military units are located there. Besides, refugees from Iran will rush to Afghanistan. Such a scenario will also affect Pakistan.

Fight against the threat of terrorism and religious extremism in Central Asian and Afghan directions is a complex task. It is necessary to prepare in advance for international cooperation in case ISIL takes active actions outside Afghanistan.

First of all, peace-making process in Afghanistan is necessary. Search of forces interested in peace-making and ready to sit down at the negotiating table is also necessary. Russia has experience in searching for such forces and organising negotiations in Syria. Direct dialogue of the Afghan Government with the Taliban is necessary. Some experts predict a 'hot' summer in Afghanistan due to new attempts of the Taliban to take a large city under control.

The following military and special methods seem to be the most important on the Afghan direction - strengthening of borders, modernisation of the armed forces of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and

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Kazakhstan, involvement of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR), the SCO Anti-terrorist centre, and development of bilateral cooperation.

It should be noted that Pakistan and India will become full members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Afghanistan has observer status in the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Expansion of interaction of SCO and CSTO becomes actual in counteraction to interconnected security challenges such as religious extremism, separatism, terrorism, and drug trafficking. We could speak about development of such operations as the CSTO 'Channel' (anti-narcotic programme) and 'Proxy' (Counteraction to extremism in information sphere, first of all on the Internet). Also participation of SCO countries, including China, in specified actions would be desirable. For example, for this purpose appropriate programmes can be opened not just for international observers, but also for active participation of countries which are not members of the CSTO.

It is necessary to strengthen coordination against illegal migration from third countries through the territory of Central Asia, and from Central Asian countries, including, coordination between the CSTO (e.g. Operation 'Illegal immigrant' is there) and SCO. This, in particular, will allow the creation of a reliable barrier against penetration of international terrorists from Afghanistan through Central Asia to Russia, China and Europe.

In Afghanistan, the SCO through coordination of Russian, Chinese, Pakistani and Indian interests in Afghan direction can make an essential contribution to normalisation of the situation. Now, Russia and China are big sponsors of the Afghan Government both in military and economic sphere. Russia delivers arms to legitimate authorities of Afghanistan (for example, fighting helicopters and spare parts), and China has initiated large-scale economic projects in the country. The role of Russia and China in rendering different types of help to Central Asian countries is similarly extremely important.

This cooperation needs to be intensified further, including, via mechanisms of consultations in the SCO to security providing agenda, especially in the north of Afghanistan where religious extremists and terrorists from Russia, Central Asia and the People's Republic of China have now transferred their bases. It is important to add the situation in Afghanistan to the SCO agenda. Strengthening of coordination in the fight

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against religious extremism through SCO is also necessary.

Growth of Russian-Chinese mutual understanding is now being promoted, including in the antiterrorism struggle recorded in the Joint Statement of the President of Russia V. V. Putin and the Chinese President Xi Jinping on 8 May 2015. The agreement, reached between the Russian Federation and China in 2015 on expansion of bilateral interaction to fight against terrorism and extremism, including at such international venues as the United Nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), SCO and others, can raise antiterrorism cooperation to a whole new level.

It should be noted that within interaction of Russia and China in the frameworks of CSTO and SCO, it is not necessary to speak about the creation of new institutes and signing new agreements. It is desirable to accelerate adoption of the already available institutes and agreements. Coordination on making a general list of terrorist organisations, exchange of information about recruitment, transportation of fighters to Afghanistan and to the Middle East, and also their financing directly fits into a complex of urgent antiterrorism measures.

Interaction in the struggle against international terrorism has to become an important part of the Russian-Chinese strategic dialogue in a bilateral format. This format needs to establish expert dialogue that requires holding forums with participation of the CSTO and SCO countries, Afghanistan and its neighbours. In this regard, creation of joint expert councils and forums is important for exchange of views on regional problems.

Russia supports a lawful Afghan government. Pakistan is a key country for ensuring stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is important to continue Russian-Pakistani interaction. India is a traditional key ally of Russia on the Afghan problem. It is necessary to seek essential activation of dialogue with it in this direction. South and Central Asian countries should promote initiatives for reviving traditional Islamic culture and not allowing religious extremists to monopolise this subject. It is also essential to study existing international experience in the sphere of non-violent efforts against religious extremism. Civil society and education can play an important role in this regard. Establishment of institutes of learning like the Islamic University in Uzbekistan, and Russia's experience in Tatarstan where, in October 2015 the Bulgar Islamic Academy was opened can be of great value. It is important to remember that the Tatar *Imams* are traditional teachers of Islamic Studies in Central Asia. Russia can increase the number of listeners arriving from Central Asian states to Muslim educational

About Possible International Cooperation for Normalisation of Situation in and around Afghanistan

institutions in its territory. Russia is also ready to widely disseminate the spiritual literature published in Russian Muslim institutions. Organisation of periodic international conferences and seminars on this subject is desirable. It is necessary to attract young religious activists from Central Asian countries widely to the relevant activities. More specifically, states must ensure:

1. development of international legal mechanisms, especially to protect the youth as the most vulnerable part of the population against purposeful propaganda of terrorism and violence;
2. protection of information spaces against distribution of extremist ideology and terrorism;
3. formation of bases of interstate anti-terror information systems;
4. state control over terrorist and extremist propaganda on the Internet;
5. coordination of state, public, cultural and other activities for counteraction to extremism and terrorism ideology.

Growing threats towards the security of Central Asian and Afghan directions considerably increases the role and value of CSTO as a unique international security organisation, having real military forces in Central Asia, uniting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It also raises the relevance of interacting with non-organisation members like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The CSTO is able, obviously, to play a key role in case of a situation aggravation in Northern Afghanistan, on the borders of former Soviet republics. While the capacity of the organisation is still developing, the CSTO collective security strategy till 2025 is a crucial step in the right direction. Ultimately, development of international cooperation in solving terrorism problems is important. This can compensate the lack of expert knowledge on this problem in mentioned countries. It is impossible to counteract a threat like international terrorism without high-quality examination. In this regard, further development of scientific and practical community interaction in the sphere of security is extremely important. ■

Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: An Iranian Perspective

Working Paper

*Dr Seyed Rasoul Mousavi**

Abstract

The state of war in Afghanistan has continued for nearly four decades which has resulted in extensive destruction of human lives and degradation of health and security in the country and the region. In comparison to 2016, 2017 has been marked by a more complicated security, political, and economic situation in Afghanistan. In this respect, the purpose of this paper is to analyse this current situation in terms of Stability, Security and Development. The analysis will be done in a way to suggest a solution for Afghanistan's crises at three levels - internal, regional, and international and according to the capacities and defining factors of each level.

Current Situation in Afghanistan

It seems that in 2017, the security, political and economic situation of Afghanistan is more complicated than previous years. It can be anticipated that Afghanistan's main challenges and security procedures will continue as following:

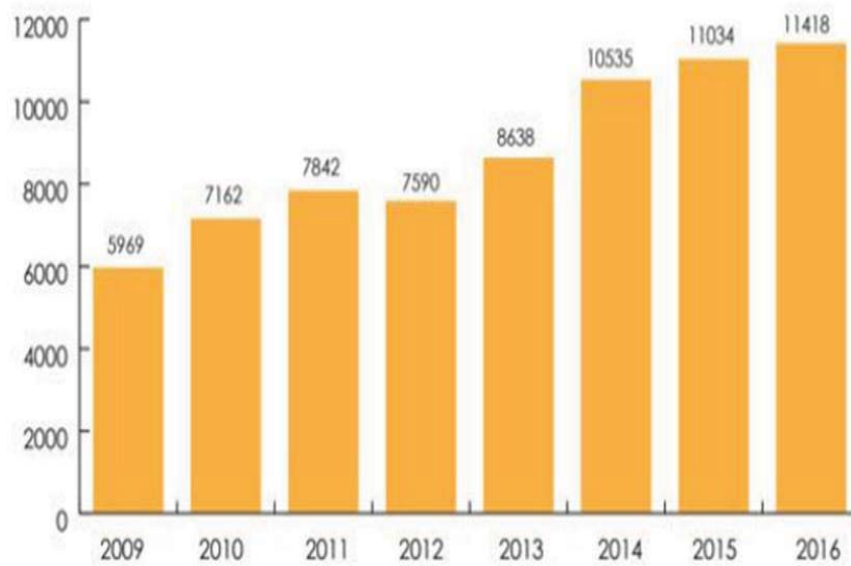
- Even though the military activities of Taliban, Al-Qaeda, ISIS (Daesh) and other terrorist groups will not increase, they will continue.
- The unstable military balance between Taliban and Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) will remain stalemated.
- The uncertain situation in the Coalition Government and challenges within the government will continue.
- Disputes among the elites of the Government and the conflicts between senior directors and rulers as well as administrators of different areas of Afghanistan show no sign of abating.

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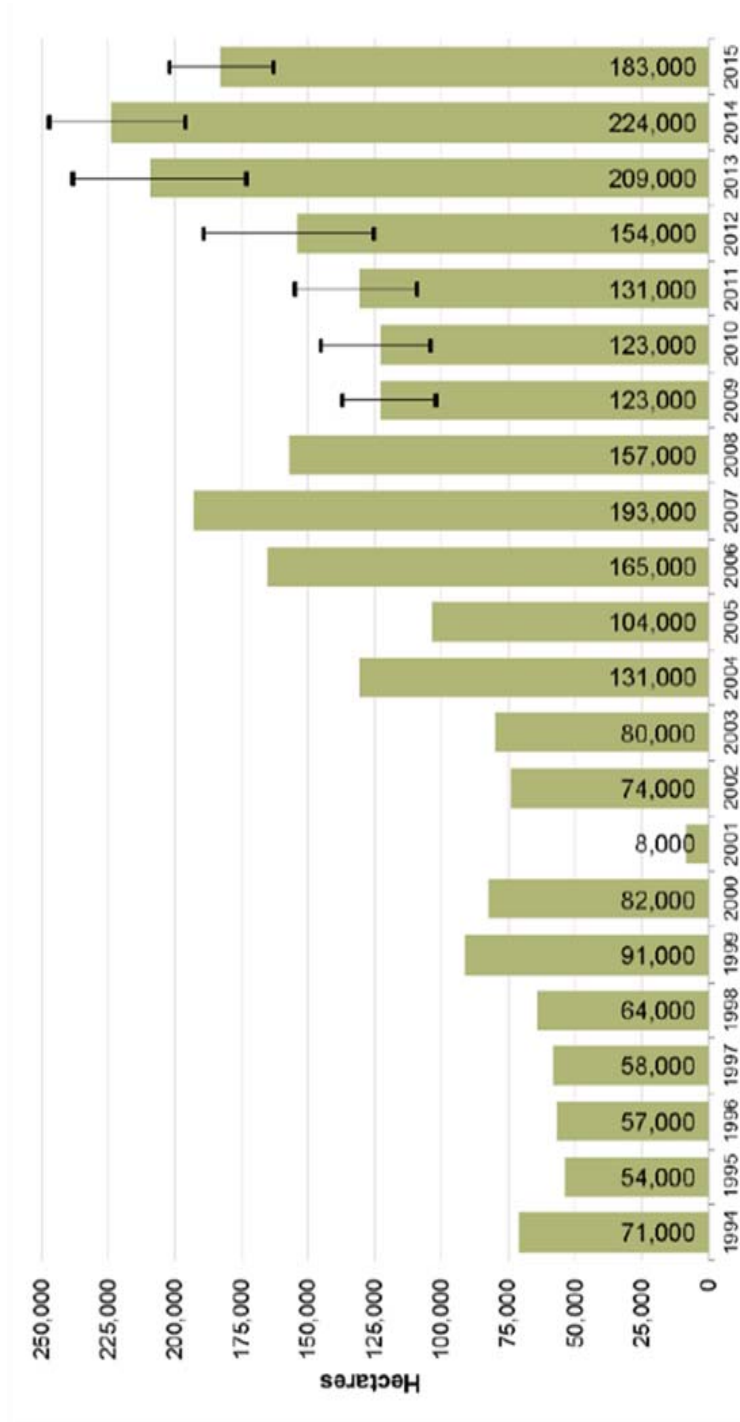
- The Taliban believe that the United States has been defeated militarily.
- Number of terrorist attacks is increasing.
- The US as Afghanistan's main security guarantor has no specific strategy for the country.
- Civilian casualties have increased dramatically (Figure 1).
- Massive amounts of opium will continue to be produced at an increasing rate (Figure 2).

Figure-1
Civilian Death and Injuries (2009-16)



Source: UNAMA (2017).

Figure-2
Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2015



Source: UNODC (2015).

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By paying attention to the basic and key causes of the crises in Afghanistan, the main reason for continuation of the critical situation in the country can be comprehended. Afghanistan, in its contemporary history, has faced three key crises namely *Stability, Security and Development* and it can be said that particularly during recent four decades all political developments in Afghanistan were to find answers for the mentioned crises and to solve them. However, none of the governments and the parties which have seized power in Afghanistan have been able to find a balanced solution.

Figure-3
Afghanistan Peace Trilemma



The crisis of stability in Afghanistan is an internal challenge and its solution must be found within the country and through political engineering and power-sharing.

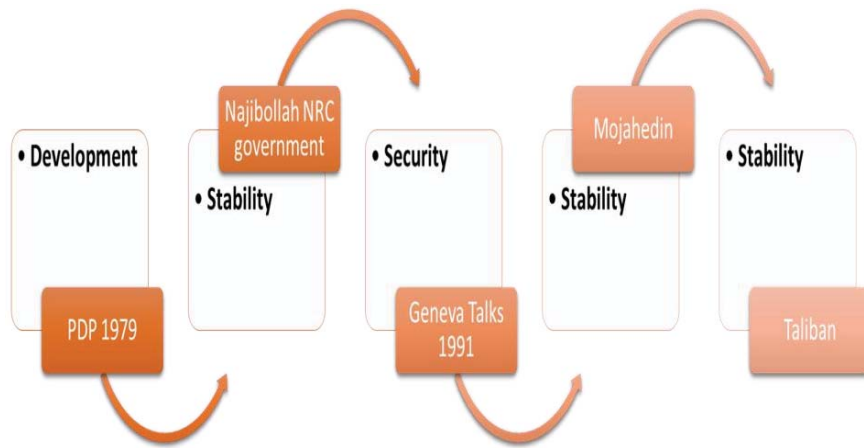
At the same time, the crisis of security in Afghanistan is a regional issue and it is not possible to establish sustainable security without the participation of regional countries, especially Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. Finally, the crisis of development in Afghanistan is an international issue which can be solved only through the participation of the international community.

Since 27 April 1978 when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDP) took power by coup till now, we can see these three problems or crises are the main concern of all Afghan governments. However, each of the governments has only focused on one of the said

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crises at a time and has not paid attention to the other two. As it was mentioned before, in the last forty years all political developments in Afghanistan were supposed to solve these crises, while none of the governments and the political parties which have seized the power in Afghanistan could find a balanced solution for them.

Figure-4
Various Afghan Governments and their Approach to Afghan Trilemma



In 2001, Bonn, the International Conference on Afghanistan, tried to provide a solution for the aforesaid crises. In this regard, four delegations of anti-Taliban ethnic factions attended the Bonn Conference. The delegations were from the Northern Alliance, the 'Cypress group', the 'Rome group', which is loyal to former King Mohammad Zahir Shah who lives in exile, and 'Peshawar group', which is a group of mostly Pashtun exiles based in Pakistan. The Taliban were excluded from the Conference.

Figure-5
Bonn Conference on Afghanistan



Despite the participation of these various parties, due to the lack of precise attention to the way of assessing and encountering the three dilemmas (Trilemma) in order to resolve them, the Bonn process faced problems. Initially, it based internal stability on removing the Taliban from power, but it focused only on the security dimension and forgot its social and political dimensions which resulted in renewed rising of the Taliban. So today, the Bonn process can be considered a failed process, since it is said that more than 40 per cent of Afghanistan has been overtaken by the Taliban.

Another mistake made by the Bonn process was its attempts to establish security in Afghanistan by relying on military forces of US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), meanwhile, disregarding the importance and role of the countries in the region in reaching this goal. Moreover, it didn't consider the fact that security of Afghanistan can be achieved in terms of regional security.

How Can Afghanistan Reach Security and Stability?

The solution for Afghanistan's crises can be achieved at three levels - internal, regional and international. First of all, the mistakes at Bonn should be addressed. In this regard, the following considerations should be taken

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into account. First, after 16 years of wars, the facts and realities of the current situation should be appropriately realised. This includes acceptance that the Bonn process has failed, there is no military solution to the situation, MOAB Strategy¹ cannot achieve peace, and finding a political solution is the only way for Afghanistan's stalemate. Second, achieving a political solution is impossible unless simultaneous and balanced attention is given to the three key crises of Afghanistan: *Stability* can be achievable by effectuating Power Re-sharing, and ensuring *Security* is based on Regional Cooperation especially neighbouring countries. On the other hand, the issue of *Development* should be considered in line with cooperation from international and regional states.

Power Re-sharing

Considering that the solutions offered by the Bonn process on power-sharing have failed to achieve peace in Afghanistan, an alternate Power Re-sharing solution is needed. In this context, power re-sharing means participation of all Afghan major political and social players from all parts of the country in the Central Government and local administration without excluding anyone. Therefore, power re-sharing necessitates a new approach to Afghanistan crises not only by the country itself, but also by the neighbouring countries and by the international community. This new approach means revising the objectives and policies of all players without exception, including the Taliban. Consequently, revising these objectives and policies necessitates a new definition for the Taliban and looking at them as *Neo-Taliban*.

Neo-Taliban: Myth or Reality?

In contrast with previous strategies of the Taliban which were mainly aimed at fighting, *Neo-Talibanism* should focus on a new strategy for peace. Although Afghanistan is an Islamic country and should be ruled based on Islamic Sharia, Neo-Taliban should come to accept the role of Constitution and rule of law and the principle of separation of powers in the country. This means that Neo-Taliban need to move towards the acceptance of power-sharing. The idea of power-sharing is in opposition to the concept of

¹ MOAB: Mother Of All Bombs. The first operational usage of MOAB was during the 13 April 2017 airstrike in Afghanistan. MOAB Strategy emphasises only on military solution.

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power monopoly. Additionally, Neo-Taliban should accept the need of Afghanistan for acquiring a national army, police and other security forces to assure its sovereignty as a united and indivisible nation. At the same time, Afghanistan territory should not be a threat for other countries.

Within such a framework, issues like women's rights and other concerns will find a suitable ground and be appropriately discussed. However, it needs to be remembered that for the Taliban negotiations will only work after determination of the date for the withdrawal of foreign troops.

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Achieving Peace in Afghanistan: A Way Forward

- Building Consensus among Major Stakeholder Countries on Afghanistan
- How Reconciliation and Confidence Building Measures fit into the Broader Challenge of Afghan Peace-making?

Building Consensus among Major Stakeholder Countries on Afghanistan

Thought Piece

Dr Liu Zongyi*

Everybody knows the importance for major stakeholder countries to build consensus on the Afghan issue. Three aspects, in this regard, are important:

1. Who are stakeholders?
2. What consensus should be reached among stakeholders?
3. How to reach consensus?

Before we talk about this, I would like to emphasise that Afghanistan has long been called the ‘graveyard of empires’ because many glorious empires declined after they reached Afghanistan - from Alexander the Great to British Empire and Soviet Union. Many of them failed to conquer and occupy Afghanistan for a long period of time, and their power was badly damaged after they reached Afghanistan. There are several reasons:

- Afghanistan is in the centre of Euro-Asia and near to the heartland about which Halford John Mackinder said any empire could only reach when it was at the height of power.
- Because of its geostrategic importance, other powers around Afghanistan would not allow any one power to occupy or control it. They would support Afghan people to fight against the invader or occupier.
- Afghan people are bold and able to fight, they never bend knees to any conqueror, and they have formed a tradition of fighting against any invader and occupier. So any empire or state that wants to occupy or control Afghanistan would get bogged down.

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I think any stakeholder country should remember these historic lessons and experiences, and have a clear mind on the Afghanistan issue.

Who are Stakeholder Countries?

As for stakeholder countries, I find a lot of scholars have reached consensus on this issue. Of course, Afghanistan and Afghan people are the largest stakeholders on this issue. However, the Afghanistan issue is a two-level game, international actors are also powerful and decide the direction of this country's peace process. In general, the US, Pakistan, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Central Asian Countries, and China are regarded as stakeholder countries. Sometimes, the European Union (EU), Turkey and Japan are also included. These stakeholder countries can be divided into several groups according to different criteria:

1. Immediate neighbours, including Pakistan, Iran, China, Central Asian countries, and Russia to some degree. These countries are immediate victims of a chaotic Afghanistan and an unstable region.
2. Those directly involved countries, including the US, Pakistan, Iran, Russia and Central Asian countries. Except for the US, other stakeholders are immediate neighbours of Afghanistan and support directly some parties or ethnic groups. These countries grasp the key of solving the Afghan issue and can bear direct responsibility for the peace process.
3. Other stakeholder countries include India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and EU, etc. Among those countries, India and Saudi Arabia are not immediate neighbours of Afghanistan, but they have some cultural and historical connections with Afghanistan, and in fact they are involved directly in the Afghanistan issue. What they want are mainly geopolitical interests and other concrete interests.

Contradictions among Stakeholder Countries

Among these stakeholder countries, there are several contradictions, these contradictions make Afghanistan issue difficult to solve:

Contradiction between Pakistan and India

Geopolitical competition is the main contradiction between India and Pakistan on Afghanistan. Pakistan is concerned that India wants to make

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Afghanistan the second front to fight with Pakistan. India support Northern Alliance against Taliban that is connected with Pakistan. They have also disputes on transnational terrorism and transit trade issues. On the contradiction between Pakistan and India, the US stance is very important. Pakistan plays key role in the peace process of Afghanistan, but the US 'balance strategy' that prefers India is making the situation from bad to worse.

Contradiction between the US and Russia

On anti-terrorism, Russia and the US have common interest, but they also have geopolitical competition over Afghanistan and Central Asia. Russia and China are consistent on geopolitical aspects; they want the US troops to withdraw from Afghanistan gradually. If Russia believed the US would not leave Afghanistan and would stay there and threaten Russian geopolitical interest and even its national security, Russia would adopt more antagonistic measures. Currently, the US criticises Russia for supporting the Taliban against the Islamic State.

Contradiction between the US and Iran

The US-Iran relationship will decide their cooperation or conflict on the Afghanistan issue.

Contradiction between Iran and Saudi Arabia

This is mainly an ideological competition between Sunni and Shia, but with more and more geopolitical competition factors. This contradiction also involves the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and the US-Iran contradiction.

Contradiction among Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan

They support different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

These different international contradictions influence and limit Afghanistan peace process. They interweave with domestic contradictions of Afghanistan and form a complicated situation. To deal with these contradictions, stakeholder countries established different mechanisms, including bilateral dialogues, trilateral dialogues and multilateral ones, but

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any mechanism cannot solve all these contradictions at the same time. This situation requires that policymakers, scholars and researchers simplify the equation and try and remove the main contradictions.

What Consensus Should be Reached among Stakeholders?

On the basis of my analysis, I think stakeholder countries should reach agreement on main contradictions regarding Afghanistan and ways to solve these problems:

‘Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace’ and reconciliation process should be supported by the international community, and Taliban should become a party of peace and reconciliation process. Whether we like it or not, only military means cannot eliminate Taliban and bring peace. Afghan people have their own political and governance traditions and the international community should respect their choice on the kind of political structure and development road they want.

We should take full consideration of the interest of real stakeholders first, especially their national security. Real stakeholders are those immediate neighbours of Afghanistan, and the US and Russia. Afghanistan and its geostrategic position should not be used against other stakeholder countries. Any stakeholder country should stop their support to and of various parties and ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Among them, Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan peace and reconciliation should be respected. Other stakeholder countries should ensure Pakistan’s national security and territorial integrity. Non-immediate countries should exercise restraint and their influence on Afghanistan should be limited to some degree.

All stakeholder countries should reach consensus on anti-terrorism and anti-extremism. Terrorism and extremism have expanded in this region, especially Islamic State, with its defeat in the Middle East, many IS militants fled to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, which is a threat to the security and stability of the region. Just as President Ghani said, what Afghanistan experienced is not a civil war, but a war with international terrorism. All stakeholder countries are victims of terrorism, so on terrorism and extremism, stakeholder countries should have a common firm stance.

All stakeholders should focus on building regional connectivity and developing a community of shared interests. The building of regional connectivity will solve problems of unemployment for Afghanistan and other surrounding countries and lay a foundation for further economic

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development. The US put forward a 'New Silk Road Project' in 2011, and China raised 'One Belt, One Road' initiative in 2013, Russia has a 'Euro-Asian Economic Union' plan, and India also has a regional connectivity project. China and Pakistan have achieved great advancement on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). These regional connectivity projects can be synergised together. In the UN Security Council Resolution No. 2344 on Afghanistan, almost all these projects or initiatives are mentioned.

How can Stakeholder Countries Reach Consensus?

In all the stakeholder countries, the US plays a deciding role on Afghanistan. After President Trump came into power, the world is watching his policy towards Afghanistan, Iran, Middle East and South Asia. The US policies towards Iran, Pakistan and India will have direct influence on Afghan situation.

The US Defence Secretary Mattis visited Afghanistan on 24 April 2017. He is the first Cabinet member of Trump Administration who visited Afghanistan. Mattis appealed to the Taliban to participate in the peace process under the condition that they stop terrorist activities and give up violent measures. This shows that the US has realised that military means cannot solve Afghanistan issue (He 2017). But at the same time, the US is planning to send in thousands of troops to Afghanistan.

First, the US should make clear its goal in Afghanistan, whether its goal in Afghanistan is to maintain an open-ended military presence or stabilise the country through a political settlement with the Taliban and its neighbours. Almost everyone in Afghanistan and the region believes the US goal is a long-term military presence rather than the stability of Afghanistan. America's focus on military tactics combined with silence on political objectives reinforces that belief (Rubin 2017).

Second, the US should support positively the efforts of regional countries to solve Afghanistan issue. In April 2017, the US refused to participate in the International Afghanistan Peace Conference held in Moscow (The Tribune 2017). About 12 stakeholder countries attended this conference.

China initiated the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) and when this mechanism achieved some advancement with the Taliban, their leader Akhtar Mansoor was killed in a drone strike in Quetta. In the future, regional countries will play greater role in Afghanistan, and this should not be impeded. After India and Pakistan become full members of Shanghai

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Cooperation Organization (SCO), SCO will play an active role in Afghanistan which is likely to benefit the country and may perhaps alter the US approach to this region.

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How Reconciliation and Confidence Building Measures Fit into the Broader Challenge of Afghan Peace-making?

Working Paper

Michael Semple*

Abstract

The paper assesses experience of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and reconciliation in Afghanistan. The Taliban's Islamic Emirate remains a powerful idea, commanding loyalty of fighters and officials across much of Afghanistan. The paper argues that the Taliban's resilience and approach to the conflict are best understood by considering the movement's culture, developed over two decades and the political dynamics between emerging rival Taliban power-centres. Drawing on the analysis of Taliban politics and culture, the paper considers an optimal CBM and reconciliation design. It proposes conditionality and linking measures to de-escalation. On the structure of measures, it outlines a modular approach, which avoids linkage to complex national-level processes. On content, the paper outlines the potential for political patronage to focus on Taliban stakeholder concerns, including welfare of fighters, prisoners and dependents.

Key words: Political Culture, Confidence Building Measures, Reconciliation, De-escalation, Political Settlement, Patronage, Prisoners.

Prelude

On 5 May 2017, a capacity crowd of tens of thousands crammed into the main football stadium in Kabul, to listen to a speech by the Amir of Hizb-i- Islami, Gulbadin Hekmatyar. The day before, Hekmatyar's convoy had entered Kabul and he proceeded to the Presidential Palace. There, he was received by President Ghani and

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mingled with the current rulers of Afghanistan and other aging veterans of the Afghan *jihad* of the 1980s.

On one level, Hekmatyar's emergence from 15 years 'underground' was a remarkably effective peace-making initiative. Here was a leader who all that time had advocated violent resistance against the government and its foreign allies, but who now publicly calls for an end to political violence. The transformation was made possible by an accord between the Afghan Government and Hizb-i-Islami, agreed almost a year earlier. Through the accord, the Government granted a form of immunity to the Hizb leaders and cadres, it agreed to release Hizb prisoners, lobby for the removal of Hekmatyar's name from United Nations (UN) sanctions and assist Hizb members and dependents to resettle in Afghanistan after return from Pakistan. For their part, Hizb-i-Islami agreed to end their violent campaign against the Government and NATO forces. Hekmatyar has gone beyond merely calling off his own campaign. He has made a series of statements condemning ongoing Taliban violence and offering to mediate for them, so that they too can enter a peace process.

The Government concessions, with regard to de-listing, prisoners and returnee support, carefully avoid altering the character of the state or even its policies. Instead, they are textbook CBMs, which have been deployed to attain a strategic goal - that of removing one pillar of the anti-government insurgency.

The deal with Hekmatyar and Hizb-i-Islami made sense because of the circumstances they found themselves in, a decade and a half after the establishment of the post-Taliban order in Kabul. In many ways, Hizb-i-Islami has long been an integral part of the order in Kabul.

Factions of the party have members of Parliament and offices in Kabul and the party's former intelligence chief is deputy to the Chief Executive. Culturally, Hizb-i-Islami veterans see themselves as belonging to the political class of contemporary Afghanistan. The Hizbis were already insiders in Kabul. Those bits of the party's military which have remained active have made only a minor contribution to the insurgency. Furthermore, participating in the insurgency as a minor player has given Hizb-i-Islami far less control over revenues than the Taliban have achieved through their participation in the conflict economy. All this suggests inferring from the Hizb-i-Islami deal what might work for the larger insurgency actors, the Taliban. Yes, CBMs will likely feature in any initiative to end violent conflict. But anyone considering the right way to use those CBMs must be sensitive to the character of the actor whose

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confidence they seek to build and the circumstances that the actor finds himself in.

Do Afghan Conflict Actors have Agency and Should We Bother Trying to Understand Them?

Radically different perspectives are available for making sense of conflict and peace issues in Afghanistan. Those who approach the Afghan conflict from a regional geopolitical perspective are apt to focus on the competition between regional and external powers, and the proxy wars through which this competition is played out. Conflict actors such as the Afghan Taliban, or indeed Hizb-i-Islami, can be reduced to an expression of the intentions of their covert backers and the resources which they provide. In the crudest versions, the Afghan Taliban are fully subservient to their assumed Pakistani patrons, and thus, have no agency.

If you apply a strict counterterrorist perspective, then non-state conflict actors such as the Taliban are significant primarily because of their ability to generate violence, especially in their use of classic terror tactics, such as assassinations and stealth attacks in urban areas.

They should be studied in terms of their military capabilities. The cultural or political character of the actor is of little interest. If you approach the Taliban from such a counterterrorist perspective then you may grant the Taliban some agency, but are unlikely to notice their culture.

The analysis in this paper applies a perspective of political culture to the Afghan conflict and treats the Taliban as an armed political actor. In this perspective, Taliban do have agency and their actions and decision making are strongly influenced by the culture which the movement has accumulated over the decades. That is not to say that Taliban are immune to influence from external linkages, but rather those influences alone do not determine their actions. Thinking of Taliban as armed political actors with agency also suggests that they may be amenable to influence by CBMs.

Place of CBMs Within a Peace Process

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are steps taken by parties to a conflict to demonstrate good faith and convince other parties that there are gains to be had from cooperation rather than continued violent competition. CBMs can be important in establishing the relationships

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which are vital to the overall success of a peace process. However, they do not normally address the major substantive issues driving the conflict. Ahmad Shah Masood, as Defence Minister, provides a classic example of astute Afghan use of the CBM at the most intimate level. When he heard of an accident of the son of a Hizb-i-Islami commander whom he was wooing for a new alliance, Masood sent a helicopter to take the boy to hospital. That gesture helped convince the commander that it was worthwhile listening to Masood's proposal. The alliance soon followed.

The usage of the term CBM in discussions of peace-making in Afghanistan is close to standard international meaning. However, Afghanistan usage of reconciliation is rather more esoteric and limited than ideas of reconciliation in the peace-making literature. In Afghanistan, the move by any non-state armed actor to cease hostilities under some form of agreement with the government is typically referred to as reconciliation. In the parlance of Afghan peace-making, Hekmatyar and his men's return to Kabul is described as reconciliation because he has foresworn violence and cut a deal.

International usage of the term reconciliation generally refers to a rather more profound rebuilding of relationships, generally involving agreement on how to address grievances accumulated during the conflict and establish a *modus vivendi*. This paper uses CBMs in the standard sense and reconciliation according to the limited Afghan usage. However, beyond these, there is a separate broader set of issues to be addressed and measures adopted if there is to be a durable peace, rather than merely a shuffling of some actors off the battlefield.

Some commentators on Afghanistan write or talk as if a peace process is under way there and, by implication, just needs to expand or become a bit more effective, so as to achieve real impact on the armed conflict. This paper is written on the basis that, as of May 2017, there is no extant Afghan peace process. Rather, on the state side, there have been initiatives over time, many of them *ad hoc* and some of them invoking the idea of peace, while more designed to pursue parochial political objectives. But no initiative has gained sufficient traction to shift Afghanistan onto a trajectory leading to reduction of violence and establishment of lasting peace. When this paper refers to an Afghanistan peace process, it is in the putative sense of that which could happen, rather than any of the institutions or initiatives already under way.

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An Introduction to Taliban Politics and Culture

There is now a wealth of knowledge about Taliban rhetoric, power-dynamics inside the movement, the practice of leadership and its internal politics. These factors collectively amount to a rich political culture, despite the disdain of regional geo-strategists for this field of knowledge,

A quick overview of previous findings from study of Taliban political behaviour provides an idea of the factors which govern Taliban response to CBMs. These are precisely the kind of factors to be considered by anyone trying to design the right package of CBMs.

In the first place, the Afghan Taliban movement has long been characterised by potency of the idea of the Emirate. True Taliban consider that the movement had a moral purpose at its launch. They consider the *Amir* as effectively divinely guided, which legitimises the structure built up under his authority – the Emirate. There is a high degree of loyalty to the original mission of the Taliban and the idea of the Emirate.

Secondly, although the Taliban movement has maintained an impressive track record of cohesiveness, grievances and dissent have intensified within since the announcement of the death of Mullah Omar. In the face the movement chooses to present to the world, spokesmen consciously project the old image of cohesiveness. But, the movement without Mullah Omar is in a state of flux.

One reason for the remarkable gap between the public projection of unity and the internal reality of fractiousness is because the Taliban political culture validates deception for the sake of the cause. Taliban have long mastered the art of using alternative facts. Indeed, although researchers now know much more about the Taliban than previously, there are multiple challenges in establishing what goes on inside the movement. The classic case of Taliban deception, practised on their own supporters as much as on outsiders, was the protracted cover up of Mullah Omar's death.

One of the most tangible ways in which Taliban politics have changed as a consequence of the fall-out from death of Mullah Omar is the emergence of different power centres in Quetta, Peshawar and Helmand. There is still only a single organisational structure and the commanders and officials based in the three major centres all claim to be part of the Emirate. But it is possible to discern networks with a stake in each of the power

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centres and a sense of competition with the others. And the seniors in each of the centres can assert a far higher degree of autonomy than previously possible.

Part of the fascination of the Taliban movement is that it combines hierarchical with horizontal organisation. The formal structure under the *Amir* and his deputies is hierarchical, with national commissions, officials for each administrative unit of the country and a pyramid of military commanders. But horizontal networks, sort of fraternities, of fighters with a common background, operate within the hierarchy.

The Taliban movement has an intimate relationship with clerical networks. But this is not the same as being a religious organisation. Indeed, both Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor and the current *Amir*, Haibatollah, have specifically resisted attempts to increase the power of the *Ulema* over the movement.

There has always been a tribal element within Taliban culture, even though official dogma projects the movement as being supra-tribal. However, in the post-Omar Taliban, there has been increasing indication of tribal solidarity and competition within.

The Islamic Emirate is a comparatively low budget organisation. But money is still vital for exercising patronage. This patronage is one of the key sources of its authority. Crudely, fighters attach themselves to commanders who can provide them at least with food, fuel and phone cards.

Jihad has fundamental significance and the attachment to notions of the legitimacy of *jihad* cut across other divisions. Even pragmatists who might like to end the war soon have to declare themselves loyal to the *jihad*.

The movement now has sufficient history that it has established what amounts to a way of life. It is feasible for a graduate from a *madrassah* to join it and to be guaranteed a career-like role in fighting or administering.

Finally, in terms of what they aspire to, the Afghan Taliban show little sign of being truly revolutionary. In terms of specific reforms that they have advocated over time, the Taliban's position is close to one of traditional Pashtun clericalism. The issue of their international agenda is more controversial and ambiguous. On one level, the leadership is at pains to project the Taliban's traditional image as being concerned only with the affairs of Afghanistan. At the same time, they have also long maintained international alliances with terrorist organisations.

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State of the Afghan Conflict

A few basic points suffice on the state of the conflict in which the Taliban are engaged. Despite the emergence of rival factions and groups, the main conflict is still between forces claiming loyalty to the Emirate versus those claiming loyalty to the Kabul government.

Violence remains at a high level. The Taliban escalated in advance of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) exit from Afghanistan. Subsequently, violence has plateaued. Violence is also highly dispersed. There are fronts in all provinces. Although power is ethnically concentrated in the movement, it has managed to spread violence beyond the areas of those ethnically dominant in the movement – both by persuading the politically minor ethnic groups to fight and by operating in mixed areas. Violence affects both urban and rural areas, but in different ways – Taliban control or frontal warfare in rural areas and assassinations and terror attacks in urban areas. Because of the urban-rural social links, everyone is affected.

The Taliban-led insurgency is super-imposed on multiple local conflicts. These local conflicts can determine who takes which side in the ostensibly national conflict.

Although much has been made of Taliban battlefield progress, Government forces remain vastly better resourced than the Taliban and still able to cope with high casualties. Neither side has any convincing prospect of prevailing militarily over the other.

Lessons from Afghan Experience of CBMs and Reconciliation

The prototype for Afghan state-led CBMs is the National Reconciliation Programme (NRP) launched by Dr Najibullah in 1986. Eight years into the war, he made overtures to the *mujahideen*. At the national level, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) government made symbolic changes to affirm that they safeguarded Afghanistan's Islamic identity. They offered minor incentives to refugees to return to the country and offered *mujahideen* groups to convert into pro-government militias. The leadership of the *mujahideen* parties rejected the NRP as falling far short of their political demands for Soviet withdrawal and change of regime. They rightly concluded that the Programme was aimed at co-opting opposition fighters so as to avoid either capitulation or substantive

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compromise. However, over time, and particularly after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal, the Najib government did make progress in establishing protocols with *mujahideen* fronts around the main cities. The protocols were in effect non-aggression pacts between armed groups and the government, with the government supplying money and material, while the armed groups helped maintain buffer zones around the cities. The NRP in effect established a *modus operandi* for dealings between state and non-state actors, which could be drawn on by the national security apparatus in subsequent iterations of the conflict. The widespread understanding, at least among veterans of the *jihad*, that so-called reconciliation measures were used as cover for co-option efforts, has encouraged deep suspicion of any state-initiated programme for reintegration fighters. Therefore, in the post-Taliban period, the Afghan government has launched a series of schemes offering to reintegrate fighters who break ranks with the Emirate, but none of them has achieved a strategic impact on the movement.

The operation of the Taliban Political Commission (TPC) in Qatar represents the most interesting case study of CBMs of the current phase of the conflict, although the utility of these measures is still open to interpretation. From the perspective of efforts to orchestrate an end to the Afghan conflict, the idea of allowing the Taliban to operate a mission in the Gulf was to provide the movement with access to a safe space, where they could engage with other actors, including the Kabul government, for dialogue and eventually negotiation. The Taliban had long complained that the travel ban imposed by United Nations sanctions made it difficult for their political leadership to travel internationally. Having a legitimate presence in Qatar supposedly removed barriers to Taliban participation in dialogue.

The US State Department came up with the idea of a CBM within the CBM, by seeking to negotiate, with the Taliban team that came to Doha, in exchange of captured US soldier Bowe Bergdahl, for five senior Taliban prisoners. After many delays, this CBM was implemented. Taliban leaders were transferred from Guantanamo to Qatar, where they have remained subject to a form of house arrest, but are able to interact with their families. In return, the Taliban organised the hand-over to a US helicopter crew of a soldier held by their Haqqani faction. Importantly, this demonstrated that an agreement reached in Doha could be implemented by fighters on the ground in Afghanistan. The arrangement was highly contested in the US, with critics of President Barack Obama's administration denouncing it as a concession to terrorists.

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The US supporters of the Qatar engagement envisaged a progression from CBM to full-fledged political engagement and peace dialogue. However, the transition to acknowledged talks was stymied. The experience provided a classic example of Murphy's Law operating in peace-making. The US worked with the Qatari authorities on an agreement with the Taliban delegation, whereby the Taliban would formally open their political office and then proceed to talks with representatives of the Kabul government. The logic of this arrangement was that the Taliban would value the element of status as a political actor accorded to them by virtue of having an office.

In return, they would agree to talk directly with the Afghan government, which potentially could lead to a broader political agreement or peace process. However, the opening of the Taliban's Qatar office ended in fiasco. The head of the Taliban mission pointedly absented himself for the occasion. The rest of his team made speeches on television, raised an Islamic Emirate flag and unveiled an office name plate. President Karzai, who ostensibly had agreed to the Qatar initiative as a way of bringing his representatives face-to-face with the Taliban, immediately protested. He denounced the protocol accorded to the mission as amounting to recognition of the Taliban as a sort of government in exile. The hope for direct dialogue between the Taliban and Kabul did not happen, and the TPC had to revert to operating without a formal, recognised office.

There are alternative interpretations of the flag-raising episode. The charitable interpretation is that weak coordination can lead to *bona fide* misunderstanding and unintended offence. This is in effect a plea for meticulous diplomacy in peace-making. An alternative interpretation is that the Taliban consciously exploited the US's willingness to offer CBMs, so as to claim international legitimacy, without ever really intending to honour the agreement to proceed to face-to-face talks. The very fact that the attempt to open the office allowed President Karzai to denounce the exercise indicated confidence among the conflict parties had been undermined rather than built.

Although the botched flag-raising delayed the start of face-to-face talks, it did not bring to an end the Taliban presence in Qatar, as the US agreed with the Qatar authorities that continued but lower profile Taliban presence could still be helpful. In effect, the US decided to extend the basic CBM of offering the Taliban a safe place to operate politically. They

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have now had that presence for some five years. Despite periodic diplomatic engagement with the Taliban's political team, no progress towards substantive peace talks was achieved.

Arguably, several rounds of humanitarian talks have helped to counter civilian harm and even inspire cooperation of the TPC for preventing civilian casualties. Those who have been involved in engagement with the TPC still differ over what conclusions to draw from the lack of progress in Qatar. The optimists for diplomatic engagement argue that the Taliban leadership has been committed to initiating substantive talks through Qatar. But what is needed is time to assess seriousness of other actors, before fully committing themselves. If it has all taken a long time, blame should be shared, especially as the US undermined confidence building by killing the Taliban leader, Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, who had authorised the launch of the Qatar mission. A less generous interpretation would be that the Pakistan-based Taliban leadership had little interest in pursuing a political settlement. Therefore, they neither sanctioned the move to substantive talks, nor did the TPC have the autonomous authority or influence which would have been required for them to initiate any process on their own. Irrespective of the interpretation of why facilitating the TPC achieved so little, the overall outcome has been a frustrating failure to progress from CBM to actual peace-making.

After Qatar, the highest profile attempt to orchestrate a settlement in Afghanistan has been the meetings of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) through 2015 and 2016. This brought together representatives of Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US, to discuss the modalities for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban and to encourage the Taliban to participate. At both the regional and international level, the initiative involved a significant investment of diplomatic capital, in the sense that the early meetings were joined by high-level representatives – a sort of diplomatic show of force. The format played to the notion that the Taliban are subject to external leverage, in particular from Pakistan. The involvement of both China and the US also provided the Taliban with a potential way to rationalise their participation in any talks. Dealing directly with world powers can easily be depicted as a sign of strength. Taliban propagandists could have used this to counteract any sense of climb-down which they experienced by virtue of associating with the Kabul government. The Quadrilateral process provided multiple rounds of interesting discussions among the diplomats, but no talks with the Taliban. The leadership, apparently after receiving many messages encouraging them to

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agree to talks with Kabul, instead declined. As the process dragged on, the level of representation dropped until the process was in effect suspended and perhaps superseded by Russian attempts to convene a dialogue support group.

The simplest lesson to be drawn from the experience of the Quadrilateral process is that elegant high-level diplomacy alone is not enough to win the confidence or cooperation of the Taliban. It is not that the Taliban are shy of diplomacy. *Au contraire*, on occasion the Taliban have truly immersed themselves in diplomacy. A more plausible explanation is simply that the Quadrilateral invitation to talks contained nothing which would change the leadership's calculus regarding the wisdom of talking. The Taliban did not go forward because they saw no advantage in doing so and they were not subject to any leverage obliging them to take the invitation more seriously.

Reflections on Future Use of CBMs

CBMs should be designed with reference to insights about Taliban political culture and their perception about the state of the conflict. This provides the best chance of achieving resonance - CBMs which actually build confidence.

There should be a clear working distinction between issues to be addressed early in any peace process and those to be addressed later. CBMs can be deployed to encourage engagement on the early issues, which should be as straightforward as possible. The more complex issues can be addressed in political talks in the later stage of a process.

In the first place, CBMs should be linked to reduction of the level of violence in Afghanistan.

Taliban prisoners and the issue of detentions should be a prime focus for the development of new CBMs. However, any new CBMs should draw on Afghan, US and Pakistani experience of dealing with detainees.

The next set of CBMs should be designed to be implemented in sync with whatever level of the Taliban movement is prepared to engage. Ideally, they should be designed in such a way that a reluctant leadership is unable to block progress.

CBMs should be designed in such a way that the Taliban, even as they start to engage in a peace process, should be able to portray themselves favourably to their constituency. They are more likely to

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embrace a peace process if they can present themselves as still faithful to the *jihad*.

The main practical CBMs should employ the practices of political patronage. The practical elements of such measures would be familiar from previous reintegration exercises – Taliban fighters require access to cash, protection and status. However, the way that these are disbursed is important. Commanders or other senior Taliban figures, who can exert influence across large networks, should play a key role in allocating the patronage resources.

CBMs should visibly benefit and respect the totemic Taliban constituencies – those who have sacrificed for the movement. Taliban include in these groups the dependents of the martyrs, prisoners and *mujahideen* themselves.

Finally, any new CBMs should apply the dictum ‘keep it simple’. They should use simplicity as the main way of staying robust in the face of potential spoiling behaviour. CBMs and the early stage peace process which they encourage should not be tied to complex diplomatic formulae or even to national level talks.

Final Thoughts

Much of the pessimism over prospects for peace-making in Afghanistan relates to the apparently increasing complexity of the conflict. There are more external actors, the Afghan actors are increasingly factionalised, the conflict economy creates some incentives for continued violence and leaders’ ability to marshal their constituencies has diminished. Part of the advantage of an approach which utilises CBMs is that relatively simple measures can be applied incrementally, and thus, avoid being paralysed by the complexity.

One thought on who ‘owns’ the CBMs: An aspect of Afghan peace-making over which appears to be a rare consensus is that only an Afghan-led process can be viable. On the most basic level, the Afghan state seems best placed to design and deliver most of the CBMs potentially of interest to the Taliban, especially on issues such as prisoners or security guarantees for the *mujahideen*. Arguably, the Taliban grossly overestimate the extent of real US or Western influence within Afghanistan. Indeed, the potential international contribution to delivering most CBMs is confined to provision of resources. The real challenge in operationalising the idea of an Afghan-owned peace process will be in ensuring that it is adequately

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inclusive. There is a risk of undermining support for peace initiatives if there is a perception that one part of the state monopolises and benefits from them.■

ANNEXURES

Speakers and Authors' Bios

Dr Attaullah Wahidyar is currently Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education (MoE), Kabul, Government of Afghanistan. He has served in Ministry of Education as Director Communication, Senior Policy Programme Advisor & Chief of Staff for over six years, with main responsibilities of overseeing the strategic operation of MoE and providing the Government with strategic policy advice on issues in the education sector and managing various policy development forums to ensure maximum participation of stakeholders in the policy development process. Prior to joining MoE, he served as an Education Officer with the UNICEF Country Office in Afghanistan where he was responsible for managing a broad portfolio of activities including curriculum development, school construction, teacher education, womens' literacy and empowerment, and life skills based education. Between 2002 and 2005, he led the largest NGO-run education programme in Afghanistan under the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and served as National Training Officer for United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In recognition of his services in the education sector, Dr Wahidyar was awarded the 2nd highest civil award of Afghanistan - Mir Masjidi Khan Medal - with honorary Ministerial award from Minister of Education and a medal of recognition for his anti-corruption work by Government of Kazakhstan.

Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi is Associate Professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Prior to this, he was based in the Department of International Relations at the University of Karachi. In addition, he has also worked as Research Fellow at the Middle East Research Institute in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. His research interests border on nationalism and ethnicity, theories of International

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Relations, conflict resolution, and security dynamics in South Asia and the Middle East. He is the author of *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir Ethnic Movements* (London: Routledge, 2012). His research has appeared in various journals, including *African and Asian Studies*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Asian Ethnicity* and *Asian Affairs: An American Review*.

Dr Grigory Tishchenko is Deputy Director, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), Moscow, Russia. He graduated in 1975 from Bauman Moscow State Technical University. From 1975 to 1978, he worked in 'Energia' (currently S. P. Korolev Rocket and Space Corporation 'Energia'). He has published two monographs *Increase in Economic Efficiency of Military Construction in the USA*; and *Creation of Missile Defense Systems Abroad and the Security of Russia*. Dr Tishchenko is the author of more than 250 studies, reports and publications; and co-author of ten monographs. His areas of expertise include national security, military construction in the USA, military economy, missile defense systems, military space, and arms control.

Ambassador Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal is currently the President's Special Envoy and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Ambassador Extraordinaire to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Prior to this, he served as the National Economic Advisor of Afghanistan (Oct 2014-Feb 2016); Finance Minister (Feb 2009-Dec 2014); Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation (Oct 2008-Feb 2009); Chief Economic Advisor to President Hamid Karzai (Jul 2008-Feb 2010); President of Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (Sep 2005-Feb 2009); and President of Afghanistan Cricket Board (June 2010-Jan 2013). Dr Zakhilwal returned to Afghanistan to participate in the Emergency *Loya Jirga* in June 2002 and ever since has been part of, or on occasions central to many important events in Afghanistan. He was an active part of all of Afghanistan's *Loya Jirgas* and was organiser of most major international conferences on Afghanistan (Afghanistan Paris Conference of 2008, London Conference of January 2010, Kabul Conference of July 2010, Bonn Conference of December

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2011, Tokyo Conference of July 2012 and London Conference of December 2014). Before returning to Afghanistan in 2002, he worked as a Senior Research Economist with the Federal Government of Canada and also taught Economics at Carleton University in Ottawa. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Economics from University of Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada in 1994; and earned a Master's degree in Economics at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada in 1995 and completed Doctorate in Economics at Carleton University in Ottawa in 2001.

Major General Khawar Hanif, HI (M) was commissioned in Punjab Regiment (Infantry) in 1980 and promoted as Major General on 25 October 2008. He has served on various command and staff appointments which include General Staff Officer Grade-III and Brigade Major of Infantry Brigade, command of his parent unit twice; Assistant Military Secretary in GHQ; Instructor Class A at Command and Staff College, Quetta; Command of a Mechanized Brigade; Private Secretary to Vice Chief of Army Staff; Defence and Army Attache in USA; General Officer Commanding of an Infantry Division, DG Doctrine and Evaluation Directorate at GHQ; and DG Anti Narcotics Force. He retired from service on 25 October 2015 and is MD/CEO Wind Energy Foundation since 9 Jan 2016. His qualifications include graduation from Gordon College, Rawalpindi in 1978, Command and Staff Course, Quetta in 1990, BSc honours from Command and Staff College Fort Queenscliff, Australia in 1994 and MSc degree from National Defence College, Pakistan in 2002. He has the singular distinction of initiating and steering the doctrine formulation process for Pakistan Army and codification of Pakistan Army Doctrine, Sub Conventional Warfare and Stability Civil Assistance and Normalisation operations Doctrines. He has been awarded Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military) by Government of Pakistan and Legion of Merit Award by the Government of USA.

Dr Liu Zongyi is Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Strategic Studies and Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). His research interests

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mainly focus on India's Economy and Foreign Policy, China's Foreign Policy, BRICS, and G-20. Dr Liu has published several papers in Chinese and overseas journals on these subjects, and published about 200 pieces of commentary articles in Chinese or English in newspapers. He holds a Bachelors degree in Economics from Shandong University of Finance and Economics and a diploma for Chinese and American Studies from The Johns Hopkins University Nanjing Centre. He obtained Master and PhD degrees in International Relations from China Foreign Affairs University.

Dr Marvin G. Weinbaum is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and served as analyst for Pakistan and Afghanistan in the US Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research from 1999 to 2003. He is currently a Scholar-in-Residence and Director of the Pakistan Center at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. Professor Weinbaum earned his Doctorate from Columbia University in 1965, his MA from the University of Michigan in 1958, and his BA from Brooklyn College in 1957. In 1965, he joined the faculty of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At Illinois, he served for 15 years as the Director of the Program on South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. He was awarded Fulbright Research Fellowships for Egypt in 1981-82 and Afghanistan in 1989-90, and was a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in 1996-97. Additionally, Dr Weinbaum has been the recipient of research awards from the Social Science Research Council, the Ford Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, IREX, the American Political Science Association, and other granting agencies. After retiring, he has held adjunct professorships at Georgetown and George Washington universities, and has frequently lectured at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute. At the State Department, he was a recipient of its Superior Honors Award. Since leaving the Department, he has assumed numerous consultancies, both with government agencies and the private sector. His research, teaching, and consultancies have focused on issues of national security, state building, democratisation, and political economy. Dr Weinbaum is the author/ editor of six

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books. He has also written more than 100 book chapters and professional journal articles, mostly about Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, but also on Egypt and Turkey. He is author of numerous opinion pieces in leading American newspapers and magazines, and many think-tank reports.

Major General (R) M Ijaz Hussain Awan, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military) graduated from Pakistan Military Academy in 1977 as an Infantry Officer. He has a varied experience of Command, Staff and instructional assignments, and is a graduate of Command and Staff College, National Defence University, Islamabad and Armed Forces War College, Turkey. He has served at the faculty of School of Infantry and Tactics and Command and Staff College, Quetta. He commanded a UN Peacekeeping Contingent in Sierra Leone and an infantry Brigade at Sialkot, Pakistan. He also commanded an Infantry Division in Gujranwala and led the famous counterterrorism operation Rah-e-Rast in Malakand Division in 2009. He also served as High Commissioner for Pakistan to Brunei Darrussalam from 2012-14.

Mr Michael Semple is a Visiting Professor at the Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, Queen's University Belfast. He conducts research and dialogue, delivers policy advice and participates in the public debate on conflict and peace-making in South Asia and the Middle East. He has published on the Taliban Movement and the challenges of pluralism in the Muslim world. His recent work includes an introduction to the concept of insurgent peace-making as an alternative approach to engagement with armed groups engaged in protracted conflict. Mr Semple has worked and travelled extensively in Afghanistan and Pakistan for three decades. He has served with the United Nations and was Deputy to the European Union Special Representative in Afghanistan.

Ambassador (R) Mohammad Sadiq has served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2009-14. Immediately before this assignment, he served as the official Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2007-09. He earlier served in key diplomatic

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positions in Washington, Beijing and Brussels. During his diplomatic assignments, Ambassador Sadiq focused on organising overseas Pakistanis to play a more active role in their adopted countries, developing their databases and electronic mass mailing systems. He has spoken at numerous educational institutions and think-tanks in Pakistan and abroad. He also writes on international relations issues. He has represented Pakistan in several multilateral and bilateral conferences/meetings, and was Member of the UN Election Observer Team that oversaw the elections in South Africa which ended the Apartheid regime (1994).

Mr Owais Ahmed Ghani is amongst Pakistan's most eminent and respected personalities. He holds the honour of being one of only three people in Pakistan's history who has held the Governorship of two provinces. He is a Mechanical Engineer with 28 years professional experience in the industrial equipment engineering industry. He played an active and progressive role in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KPK) provincial cabinet during 1999-2002 as Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce, Minerals, Labor, Transport, IT and Science & Technology and then as Federal Minister for Environment, Labor, Manpower & Overseas Pakistanis, Local Government, Religious Affairs & Zakat. He was also appointed as the Governor of Balochistan province from 2003 to 2008 and oversaw a difficult period of the province's political history. He, then, served as Governor of KPK province from 2008 to 2011 during which intensive counterinsurgency operations were launched to clear Swat and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) from anti-Pakistan militants.

Mr Rahimullah Yusufzai is Resident Editor of *The News International* in Peshawar and is also a senior analyst for GEO TV and correspondent of the BBC World Service for its Urdu, Pashto and Hindi services in Pakistan. He has been reporting on the Afghan conflict since the 1980s and also on issues of militancy and terrorism in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the rest of Pakistan for the past 15 years.

Speakers and Authors' Bios

Mr Sayed Mahdi Munadi joined the Center for Strategic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan as researcher in 2013. He is currently the head of Research and responsible for regional cooperation and integration in South and Central Asia. Mr Munadi is the author of several research and analytical articles, with particular focus on Afghanistan's regional integration published in academic journals and as book chapters. He has also translated a book into Dari from English titled 'Towards a More Cooperative South Asia', and also translated and edited 'Islamic Networks in Pakistan, Central Asia and Afghanistan'. He is also the author of 'Role of Terrorism in International Relations.' He is also a university lecturer, currently teaching modules on Principles of International Relations and other related issues at a number of private Afghan universities in Kabul.

Dr Seyed Rasoul Mousavi is Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice President of Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran. Previously, he served as Iran's Ambassador to Finland, Estonia and Tajikistan. After completing his Bachelors and Masters in Political Science from Shiraz University and Tehran University respectively, he completed his Doctorate in Political Science from Azad University, Iran. He has many books to his credit including *Economic Potentialities in Central Asia* (1984), *Afghanistan & Challenges Ahead* (1993) and *NATO Strategy in the Caucasus* (2005). He has also published several research articles in different acclaimed journals such as the *Journal of Foreign Policy*, *Central Asia and the Caucasus Review* and the *Defense Strategic Review*. He is an expert on Regional Studies and National Security. ■

IPRI Publications

IPRI Journal

The *IPRI Journal* is an X-category biannual refereed journal enjoying wide circulation in Pakistan and abroad. It is being published since 2001 and consists of research articles that build interdisciplinary understanding of today's global complexities, interconnectedness, and events of international/regional importance by strengthening the knowledge-base primarily from Pakistan and the Global South and North on areas related to international affairs, geopolitics, diplomacy, security, political economy, conflict and governance. Book reviews of latest publications on similar subjects are also published. The *IPRI Journal* is now recognised by Clarivate Analytics (formerly the Intellectual Property & Science Business of Thomson Reuters) and will be indexed and abstracted in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

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The Institute started its second biannual refereed Journal in 2016 entitled the *Journal of Current Affairs* aimed to encourage the research of young scholars and academics. Articles consist of contemporary subject matters providing policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders' critical understanding of world politics, foreign affairs and international security vis-à-vis Pakistan.

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- IPRI Paper 17, *Challenge of Identity and Governance Quaid's Vision: The Way Forward* - Dr Noor ul Haq (2013)
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